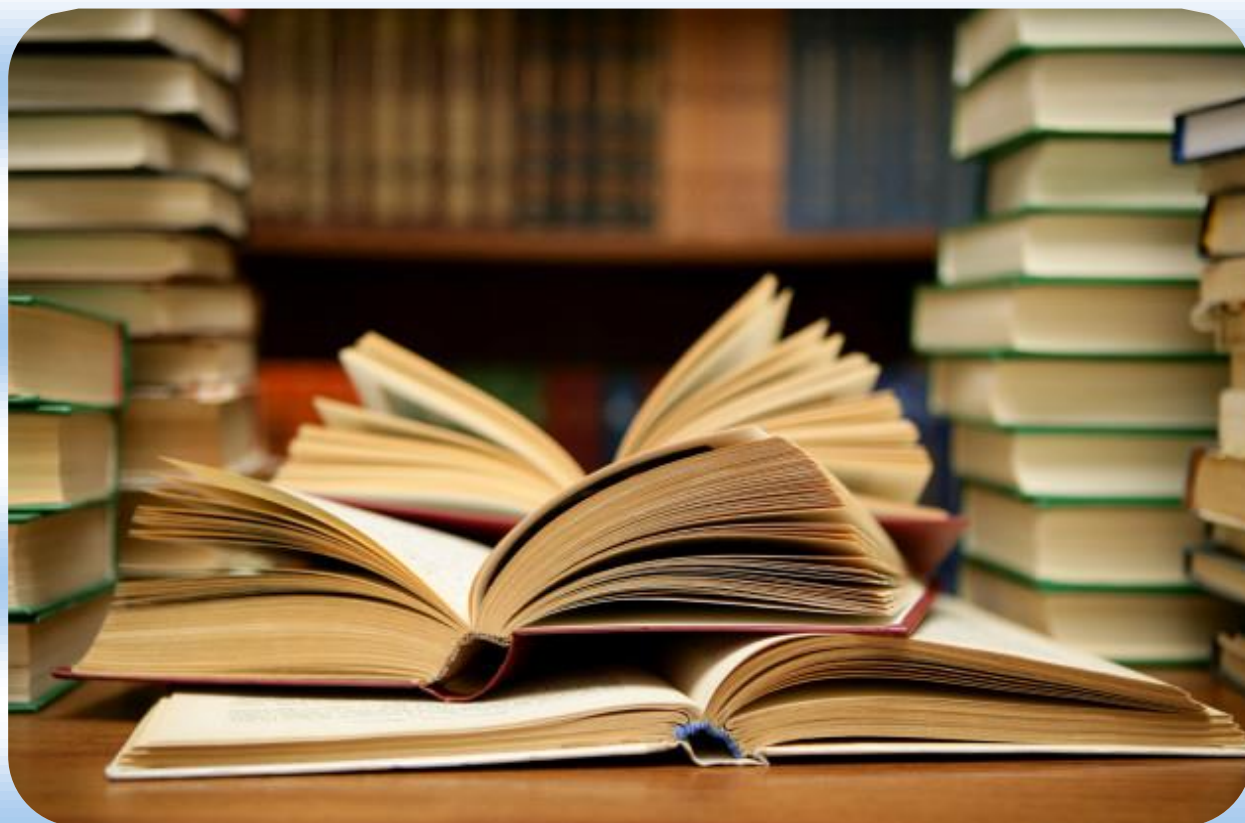


LIBRARY & RESOURCE CENTER, NOIDA

GENERAL KNOWLEDGE MONTHLY



JULY-2019

NATIONAL CURRENT AFFAIRS

India ratifies OECD's convention to check Tax Evasion

NEW DELHI: India has ratified the multilateral convention to implement OECD's project on checking tax evasion, and the provisions enshrined in the framework will come into effect from fiscal 2020-21 for bilateral tax treaties, the finance ministry said. The Multilateral Convention to Implement Tax Treaty Related Measures to Prevent Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS) was signed by then Finance Minister Arun Jaitley in Paris on June 7, 2017. The Cabinet last month approved ratification of the convention.

RBI constitutes panel to review Core Investment Companies

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has constituted a working group to review the regulatory guidelines and supervisory framework applicable for core investment companies (CIC), as the extant framework is not adequate to handle the complex corporate governance structures that the companies have now become. CICs are holding companies of non-banking financial companies (NBFCs). Over time, "...corporate group structures have become more complex involving multiple layering and leveraging, which has led to greater inter-connectedness with the financial system through their access to public funds.

Highlights of Union Budget 2019

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented the maiden budget of Narendra Modi 2.0 government in the Lok Sabha on Friday. "Gaon, Garib and Kisan [village, poor, and farmer] is at the centre of all policies of this government. Between 2014 and 2019, we provided rejuvenated dynamic Centre-State cooperative federalism, and the GST Council, said Ms. Sitharaman. PAN and Aadhaar will become interchangeable. You can use your Aadhaar number to file your I-T Returns soon. ₹5 lakh minimum limit announced for taxpayers.

Six Sigma Institute of Mountain Medicines and High-Altitude Rescue to be set up at Uttarakhand

Uttarakhand Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat on Saturday agreed to a proposal to establish Asia's first Six Sigma Institute of Mountain Medicines and High Altitude Rescue at Rudrapur. A press release by Uttarakhand government said, "Chief Minister Uttarakhand accepted and agreed on a proposal to establish Asia's first Six Sigma Institute Of Mountain Medicines & High Altitude Rescue at Rudrapur." "This mountain institute will create 1,200 employment, Specialised healthcare, advance education and Rescue Training in the Uttarakhand," the release said.

Utkarsh 2022: finalized by RBI board

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) board, which met in New Delhi, finalised a three- year roadmap to improve regulation and supervision, among other functions of the central bank. This medium term strategy — named Utkarsh 2022 — is in line with the global central banks' plan to strengthen the regulatory and supervisory mechanism, sources aware of the board meeting told The Hindu. "It is a three-year road map for medium term objective to be achieved for improving regulation, supervision of the central bank," said a source.

BCC inks MoU with BRICS Chamber to promote trade

The Bharat Chamber of Commerce, (BCC) and the BRICS Chamber of Commerce and Industry, New Delhi, signed an MoU on Tuesday for promoting trade and investments between the BRICS countries and the eastern part of India, in particular. Members of the BRICS are Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. The MoU was signed by BCC president Sitaram Sharma and BRICS Chamber of Commerce and Industry Director General B B L Madhukar, a statement said here.

Kerala Govt. to set up Non-Resident Keralites Investment company

Kerala Cabinet has cleared its plan to set up a diaspora investment company with a 74% stake of non-resident Keralites and a 26% government stake. This PPP (public-private partnership) company is to fund infrastructure projects and NRI townships in the state. The company will be known as NRK Investment and Holding Company, said a release from chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan's office.

RBI's Working Group recommends extension of market hours

An internal working group of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on comprehensive review of market timings has suggested calibrated extension of currency market hours, from 9 am to 9 pm for both over-the counter and exchange traded. Presently, the markets close at 5 pm. "While the extension of market timings is expected to provide benefits such as better pricing of post market hours information/data, improved onshore price discovery.

Inter-Ministerial Committee on Virtual Currencies submits Report

NEW DELHI: An inter-ministerial committee set up by the government on virtual currencies has proposed banning of private cryptocurrencies in India by enacting a law and imposing fines and penalties for carrying on activities related to such cryptocurrencies. The committee headed by finance secretary Subhash Chandra Garg has proposed a draft bill "Banning of Cryptocurrency & Regulation of Official Digital Currency Bill, 2019", which has been placed in the public domain.

Vande Bharat Express completes trial run from New Delhi to Katra

Vande Bharat Express Delhi to Katra: Indian Railways' Northern Railway zone has successfully conducted the Confirmatory Oscillograph Car Runs (COCR) trial of the new Vande Bharat Express (Train 18) on the Delhi-Katra route. The trial run was carried out on July 22, that is yesterday, and the Vande Bharat Express will be back in New Delhi today, a Northern Railway official told Financial Express Online. As per the schedule, the Train 18 started its journey from New Delhi railway station at 6:00 AM.

RIL becomes highest-ranked Indian company on Fortune Global 500 list

MUMBAI: Diversified conglomerate Reliance Industries (RIL) has become the top-ranked Indian company to feature in the latest Fortune Global 500 list. The oil-to-retail major has toppled state-run Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) as the top-ranked Indian company. RIL has attained a rank of 106 in the latest list, recording an improvement of 42 positions from its previous ranking. On the other hand, IOC improved its position to 117th rank, registering a jump of 20 spots.

IBBI tightens norms governing resolution professionals (RPs)

NEW DELHI: In a significant move, the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) has tightened norms governing resolution professionals wherein restrictions will also be in place for their relatives from taking up employment after completion of a resolution process. Insolvency resolution professionals would be barred from having employment when they are in possession of authorisation to take up work under the insolvency law.

Jaipur listed as UNESCO World Heritage Site

NEW DELHI: The Walled City of Jaipur, known for its iconic architectural legacy and vibrant culture, Saturday made its entry into the UNESCO World Heritage Site list. "Just inscribed as @UNESCO #WorldHeritage Site: Jaipur City in Rajasthan, #India. Bravo," UNESCO tweeted Saturday afternoon. The announcement was made after the 43rd Session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee, underway at Baku (Azerbaijan) from June 30 to July 10.

Air India allows Hajj Pilgrims to carry Zamzam Water on Flight

Air India on Tuesday stated that pilgrims returning from Saudi Arabia after Haj will be allowed to carry holy water from the Zamzam well within the permissible baggage allowance. The well of Zamzam is located in Mecca in Saudi Arabia and many Haj pilgrims bring the holy water from the well for family and friends. On July 4, the sales team of Air India's Jeddah office reportedly wrote to all travel agents stating that till September 15, due to change of aircraft and limitation of seats, Zamzam cans will not be allowed on flight Nos.

10 Monuments to be open for public from sunrise till 9 PM

Ten centrally protected monuments across the country will be open to public from sunrise till 9 p.m., Minister of State (independent charge) for Culture and Tourism Prahlad Singh Patel said on Monday. The monuments that now open at 9 a.m. and close at 5.30 p.m. are: Humayun's Tomb and Safdarjung Tomb in Delhi; Rani ki Vav in Patan, Gujarat; Man Mahal in Varanasi; Gol Gumbaz in Karnataka; Rajarani Temple Complex in Bhubaneswar; Dulhadeo Temple in Khajurao, Madhya Pradesh; Sheikh Chilli's Tomb in Kurukshetra, Haryana.

'Odisha Rasagola' gets GI Tag

The rasagola, a popular dessert of Odisha, has received the geographical indication tag from the Registrar of Geographical Indication after years of controversy around the sweet. The registration was conferred to 'Odisha Rasagola' under Section 16(I) or of authorized Section 17(3)(c) of Geographical Indication of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act 1999 on Monday. The GI number 612 has been registered in favour of the Odisha.

IAF launches 3D mobile video game Indian Air Force: A cut Above

NEW DELHI: A new mobile video game, themed on various aerial combats and missions, including airstrikes, undertaken by the IAF was on Wednesday launched by Air Chief Marshal B S Dhanoa, seeking to give the youth a "realistic feel of the Air Force". The game, 'Indian Air Force: A Cut Above', will let the Indian youth know more about the IAF, and motivate them to take it up as a challenging and exhilarating career option, he said.

Parliament passes Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill, 2019

New Delhi: The government scored a major victory on Tuesday, managing to get its contentious bill seeking to ban the practice of instant triple talaq passed by a slim margin in the Rajya Sabha on the back of a divided Opposition. The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) succeeded in getting the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill, 2019 voted through despite the fact that it is in a minority in the Upper House, pointing to the government's effective floor management.

Parliament passes Companies (Amendment) Bill, 2019

The parliament on Tuesday approved the Companies (Amendment) Bill which seeks to tighten Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) norms and ensure stricter action for non-compliance of the company law regulations. The legislation was passed in the Rajya Sabha with voice vote. Lok Sabha had passed the Bill on July 26. Finance and Corporate Affairs Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said the government has brought in all the provisions of the ordinance and has also added new amendments in the Bill.

Dracaena cambodiana: India's first dragon blood-oozing tree

Assam has added to India's botanical wealth a plant that yields dragon's blood — a bright red resin used since ancient times as medicine, body oil, varnish, incense and dye. A trio of researchers led by Assam forest officer Jatindra Sarma has discovered *Dracaena cambodiana*, a dragon tree species in the Dongka Sarpo area of West Karbi Anglong. The team's report has been published in the latest issue of the Journal of the Botanical Research Institute of Texas. This is for the first time that a dragon tree species has been reported from India.

West Bengal CM launches 'Didi Ke Bolo' campaign

Around 1,000 Trinamool Congress leaders will be heading towards Bengal villages over the next 100 days as part of the party's first major programme ahead of the assembly elections in 2021. The idea is to strengthen the party's connect at the grassroot level, what was once its stronghold. Announcing the initiative at a press conference, party chief Mamata Banerjee said that the party would decide who would visit where. The announcement was made after Banerjee's meeting with MLAs and other senior leaders.

Centre ropes in IBM for pilot study on using AI in Agriculture

NEW DELHI: The Centre on Wednesday inked pact with IBM India for undertaking a pilot study to utilise Artificial Intelligence (AI) and weather technology solutions in agriculture in one district each in three states. The pilot study will be conducted for the Kharif crop season 2019 in three districts - Bhopal, Rajkot and Nanded - in Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra, respectively, an official statement said.

Bhabha Kavach: India's 1st Lightest, Indigenous Bullet Proof Jacket gets MHA nod

Bhabha Kavach, billed as "India's lightest bullet-proof jacket", was launched at the International Police Expo 2019 in New Delhi last week. The bullet-proof jacket, developed jointly by the Ordnance Factories Board and the public sector metals and metal alloys manufacturer MIDHANI, can withstand bullets from an AK-47 assault rifle (7.62 mm hard steel core bullets), and the 5.56 mm INSAS rifle, according to a press release issued by the Expo. The Kavach weighs 9.2 kg, a half kilogram less than the weight for a bullet-proof jacket prescribed by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), the release said.

Chandrayaan-2 spacecraft successfully launched by GSLV MkIII-M1

NEW DELHI: Indian Space Research Organisation (Isro) has bounced back with flying colours," said its chairman K. Sivan and broke into a nervous smile, as Chandrayaan-2 was injected into the elliptical Earth orbit 16.4 minutes after its launch from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in

Sriharikota. With this, Chandrayaan-2 began its historic 48-day journey to the south pole of the Moon, where it will begin its quest for water.



CARE4U app: for elderly people developed by IIT Kharagpur team

In a move to help geriatric care, students of IIT Kharagpur have built an app which will inform the caregiver when the elderly person falls down with the exact location. 'CARE4U' the android-based app will connect the caregiver to the elderly person. The app has been built by an interdisciplinary team of the second year B-Tech students of the institute, an IIT Kharagpur statement said on Tuesday. The network-based fall detection algorithm in the app installed on the phone of the elderly can detect whether the elderly has fallen down.

IIT Hyderabad develops eco-friendly solar cells using Kumkum Dye

Scientists at IIT Hyderabad have developed low-cost, environment-friendly solar cells by employing an off-the-shelf dye used to make kumkum or vermilion in India. The dye-sensitised solar cell (DSSC) is based on New Fuchsin (NF) dye with aqueous electrolyte and platinum-free counter electrodes, according to the research published in the Solar Energy journal. The most familiar solar cells today are made up of silicon and can be seen in the various overhead panels.

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. "The moisture in the waste is used to the advantage of the process which uses water for the reaction. The biofuel generated as the recovered output can help curb air pollution," Dubey explained.

Infosys launches Cyber Defence Center in Bucharest, Romania

New Delhi: Infosys on Monday 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 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.

Mohun Bagan Ratna Award 2019: Keshav Dutt, Prasun Banerjee

Two-time Olympic gold medallist Keshav Dutt and former India football captain Prasun Banerjee will be conferred the 'Mohun Bagan Ratna' during its annual day celebrations on July 29, the club said Monday. One of the oldest surviving hockey Olympians of the country, 94-year-old Dutt donned the national jersey in the 1948 London Games, where India won the first gold post Independence, and the former centre halfback won his second Olympic gold in Helsinki 1952.

Manoj Kumar Nambiar elected Chairman of MFIN

Microfinance Institutions Network (MFIN) has elected Manoj Kumar Nambiar, managing director of Arohan Financial Services, as its chairman. Vineet Chattree of Svantra Microfin will be the vice-chairman, the industry association and self-regulatory organisation (SRO) for the microfinance industry in India said Tuesday. "In the 10th year of MFIN, it's time that we start celebrating this sector which has played a significant role in getting rural India.

SBI Managing Director Anshula Kant appointed World Bank's MD and CFO

Anshula Kant, managing director of the State Bank Of India, has been appointed as managing director and chief financial officer of the World Bank, its president David Malpass announced Friday. As Managing Director and Chief Financial Officer, Kant will be responsible for financial and risk management of the World Bank Group, reporting to the President. "I am very pleased to appoint Anshula Kant as World Bank Group Managing Director and CFO.

Kulbhushan Jadhav Case: ICJ asks Pakistan to review conviction order

In a major victory for India, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on Wednesday called for an effective review and reconsideration of the conviction and sentencing of Indian national Kulbhushan Jadhav, facing death in Pakistan on charges of spying, and held that a continued stay on execution constitutes an indispensable condition for the review. "The Court recalls that it indicated a provisional measure directing Pakistan to take all measures at its disposal to ensure.

IFS officer Vivek Kumar appointed Private Secretary to PM Modi

Indian Foreign Service (IFS) officer Vivek Kumar was appointed as private secretary to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday, according to an official order. The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet, headed by the prime minister, cleared the new assignment for Kumar, who is currently working as Director in the Prime Minister's Office. Kumar's appointment will come into effect from the day of the assumption of charge and his tenure will be on co-terminus basis or until further orders, whichever is earlier, the official order said.

Priti Patel: Britain's first Indian-origin Home Secretary

London: Priti Patel, an ardent Brexiteer who was among the most vocal critics of Theresa May's Brexit strategy, on Wednesday took charge as Britain's first Indian-origin Home Secretary in the newly-unveiled Boris Johnson Cabinet. Patel had been a prominent member of the "Back Boris" campaign for the Conservative Party leadership and was widely tipped for the plum post in his frontline team.

B S Yeddyurappa sworn in as Chief Minister of Karnataka

B.S.Yeddyurappa, the 76-year old Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Karnataka unit president, said he will take oath as the state's chief minister at 6 PM on Friday. "I met governor to stake claim to form the government," Yeddyurappa said after meeting Karnataka governor Vajubhai Vala at Raj Bhavan. Yeddyurappa will be sworn in as the chief minister of Karnataka for the fourth time. The BJP's stake to form government in the state comes after an anxious few days.

IPS officer V. K. Johri appointed as New BSF Director General

NEW DELHI: IPS officer V K Johri has been appointed as the next Director General (DG) of country's largest border guarding force, BSF, an official order said Sunday. The order has been issued by the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) that is headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and has Home Minister Amit Shah as its member. Johri, a 1984-batch Indian Police Service officer of Madhya Pradesh cadre, is presently serving as the Special Secretary in the external intelligence agency RAW, under the Cabinet Secretariat.

IAF's Tarun Chaudhri became 1st pilot to do Wingsuit Skydive Jump

Wing Commander Tarun Chaudhri has become the first Indian Air Force pilot to perform a wingsuit skydive jump. Chaudhri achieved the feat on July 21 during the Kargil Diwas celebrations at Air Force Station in Jodhpur. The Indian Air Force congratulated Chaudhri for achieving this feat. "Wg Cdr Tarun Chaudhri SC achieved a milestone by accomplishing WINGSUIT SKYDIVE JUMP on 21 July 19. The feat is the deepest imprint of ethos and

professionalism of IAF, be it adventures or operations. Congratulations & Touch the Sky with Glory!" the official Twitter handle of the IAF tweeted.



ITBP DG S S Deswal given charge of NSG

ITBP Director General (DG) S S Deswal has been given the additional charge of the counter-terror force NSG as the incumbent chief is set to retire on Wednesday, officials said. The serving NSG DG Sudeep Lakhtakia, a 1984-batch Indian Police Service (IPS) officer of the Telangana cadre, will attain superannuation from service on Wednesday. Deswal, the chief of the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) force, is Lakhtakia's batchmate but his cadre is Haryana. An order issued by the Union home ministry said Deswal will hold the post in an "additional" capacity till a successor or regular DG is appointed.

USISPF to honour Wipro's Azim Premji, Mastercard CEO Ajay Banga

The US-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF) Wednesday said that Mastercard CEO and President Ajay Banga and Wipro Chairman Azim Premji will receive the 2019 Global Excellence Awards at its Second Annual Leadership Summit in Washington on July 11. Jared Kushner, senior adviser to the President of the United States, will present awards during the summit, a statement said. "We are delighted to offer the prestigious Global Excellence Awards to the two business leaders who have significantly contributed to strengthening economic ties between the US and India," USISPF Board Chairman John Chambers said. Premji said he was honoured by this award.

Gully Boy' wins NETPAC Award for Best Asian Film at BIFAN

After impressing the Indian audience, Ranveer Singh and Alia Bhatt starrer 'Gully Boy' has now been recognised at the Bucheon International Fantastic Film Festival (BIFAN) in South Korea. The film directed by Zoya Akhtar was honoured with NETPAC Award for Best Asian Film. Thanking BIFAN and cast and crew of the film, a happy Zoya posted a status on her Instagram account. The film revolves around the underground rap movement in India also stars Kalki Koechlin, Siddhant Chaturvedi and Vijay Raaz in pivotal roles. 'Gully Boy' is inspired by the lives of Mumbai street rappers Vivian Fernandes aka Divine and Naved Shaikh aka Naezy.

Nagarkirtan: wins Best Feature Film award at SAARC film festival

Director Kaushik Ganguly's Bengali outing 'Nagarkirtan', a love story of a transwoman and a flautist, has won big at this year's SAARC film festival, bagging four awards, including 'Best Feature Film'. The critically acclaimed movie, starring Riddhi Sen and Ritwik Chakraborty, had swept as many National Awards last year. At the ninth edition of the SAARC fest in Colombo, 'Nagarkirtan' was honoured with 'Best Feature Film', 'Best Director', 'Best Actor' and 'Best Original Score' awards.

Sudarsan Pattnaik wins People's Choice Award in U.S.

Renowned Indian sand artist and Padma Awardee Sudarsan Pattnaik has won the People's Choice Award at a prestigious sand sculpting festival in the U.S., wowing the American public with his sculpture that highlighted the message of combating plastic pollution in oceans. Mr. Pattnaik was among the 15 top sand artists selected from across the world to participate in the 2019 Revere Beach International Sand Sculpting Festival in Boston, Massachusetts.

SCR commissions Longest Electrified Railway Tunnel in India

Indian Railways has achieved another engineering feat. The engineers of Indian Railways has added another feather in its cap by commissioning the longest electrified tunnel in India. The total length of the tunnel is 6.6 kms and is situated between Cherlopalli and Rapuru stations which fall under the South Central Railways zone of Indian Railways. The newly constructed tunnel will help in providing viable rail connectivity between Krishnapatnam Port.

Centre fixes price for Sovereign Gold Bonds at Rs.3,443 per gram

The government has fixed the price at Rs 3,443 per gram for the new series of sovereign gold bonds (SGBs) opening Monday. The Centre in consultation with the RBI has decided to allow a discount of Rs 50 per gram from the issue price to those investors who apply online and the payment is made through digital mode, the finance ministry said in a statement. "For such investors, the issue price of gold bond will be Rs 3,393 per gram of gold," it said.

All lanes at toll plazas to be 'FASTag lanes' from 1st Dec

To ensure seamless traffic and prevent congestion at toll plazas, the government on Friday said it has decided to declare all lanes at toll fee plaza on national highways as 'FASTag lanes' from December 1. However, among all lanes, one 'hybrid lane' will be allowed at every toll plaza to facilitate and monitor over-dimensional or oversized vehicles, where FASTag and other modes of payment will be accepted. In a statement, the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways said this lane will also be converted into FASTag-only lane in a time-bound manner.

INTERNATIONAL CURRENT AFFAIRS

England beat New Zealand in thrilling Cricket World Cup final – as it happened!

England have won the World Cup. It feels good to write those words and to soak in the outpouring of joy that comes with their thrilling victory over New Zealand. So let's try to sum up: England are world champions after tying with New Zealand on 241 each after their respective 50 overs. They both scored 15 in the super-over shootout – but England won thanks to hitting more boundaries in their 50 overs.

Vinesh, Divya win gold; Pooja bags silver at the Wrestling Grand Prix of Spain

Putting up a dominating show, India's top wrestler Vinesh Phogat won her first gold medal after shifting to 53kg category, while Divya Kakran claimed the top honours in the 68kg category at the Grand Prix of Spain here. Vinesh, one of India's medal hopefuls at the 2020 Tokyo Games, was competing only in her third tournament in the new category. In the eight-wrestler 53kg draw, Vinesh comfortably beat Peru's Justina Benites and Russia's Nina Minknova before getting the better of Dutch rival Jessica Blaszka in the final.

Japan resumes commercial whaling

The whaling ships have a permit to catch 227 minke, Bryde's and sei whales this year in Japanese waters. Japan's last commercial hunt was in 1986, but it has continued whaling for what it says are research purposes. It has now withdrawn from the International Whaling Commission (IWC) so is no longer subject to its rules. IWC members had agreed to an effective ban on whale hunting, but Japan has long argued it is possible to hunt whales in a sustainable way.

New Zealand bans Single-Use Plastic shopping bags

WELLINGTON: New Zealand officially banned single-use plastic shopping bags Monday, introducing hefty fines for businesses that continue to provide them. Plastic pollution has become a growing global concern, with a million birds and more than 100,000 marine mammals injured or killed every year by becoming entangled in packaging or ingesting it through the food chain. Companies that break New Zealand's ban will face heavy penalties, including fines of up to NZ\$100,000 (\$67,000). "New Zealanders are proud of our country's clean, green reputation and want to help ensure we live up to it," Environment Minister Eugenie Sage said.

IAEA confirms Iran breached enriched Uranium Stockpile limit

The International Atomic Energy Agency said its inspectors had verified the 300kg (660lb) cap had been exceeded. Iran stepped up production of enriched uranium, used to make reactor fuel but also potentially nuclear bombs, in May. It said it was responding to sanctions reinstated by the US after President Donald Trump abandoned the deal. The UK and Germany have called on Iran to reverse its decision, while the US said its strategy of "maximum pressure" would continue.

US Senate passes law to give India NATO ally-like status

The U.S. Senate has passed a legislative provision that brings India at par with America's NATO allies and countries like Israel and South Korea for increasing defence cooperation. The National Defense Authorisation Act or NDAA for the fiscal year 2020, that contained such a proposal was passed by the U.S. Senate last week. Introduced by Senate India Caucus Co-Chair Senator John Cornyn with the support of Senate India Caucus Co-Chair Senator Mark Warner.

India pledges \$5 Million aid to UN Palestine Refugee Agency in 2019

India has pledged to contribute USD 5 million in 2019 to the UN Palestine refugee agency, even as it voiced concern over the agency's difficult financial situation due to voluntary contributions from a limited donor base and called for ensuring sustained fiscal support for its work. India's Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador K Nagaraj Naidu said the Government of India has increased its annual financial contribution fourfold to the UNRWA core budget, from USD 1.25 million in 2016 to USD 5 million in 2018.

India to train Bangladeshi Civil Servants at Mussoorie

Eighteen hundred Bangladeshi mid-career civil servants will be trained at the National Centre for Good Governance (NCGG) in Mussoorie between 2019-2025. The first batch of 30 civil servants leaving for a two-week long training programme in Mussoorie paid a visit to the Indian High Commission in Dhaka yesterday. The Bangladeshi civil servants are being trained at the National Centre for Good Governance based on the Memorandum.

India hands over 250 pre-fabricated houses to Myanmar's Rakhine State

India on Tuesday handed over 250 pre-fabricated houses to the displaced Muslim families who are currently residing in Myanmar's Rakhine state. The houses were built under the Rakhine State Development Programme (RSDP) at a cost of USD 25 million. Ambassador of India Saurabh Kumar handed over the documents related to the pre-fabricated houses to U Aung Kyaw Zan, Joint-chairman of Returnee Resettlement Work Committee and the Minister for Electricity.

France to impose green tax on plane tickets from 2020

The French government is to impose a tax of up to €18 on plane tickets for all flights from airports in France to fund less-polluting transportation projects, a Minister said on Tuesday. The move, which will take effect from 2020, will see a tax of €1.5 imposed on economy-class tickets on internal flights and those within Europe, with the highest tariff applied to business-class travellers flying outside the bloc, Transport Minister Elisabeth Borne said.

Gafa Tax: France to levy 3% tax on Internet giants

France's Lower House of Parliament on Thursday approved a small, pioneering tax on Internet giants like Google, Amazon and Facebook and the French government hopes other countries will follow suit. The Bill aims to stop multinationals from avoiding taxes by setting up headquarters in low-tax European Union countries. Currently, the companies pay nearly no tax in countries where they have large sales like France.

US House passes Bill to remove 7% cap on issuing Green Card

The US lawmakers Wednesday passed a bill aimed at lifting the present seven per cent country-cap on issuing Green Cards, a move which would benefit thousands of highly-skilled Indian IT professionals. A Green Card allows a person to live and work permanently in the US. Passed by the US House of Representatives, the bill, on being signed into law, would considerably shorten the agonising wait of talented professionals from countries like India who have applied for permanent residency in the United States.

Baba Guru Nanak International University: Foundation stone laid in Pakistan

The foundation stone of Baba Guru Nanak International University has been laid in Nankana Sahib, the birth place of founder of Sikhism Baba Guru Nanak Dev, in Pakistan's Punjab province, more than a decade after its construction proposal first surfaced. The foundation stone of the university was laid by Punjab Chief Minister Usman Buzdar on Friday and would be completed with an amount of over Rs 258 crores spread over 10 acres.

Kartarpur Sahib: Pakistan agrees to Visa-free, year-long travel for Indians

Pakistan on Sunday agreed to give year-long visa-free access for Indian pilgrims to the holy Gurdwara of Kartarpur Sahib. The Ministry of External Affairs said in a statement that the agreement was reached at the second formal meeting held at Wagah, at which India took up the presence of Khalistan supporters in Pakistani territory. "It was agreed to allow visa-free travel for the Indian passport-holders and OCI card-holders seven days a week. Throughout the year, 5,000 pilgrims will be allowed to visit the Kartarpur Sahib Gurdwara per day. The pilgrims will be allowed to travel as individuals or in groups and also on foot.

Palau becomes 76th nation to join International Solar Alliance

Washington DC: Palau, an archipelago of over 500 islands in Oceania, on Tuesday became the 76th signatory country to join the International Solar Alliance. "President of the Republic of Palau H.E. Tommy E. Remengesau, Jr. signed the Framework Agreement of the Int'l Solar Alliance today at @IndiaUNNewYork. #Palau becomes the 76th signatory country. Indian Embassy, Manila is working towards taking India-Palau ties to new heights," Nagaraj Naidu, the Deputy Permanent Representative at India's Mission to the United Nations.

Kulbhushan Jadhav Case: ICJ asks Pakistan to review conviction order

In a major victory for India, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on Wednesday called for an effective review and reconsideration of the conviction and sentencing of Indian national Kulbhushan Jadhav, facing death in Pakistan on charges of spying, and held that a continued stay on execution constitutes an indispensable condition for the review. "The Court recalls that it indicated a provisional measure directing Pakistan to take all measures at its disposal to ensure that Mr. Jadhav is not executed pending the final decision.

US not to sell F-35 fighter jets to Turkey for buying Russian S-400

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump has announced that the US would not sell the F-35 fighter jets to Turkey after Ankara purchased the S-400 missile defense system from sanctions-hit Russia. The decision by the Trump Administration against a major NATO ally could be an indication of the things to come for India as it has also signed up with Russia to buy the S-400 missile defense system against the advice of the US.

US slaps sanctions against Myanmar's military chief for killing of Rohingya Muslims

The US has slapped sanctions against Myanmar's chief of military and three other top officers for gross human rights violations, including killing of Rohingya Muslims and barred their entry into America. Following the sanctions imposed on them on Tuesday, Commander-in-Chief Min Aung Hlaing, Deputy Commander-in-Chief Soe Win, Brigadier General Than Oo and Brigadier General Aung Aung along with their immediate family members.

WHO declares Ebola outbreak in DRC as a Global Health Emergency

The deadly Ebola outbreak in Congo is now an international health emergency, the World Health Organization announced on Wednesday after the virus spread this week to a city of two million people. A WHO expert committee had declined on three previous occasions to advise the United Nations health agency to make the declaration for this outbreak, which other experts say has long met the conditions. More than 1,600 people have died since August in the second deadliest Ebola outbreak in history.

Motihari-Amlekhgunj Oil Pipeline ready for commercial operation

KATHMANDU: India and Nepal have successfully concluded the 'testing transfer' of the Rs 325 crore Motihari-Amlekhgunj oil pipeline and the strategically important project is set to start commercial operation next month, a media report said Friday. Along with reducing the huge transportation cost for the landlocked country, the commercial operation of the oil project will also ensure reduction in fuel prices, officials said. The Motihari-Amlekhgunj oil pipeline project was first proposed in 1996. However, the project finally edged closer to reality during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Kathmandu in 2014.

Iran tests Medium-Range Missile: US Official

Washington (CNN)Iran test-fired a medium-range ballistic missile late Wednesday that traveled 1,000 kilometers from its southern launch point into northern Iran, according to a US official with direct knowledge of the event. The launch of the Shahab-3 missile did not pose a threat to shipping or US bases, the official said, and remained inside Iran for the duration of its flight. Nevertheless, it served as a signal to the US and Europe and could serve to further increase tensions in the region.

Mexico beats US to lift 8th CONCACAF Gold Cup

Mexico defeated the United States 1-0 in the CONCACAF Gold Cup final on Monday to claim the trophy for the first time since 2015. Mexico, who were playing their first tournament under new coach Tata Martino, have now defeated the US on five of the last six occasions the two sides met in North America's leading international tournament, Xinhua news agency reported. Jonathan dos Santos scored the decisive goal in the 73rd minute to seal the match in Mexico's favour.

Dutee Chand wins 100m gold in World Universiade in Italy

The Odisha runner, whose national record stands at 11.24 seconds, thus became the first Indian to win a 100m gold in a global event. National record holder Dutee Chand became the first Indian woman track and field athlete to clinch a gold medal in the World Universiade after she won the 100m dash event here. The 23-year-old Dutee clocked 11.32 seconds to win the gold as she led the race from start to finish.

Mary Kom wins gold in President's Cup

Six-time world champion Mary Kom (51kg) and 2018 World Championships bronze winner Simranjit Kaur (60kg) grabbed a gold each as Indian boxers finished their campaign at the 23rd

President's Cup in Labuan Bajo, Indonesia with nine medals on Sunday.



Kutno Athletics Meet: Hima Das wins gold in Women's 200m

Indian sprinter Hima Das won her second international gold in women's 200m with a top finish at the Kutno Athletics Meet in Poland on Sunday. Hima, who has been struggling with a back problem for the past few months, clocked 23.97 seconds to clinch the gold while VK Vismaya bagged the silver in 24.06. This was Hima's second competitive 200m race of the year. In her first competitive 200m race of the year, the Assam runner - who has a personal best of 23.10s - had clocked 23.65s on her way to gold in the Poznan Athletics Grand Prix, also in Poland.

World Hindu Economic Forum launches its Nepal Chapter in Kathmandu

Member of Parliament from Rajya Sabha and Former Union Minister Dr. C.P. Thakur also graced the event. On this occasion Founder of World Hindu Economic Forum Swami Vigyananand said economic empowerment is very necessary to get due respect and recognition in the modern world. He said HEF brings together financially successful elements within Hindu society, so that each group can share their business knowledge.

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.

Germany's Ursula von der Leyen appointed new President of EU Commission

Ursula von der Leyen has been confirmed as the European commission's first female president and the first German in the job for more than 50 years. In a secret ballot, MEPs voted narrowly to support the German defence minister as a replacement for Jean-Claude Juncker when he steps down on 31 October. She won the support of 383 MEPs, nine votes more than required to secure an absolute majority but below the 400 threshold that would have given her a stable majority to get her policies through parliament over the next five years.

IMF Chief Christine Lagarde to now head European Central Bank

It comes ahead of a decision on her nomination to become head of the European Central Bank (ECB). Ms Lagarde said she would leave the IMF on 12 September. "With greater clarity now on the process for my nomination as ECB president and the time it will take, I have made this decision in the best interest of the fund," she said. "The executive board will now be taking the necessary steps to move forward with the process for selecting a new managing director."

Boris Johnson takes charge as new Prime Minister of United Kingdom

Boris Johnson officially took charge as UK Prime Minister, after meeting Queen Elizabeth II, who asked him to form a new administration. Johnson has vowed that he will get 'a new deal, a better deal' from the European Union and promised that the UK will leave EU on October 31 and there are 'no if's and but's' about it. In a statement released by Buckingham Palace, the Queen met with Johnson and invited him to form the government.

Iraq's Babylon listed as UNESCO's World Heritage Site

UNESCO's World Heritage Committee has voted to list the sprawling Mesopotamian metropolis of Babylon as a World Heritage Site after three decades of lobbying efforts by Iraq. Iraq had been trying since 1983 to have the site - a massive 10sq-km complex of which just 18 percent has been excavated thus far - recognised by UNESCO. Straddling Iraq's Euphrates River, about 100 kilometres south of Baghdad, the city was the centre of the ancient Babylonian empire more than 4,000 years ago.

Australia's Budj Bim Cultural Landscape included in UNESCO's WHS

The Budj Bim Cultural Landscape, near Portland, became the first in Australia to receive World Heritage status for its Aboriginal cultural importance after a decades-long campaign run by traditional owners, some of whom were present for the decision. "This is a very special day for our community. This landscape, which we have cared for over thousands of years, is so important to Gunditjmara People," elder Denise Lovett said in a statement. "The decision also recognises Budj Bim's significance to all of humanity."

Italy's Prosecco hills enters UNESCO World Heritage list

Italy's Prosecco hills northeast of Venice, which have been cultivated for centuries, were on Sunday added to the World Heritage list by the UN cultural organisation. The Conegliano and Valdobbiadene hills, where the grapes that produce the famous prosecco sparkling wine are grown, got the green light at a meeting of UNESCO's World Heritage Committee in Baku. "The landscape is characterised by 'hogback' hills, ciglioni— small plots of vines on narrow grassy terraces— forests, small villages and farmland," UNESCO said in a statement announcing the decision.

Saudi Arabia adopts Digital India, equality of women in Haj 2019

Jeddah, Jul 6: The Indian Haj mission in Saudi Arabia adopting digital technology to reach out massive number of pilgrims as part of Government of India's initiative of Digital India. With the Introduction of Haj App, Indian diplomats in Saudi Arabia bridging with pilgrims not only to facilitate a smooth and hassle-free Haj operation but also received grievances and feedbacks to improve the service. This was announced by Indian Ambassador Dr Ausaf Sayeed here on Saturday in a press conference along with Consul General Md Noor Rahman Sheikh to brief about ongoing Indian Haj operation in Saudi Arabia.

International arbitration court imposes \$5 billion penalty Pakistan

In a jolt to cash-strapped Pakistan, an international arbitration court has imposed a whopping USD 5.976 billion penalty - one of the biggest in its history - on Islamabad for the unlawful denial of a mining lease to a company for the Reko Diq project in 2011. The Tethyan Copper Company (TCC) - a joint venture between Chilean mining company Antofagasta and Canada's Barrick Gold Corporation - had filed claims for international arbitration before the World Bank's International Centre.

Bangladesh develops plastic alternative from jute

It has been three years since a local scientist invented jute polymer, a material that is not only biodegradable but is both water and air resistant, and 1.5 times stronger than polythene. Polythene is a global problem and Bangladesh has been facing the problem of this material choking the life out of our drainage system and canals. Unfortunately, Dr Khan and his team have been left in the lurch in the absence of any policy or budgetary support. The project needs a dedicated budget of about Tk 250 crores a year so that capital machinery can be bought to produce products based on jute polymer in bulk, which would make it price competitive.

