

'Rambo' Rabuka returns as Fiji Prime Minister



Former military commander Sitiveni Rabuka was confirmed as Fiji's Prime Minister, after accusing the outgoing government of stoking "fear and chaos" to derail his return to power.

Mr. Rabuka replaces the imposing Frank Bainimarama, who toppled the government in a 2006 coup and became prime minister a year later.

Fiji is one of the most populous and prosperous Pacific island nations, and has grown closer to China under Mr. Bainimarama.

Mr. Rabuka has signalled a willingness to shift away from Beijing in favour of traditional allies Australia and New Zealand.

Pakistan repeals colonial-era law against suicide



Pakistan has amended a section of the country's criminal law to repeal a colonial-era legislation against suicide.

The development came in the form of an amendment, signed by President Arif Alvi and announced by his office on Twitter. The amendment, introduced by the secular Pakistan People's Party, was approved by the parliament's upper house, or Senate, three months ago.

Under the previous legislation — a vestige of colonial times from before the 1947 partition that carved out India and Pakistan from the former British Empire — attempted suicide was punishable by up to one year in prison, a fine or both in Pakistan.

WHO estimated that at least eight people in 100,000 took their own life in Pakistan in 2019, though the actual number is believed to be far higher as many cases go unreported to avoid a police investigation.

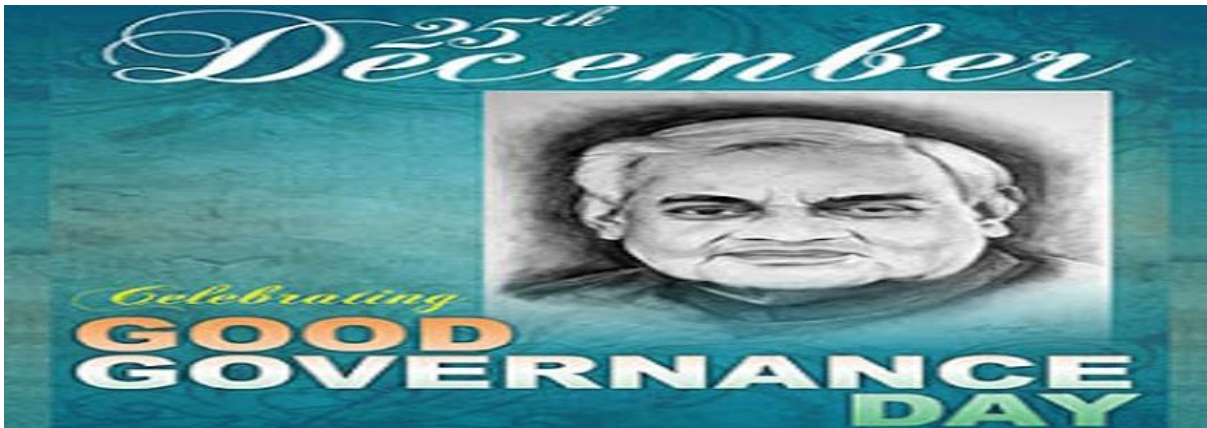
Taliban ban women from working for domestic, foreign NGOs



The Taliban government ordered all foreign and domestic non-governmental groups in Afghanistan to suspend employing women, allegedly because some female employees didn't wear the Islamic headscarf correctly. The ban was the latest restrictive move by Afghanistan's new rulers against women's rights and freedoms.

The order came in a letter from Economy Minister Qari Din Mohammed Hanif, which said that any NGO found not complying with the order will have their operating license revoked in Afghanistan.

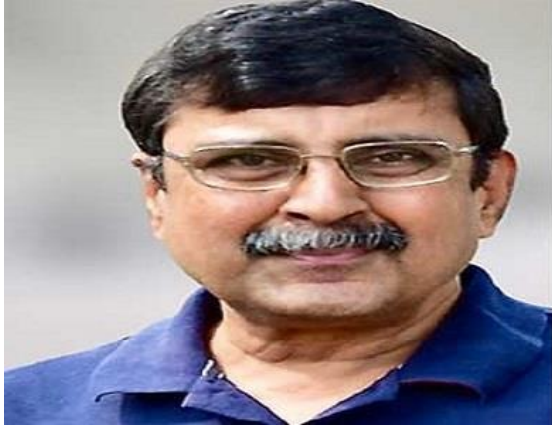
Good Governance Day: 25th December



Every year, in honour of former Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's birthday, India observes "Good Governance Day" on 25th December. The day is devoted to former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Prime Minister Narendra Modi 2014 announced that "Good Governance Day" will be observed annually on December 25 in memory of the former PM.

The purpose of Good Governance Day is to increase public access to various government programmes and services via good governance. It was established with the slogan "Good Governance through e-Governance."

Two UoH professors bag Visitor's Awards for technology and research



Professors K.C. James Raju and Surajit Dhara from the School of Physics, University of Hyderabad (UoH), have been adjudged the best entry for 7th Visitor's (President of India) Awards 2021 under the category Visitor's Award for Technology Development and Visitor's Award for Research (Physical Sciences) respectively.

This is the first time two UoH professors have been selected for this award in the same year. Earlier, one faculty each were awarded in 2018 and 2020. Vice-chancellor of the university B.J. Rao said that it was a historic moment when two Visitor's Awards have been given to UoH faculty in the same year and that too, from the School of Physics.

Scientists freeze Great Barrier Reef coral in world-first trial



Scientists working on Australia's Great Barrier Reef have successfully trialed a new method for freezing and storing coral larvae they say could eventually help revive reefs threatened by climate change.

Scientists are scrambling to protect coral reefs as rising ocean temperatures destabilise delicate ecosystems. The Great Barrier Reef has suffered four bleaching events in the last seven years, including the first-ever bleach during a La Niña phenomenon, which typically brings cooler temperatures.

Cryogenically frozen coral can be stored and later reintroduced to the wild but the current process requires sophisticated equipment including lasers. Scientists say a new lightweight "cryomesh" can be manufactured cheaply and better preserves coral.

Mental health helpline receives 20,000 calls in two months



Tele Mental Health Assistance and Networking Across States (MANAS), a toll-free 24/7 number which was launched on October 10 on World Mental Health Day by the Union government, has received over 20,000 calls to date, reported the International Institute of Information Technology Bangalore (IIITB).

Based on the Karnataka Government's E-Manas service, which was launched during the first wave of COVID-19, Tele Manas under the National Mental Health Programme (NMHP) now has 24 States and Union Territories on board, and provides basic support and counselling along with emergency psychiatric facilities. While the National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS) was appointed as the nodal centre for the helpline, IIITB has been providing technical support for it.

Consumer Affairs Minister Goyal unveils 'right to repair' portal



Food and Consumer Affairs Minister Piyush Goyal introduced a host of new initiatives, including a right to repair portal and an NTH mobile app and opened new premises of the National Consumer Helpline centre in the national capital.

On the 'right to repair' portal, manufacturers would share the manual of product details with customers so that they could either repair by self, by third parties, rather than depend on original manufacturers. Initially, mobile phones, electronics, consumer durables, automobile and farming equipments would be covered.

Drone start-up Garuda Aerospace gets DGCA approvals for Type, RPTO certification



Drone manufacturer Garuda Aerospace Private Ltd. has received Type Certification and Remote Pilot Training Organisation (RPTO) approval from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) for its indigenously-designed Kisan drones. It is India's first drone start-up to get these approvals.

The Type certification was introduced by the Union government in August 2021 under Drone Rules. The Made-in-India Kisan drones are developed for agricultural purposes such as reducing crop loss, crop health monitoring, yield measurement, and crop loss mitigation.

Union Minister Anurag Singh Thakur inaugurates Sports Science Centre in Udupi



Union Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports, Anurag Singh Thakur inaugurated the Sports Science Centre in Udupi.

Speaking on the occasion, he said that the government is making efforts to transform India into a sporting soft power. It has increased the sports budget from 854 crores before 2014 to 3,100 crore rupees this year and spent 2700 crore rupees to enhance sporting infrastructure as against 630 crore rupees earlier. For Khelo India Games, the government is spending 3,136 crore rupees for a period of five years.

PAN not linked with Aadhaar by end of March 2023 to be rendered inoperative



The Income Tax department issued an advisory that those permanent account numbers (PAN) which are not linked with Aadhaar by the end of March next year will be rendered "inoperative".

The 'exempt category', according to a notification issued by the Union Finance Ministry in May 2017, are those individuals residing in the states of Assam, Jammu and Kashmir and Meghalaya; a non-resident as per the Income-tax Act, 1961; of the age of 80 years or more at any time during the previous year and a person not a citizen of India.

A circular issued by the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) on March 30 said once a PAN becomes inoperative, an individual shall be liable to all the consequences under the I-T Act and will have to suffer a number of implications.

Several insurance companies exceed limit on expenses in FY22: Irdai report



In FY22, several insurance companies, both in the life and non-life segment, have exceeded the expense of management limits prescribed by the insurance regulator in its guidelines laid down in 2016, the annual report released by Irdai for 2021-22 revealed.

As far as life insurers are concerned, of the 24 companies, 16 were found to be compliant with IRDAI (Expenses of Management of Insurers transacting life insurance business) Regulations, 2016, but eight life insurers had exceeded the limits of expenses on an overall basis or segmental basis and the same are under examination and consideration for grant of forbearance.

PV Sindhu 12th highest-paid female athlete in world, only Indian and badminton player in top 25



India's badminton star PV Sindhu is the only Indian player in the top 25 in Forbes' annual list of the highest-paid female athletes in the world. Sindhu, the 2016 Rio Olympics silver medallist, occupies the 12th spot in the list. Japanese tennis star Naomi Osaka tops the list. The 27-year-old made 7 million US Dollars of her earnings, having won a singles gold and doubles silver at the Commonwealth Games earlier this year in Birmingham.

For the third straight year, Osaka tops Forbes' annual list of the World's highest-paid female athletes. The list is dominated by tennis players once again.

The list's Top 10, includes Serena Williams, Emma Raducanu, Iga Swiatek, Venus Williams, Coco Gauff and Jessica Pegula. For the record, Osaka and Serena are the only two women who are placed in the Top 50 of Forbes' list of the world's highest-paid athletes.

Geto Sora wins Junior International Badminton Championship title in Malaysia



Budding badminton sensation Geto Sora once again made Arunachal proud by winning the Top Arena Junior International Badminton Championship title in the below 9 years category, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

He won the championship title after beating Malaysia's second seed Jaryl Teh in straight sets 21-5, 21-16.

This is Sora's second international badminton title in two months.

In November, the 7-year-old Sora had won the multinational BTY-Yonex-Singha Championship, which was held at the Banthongyord Badminton School in Bangkok, Thailand.