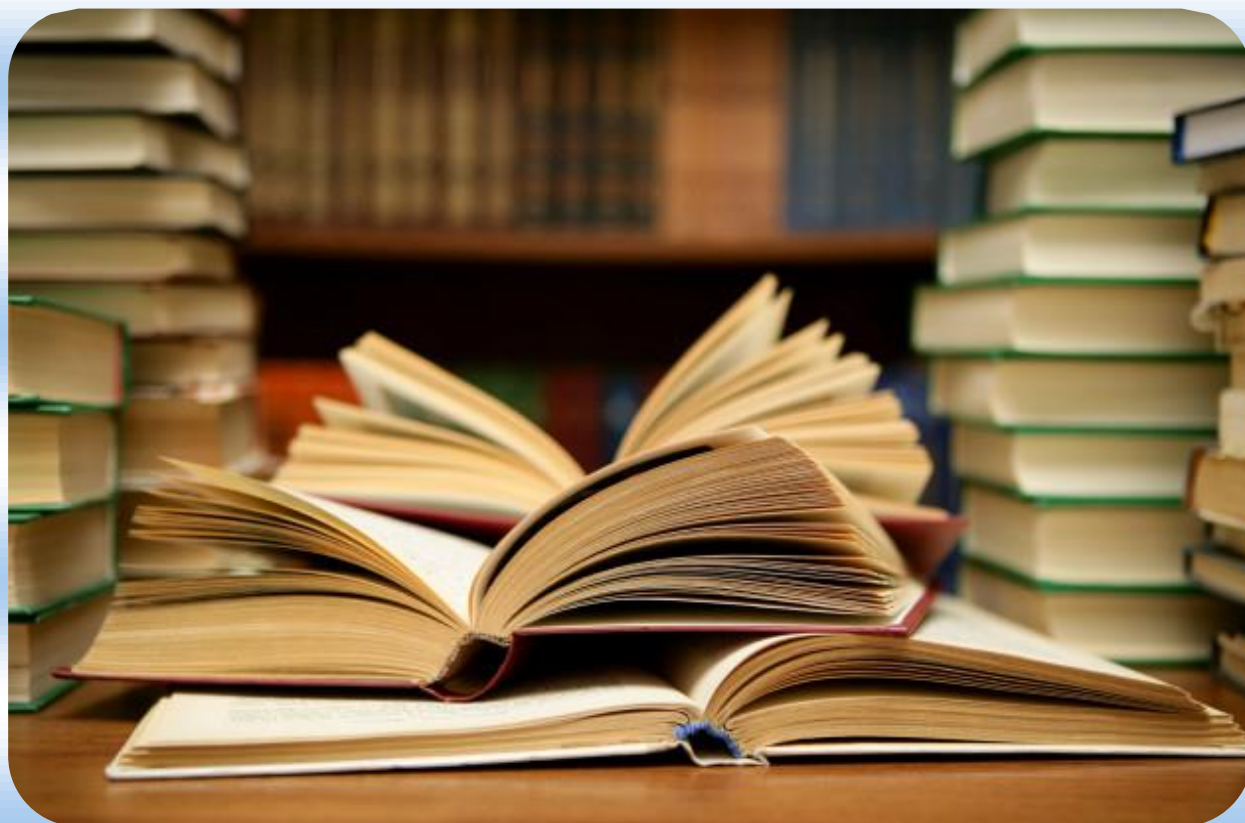


LIBRARY & RESOURCE CENTER, NOIDA

GENERAL KNOWLEDGE MONTHLY



MARCH-2019

NATIONAL CURRENT AFFAIRS

WhatsApp to Work with Nasscom to Impart Digital Literacy

In a bid to curb fake news during the general elections, WhatsApp and NASSCOM Foundation on Monday came together to impart digital literacy training. As part of the partnership, WhatsApp and NASSCOM Foundation will train nearly 1,00,000 Indians to spot false information and provide tips and tricks to stay safe on WhatsApp. The co-created curriculum, which includes real-world anecdote tools that can be used to verify a forwarded message and actions that users can take like reporting problematic content to fact checkers and other law enforcement agencies, will be disseminated in multiple regional languages.

Social Media Platforms Present Voluntary Code of Ethics

Social media platforms and the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) on Wednesday presented a 'Voluntary Code of Ethics for the General Election 2019' to the Election Commission. "This code will become effective and will enter into force on March 20, 2019," they said in a statement, adding that it would remain operational during the election. The code's purpose is to identify measures that the platforms can take to increase confidence in the electoral process.

Centre Bans Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) Under UAPA

Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on Friday banned separatist Yasin Malik's Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) under the anti-terror law, Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 (UAPA). The move comes days after the Centre banned Jamat-e-Islami (JeI-J&K) under Section 3(1) of the UAPA. The JKLF was also banned under the same sections, which gives power to the Centre to declare any association as unlawful by notifying it in the Official Gazette.

Bhagwan Lal Sahni appointed Chairman of the National Commission for Backward Classes

Two years after the term of National Commission for Other Backward Classes (NCBC) got over, the Central Government has set up a new commission appointing Bhagwan Lal Sahni, a BJP leader from Bihar's Muzaffarpur, as its new chairman. Sahni assumed charge on Friday. BJP leader and former Varanasi mayor Kaushalendra Singh Patel, BJP national secretary and former MP Sudha Yadav from Haryana, and Telangana BJP general secretary Achary Talloju have been appointed as members of the commission. President Ram Nath Kovind approved their names on Thursday.

Centre Bans Jamaat-e-Islami (Jammu and Kashmir)

SRINAGAR: Days after cracking down against their leaders, the Centre has formally banned the Jamaat-e-Islami (Jel) for five years for allegedly supporting "terrorist groups and being involved in the anti-national and subversive activities in the country". This is the second time that Jel has been banned in the last 29 years of turmoil. Jamaat-e-Islami was banned in 1990 but the ban was revoked and leaders were released a few years later.

CISF Creates New Guinness World Record

Troops of the CISF Sunday created history by achieving a Guinness world record feat in 'single line bicycle parade' to mark the 50 years of the paramilitary force, an officer said. The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) was raised in 1969 and it has about 1.80 lakh personnel in its ranks. The record was created at the Yamuna Expressway in Noida when personnel of the central force rode a total of 1,327 bicycles "non-stop with uniform distance between bicycles in a single line," the official said. "The bicycle parade covered 3.2 km distance non-stop.

RBI Eases Business Guidelines for White Label ATMs

The Reserve Bank of India has allowed operators of white label Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) to accept international credit, debit and prepaid cards. It also eased rules for cash supply tie-ups at these. A white label ATM (WLA) is operated by a non-bank entity; customers from any bank may withdraw money from these, for a fee. Further on the new rules, WLA operators will have an option to provide facilities for Dynamic Currency Conversion for international cards.

SC Proposes Mediation Panel for Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid Land Dispute Case

The Supreme Court on Friday decided to send the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid land title dispute for mediation by a three-member team led by a former judge of the court, Justice Fakkir Mohamed Ibrahim Kalifulla. The other two members of the panel are spiritual leader Sri Sri Ravi Shankar and Chennai-based Senior Advocate Sriram Panchu. Holding that nothing in the provisions of Code of Civil Procedure (CPC).

Prasar Bharati brings 11 more state Doordarshan Channels on Satellite Footprint

Prime Minister Narendra Modi Saturday said national broadcaster Prasar Bharati has brought 11 more state Doordarshan channels, including five for the northeastern states, on the satellite footprint of the country. "Glad to note that Prasar Bharati has brought 11 more State DD Channels on the Satellite footprint of India through DD Free Dish," he tweeted. "This includes five channels for Northeastern states. This will go a long way in strengthening regional cultures and fulfilling people's aspirations," he said.

Exclusion from draft Assam NRC will not affect voting rights: ECI

The Election Commission told the Supreme Court on Tuesday that the draft National Register of Citizens (NRC) for Assam will not affect the voting rights of those not included in it. "We have already made a statement that we will not do anything on the basis of the draft NRC," senior advocate Vikas Singh, appearing for the EC, told a bench of Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi and Justices Deepak Gupta and Sanjiv Khanna.

Twitter Executives may face Jail and Penalties if failed to Act

Top Twitter executives could not only face financial penalties but also face upto seven years in jail if they fail to remove content and accounts that are 'objectionable and inflammatory,' Times of India reported quoting an unnamed official from the ministry of information technology. Twitter has been asked to comply with the provisions under the Indian IT Act or else it would face action under Section 69A of the IT Act which gives the government power.

Prayagraj Kumbha Mela 2019 makes it to the Guinness World Records

NEW DELHI: The Ministry of Culture on Sunday said in a statement said that the Prayagraj Kumbh Mela 2019 has entered the Guinness Book of World Records for the largest crowd management, largest sanitation drive and largest painting exercise of public sites. "A three-member team from the Guinness World Records visited Prayagraj for the purpose. Exercises at a large-scale were performed before the team for four days, from February 28 to March 3.



Azaadi ke Diwane Museum Inaugurated at Red Fort

Union Minister Mahesh Sharma on Monday inaugurated 'Azaadi Ke Diwane' museum, dedicated to the unsung heroes of the country's freedom struggle, on the Red Fort premises here and said it would inspire the younger generation. Built by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), the museum is the fifth in a series of recently inaugurated ones — the others being the Subhash Chandra Bose and INA museum, the Yaad-e-Jallian museum, the Museum on 1857 (on the country's first war of Independence) the Drishyakala (a museum on Indian Art) — on the sacrifices of India's freedom fighters.

Kashi Vishwanath Corridor

The Kashi Vishwanath Temple Corridor, considered Prime Minister Narendra Modi's pet project in his constituency, may not only alter the topography of the ancient city but also lay bare its communal faultlines. Critics complain that dozens of small and medium-sized old temples, most built in residential complexes, were destroyed along with the scores of shops and 'bhavans' to clear the way for the project. They see the demolitions as a loss to the Hindu cultural heritage of the city.

Jalamrutha Scheme of Karnataka

Karnataka, which has the largest swathe of drought-prone land in the country next only to Rajasthan, is set to launch a major water conservation scheme titled 'Jalamrutha', which focusses on drought-proofing measures, including protection and rejuvenation of waterbodies. The ambitious scheme of the Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Department, that was cleared by the State Cabinet on Monday, will be launched by Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy in Bengaluru on Thursday.

Madhya Pradesh to increase the OBC quota and implement EWS

Madhya Pradesh chief minister Kamal Nath on Wednesday announced he will implement the provision of 10% reservation for the economically weaker section among the general category and also increase the quota for other backward classes (OBC) from the existing 14% to 27%. Last month, the CM had constituted a ministerial committee to work out modalities for implementing the 10% quota, after the central government approved a Constitutional amendment for the reservation for the economically weaker.

J& K Return Policy for Militants

Jobs, reformative measures, and a monthly stipend of Rs 6,000. These are the key points of a new "reintegration policy" draft that is under the consideration of the J&K government headed by Governor Satya Pal Malik to encourage militants hailing from the state to give up arms. Speaking to The Indian Express, K Vijay Kumar, advisor to the state government, said the policy draft "is presently at the pre-SAC stage".

Hasmukh Adhia Appointed as Chancellor of Gujarat Central University

Former Finance Secretary Hasmukh Adhia has been appointed chancellor of Gujarat Central University. The appointment, which comes days before the model code of conduct is enforced, was approved by President Ram Nath Kovind who is also the visitor of the university. Adhia's name was proposed by the HRD Ministry earlier this month.

Vastradan Campaign Sets Guinness World Record

A campaign by a member of the erstwhile royal family of Udaipur has received over 3 lakh items of clothing, creating a Guinness world record for the largest collection of clothes for donation, a press release claimed. Lakshyaraj Singh Mewar, a descendant of Rajput ruler Maharana Pratap, received the certificate from an official of the Guinness Book of World Records-UK at Udaipur on Sunday, it said.

Cloud Seeding in Karnataka for Two Monsoon Seasons

As 176 taluks reel under drought, the State government is hoping to influence the upcoming monsoon and capture as much water as possible from the rain clouds. On March 8, the Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Department pushed a tender call for cloud seeding operations to enhance rainfall during the monsoons of 2019 and 2020. The project is expected to cost ₹50 crore each year. Cloud seeding uses planes to spray clouds with chemicals to condense smaller particles into larger rain droplets.

Pramod Sawant sworn-in as CM of Goa

PANAJI: At 1.48 am, a minute after the national anthem was played at the Raj Bhavan, Dr. Pramod Sawant took oath as chief minister of Goa. The 45-year-old MLA from Sanquelim constituency took charge of the office, hours after the final rites of his predecessor, Manohar Parrikar, were conducted with full state honours. A two-time MLA who started as a karyakarta, Sawant steadily rose in rank and profile.

Mizoram passes Bill to Detect Illegal Foreigners

The Mizoram Assembly Monday unanimously passed a bill that seeks to detect foreigners illegally residing in the northeastern state, that shares an over 700-km border with Bangladesh and Myanmar. Introducing The Mizoram Maintenance of Household Registers Bill, 2019, Chief Minister Zoramthanga said the influx of foreigners into the state through its porous borders has remained a serious concern for several decades. The measures proposed under legislation are intended to provide credible individual identification system and to prevent "usurpation" of benefits of developmental schemes by those who are not entitled, the bill says.

Income tax exemption limit on gratuity doubled to Rs 20 lakh

NEW DELHI: The labour ministry said Thursday that the income tax exemption limit on gratuity has been doubled to Rs 20 lakh from the existing Rs 10 lakh, a move that will benefit employees who are not covered by the Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972. "Ministry of Finance has enhanced the income tax exemption for gratuity under Section 10 (10) (iii) of the Income Tax Act, 1961 to Rs 20 lakhs," a labour ministry statement said.

Facebook Hubs to Support Start-Ups

Social media platform Facebook on Tuesday launched “Facebook Hubs”, an initiative to foster innovation and offer support for budding entrepreneurs. Facebook Hubs will extend support for start-up community by hosting mentor hours and conducting trainings, workshops, discussions across 20 locations in Delhi, Gurugram, Noida, Bengaluru, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Pune, Navi Mumbai and in Goa, it said in a statement. The social media platform said it has partnered with 91springboard, an office space rental firm, for a year-long programme.

SBI launches cardless ATM withdrawal with YONO Cash

State Bank of India on Friday launched ‘YONO Cash’ for cardless withdrawal of cash at over 16,500 SBI ATMs across the country. With this facility, customers can initiate the cash withdrawal process on the YONO app and set a six-digit YONO Cash pin for the transaction. They will also get a six digit reference number for the transaction on their registered mobile number via SMS.

SpiceJet joins IATA

Low cost carrier SpiceJet on Tuesday said it has become a member of global airlines’ grouping International Air Transport Association (IATA). SpiceJet is the first Indian budget carrier to join the IATA, which has over 290 airlines as members. The IATA membership is also significant on account of SpiceJet’s plans to rapidly expand its international footprint,” the airline said in a statement. The membership also allows SpiceJet to explore and grow its collaborations with international member airlines of IATA through interlining and code shares.

India’s GDP Forecasts by Fitch Ratings

Fitch Ratings on Friday cut India’s economic growth forecast for the next financial year starting April 1, to 6.8% from its previous estimate of 7%, on weaker than expected momentum in the economy. “While we have cut our growth forecasts for the next fiscal year (FY20, ending in March 2020) on weaker-than-expected momentum, we still see Indian GDP growth to hold up reasonably well, at 6.8%, followed by 7.1% in FY21,” Fitch said in its Global Economic Outlook.

PFC becomes India’s second largest state-owned Financial Firm

NEW DELHI: State-owned power sector financier Power Finance Corporation (PFC) completed its mega deal to buy majority stake in REC Ltd on Thursday by transferring Rs 14,500 crore to the government. Proceeds from the deal, which includes strategic sale of 52.63 per cent of paid-up equity shareholding of REC held by the government to PFC along with transfer of management control, helped the government exceed its disinvestment target of Rs 80,000 crore for 2018-2019.

India's April-February Fiscal Deficit at 134% of Target

NEW DELHI: The government's fiscal deficit was 34.2% more than the revised estimates for FY19 at the end of February, highlighting the challenge it faces in meeting the target for the year as tax collections remained muted. The fiscal deficit target for FY19 was revised upwards to 3.4% of GDP in the interim budget for FY20 presented on February 1 from 3.3% estimated initially. "We are sticking to the 3.4% fiscal deficit target," economic affairs secretary Subhash Chandra Garg.

Who is re-appointed as Maruti's India MD & CEO in March 2019?

New Delhi: The country's largest carmaker Maruti Suzuki India (MSI) Wednesday re-appointed Kenichi Ayukawa as Managing Director and CEO for a period of three years with effect from April 1, 2019. "We hereby intimate that the Board, in its meeting held today, approved reappointment of Mr. Kenichi Ayukawa as Managing Director and CEO of the Company for a period of 3 (three) years w.e.f. pt April, 2019 on the existing terms and conditions including remuneration," MSI said in a BSE filing.

Who is re-appointed as Maruti's India MD & CEO in March 2019?

NEW DELHI: The country's largest carmaker Maruti Suzuki India (MSI) Wednesday re-appointed Kenichi Ayukawa as Managing Director and CEO for a period of three years with effect from April 1, 2019. The company's board, which met Wednesday, re-appointed Ayukawa on the existing terms and conditions including remuneration, MSI said in a regulatory filing. This would be Ayukawa's third term as MD and CEO of MSI.

What was the code name of project DRDO undertake to destroy satellites in Space?

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday announced that India had joined the elite club of space powers by shooting down a low-earth orbit satellite with an anti-satellite missile (ASAT). "In the journey of every nation there are moments that bring utmost pride and have a historic impact on generations to come. One such moment is today... something all of us should be proud of.

What is the full form of "Nyay", a scheme proposed by Congress party if it comes to power?

Congress leader P Chidambaram Wednesday said that his party has consulted enough economists who believe that India has the capacity to implement the proposed minimum income scheme, PTI reported. Congress' minimum income scheme will be rolled out in phases and cover 5 crore families. We have consulted enough economists and they have broadly agreed that India has the capacity to implement the scheme," Chidambaram was quoted as saying by PTI.

Vice Admiral Karambir Singh appointed as next Navy chief

The government on Saturday appointed Vice Admiral Karambir Singh as the next Chief of the Naval Staff (CNS). With the announcement, the government has for the second time overlooked the seniority principle in service chief appointments. Vice Admiral Singh will take over as the 24th Navy chief from incumbent CNS Admiral Sunil Lanba, who is set to retire on May 31 on completing three years in office. He is currently the Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief (FOC-in-C) of Eastern Naval Command headquartered at Visakhapatnam.

Justice Pinaki Chandra Ghose Sworn-in as Lokpal

Justice Pinaki Ghose on Saturday took oath as the first Lokpal of India — the national anti-corruption ombudsman. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, President Ram Nath Kovind, Vice-President M Venkaiah Naidu and Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi were present on the occasion. The former Supreme Court judge's appointment comes five years after the Lokpal Act received the President's nod on January 1, 2014.

Why Ballot Papers will be used in Nizamabad instead of EVM?

With 185 candidates, including over 170 farmers in the fray, the Election Commission will use ballot papers instead of EVMs in Nizamabad Lok Sabha constituency in Telangana, from where Chief Minister K Chandrasekhara Reddy's daughter K Kavitha is seeking re-election. This was necessitated as the number of candidates is higher than what the EVMs can accommodate. The farmers had filed their nominations protesting the alleged failure of the ruling Telangana Rashtra Samithi to ensure minimum support price for turmeric and red jowar (sorghum) produce.

World's highest polling station

CHANDIGARH: The world's highest polling station is now in the sleepy hamlet of Tashigang in the Buddhist-dominated Lahaul-Spiti district of Himachal Pradesh at an altitude of 15,256 feet. This polling station falls in one of the 17 assembly segments that form the Mandi Lok Sabha seat, the second largest constituency in the country. Located around 29 km from the India-China border, this polling station covers two villages of Tashigang and Gete.

President Ram Nath Kovind honoured with highest civilian award of Croatia

President Ram Nath Kovind and his Croatian counterpart Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic on Tuesday held a wide range of discussion on issues of mutual interest and reaffirmed their commitment to expand the economic relations between the two nations. Kovind is in the European country as part of his three-nation visit to Croatia, Bolivia and Chile to further strengthen bilateral ties between India and the three countries.

INTERNATIONAL CURRENT AFFAIRS

RBI, Bank of Japan sign Bilateral Swap Arrangement

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and Bank of Japan have signed a bilateral swap arrangement (BSA) for an amount up to \$75 billion, effective on Thursday. The bilateral swap facility was approved by the Cabinet in mid-January in order to allow India to manage its exchange rates better. The facility will allow India to have additional resources to manage exchange rate fluctuations, and will give Indian companies better negotiating power overseas when the exchange rate remains stable.

Macky Sall re-elected as Senegal's President

Senegal's President Macky Sall has won a second term, of five years, following Sunday's election. He won 58% of the votes cast, but opponents accused him of preventing some of his main rivals from running. But who is Mr Sall and what are the challenges facing him?



UNSC Blacklists Osama bin Laden's Son Hamza

The UN Security Council has designated Hamza bin Laden, the son of slain Al Qaida chief Osama bin Laden, under its sanctions list, subjecting him to a travel ban, assets freeze and an arms embargo as it described him as being seen as the "most probable successor" of the group's current leader Aiman al-Zawahiri. The UN Security Council's 1267 ISIS and Al Qaida Sanctions Committee listed 29-year old Hamza bin Laden on Thursday, the day the US announced a reward of up to one million dollars for information about him.

Red Flag 2019

The National Defense Strategy warns of a new era of potential conflict with revisionist powers Russia and China. The Air Force just offered a preview of that lethal battlespace. After refueling at night over a southern-Nevada dust bowl called Texas Lake, scores of U.S. and coalition warplanes crossed into contested air space on a mission to suppress state-of-the-art enemy air defenses.



China hikes defence budget by 7.5%

Beijing: China, the world's second largest military spender after the US on Tuesday announced a 7.5 per cent increase in its defence budget for this year, hiking it to a whopping USD 177.61 billion, over three times that of India. The 2019 defence budget will be 1.19 trillion yuan (about USD 177.61 billion), according to a draft budget report submitted by Chinese Premier Li Keqiang at the opening of the annual session of China's Parliament, the National People's Congress (NPC), on Tuesday.

Tibetan Activists Mark National Uprising Day

Hundreds of Tibetan activists staged a protest march on Monday to mark the 60th anniversary of their National Uprising Day. They marched from Khan Market to the office of United Nations India in Lodhi Road and submitted a memorandum, Madhur Verma, Deputy Commissioner of Police (New Delhi) said. Around 400 activists participated in the rally, the officer said. Tibetan Uprising Day is observed on March 10 to commemorate the 1959 Tibetan uprising against the presence of the People's Republic of China in Tibet.

EU Adds 10 Countries to Tax Blacklist

BRUSSELS: The European Union expanded its tax haven blacklist by 10 countries on Tuesday, adding the United Arab Emirates and Bermuda despite the objections of powerful member states such as Italy. The list, now 15 countries long, was first drawn up in 2017 in the wake of several scandals, including the Panama Papers and LuxLeaks, that pushed the EU into doing more to fight tax evasion by multinationals and the rich.

UK Issues New Black Hole Coin in Honour of Stephen Hawking

The UK's Royal Mint Tuesday unveiled a new commemorative 50 pence coin inspired by the late legendary British physicist Stephen Hawking's seminal work on black holes. Hawking, one of the world's best-known theoretical physicists who died aged 76 last year, joins the ranks of other eminent scientists such as Isaac Newton and Charles Darwin to have a commemorative coin in honour of one of his greatest discoveries that black holes should not be all black.

China Blocks Listing of Azar Masood as Global Terrorist

China has for the fourth time blocked (put a technical hold) a proposal at the United Nations to designate Jaish-e-Mohammad chief Masood Azhar as a global terrorist. Standing solidly behind its 'Iron Brother' Pakistan, China ignored international efforts to clamp down on cross-border terrorism. This is a major setback to Indian efforts to proscribe the Pulwama mastermind under the 1267 Al Qaeda Sanctions Committee of the UN Security Council (UNSC).

India Awards 200 Golden Jubilee Scholarships to Nepali Students

KATHMANDU: The Indian Embassy in Nepal on Wednesday announced 200 scholarships to meritorious Nepali students for continuing various undergraduate courses at colleges and universities. The Golden Jubilee Scholarship scheme was initiated by the Indian Government in 2002 to mark the completion of 50 years of India-Nepal Economic Cooperation. During the inception of the scheme, 50 meritorious Nepali students were awarded the scholarships.

India gets first TIR shipment via Chabahar Port from Afghanistan

The first shipment under the United Nations 'Transports Internationaux Routiers' (TIR) convention arrived in India from Afghanistan through Iran's Chabahar Port. The consignments arrived at port of Nhava Sheva, Mumbai and Mundra on Wednesday, officials said. Welcoming the arrival of the maiden shipment, Pranab Kumar Das, Chairman, Central Board of Indirect Taxes & Customs (CBIC), Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance, said the TIR convention will help in fast and easy movement of goods across multiple countries.

Kazakhstan renames Capital Astana after Ex-President

The change was announced after Kassym-Jomart Tokayev was sworn in as president, promising to seek his predecessor's opinion on key decisions. Mr Nazarbayev, 78, served nearly 30 years as leader of the oil-rich nation. Meanwhile, his eldest daughter has been elected speaker of the upper house of parliament. Dariga Nazarbayeva's promotion to the second most powerful position in the country raises her profile as a potential successor. Her father, who is head of the governing party.

US to recognize Israel's sovereignty over Golan Heights

Donald Trump has announced that the US will recognize Israel's sovereignty over the Golan Heights, captured from Syria in 1967, in a dramatic move likely to bolster Benjamin Netanyahu's hopes to win re-election, but which will also provoke international opposition. Previous US administrations have treated Golan Heights as occupied Syrian territory, in line with UN security council resolutions. Trump declared his break with that policy, in a tweet on Thursday.

New Zealand Announces Ban on Military-Style Semi-automatics and Assault Rifles

(CNN)All military-style semi-automatic weapons, assault rifles and high-capacity magazines will be banned in New Zealand following the mass shootings at two Christchurch mosques that killed 50 people, New Zealand's Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern announced on Thursday. "On 15 March our history changed forever. Now our laws will too. We are announcing action today on behalf of all New Zealanders to strengthen our gun laws and make our country a safer place," Ardern said at a press conference in the capital Wellington.

India extends Financial Grant for building educational campus in Nepal

The newly constructed building of Siddheshwar Education Public Campus in Ramechhap district was inaugurated on Friday. The new three story building comprises of 12 class rooms, faculty room, principal room, library, laboratory room, a meeting hall and toilets for girls and boys. The newly built infrastructure will not only boost learning environment of students but also enhance access to education to needy, poor and marginalized students.

India boycotts Pakistan National Day Events

Indian authorities on Friday stayed away from the Pakistan National Day celebrations, after it was reported that Kashmiri separatists were to attend the event. However, the ceremony at the High Commission of Pakistan went ahead even as Prime Minister Imran Khan declared that he had received India's greetings. the decision was prompted by the possible presence.



Syrian Democratic Forces defeats Islamic State group

SDF fighters have been raising victory flags in Baghuz, the last stronghold of the jihadist group. US President Donald Trump praised the "liberation" of Syria, but added: "We will remain vigilant against [IS]." The jihadists retain a presence in the region and are active in countries from Nigeria to the Philippines. After the caliphate: Has IS been defeated? Islamic State women defiant in face of lost caliphate.

Italy joins China's Belt Road Initiative

Italy's decision to be the first major European economy to join China's massive investment and infrastructure project, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), can only exacerbate tensions between Italy and its neighbors. On Saturday, President Xi Jinping and the Italian government signed a non-binding agreement for Italy to join China's trade route and inked a total of 29 deals worth 2.5 billion euros (\$2.8 billion) across an array of sectors. Italy hopes the project will boost its sluggish economy.

Pakistan Approves Plan to Open Sharda Peeth Corridor

The Pakistan government on Monday approved a proposal to establish a corridor that will allow Hindu pilgrims from India to visit Sharda Peeth, an ancient Hindu temple and cultural site in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, according to a media report. The Sharda Peeth corridor, when opened, will be the second religious tract after Kartarpur corridor in Pakistan-controlled territory that will connect the two neighbouring nations.



EU Parliament Passes Copyright Reforms Law

European lawmakers have approved sweeping copyright reforms that could have far-reaching consequences for the business models of tech giants like Google and Facebook. The law is aimed at bringing the EU's rules on copyright into the 21st century to help artists and publishers whose works have been widely dispersed on the internet. A first reading of the new copyright directive was passed Tuesday in Strasbourg by lawmakers at the European Parliament.

Pentagon authorises fund transfer to build US-Mexico Border Wall

Acting Pentagon chief Patrick Shanahan has authorised \$1 billion (£757 million) to build part of the wall sought by Donald Trump along the US-Mexico border, the first funds designated for the project under the president's emergency declaration. The Department of Homeland Security asked the Pentagon to build 57 miles (92 kilometres) of 18-foot (5.5-metre) fencing, construct and improve roads, and install lighting to support Mr Trump's.

Facebook bans White Nationalism, White Separatism on its Platforms

(REUTERS) - FACEBOOK Inc on Wednesday banned praise, support and representation of white nationalism and white separatism, a move that drew qualified approval from New Zealand where a massacre of 50 people in mosques was live streamed earlier this month. Civil rights groups have said social media giants have failed to confront extremism and that was under the spotlight this month after a suspected white supremacist broadcast live footage of his attacks in Christchurch, New Zealand.

Indians at Dan Kovlov 2019

Olympic bronze medallist Sakshi Malik stunned the reigning world champion Petra Olli of Finland to enter the finals of the female 65g category freestyle at the Dan Kolov 2019 wrestling meet in Ruse, Bulgaria on Thursday. In the semi-final bout, Sakshi defeated Olli 4-1 and will face Henna Johansson of Sweden in the finals on Friday. Sakshi, who won a bronze medal at the 2016 Rio Olympics, now has a shot at the gold medal. Earlier, Malik had said that she is looking to improve upon her performances in each and every competition that she takes part.

IOC-BPRL acquires oil block in Abu Dhabi

State-owned Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) Monday said it along with its partner Bharat PetroResources Ltd (BPRL) has won an oil block in Abu Dhabi, where the two will invest USD 170 million. IOC-BPRL won the block in Abu Dhabi's first-ever competitive bid round. "IOC and BPRL, a subsidiary of Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL), acting jointly as a consortium through Urja Bharat Pte Ltd have been awarded 100 per cent stake in the Abu Dhabi.

EU parliament approves ban on Single-use plastics

European Union legislators have overwhelmingly approved a ban on single-use plastic items - including straws, forks, knives and cotton buds - to counter pollution amid efforts to push manufacturers to step up their recycling efforts. The measure, which passed on Wednesday and will take effect in 2021, targets the top 10 disposable plastic products that wash up on European shores, provided that consumers have alternatives. They include plates, balloon sticks, food and beverage containers made of expanded.

Sai Praneeth Loses in Final of Swiss Open

Despite a brave performance, Sai Praneeth fell just short of a historic win in the final of the Swiss Open, losing to World No.2 Shi Yuqi 21-19, 18-21, 12-21. His opponent, China's Shi Yuqi, the 2019 All England Open champion, sometimes looked unprepared for the level of competition Praneeth brought to the court on Sunday. There had been only one meeting between the two before this, which Yuqi had won more comfortably. Praneeth, currently ranked 22 in the world, had upset World No.5 and Olympic champion Chen Long in the semi final on Saturday 21-18, 21-13.

India launches third IT corridor in China

Beijing: India has launched its third IT corridor in China that will facilitate partnerships between Indian and Chinese companies. The National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM) entered into a partnership with China's Xuzhou city from Jiangsu Province in China to help develop the IT corridor. The IT industry body has already launched such corridors at Dalian and Guiyang cities to cash in on the burgeoning Chinese IT industry market. Through its previous s ..

Japanese architect Arata Isozaki wins Pritzker Prize

The jury said he pioneered the "understanding that the need for architecture is both global and local". Isozaki said growing up not far from the bombed city of Hiroshima taught him how homes and cities could be rebuilt. He is the 46th Pritzker laureate and the eighth Japanese architect to receive the honour. The jury said Isozaki's architecture defied categorisation as it was always evolving. "Possessing a profound knowledge of architectural history and theory, and embracing the avant-garde, he never merely replicated the status quo," it said.

Peter Tabichi wins Global Teacher Prize 2019

Peter Tabichi, a member of the Franciscan religious order, won the 2019 Global Teacher Prize. Brother Peter has been praised for his achievements in a deprived school with crowded classes and few text books. He wants pupils to see "science is the way to go" for their futures. The award, announced in a ceremony in Dubai, recognises the "exceptional" teacher's commitment to pupils in a remote part of Kenya's Rift Valley. He gives away 80% of his pay to support pupils, at the Keriko Mixed Day Secondary School in Pwani Village, Nakuru, who otherwise could not afford uniforms or books.

