

Haiti earthquake hits 1.2 million people: UNICEF



The United Nations Children’s Fund UNICEF said, around 1.2 million people, including 5,40,000 children, have been impacted by the 7.2-magnitude earthquake. The quake left 1,419 people dead and more than 6,900 injured. The toll is expected to rise in the coming days, but search and rescue efforts are being hampered by a lack of resources and by heavy rains, which have caused mudslides that blocked roads in the region.

UNICEF said, flooding and mudslides are likely to worsen the situation of vulnerable families and further complicate the humanitarian response.

Maki Kaji, godfather of Sudoku, dies in Japan



Maki Kaji, a university dropout who turned a numbers game into one of the world’s most popular logic puzzles and became known as the “Godfather of Sudoku,” died. He was 69. His death was announced by Nikoli, the puzzle company he co-founded.

According to Nikoli, an estimated 200 million people in 100 countries have solved the puzzle, which involves filling in a numbered grid. A world championship is held each year.

Afghanistan: India evacuates diplomats amid security concerns



India has evacuated its ambassador and all other diplomats from Afghanistan, the foreign ministry said. They were flown out in a special military flight on Tuesday to the Hindon airbase near capital Delhi. The aircraft was carrying around 150 people, including diplomats, officials, security personnel and some stranded Indians.

The commercial airspace is shut and foreign troops have been struggling to keep the Kabul airport functional amid the chaos.

New Zealand enters nationwide lockdown over one Covid case



New Zealand has announced a snap lockdown after a man tested positive for Covid, the first case in six months. The case was detected in Auckland, which will be in lockdown for a week, while the rest of the country will be in lockdown for three days. Just around 20% of its population has been fully vaccinated.

New Zealand has been successful in eliminating the virus from within its borders, although its international borders remain largely closed.

Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik announces smart health cards for 3.5 crore people



Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik announced that his government will provide smart health cards to 3.5 crore people in the state under the Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana. Beneficiaries of national and state food security schemes, and Annapurna and Antyodaya initiatives will get the cards under which women can avail treatment up to Rs 10 lakh per year and other family members will get the benefit up to Rs 5 lakh each. The initiative will cover 3.5 crore people in 96 lakh families in a phased manner, Patnaik claimed that Odisha is the first state in the country to provide such smart health cards.

One more lab approved for batch-testing and release of Covid-19 Vaccines



In an important initiative to ramp up the speed of vaccination, the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW), has approved one more lab for testing and lot release of Covid-19 vaccines. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has authorised National Institute of Animal Biotechnology (NIAB), Hyderabad as Central Drug Laboratory (CDL) for testing and lot release of Covid-19 vaccines.

After due deliberations, DBT proposed two laboratories namely NIAB and National Centre for Cell Sciences (NCCS), Pune for this purpose. Funds from Prime Minister Cares Fund Trust (PM-CARES) were allotted for upgradation of these two laboratories.

Indian scientists discover 'mermaid' plant species



Indian scientists have discovered a new plant species in India's Andamans archipelago. Biologists found a marine green algae during a trip to the island in 2019. Identification is laborious, and it took the scientists nearly two years to confirm that the species had been discovered for the first time. Scientists from the Central University of Punjab have named the specie *Acetabularia jalakanyakae*. The main feature of the newly discovered species is that the plant is made up of one gigantic cell with a nucleus.

Samsung, NSDC to train 50,000 youth for jobs in electronics retail sector



Consumer electronics major Samsung India has partnered with the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) under a CSR initiative, aiming to train 50,000 young persons as job-ready for the electronics retail sector over the next few years. Through Samsung DOST (Digital and Offline Skills Training), the leading smartphone and consumer electronics good manufacturer would execute the training programme using the nationwide skills training centres of NSDC. School pass-outs would be trained at 120 sites in India with paid on-the-job training at Samsung retail outlets under the programme.

RBI unveils financial inclusion index



The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced the formation of a composite Financial Inclusion Index (FI-Index) to capture the extent of financial inclusion across the country. The FI-Index for the period ended March 2021 stood at 53.9 compared with 43.4 for the period ended March 2017. The FI-Index is made up of three main parameters: access (35% weightage), usage (45% weightage), and quality (20% weightage), each of which has several aspects that are calculated using a variety of indicators.

The index, which will include 97 factors, will be sensitive to ease of access, availability and consumption of services, and service quality. It will also take into account the quality of financial inclusion, as evidenced by financial literacy, consumer protection, and inequities and service inadequacies. It will collect information on banking, investing, insurance, postal service, and pensions to determine the level of financial inclusion.

SEBI cuts post-IPO lock-in for promoters to 18 months



Markets regulator SEBI has reduced the minimum lock-in period for promoters' investment post an initial public offering (IPO) to 18 months from three years, under certain conditions. The move comes at a time when many companies are looking to list on the stock exchanges. In addition, the SEBI has streamlined disclosures requirements of group companies.

In a notification, SEBI said if the object of the issue involves offer-for-sale or financing other than for capital expenditure for a project, then the minimum promoters' contribution of 20% would be locked-in for 18 months from the date of allotment in the IPO.

Retail sales touch 72% of pre-pandemic level: RAI



Retail sales across India continued to recover in July, reaching 72% of the pre-pandemic levels of July 2019, and businesses are pinning hopes on the festive seasons for a further boost, Retailers Association of India (RAI) said . According to the retailer's body, the rate of recovery was 50 per cent of pre-pandemic levels in June 2021.

RAI retail businesses in south India have indicated a very sharp comeback in July 2021 with sales at 82 per cent of the pre-pandemic levels (July 2019), as against 50 per cent sales in June 2021. However, west India is yet to improve, registering sales at 57 per cent of pre-pandemic levels (July 2019).

Exporters to get duty relief as part of Jan. 1 RoDTEP scheme



To boost exports, the Union government announced rates of tax refunds under the export promotion scheme RoDTEP for 8,555 products, such as marine goods, yarn, dairy items. The government has set aside Rs 12,454 crore for refunds under the Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products (RoDTEP) scheme for the current fiscal.

Under the RoDTEP, various central and state duties, taxes, and levies imposed on input products, among others, would be refund . Commerce Secretary B V R Subrahmanyam said that Rs 19,400 crore would be available for 2021-22 for both the RoDTEP and the Rebate of State and Central Taxes and Levies (RoSCTL). The RoSCTL scheme was announced for the export of garments and apparels.

Tata Steel interested in RINL: CEO



Tata Steel is interested in acquiring state-owned Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Limited (RINL), the company's CEO and MD, T.V. Narendran, said. RINL, under the Ministry of Steel, owns a 7.3 million-tonne plant in Visakhapatnam. It holds the distinction of being India's first shore-based integrated steel plant. The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) on January 27, gave its 'in-principle' approval for 100% disinvestment of government stake in RINL, the corporate entity of Visakhapatnam Steel Plant (VSP), along with RINL's stake in its subsidiaries/joint ventures by way of privatisation.

New credit cards: RBI partially lifts curbs on HDFC Bank



In a major relief for HDFC Bank, the Reserve Bank of India has partially lifted the ban on the private sector lender and has allowed it to issue new credit cards. The RBI in December last year asked HDFC Bank to temporarily halt sourcing of new credit card customers. However, the ban on launching new technology initiatives remains.

In December last year, the RBI had come out with an unprecedented action implementing both the bans, after repeated instances of technological outages at the lender, which is the market leader in the credit cards segment.

Value e-commerce in India to grow to \$40 billion market: Kearney report



Kearney, a global consulting firm, sees value e-commerce segment in India's lifestyle retail market growing from \$4 billion in 2019 to \$20 billion in 2026 and \$40 billion in 2030 — a 10-fold growth in 10 years. The report noted that Indian consumers have always been value conscious, and much of the overall demand is for affordable, smaller-ticket items.

Praggnanandhaa takes blitz title



Sixth seed R. Praggnanandhaa outsmarted five higher-ranked compatriots to win the RTU Open blitz chess title. Praggnanandhaa scored 10 points from 11 rounds to take the honours ahead of training partner M. Karthikeyan, who tallied 9.5 points. Top seed Nihal Sarin came third with nine points.

England's Livingstone fires Phoenix into Hundred final



Birmingham Phoenix stand-in captain Liam Livingstone hit a stunning unbeaten 92 off 40 balls during a superb all-round display as his side secured its place in inaugural final of English cricket's the Hundred competition with a dominant eight-wicket win at the Northern Superchargers. The England all-rounder had earlier starred with the ball, taking 3-25 with his assorted spin as the Superchargers were held to 143-8.