

US panel releases final report on US Capitol riot, accuses Donald Trump of conspiracy



The US Congressional panel investigating last year's attack on the US Capitol has accused former President Donald Trump of a "multi-part conspiracy" to overturn his election defeat three months earlier. The panel has released its final 845-page report on the attack. It places the blame for the 6 January 2021 storming of Congress squarely on the former president. It also recommends barring Mr Trump from public office in the future. Over 18 months, the committee held 10 public hearings and interviewed more than 1,000 witnesses, including Trump administration officials and staff, Trump family members, Capitol police officers, rioters, militia members, and more.

Over 1.5 million people without power as winter storm sweeps through US & Canada



In the United States and Canada, nearly 1.5 million people are without power across several states as a powerful Arctic winter storm sweeps through both countries. Large parts of both the countries are under winter weather alerts that stretch from coast-to-coast and as far south as the US-Mexico border. The storm has brought damaging winds and freezing temperatures that can quickly lead to frostbite. More than 1,400,000 people from Texas to Maine had no electricity as intense winds damaged power lines. Power outages have also been reported in Canada, affecting 317,900 people in the provinces of Quebec and Ontario.

Nepal elected member of UN's Peacebuilding Commission



Nepal has been elected a member of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) at the 56th plenary meeting of the United Nations General Assembly for a tenure of two years. The membership will be effective from 1st January 2023. This offers Nepal an opportunity to enhance the country's visibility in the world arena as a peacebuilder and peace contributor. Alongside Nepal, Bangladesh, Ethiopia, India, and Rwanda were also elected from the category of Troop and Police Contributors to UN Missions. Nepal has participated in UN peacekeeping operations since 1958. Nepal stands as the third largest Troop and Police Contributor to UN Peacekeeping. Earlier, Nepal had served at the PBC in 2009-10 and 2011-15.

A 31-member body, the PBC was established in 2005 with a mandate to support peace efforts in conflict-affected countries, including their reconstruction and institution-building by promoting an integrated, strategic, and coherent approach across the system.

India wraps up UNSC presidency with focus on terrorism, Global South and maritime security



India wrapped up its December Presidency of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) with a special focus on terrorism, Global South and maritime security. Addressing the last scheduled meeting of UNSC of the year and India's term at the council, India's Permanent Representative to the UN, Ruchira Kamboj said that India did not hesitate to raise its voice against the common enemy of humanity, such as terrorism.

India's UNSC non-permanent membership comes to a close on December 31. Ireland, Kenya, Mexico, and Norway diplomats to the UN also addressed the wrap-up session as they, too, would exit the UNSC after 2-year term.

Fiji's Opposition accuses govt. of stoking fear to stay in power



Fiji's opposition has accused the government of sowing "fear and chaos" in a bid to stay in power, as the military began deploying to the streets of the capital Suva. Formal naval commander Bainimarama has led Fiji since a 2006 military coup and has refused to concede defeat following the elections on 14 December.

The vote resulted in the opposition—led by rival ex-coup leader and former prime minister Sitiveni "Rambo" Rabuka—cobbling together enough seats to form a coalition government. Meanwhile, Bainimarama has cited unsubstantiated reports of post-vote ethnic violence as a reason to deploy the military and fulfil our duty to keep Fiji safe.

81 cr. people to get free foodgrains for one year



The Union Cabinet has decided to provide free foodgrains to all 81 crore beneficiaries covered under the National Food Security Act (NFSA) for one year. The beneficiary families which used to pay ₹1 for coarse cereals, ₹2 for wheat and ₹3 for rice per kilogram will now get 35 kg of foodgrains a month free of cost for the next one year, and others will get five kilograms free each month till December 2023. The Centre has estimated an additional amount of ₹2 lakh crore for the scheme.

Cabinet approves pending OROP revision for veterans



The Union Cabinet approved a pension revision for retirees from the armed forces and their families under the One Rank One Pension (OROP) scheme, which has been delayed since July 2019. Arrears will be paid from July 01, 2019, to June 30, 2022, which is approximately ₹23,638 crore as per the applicable dearness relief, the Defence Ministry said. Armed forces personnel with a retirement date up to June 30, 2019, excluding premature retirees with effect from July 1, 2014, will be covered under this revision, the Ministry said.

Against the backdrop of delays, veterans had taken the legal route to pursue the revision. The case has been repeatedly delayed with the Government asking for more time in the Supreme Court. One Rank One Pension implies uniform pension to personnel based on rank and length of service, and irrespective of the date of retirement. The estimated annual expenditure for the implementation of the revision has been calculated as approximately ₹8,450 crore based on 31% Dearness Relief (DR).

Bharat Biotech's intranasal Covid vaccine approved by govt., to be available on CO-WIN soon



Bharat Biotech's intranasal Covid vaccine has been approved by the Union Health Ministry as a booster dose for those above 18 years of age. The needle-free vaccine will be available at private centres. It will be introduced on the Co-WIN platform soon. It is likely to be rolled out in the national Covid vaccination programme soon.

The nasal vaccine -- BBV154 -- received approval of the Drugs Controller General of India in November for restricted use in an emergency situation for those above 18 years as a heterologous booster dose. The approval for the vaccine comes amid a spurt in Covid cases in China and some other countries.

U.P. and T.N. struggle with encroachment in Centrally protected monuments, sites



Uttar Pradesh has the largest number of Centrally Protected Monuments that have been encroached upon, closely followed by Tamil Nadu. While 75 protected monument sites have been encroached upon in Uttar Pradesh, the corresponding number for Tamil Nadu is 74, Minister for Tourism and Culture G. Kishan Reddy told the Rajya Sabha. Uttar Pradesh also has the largest number of Centrally Protected monuments in the country at 743, while Tamil Nadu has 412. A total of 356 such heritage structures have encroachments across the country.

Veteran Telugu actor Kaikala Satyanarayana passes away



Veteran Telugu actor Kaikala Satyanarayana passed away after a brief illness. In a career spanning over six decades, Satyanarayana had acted in more than 750 films. Apart from Telugu, he had also acted in a few Tamil, Kannada and Hindi films. In a brief stint in politics, Satyanarayana was elected to Parliament from Machilipatnam in 1996.

Satyanarayana was awarded the Raghupathi Venkaiah Award in 2011 by the Andhra Pradesh government and the lifetime achievement in Telugu cinema in 2017.

India and Bangladesh agree to soon start discussion on Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement



India and Bangladesh have agreed to start the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) at an early date. The decision was taken during a meeting between Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Consumer Affairs, Food, and Public Distribution and Textiles, Piyush Goyal and Bangladesh Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi in Delhi.

Both sides also agreed that CEPA will also create new jobs, raise living standards, and provide wider social and economic opportunities in India and Bangladesh. In addition, the partnership would establish reliable and sustainable Regional Value Chains (RVCs).

HDFC secures \$400-mn IFC loan to finance 'green' houses



The International Finance Corporation (IFC) has extended a \$400-million loan to mortgage major HDFC for financing green affordable housing units, as part of their efforts towards supporting climate goals. The companies said this loan will help close the urban housing gap and improve access to climate-smart affordable homes by boosting green housing. Since 2010, IFC has lent more than \$1.7 billion to domestic housing finance firms for on-lending to retail buyers and developers of affordable and green housing.

Flipkart, PhonePe announces separation of ownership



Flipkart and PhonePe announced full ownership separation of digital payments platform PhonePe. As part of the transaction, existing Flipkart Singapore and PhonePe Singapore shareholders, led by Walmart, have purchased shares directly in PhonePe India, thus completing a process started earlier this year to make PhonePe a fully India-domiciled company. Walmart would remain the majority shareholder of both the business groups, as per a Flipkart communique.

Adani to control almost 65% of NDTV as founders sell stake



Billionaire Gautam Adani will control 64.7% of New Delhi Television Ltd. as the company's founders have decided to sell most of their shares to his conglomerate, four months after he initiated a takeover for the news network. Mr. Adani already owns 37% of NDTV through an open offer and acquisition of a company owned by founders Radhika and Pranoy Roy, despite several unsuccessful attempts by NDTV to block the takeover citing regulatory restrictions on moving shares.

The Roys would sell a 27.26% stake in NDTV to the AMG Media Network, an entity owned by Mr. Adani.

Sam Curran becomes the costliest in history as overseas players fetch the big bucks



England's all-rounder Sam Curran has become the most expensive player in the history of IPL auctions after fetching a whopping Rs 18.5 crore bid from Punjab Kings. Australia all-rounder Cameron Green was second-highest earner, fetching Rs 17.5 crore bid from Mumbai Indians. England Test skipper Ben Stokes was the third-highest gainer, fetching Rs 16.25 crore from CSK who pipped Kolkata Knight Riders in another intense bidding war.

Khelo India digital dashboard launched



Sports Minister Anurag Thakur has launched the 'Khelo India Dashboard', a one-stop platform, which will give people all the information they need with regards to the various schemes that come under the programme. The digital platform will have statistical data on athletes, coaches, venues and schemes related to the Khelo India programme.

The platform also has a database on Khelo India Centres, Khelo India Academies, SAI Training Centres and National Centres of Excellence.