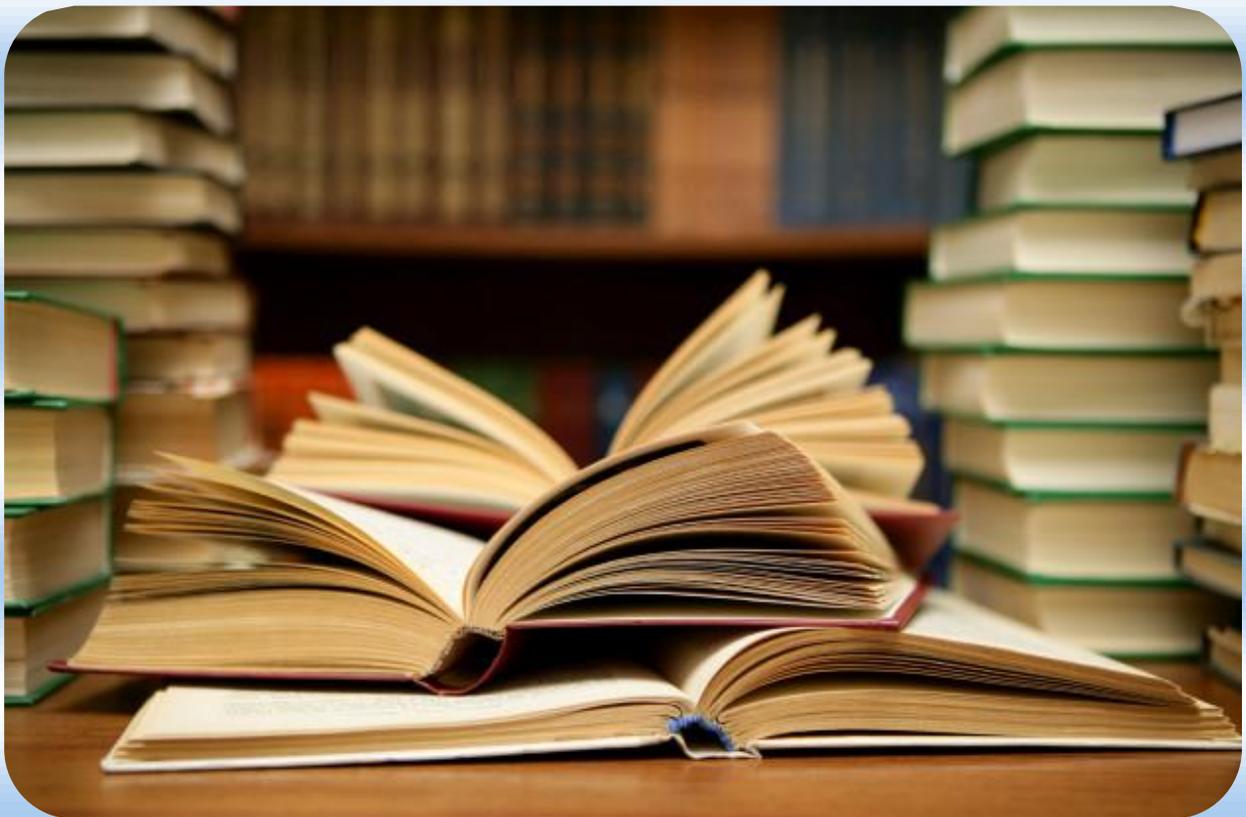


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GENERAL KNOWLEDGE MONTHLY



AUGUST-2019

NATIONAL CURRENT AFFAIRS

Govt. opens up 137 Himalayan Peaks to foreign mountaineers and trekkers

NEW DELHI: The ministry of home affairs (MHA) has opened up 137 peaks located in Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Sikkim to foreigners "desirous" of obtaining a mountaineering visa for climbing and trekking purposes. MHA said the proposal to open more mountain peaks for mountaineering and trekking in all the Himalayan states was under consideration of the government.

2nd UDAY Express to run between Visakhapatnam, Vijayawada

With an aim to cater to the busy route between Visakhapatnam and Vijaywada route, a special double decker train will soon become operational. Railways's second double-decker Uday Express will run between Visakhapatnam and Vijayawada, news agency Press Trust of India reported. But the date of operation of the train has not been decided yet. The first Uday Express was a specially-designed air-conditioned chair car which started service between Coimbatore and Bangalore in June 2018.

PM Modi Honoured with UAEs Highest Civilian Award 'Order Of Zayed'

Prime Minister Narendra Modi was honoured with the 'Order of Zayed', the UAE's highest civilian award, as a mark of appreciation for his efforts to boost bilateral ties between the two nations. The award has earlier been bestowed on several world leaders, including Russian President Vladimir Putin, Queen Elizabeth II and Chinese President Xi Jinping. "An incomparable honour reflecting our warm ties. PM @narendramodi conferred with the prestigious 'Order of Zayed'.



Vinesh Phogat wins Gold in 53kg in Poland Open Wrestling Tournament

Star India grappler Vinesh Phogat has bagged her third consecutive gold in women's 53kg category after winning the Poland Open wrestling tournament in Warsaw. The 24-year-old prevailed 3-2 over local wrestler Roksana in the final of the competition. Vinesh had earlier beaten Sofia Mattson of Sweden, the Rio Olympics bronze medallist, in the quarterfinals of this international tournament.

Maharashtra launches Mission Shakti sports initiative

Film actor Aamir Khan on Sunday attended the launch function of Mission Shakti, an initiative by Maharashtra minister Sudhir Mungantiwar to train athletes from Chandrapur and Gadchiroli for international events like the Olympics. Among those present at the function in Ballarpur here was state sports minister Ashish Shelar. "I don't remember much that I learnt in school except sports. It teaches us how to complete tasks through teamwork

BCCI retains Ravi Shastri as team India's head coach till 2021

NEW DELHI: The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) today decided to retain Ravi Shastri as Team India's head coach. The 57-year-old Indian all-rounder, who was Team India director between 2014 and 2016, was appointed the head coach after Anil Kumble's resignation following the 2017 Champions Trophy where India lost to Pakistan in the final. Under his tenure, India recorded their first ever Test series win in Australia in 2019 after having lost on tours to South Africa and England in 2018.

CISF win 10 medals 'World Police and Fire Games' 2019 in China

CISF sports personnel have won 10 medals, including five gold, at the recently-concluded 'World Police and Fire Games' in China's southwestern Sichuan province. The 'World Police and Fire Games-2019', an Olympic-style competition with 10,000 athletes representing law enforcement, fire-fighters and officers from corrections, probation, border protection, immigration and customs from over 70 countries competing in more than 60 sports, were held from August 8 to 18 in Chengdu city.

BCCI awards title sponsorship rights to Paytm for 5 more years

Paytm has extended its association with the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) as title sponsor for international and domestic matches in India by agreeing to shell out ₹326.8 crore for the four-year cycle commencing October, 2019. BCCI made the announcement after bid documents were opened at its headquarters on Wednesday. Paytm had replaced Micromax with a bid of ₹2.42 crore per match in October 2015. When the BCCI opened the bid documents for the next cycle — October 2019 to September 2023 — Paytm's parent company.

WADA suspends accreditation of India's National Dope Testing Laboratory for 6 months

The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) has suspended the accreditation of India's National Dope Testing Laboratory (NDTL) for six months in a massive blow to the country's anti-doping programme, the cost of which will rise significantly now. The lab, which got WADA accreditation in 2008, is no longer authorised to carry out testing of the samples as the suspension is effective August 20

BWF World Championship 2019: B. Sai Praneeth wins bronze in men's singles

Sai Praneeth's impressive run at the BWF World Championships ended as he succumbed to defending champion Kento Momota in a lop-sided semifinal to settle for bronze here on Saturday. Praneeth's attacking game couldn't dent the defence of an in-form Momota as he went down to the World No. 1 13-21 8-21 in 41 minutes. Notwithstanding the loss, Praneeth still achieved the rare distinction of becoming the first Indian male shuttler in 36 years to win a medal in the prestigious tournament.

BWF World Championships 2019: PV Sindhu became 1st Indian to win gold

P V Sindhu on Sunday became the first Indian to win badminton World Championships gold by beating familiar rival Nozomi Okuhara of Japan in a lop-sided final here on Sunday. The Indian won 21-7 21-7 in the summit clash that lasted just 38 minutes. Two years after being robbed of the gold by Okuhara in an epic 110-minute final at Glasgow that went down as one of the greatest battles in badminton history, Sindhu finally exorcised the ghost of that heart-wrenching loss with a completely dominating win over the same opponent.

Girraj Prasad Gupta takes over as the Controller General of Accounts

Girraj Prasad Gupta took over as the Controller General of Accounts (CGA) on Thursday, the finance ministry said in a statement. Gupta, a 1983-batch Indian Civil Accounts Service (ICAS) Officer, has worked at higher positions in the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) and the Ministry of Finance. He has also worked as the Director of National Institute of Financial Management. (NIFM), Faridabad.

Shah Rukh Khan awarded Excellence in Cinema award at Indian Film Festival of Melbourne

MUMBAI: Superstar Shah Rukh Khan will be felicitated with 'Excellence in Cinema' honour at the awards night of Indian Film Festival of Melbourne on August 8. The festival would pay tribute to the actor's continuous contribution to cinema and popular culture in India with the award. Shah Rukh, who is also the chief guest at the festival, will be presented the award by Linda Dessau, who is the first female Governor of the State of Victoria. "I'm humbled and honoured for this recognition.

Chandrima Shaha: 1st woman President of Indian National Science Academy (INSA)

Former director of the National Institute of Immunology Chandrima Shaha has been elected as the first woman president of the reputed Indian National Science Academy (INSA), according to its website. Shaha, who will head INSA from 2020, said after taking over as president, her priority would be to make efforts to further popularise science among the masses, and she would also focus on more collaborations with foreign institutes.

Aishwarya Pissay: 1st Indian to claim a World Title in Motorsports

LAST week, the Federation of Motorsports Clubs of India put out a celebratory newsflash. It said: "Aishwarya Pissay of TVS clinches the Fim Baja World Cup 2019 Women's Category... #Fmsci congratulates India's first #FIM World Cup champion." Subsequently, Aishwarya made it to the front pages of newspapers and trended on social media. The media release that was to follow had more details about 23-year-old Pissay's performance in the cross-country rally-raid arena with overall and women's categories spread across four events.

Harshad Pandurang Thakur appointed as Director of NIHF

Harshad Pandurang Thakur has been appointed as the Director of National Institute of Health and Family Welfare, an official order said on Wednesday. The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet, headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, appointed him for a period of five years. "The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet has approved the proposal for appointment of Harshad Pandurang Thakur, Professor, Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Mumbai to the post of Director, National Institute of Health and Family Welfare (NIHF).

Tamil Nadu honours ISRO Chief with Dr A. P. J. Abdul Kalam Award

Chairman of Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) K. Sivan, under whose leadership, the organisation launched its Chandrayaan-2 mission, was on Thursday awarded Tamil Nadu government's Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam Award. Since he could not be present at the Independence Day celebrations at Fort St. George, he is expected to collect the award from the Chief Minister at a later date.

Rajiv Gauba appointed next Cabinet Secretary for two years

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has approved the appointment of Rajiv Gauba, a 1982 batch IAS officer from Jharkhand cadre, as Cabinet Secretary. Gauba has been appointed as Cabinet Secretary for two years from August 30 or until further orders, whichever is earlier, an official release said. The ACC also approved the appointment of Gauba as Officer on Special Duty in the Cabinet Secretariat from the date of his assumption of charge till he takes over as Cabinet Secretary.

IAF's Shalija Dhama becomes India's 1st female flight commander

Indian Air Force's Wing Commander Shalija Dhama has scripted history by becoming the first female officer to be appointed as flight commander of a flying unit, news agency ANI reported. She took over as flight commander of a Chetak helicopter unit at Hindon airbase. Flight Commander is the second in command of the unit.

Ravish Kumar wins 2019 Ramon Magsaysay Award

Indian journalist Ravish Kumar on Friday was awarded this year's Ramon Magsaysay Award, regarded as the Asian version of the Nobel Prize. Kumar, 44, who is NDTV India's senior executive editor is one of India's most influential TV journalists, the award citation said. He is among five individuals who were declared winners of the award. Kumar's "Prime Time" programme "deals with real-life, under-reported problems of ordinary people", it added.

ISRO institutes Vikram Sarabhai Journalism Award in Space

New Delhi: Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has announced 'Vikram Sarabhai Journalism Award in Space Science, Technology and Research' as a reward and recognition to journalists who have been actively contributing towards the field of space science, applications, and research. The nominations are open to all Indian journalists and those articles that are published from the year 2019 till 2020 can be submitted, stated ISRO. Candidates will be nominated and judged based on certain criteria.

Bharat Ratna 2019 Awards presented by President of India

New Delhi: Former President Pranab Mukherjee, will be honoured with India's highest civilian award, Bharat Ratna by President Ram Nath Kovind on Thursday. Mukherjee's life-long political career spanned about five decades, during which he held various key posts in the Congress as well as in the governments led by Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi, P V Narasimha Rao and Manmohan Singh.



National Film Awards 2019

The 66th National Film awards were announced by Rahul Rawail, head of the Jury for feature films, on Friday. Four hundred and nineteen films competed for the awards this year. The national film awards are given in 31 categories. An Award for film friendly state has been instituted this year. Uttarakhand won this year.



PM Modi conferred King Hamad Order of the Renaissance by Bahrain

Prime Minister Narendra Modi was conferred 'The King Hamad Order of the Renaissance' during his meeting with the King of Bahrain here on Saturday. "I feel very honoured and fortunate to be awarded The King Hamad Order of the Renaissance. I am equally honoured by your majesty's friendship for me and for my country.



RACE: Rajasthan's New Higher Education Model

A new higher education model has been launched in Rajasthan for distribution of faculties and movable assets among the government colleges at the district level to rationalise the availability of resources. The model will create a pool for sharing of facilities which will benefit the colleges lacking infrastructure. Minister of State for Higher Education Bhanwar Singh Bhati inaugurated the model, titled Resource Assistance for Colleges with Excellence, in the presence of principals of colleges here recently. He said all the colleges would get equal opportunities for imparting quality education with the adoption of the new model.

All CAPF personnel will now retire at a uniform age of 60 years: Govt

All Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) personnel will now retire at a uniform age of 60 years, a government order said on Monday. The Union Home Ministry order, accessed by PTI, said all personnel of the forces -- the Central Reserve Police Force, Border Security Force, Indo-Tibetan Border Police, Sashastra Seema Bal -- will superannuate at the age of 60, instead of 57 years for certain rank of officials.

DRDO transfers design of Mobile Metallic Ramp (MMR) to Indian Army

NEW DELHI: The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) handed over to the Army on Tuesday the design of Mobile Metallic Ramp (MMR) for strategic mobility of armoured and mechanised units as well as formations of the Army. Secretary Department of Defence R&D and Chairman DRDO, Dr G Satheesh Reddy, handed over the design of MMR to Vice Chief of Army Staff, Lt Gen Devraj Anbu.

Amazon India launches Military Veterans Employment programme

BENGALURU : Amazon India on Monday announced the launch of a Military Veterans Employment programme that it said will create hundreds of opportunities for military veterans and their spouses across Amazon India's Fulfillment Centres, Sort Centres and Delivery Centres in the country. Amazon India is partnering with the Office of the Director General of Resettlement (DGR) and the Army Welfare Placement Organisation (AWPO) to create continued work opportunities for military families across the country.

J&K Reorganisation Bill 2019 passed in Rajya Sabha

New Delhi: The Rajya Sabha on Monday passed the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Bill that seeks to scrap Article 370 and Article 35A in Jammu and Kashmir, while also bifurcating the state into union territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh. The Bill was passed by the Upper House through a voice vote, with 125 being in favour and 61 against it and there was also one abstention. With the passage of the Bill in the Rajya Sabha, it will now be discussed in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday.

Lok Sabha passes Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2019

The Lok Sabha on Monday passed the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill 2019 by a voice vote. The Bill provides a mechanism for social, economic and educational empowerment of transgenders and was passed amid noisy protests by some Opposition parties over Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury not being allowed to speak on his adjournment notice. The protesters came into the well of the House and shouted slogans demanding that Prime Minister Narendra Modi make a statement about the Kashmir.

Indian Railways to prohibit single-use plastic from October 2

The Indian Railways has decided to enforce a ban on single-use plastic materials on its premises, including trains, with effect from October 2, 2019. While directing the authorities to expedite installation of 1,853 plastic water bottle crushing machines at 360 major stations in the first phase, the Railway Board asked Indian Railways Catering and Tourism Development Corporation (IRCTC) to implement return of plastic drinking bottles as part of Extended Producer Responsibility.



Indian Institute of Petroleum sets up plant to turn plastic waste into diesel

The journey from plastic to petrol, a pilot plant for which was inaugurated in Uttarakhand on Tuesday, started in 2006 when a small group of scientists at the Indian Institute of Petroleum (IIP), Dehradun, started work on a project to make something useful from the hazardous waste. Their mission: To develop a technology that will not only help in disposing of the plastic but will also result in generating revenue from it. After much effort, the institute developed a technology to convert plastic into petroleum products such as diesel, petrol and other aromatic compounds. Sanat Kumar, senior scientist in-charge of the project at IIP Dehradun said many people find it difficult to understand how plastic can be changed into diesel.

Information and Broadcasting Ministry launches e-version of Rozgar Samachar

The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has launched the e-version of 'Rozgar Samachar' in a bid to make young aspirants aware of job opportunities in the government sector, including public sector enterprises. The e-version of the weekly, launched by Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar, will also provide information and guidance about admission and career opportunities in various streams through career-oriented articles by experts. It is expected to meet the emerging challenge of young readers switching to electronic modes of communication, an official statement said.

PM inaugurates Dynamic Facade Lighting in Parliament House

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated on Tuesday a special dynamic system of over 800 LED lights that have been installed on the facade of Parliament House to enhance the building's grandeur. According to Lok Sabha secretariat officials, 875 LED lights, which will change colour every few seconds, have been placed on the facade of the Parliament House.



IIT-KGP develops Hydro Thermal Carbonization technology for Waste Management

A research team at IIT Kharagpur has developed a technology which can generate energy from solid waste with high moisture content. The new technology - Hydro Thermal Carbonization (HTC) - can convert municipal solid waste to biofuel, soil amendment and absorbents, the premier institute said in a statement. Lead researcher Brajesh Kumar Dubey said the key to the success of the technology in Indian conditions lies in designing proper industrial scale reactor with improved heat integration system.

Maitri mobile app: to connect old-age homes and orphanages, win tech prize in US

Five girls here have developed a mobile app that connects children at orphanages with senior citizens in old-age homes, with their innovation fetching them a bronze medal at global tech competition in the US. The app, called Maitri, is aimed at bringing together individuals suffering from loneliness and depression and those lacking the nurturing love of elderly role models, said the all-girl team "Tech Witches"



Pakistan-China aerial exercise held in China's Hotan City

NEW DELHI: The Indian Air Force (IAF) is keeping a close eye on the Pakistan-China aerial exercise taking place in China's Hotan City in which both the countries have deployed latest fighter jets. Islamabad is participating with its JF-17 fighter aircraft while China is taking part with their J-10 and J-11 fighters. "The exercise codenamed Shaheen is taking place in the Hotan city which is more than 200 km north of Leh city in Ladakh.

India launches world's first facial biometric data-based ID for seafarers

India has become the first country in the world to issue Biometric Seafarer Identity Document (BSID), capturing the facial biometric data of seafarers. Union Minister of State for Shipping Mansukh Mandaviya launched the project on Wednesday and handed over the new BSID cards to five Indian seafarers. The new facial biometric technology is a marked improvement over the two-finger or iris-based biometric data, with modern security features.

Samarth: Flipkart's initiative to bring Indigenous Artisans on platform

E-commerce company Flipkart on Wednesday launched 'Samarth', an initiative to bring weavers, artisans and makers of handicrafts to its platform. Flipkart claimed that this initiative could give such communities access to its Indian customer base of over 150 million. Anurag Thakur, Minister of State, Finance and Corporate Affairs, launched this initiative along with Kalyan Krishnamurthy, CEO, Flipkart Group. Flipkart Samarth will support such artisans, weavers, etc, by on-boarding them and helping them in the process of selling on the internet.

RBI reduces repo rate by 35 basis points to 5.40%

NEW DELHI: The six-member monetary policy committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Wednesday cut repo rate by 35 basis points (bps) in its third bi-monthly policy review of the financial year. It was fourth rate cut by the central bank in a row. The short-term lending rate now stands at 5.40 per cent. The MPC felt standard 25 bps rate cut might have been and 50 bps rate cut a bit excessive, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das told reporters. Four out of six committee members voted in favour of the 35 bps rate cut.

Assam's Dikom Tea Estate brand fetches 'record' Rs.75,000/kg

A rare variety of tea from Upper Assam's Dikom Tea Estate set a new record on Tuesday as it was auctioned for Rs 75,000 per kg at the Guwahati Tea Auction Centre (GTAC), an official said. The tea, 'Golden Butterfly', was purchased by city-based Assam Tea Traders, GTAC Buyers Association Secretary Dinesh Bihani said. "In the tea sector, this auction centre has created an image of a place where records are meant to be broken and history is meant to be re-written", Bihani said adding that this "exceptionally rare and special tea".

Banks not to charge for failed transactions, balance enquiry: RBI

The Reserve Bank on Wednesday asked banks not to count failed transactions at ATMs due to technical reasons as part of “free ATM transactions” permitted every month. Besides, use of ATMs for balance enquiry and fund transfers too should be not part of the free transactions facility given to a customer. Banks provide certain number of free transactions at ATMs to their customers and beyond that impose charges.

India's forex reserves at new life-time high of \$430.57 bn

Mumbai: India's foreign exchange reserves surged by \$1.620 billion to \$430.572 billion in the week to 9 August on rise in foreign currency assets, according to the latest RBI data released on Friday. In the previous reporting week ended on 2 August, the reserves had declined by \$697.2 million to \$428.952 billion. In the reporting week, foreign currency assets, a major component of the overall reserves, increased by \$15.2 million to \$398.739 billion, the apex bank said on Friday.

Bharatcraft portal: Government to launch e-commerce marketing platform

The government is planing to launch an e-commerce project called 'Bharatcraft' for micro small and medium enterprises (MSME), on the lines of global online shopping platform such as Alibaba, said union minister Nitin Gadkari on Thursday. Gadkari said the proposed platform could generate a turnover of Rs 10 trillion over the next few years. Gadkari, who is the minister for MSME and road, transport and highways, was speaking at an event organised by the National Stock Exchange (NSE).

Gujarat tops in Composite Water Management Index 2019

Gujarat retained the top position in water management, the NITI Aayog said on Friday, as it warned India will lose 6 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) by 2050 because of a water crisis, setting off alarm bells on an impending water scarcity scenario. India's demand for water will exceed supply by a factor of two by 2030, it said. Releasing the second edition of the Composite Water Management Index, the government think tank said the annual per capita availability of water is expected to reduce to 1,140 cubic metres by 2050.

GI Tag accorded to three new products

New Delhi: The government on Friday allotted Geographical Indication (GI) tags to four new products from the states of Tamil Nadu, Mizoram and Kerala. GI is an indication used on products that have a specific geographical origin and possess the qualities or reputation that are due to that origin. The Department of Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) recently registered GIs for Palani Panchamirtham in Palani Town, Tamil Nadu, Tawlhlohpuan.

INTERNATIONAL CURRENT AFFAIRS

Bangladesh- Russia signs uranium supply deal

Under the deal Russia will supply the nuclear fuel needed for the plant during its entire life cycle. The deal was signed today in Dhaka between the Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission and Russian Nuclear Fuel Supply Company (TVEL). Work on the two units of the plants, each producing 1200 MW of electricity is scheduled to be completed in 2022 and 2024 respectively. The two countries have also signed 'spent fuel sent back' agreement in 2017 for management of the nuclear waste of Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant (RNPP).

United States designates China a 'Currency Manipulator'

The U.S. Treasury Department on Monday designated China as currency manipulator, a historic move that no White House had exercised since the Clinton administration. "Secretary Mnuchin, under the auspices of President Trump, has today determined that China is a Currency Manipulator," the Treasury Department said in a release. "As a result of this determination, Secretary Mnuchin will engage with the International Monetary Fund to eliminate the unfair competitive advantage created by China's latest actions."

Kajin Sara Lake set to be world's highest lake

Lamjung, Aug 10 (IANS): Newly discovered Kajin Sara lake in Manang district of Nepal is all set to become the world's highest lake replacing Tilicho lake (also in Manang), which currently holds the title. The Himalayan Times reported that the lake is situated at a height of 5,200 metres at Singarkharka in Chame Rural Municipality of Manang. According to Chame Rural Municipality Chair Lokendra Ghale, the lake was discovered about a few months ago by a team of mountaineers.

India suspends Thar Link Express

India on Friday suspended weekly Thar Link Express which connects Jodhpur in Rajasthan to Karachi in Pakistan, a railway official said. The train's scheduled journey on Friday will not take place, North Western Railway's Chief Public Relations Officer Abhay Sharma said. He said the train services on both up and down lines have been suspended till further orders. "Thar Express rail services are being suspended till further orders by the Railways," he said in a statement. Thar Link Express runs on the Indian side between Bhagat Ki Kothi railway station in Jodhpur to Munabao.

28th BASIC Ministerial meeting on Climate Change held in Brazil

The BASIC group can play an important role in ensuring that all countries accept the Paris climate agreement in its letter and spirit, Environment Minister Javadekar has said. Javadekar is attending the 28th ministerial meeting of BASIC -- Brazil, South Africa, India and China -- countries on climate change in Sao Paulo, Brazil. "Brazil, South Africa, India and China put together has one-third of the world's geographical area and nearly 40 per cent of the world's.

India to offer e-Tourist Visa fee based on tourist footfall

With the aim of attracting more foreign travellers to the country, it has been proposed to reduce the e-visa fee while also offering the option of a short-term as well as long-term tourist e-visa. The Tourism Ministry has proposed to introduce a short duration e-visa for tourists with one month validity at a charge of \$25. However, this will be applicable during peak tourism season between July and March. To attract more tourists during the lean period.

10th Mekong Ganga Cooperation Ministerial meeting held in Bangkok

BANGKOK: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Thursday met with his Thai and New Zealand counterparts separately in Bangkok and discussed a host of key issues, including Indo-Pacific and maritime partnership. Jaishankar is in the Thailand capital to attend a number of conferences, including the ASEAN-India Ministerial Meeting, the 9th East Asia Summit Foreign Ministers' Meeting, the 26th ASEAN Regional Forum and the 10th Mekong Ganga Cooperation Ministerial Meeting.

US test-fires Medium-Range Cruise Missile after exiting INF treaty

WASHINGTON: The US Defense Department on Monday announced the test of a medium-range ground-launched cruise missile, just weeks after tearing up the Cold War-era pact with Russia eliminating that class of nuclear-capable weapons. The missile was launched on Sunday from the US Navy-controlled San Nicolas Island off the coast of Los Angeles, California. "The test missile exited its ground mobile launcher and accurately impacted its target after more than 500 kilometers (310 miles) of flight.

Saudi Arabia: Travel abroad restriction on women lifted

The new rule announced on Friday allows women over the age of 21 to apply for a passport without authorisation, putting them on an equal footing to men. Women are also being given the right to register births, marriage or divorce. The kingdom has recently eased other long-standing social restrictions on women, though campaigners say more remains to be done for women's rights. Saudi Arabia has increasingly come under the spotlight over its treatment of its female citizens, an issue highlighted by several high-profile cases of Saudi women.

Bavar-373: Iran's new home-grown air defence system unveiled

Iran's President Hassan Rouhani inducted the Bavar-373 air defense system into the military at an official unveiling ceremony on Thursday, August 22. The indigenous long-range air defense missile system, which Iran claims has a range of 300 km (186 miles) and can strike targets at an altitude of 65 km, has been billed by state media as the country's answer to the Russian S-300.

Pakistan blacklisted by Asia-Pacific Group of FATF

Pakistan has been placed on the lowest rung, or "blacklist", of the Financial Action Task Force's Asia Pacific Group (APG) for non-compliance and non-enforcement of safeguards against terror financing and money laundering. The APG, one of nine regional affiliates of the FATF, met in Canberra from August 18 to 23 to discuss a five-year review of the Mutual Evaluation Report (MER) for Pakistan, and decided to place it among countries requiring "enhanced, expedited follow-up".

India, Nepal launch Kathmandu-Siliguri bus service

A bus service was launched on Monday between Kathmandu and Siliguri, the 10th bus service between Nepal and India. The Kathmandu-Siliguri bus service was launched during a programme in the outskirts of Kathmandu on Monday. Minister for Transport Management Raghbir Mahaseth and Indian Ambassador to Nepal Manjeev Singh Puri jointly flagged off the bus service. The Kathmandu-Kakarbhitta-Siliguri bus service will operate on a daily basis, according to the bus operators. India will operate buses on the route in the beginning.

France's Franky Zapata successfully crosses English Channel on hoverboard for 1st time

Mr Zapata, 40, took off from Sangatte, near Calais, at 06:17 GMT on Sunday and landed in St Margaret's Bay in Dover. The invention, powered by a kerosene-filled backpack, made the 22-mile (35.4-km) journey in 22 minutes. Mr Zapata, a former jet-ski champion, had failed in his first attempt to cross the Channel on 25 July after complications with refuelling.



Iceland holds funeral for Okjökull: 1st glacier lost to climate change

Iceland has marked its first-ever loss of a glacier to climate change as scientists warn that hundreds of other ice sheets on the subarctic island risk the same fate. As the world recently marked the warmest July ever on record, a bronze plaque was mounted on a bare rock in a ceremony on the barren terrain once covered by the Okjökull glacier in western Iceland.



FEDOR: Russia launches its 1st humanoid robot in space

Russia on Thursday launched an unmanned rocket carrying a life-size humanoid robot that will spend 10 days learning to assist astronauts on the International Space Station. Named Fedor, short for Final Experimental Demonstration Object Research, the robot is the first ever sent up by Russia. Fedor blasted off in a Soyuz MS-14 spacecraft at 6:38 am Moscow time (0338 GMT) from Russia's Baikonur cosmodrome in Kazakhstan. The Soyuz is set to dock with the space station on Saturday and stay till September 7.



Akademik Lomonosov: Russia launches world's first floating nuclear reactor

On Friday, three tugs will tow the Akademik Lomonosov barge out of Murmansk to begin a 5,000km voyage to a remote port on the other side of Russia's Arctic coast, and in the process send waves through the nuclear energy sector. The vessel is a floating nuclear reactor, a portable power plant designed to supply electricity to areas disconnected from the grid, and envisaged by Russia's state nuclear corporation Rosatom as the future of small-scale nuclear power with an eye on export opportunities in developing countries.

Papua New Guinea has highest number of 'living' indigenous languages in world

The Pacific island nation of Papua New Guinea has the highest number of 'living' indigenous languages in the world (840), while India stands fourth with 453. 2019 is the United Nations' International Year of Indigenous Languages. In 2016, the UN's Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues pointed out that "40% of the estimated 6,700 languages spoken around the world were in danger of disappearing".

Sri Lanka exempts Visa Fees by Indian tourists

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka will begin to waive its existing visa fee for travellers from 48 countries including India and China from August 1 as part of efforts to attract more tourists to the country, officials said on Wednesday. In a media briefing here, Tourism Development, Wildlife and Christian Religious Affairs Minister John Amaratunga said that Cabinet approval has been obtained to waive off the existing \$25 visa fee for travellers arriving from India, China, the US, Germany, Canada, Malaysia and Indonesia, among other countries.

Shawala Teja Singh temple in Pakistan opened for Hindus after 72 Years

Pakistan has opened a 1,000-year-old Hindu temple in eastern city Sialkot for "worship" for the first time since partition on the demand of the local Hindu community, officials said on Monday. The Shawala Teja Singh temple, located in city's congested Dhaarowal locality, some 100-km from Lahore, is more than 1,000 years old, according to the book 'History of Sialkot' by the late Rashid Niaz.

Infosys launches Cyber Defence Center in Bucharest, Romania

Infosys announced the launch of its state-of-the-art Cyber Defence Center in Bucharest, Romania. The Defence Center is an expansion of services delivered through the Infosys Digital Innovation Center which opened in Bucharest earlier this year. The Defence Center will provide end-to-end, real-time, 24/7 cyber security monitoring and protection services to support European and global businesses on their digital transformation journey. These services, including security monitoring, management and remediation.

Pakistan test-fires nuclear-capable ballistic missile Ghaznavi

Pakistan carried out a night training launch of surface-to-surface ballistic missile Ghaznavi early on Thursday, a move that coincides with its scaled-up effort to internationalise the Kashmir issue. Major General Asif Ghafoor, spokesperson of Pakistan Armed Forces, tweeted that the exercise was successful and put out a 30-second video clip of the missile launch along with a group photograph of officers with the missile. The military spokesperson said the ballistic missile is capable of “delivering multiple types of warheads upto 290 km”.

International Day Against Nuclear Tests observed on August 29

“I reiterate my call for all States that have not yet done so, to sign and ratify the [Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty], especially those whose ratification is needed for the Treaty’s entry into force,” Mr. Guterres urged in his message for the International Day Against Nuclear Tests, observed annually on 29 August. The Treaty, known worldwide by the acronym CTBT, is a central pillar of international efforts to advancing nuclear disarmament. However, despite being widely supported – with 184 signatories and 168 ratifying States – it has not yet entered into force, more than two decades after its adoption.

