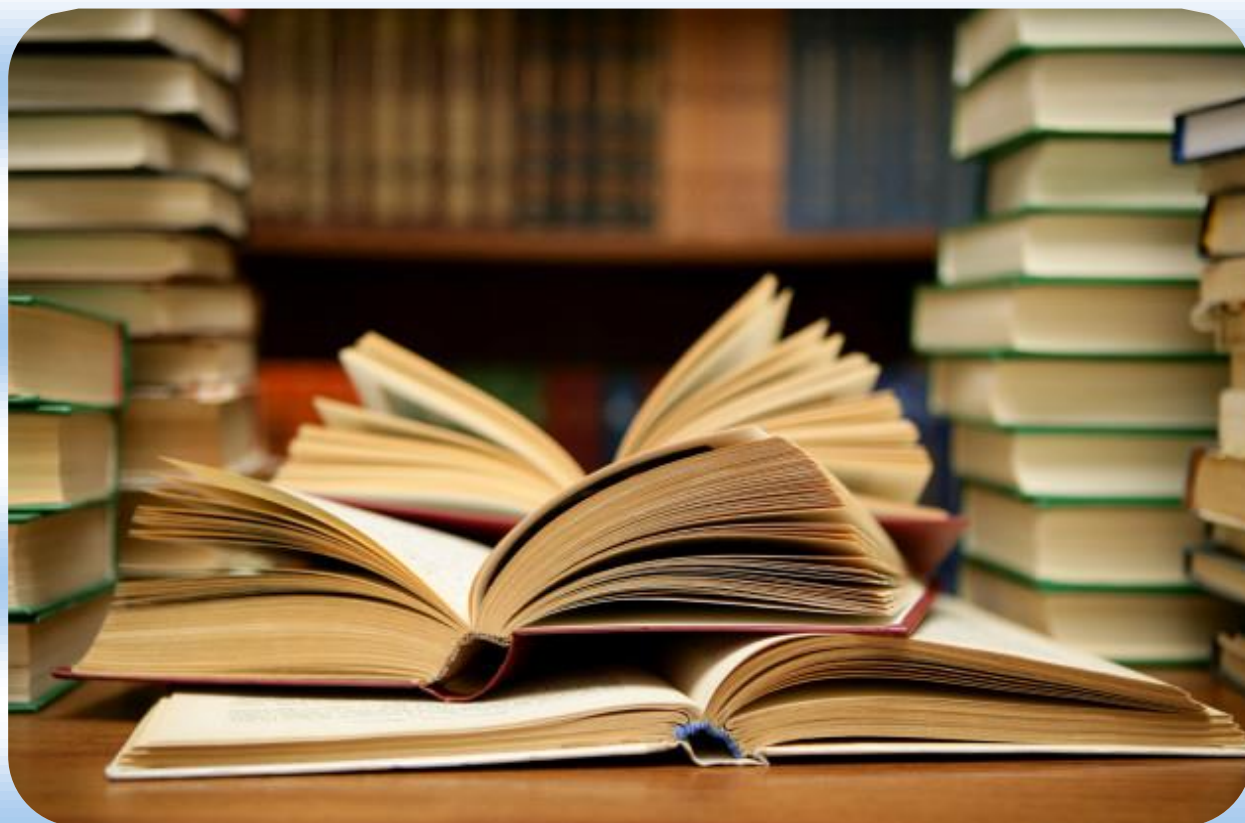


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GENERAL KNOWLEDGE MONTHLY



MAY-2019

NATIONAL CURRENT AFFAIRS

Rohit Tiwari's wife charged with his murder, arrested

Apoorva Shukla, wife of Rohit Shekhar Tiwari, has confessed to the crime of killing her husband, the Delhi Police said on Wednesday, after her arrest from her Defence Colony residence Rohit Shekhar was declared brought dead at a city hospital on April 16. Additional Commissioner of Police Rajiv Ranjan said Ms. Apoorva had confessed to committing the crime. The case, so far, was being viewed as a case of sudden provocation as opposed to a pre-planned murder.

Akshay Kumar to engage in a 'completely non political' conversation with PM Narendra Modi

A day after Akshay Kumar said he would be getting into an "unknown and uncharted territory" with something he had not done before, the Bollywood actor Tuesday said he will have a "candid and completely non political" chat with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday. The 51-year-old star took to Twitter to announce that his conversation with the prime minister will be a "breather" in election time.

Crypto currency is 'ponzi scheme', should be banned in India: Govt official

Crypto currency is a "ponzi scheme" and should be banned to protect the interest of investors, a government official said Friday. Amid continuing debates about crypto currencies such as Bitcoins, the Investor Education and Protection Fund (IEPF) Authority, which comes under the corporate affairs ministry, is in favour of banning trade in such currencies. Crypto currencies are based on blockchain technology and there are concerns about its viability in the long-term and risk to investors, especially considering steep fluctuations in the prices.

Biosimilars to help Biocon cross \$1 billion revenue in FY20

BENGALURU: Searing growth in its biosimilar business is expected to help see Biocon cross \$1 billion in revenue this fiscal. Biosimilars, or biologics, are biological drugs that are developed to be highly similar and clinically equivalent to an existing biological drug, and they can be developed once the original drug's patent expires. Biological drugs are made from complex molecules manufactured using living microorganisms, plants, or animal cells. Biocon's biosimilars, the first of which was insulin Glargine and which was launched in 2016 in Japan, contributed Rs 1,517 crore in the recently concluded fiscal, from just Rs 342 crore three years back, a CAGR of 45%.

Sachin Bansal marks fifth debt deal in two months

MUMBAI: Flipkart co-founder Sachin Bansal, who made a personal fortune of close to \$1 billion after selling the online retailer to Walmart last year, has found a new calling in debt deals. On Monday, Bansal invested ₹20 crore in debt in online grocery and milk delivery startup Milkbasket, the latest in a series of debt deals that he has entered into since exiting Flipkart. The small size of the deal notwithstanding, the transaction underlines a distinct pattern in Bansal's investments.

Only one hurdle remains in Jio's path to India domination

The first decisive pecking order reset forced by Mukesh Ambani on Indian telecom is here. As per recently released data, Jio has now left AirtelNSE -2.01 % behind in subscriber base to become as India's second-biggest telecom company. The number of Jio customers now stands at 30.6 crore — behind only Vodafone-Idea which has 38.7 crore. It means with 28.4 crore customers, Airtel now slips to third place.

Lok Sabha polls 2019: PM Modi files nomination from Varanasi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi filed his nomination papers for the Varanasi Lok Sabha seat on Friday, accompanied by a galaxy of top BJP and NDA leaders in what was a massive show of strength for the country's ruling alliance. Bihar Chief Minister and JD-U chief Nitish Kumar, Union minister and LJP chief Ram Vilas Paswan, Shiv Sena supremo Uddhav Thackeray and Shiromani Akali Dal patron Parkash Singh Badal were with Modi.

CBI issues look-out notice against Bhushan steel boss, wife in bank fraud case

The CBI on Wednesday issued a Look-out Circular against Bhushan Steel CMD Sanjay Singhal, vice chairman Aarti Singhal in a Rs 2,348 crore bank fraud case. On April 6, the CBI had in a statement said that it had filed a case under the charges of corruption and criminal conspiracy against the company - Bhushan Steel, its CMD Sanjay Singhal, Vice Chairman Aarti Singhal, director Ravi Prakash Goyal, full time director Ram Naresh Yadav, three other senior functionaries of the company and unknown government servants.

Weather forecast today, Cyclone Fani highlights: Cyclonic storm to turn 'severe' tonight, Kerala braces for heavy rains

Weather forecast today, Cyclone Fani LIVE Updates: The India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Sunday issued a weather warning stating that Cyclone Fani would transform into a severe cyclonic storm. "It is very likely to intensify into a severe cyclonic storm during next 12 hours and into a very severe cyclonic storm during subsequent 24 hours. It is very likely to move northwestwards till 30th April and thereafter recurve northeastwards gradually".

72 Lok Sabha seats in 9 states go to polls in 4th phase on Monday

New Delhi: Polling will be held on Monday for the fourth phase of Lok Sabha election in 72 parliamentary constituencies spread across nine states. The stakes are high for the ruling BJP and its allies as it had swept 56 of these seats in 2014, leaving just two for the Congress and the rest for other opposition parties such as the Trinamool Congress (six) and the Biju Janata Dal (six).

Letters prove Netaji was Gumnami Baba: Book

A leading American handwriting expert has concluded that Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose lived in India for several decades after Independence, under the identity of a reclusive ascetic Gumnami Baba, claims a new book. The expert, Carl Baggett, reached his conclusion after studying letters written by both Bose and Gumnami Baba. Baggett is an authority on document examination with over 40 years of experience and has completed over 5,000 cases. Certified by the American Bureau of Document Examiners.

Conspiracy probe after harassment investigation against CJI Ranjan Gogoi

New Delhi: Former Supreme Court judge AK Patnaik, who is tasked with probing an alleged conspiracy to frame Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi in a sexual harassment case, will start his inquiry only after an in-house inquiry against Gogoi is completed. "I will start only after the in-house committee completes its probe as there is no time limit fixed by the Supreme Court to submit the report of my inquiry into the affidavits sent to me by the court," Justice Patnaik told ET on Friday.

Yes Bank reports its first ever quarterly loss of ₹1507 crore

MUMBAI: Private sector lender Yes Bank Ltd on Friday reported its first-ever quarterly loss at ₹1,506.64 crore on the back of higher provisions. The bank would have reported a steeper loss if not for a tax write-back of ₹832 crore in the March quarter. Meanwhile, the bank's board approved the appointment of Ravinder Kumar Khanna and Shagun Kapur Gogia as additional directors (non-executive, non-independent) with immediate effect.

Tatas' election expenditure rises more than 20 times since 2014

The Tata group, through its electoral trust, is learnt to have contributed Rs 500-600 crore towards the 2019 Lok Sabha (LS) elections, pushing up its poll expenditure by more than 20 times since 2014. In the financial year 2014-15, it disbursed Rs 25.11 crore to political parties, according to official filings made by Progressive Electoral Trust, the Tata group's election funding vehicle. For the ongoing elections, it has made contributions to all national parties, with the biggest chunk going to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Chinese smartphone brands increase India market share

NEW DELHI: Chinese phone makers are clearly making their presence felt in the Indian smartphone market. India's overall smartphone shipments grew just 4% annually but the market share of Chinese brands in the Indian smartphone market touched 66% in the first quarter of this calendar year, according to a report released by Counterpoint's Market Monitor service today. Xiaomi remained the smartphone market leader in Q1 2019 with a 29% share, though its shipments declined by 2% YoY.

Rajan said to be in the running for post of Bank of England Guv

London: The UK government on Wednesday formally launched its hunt for a new Bank of England Governor, a post for which former Reserve Bank of India (RBI) governor Raghuram Rajan has been widely named as among the contenders. UK Chancellor Philip Hammond told the House of Commons Treasury Committee that it was important the person who took over from current Governor Mark Carney at the end of his term in January 2020.

Maruti to pull the plug on diesel cars in April 2020

Car buyers eyeing a diesel-powered vehicle from the Maruti Suzuki stable will have less than a year to make their choice as the company plans to stop manufacturing such vehicles starting next financial year. Maruti Suzuki, which is the largest car maker in the country, on Thursday, announced plans to discontinue selling all diesel cars in the country from April 1, 2020, citing uncertainty over demand for such vehicles due to "significant" increase in price once the new BS VI emission norms kick in.

Farmers in a fizz as PepsiCo files suit over potato IPR violation

A full-blown fight has broken out potato farmers in Gujarat and multinational food giant PepsiCo India Holdings Pvt Ltd (PIH). The issue: alleged infringement of intellectual property rights (IPR) of a plant variety registered under the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights (PPV&FR) Act, 2001. A group of farmer organisations and civil society representatives upped the ante against PepsiCo India after the MNC filed lawsuits against four potato growers.

Naspers checks out of MakeMyTrip with Ctrip share swap deal

BENGALURU: China's largest online travel agency now owns nearly half of India's largest travel e-portal, MakeMyTrip, after a share-swap deal with South African internet giant Naspers Ltd. The swap will see the stake of China's Ctrip.com International Ltd in Nasdaq-listed MakeMyTrip Pvt. Ltd increase to around 49%, along with 4% of total voting rights, while Naspers will end up owning 5.6% of the Chinese company's shares.

As Gill shines sunlight on Yes Bank's past, investors get ready for pain

Looks like Yes Bank Ltd's new boss Ravneet Gill is taking a chapter out of American litigator Louis Brandeis's philosophy. Brandeis had famously said: "Sunlight is said to be the best of disinfectants; electric light the most efficient policeman." Gill has thrown sunlight on every nook and corner of the private sector bank, which was until January headed by founder Rana Kapoor, who was ousted by the regulator after it found that corporate governance.

Ex-Army Chief Dalbir Singh Suhag named Indian High Commissioner to Seychelles

Former Indian Army Chief General Dalbir Singh Suhag has been appointed as the next High Commissioner of India to the Republic of Seychelles, the Ministry of External Affairs said on Thursday. "He is expected to take up the assignment shortly," a statement from the MEA read. The development puts to rest speculations about the former Army Chief joining politics. Dalbir Singh Suhag was the Army Chief when the Special Forces commandoes of the Indian Army conducted surgical strikes at terrorist launch pads inside Pakistan Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (PoK).

World's biggest gets bigger, TOI readership soars 17%: IRS

The world's biggest English language newspaper just got bigger. The Times of India recorded a staggering growth of 17% on an already massive base – adding 2.2 million, or 17%, in total readership to 15.2 million in the first quarter of 2019, from 13 million in the same period in 2017. There are seven English general interest broadsheet dailies including TOI, in the top 10 (of the remaining three, two are tabloids and one is a business paper), according to the latest findings of the Indian Readership Survey (IRS).

Supreme Court declines to lift stay on release of PM Modi biopic

New Delhi: Saying it "won't interfere" with an Election Commission (EC) order banning a biopic on Prime Minister Narendra Modi until 19 May, the Supreme Court on Friday refused to lift the stay on the release of the movie starring Vivek Oberoi. A bench headed by chief justice Ranjan Gogoi said it was not inclined to entertain the application filed by producers of the biopic challenging the EC's order.

Bajrang Punia to be first Indian wrestler at New York fight Night

NEW DELHI: Indian wrestling's poster boy Bajrang Punia will soon walk the famed hallways of the iconic Madison Square Garden in New York, US. Bajrang is the first Indian to be invited by USA Wrestling, the national governing body for the sport in the US, to participate in the "Grapple at the Garden - Beat the Streets" fight night, scheduled on May 6. Bajrang will take on two-time US national champion Yianni Diakomihalis in the 65kg category.

Supreme Court gives RBI 'last chance' to alter disclosure policy

The Supreme Court on Friday gave the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) "a last opportunity" to withdraw a November 2016 Disclosure Policy to the extent to which it stonewalls revelation of every other kind of information under the Right to Information Act, including the list of wilful defaulters and annual inspection reports. A Bench of Justices L. Nageswara Rao and M.R. Shah found the policy of the central bank to be directly contrary to the court's judgment.

India set to launch second mission to the moon Chandrayaan-2 in July, says ISRO

NEW DELHI: After being deferred several times in last one year, India's second mission to the moon - Chandrayaan 2 is now all set to be launched in July. The Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) which had initially planned to launch the mission last year in April, confirmed that the all the modules for the mission would be ready in the next two months. "All the modules are getting ready for the Chandrayaan-2 launch during the window of July 9 to July 16.

Mysterious footprints found in the Himalayas. Army says it could be of mythical snowman

The Indian Army claimed to have found the footprints of a mythical beast called 'Yeti' in the Himalayas. As per the Twitter handle of the Army, an expedition team has found mysterious footprints measuring 32x15 inches close to Makalu Base Camp on 09 April 2019. "This elusive snowmanNSE -2.44 % has only been sighted at Makalu-Barun National Park in the past," the tweet further added. The pictures, however, only show the print of only one foot.

BlackBerry Messenger shuts down this month, here's what you need to know

One of the first instant messaging applications, BlackBerry Messenger (BBM), is going to shut down on May 31. On April 18, Emtel, the company that has run BBM since 2016, announced the closure of the consumer version of the app. The company cited dwindling number of users as the reason for the closure. However, BlackBerry followed up that announcement by offering the enterprise version (BBMe) of the software to consumers.

Polling over in 424 seats, spotlight on eastern UP

NEW DELHI: Elections 2019 have begun to wind down with polling completed in 424 of the 543 Lok Sabha seats after Monday's fifth phase, which saw voting in 51 seats across seven states. As many as 80% of these seats are categorised as rural. The voter turnout, at 62.56% until 6 pm, was slightly higher than that recorded in 2014. Polling in Bihar and Rajasthan went up by 2 percentage points.

Two Olympians face off against each other in Jaipur Rural LS seat

An interesting electoral combat is on the cards in Rajasthan's Jaipur Rural constituency where two Olympians -- BJP's Col Rajyavardhan Rathore and Congress's Krishna Poonia -- will face each other in the Lok Sabha polls. Olympian-turned-politician Rathore, who is the Union Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting, had won the seat in the 2014 elections and the party has reposed faith in him again while the Congress fielded sitting MLA Poonia to contest against the former Army officer.

Sebi finds NSE guilty of lapses in algo trade case

MUMBAI: The markets regulator on Tuesday cracked the whip on National Stock Exchange of India Ltd (NSE), directing it to deposit nearly ₹1,000 crore in an investor fund and barring it from accessing capital markets for six months, besides clawing back a chunk of salaries from its two former CEOs, for lapses in its algorithmic trading systems and co-location services. In a set of five orders issued on Tuesday, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi).

BJP eyes election boost from Masood Azhar's ban by UN

Describing the UNSC decision against Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) leader Masood Azhar as diplomatic victory for India, union government on Thursday said that Azhar's listing as a global terrorist was because international pressure and diplomatic pressure of India. Speaking to media on Thursday, finance minister Arun Jaitley and Defence minister Nirmala Sitharaman said that there were 35 declared terrorist organisation based in Pakistan and the decision against Azhar was because of the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Anil Ambani takes on Rahul Gandhi, calls him a 'malicious liar'

The Anil Ambani group on Sunday took Congress President Rahul Gandhi head on by calling the latter's allegations of crony capitalism against its chairman as "calumny, disinformation, distortion, and malicious lies." In recent election-eve media interactions and rallies, Rahul has singled out Anil Ambani several times for winning the Rafale defence contract from the Narendra Modi government, alleging favouritism and corruption. In a statement on Sunday.

Tendulkar to Ethics Officer: No tractable conflict, BCCI responsible for this current situation

Sachin Tendulkar has rejected BCCI's observation that his alleged Conflict of Interest falls under "tractable category", terming the parent body "responsible for the current situation" arising due to his role as a member of the Cricket Advisory Committee and an 'Icon' of Mumbai Indians. In fact, Tendulkar in his 13-point response (in possession of PTI) to BCCI Ethics Officer DK Jain has requested him to call Committee of Administrators (CoA) chief Vinod Rai and CEO Rahul Johri to "clarify their position".

Wedding bells! Noel Tata's son Neville gets engaged to Manasi Kirloskar in Mumbai

A new alliance is being forged. And this one marks the coming together of two leading business families for a happy occasion. Last week, eminent businessmen Noel Tata's son Neville and Vikram Kirloskar's daughter Manasi got engaged in a private ceremony in Mumbai. According to a source close to both the families, the senior Tata and Kirloskar's friendship goes way back, and the joining of the young couple further cements their relationship.

Avengers Endgame breaks these 5 records at India box office: Marvel film is 2019's top grosser, biggest Hollywood hit ever

Avengers: Endgame has become the highest grossing Hollywood film in India, overtaking its predecessor Avengers: Infinity War's lifetime earnings in less than a week. The Marvel superhero film has made Rs 244 crore (nett) in six days, and Rs 290 crore gross. Infinity War had concluded its run with around Rs 230 crore nett. Trade analyst Taran Adarsh called the performance an 'eye-opener' and said that the film is competing with the biggest Hindi films.

Tej Bahadur's papers rejected; SP retains Shalini Yadav

Varanasi: The nomination papers of dismissed BSF jawan Tej Bahadur Yadav has been rejected by the returning officer for Varanasi Lok Sabha constituency following his failure to submit a certificate that 'he was not sacked for either corruption or disloyalty'. After Yadav's paper was rejected, 31 candidates were in the fray for the seat, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "Shri Tej Bahadur has stated that he has been dismissed from government service on April 19, 2017.

Patanjali's ₹4,325 crore bid for Ruchi Soya gets lenders nod

NEW DELHI: In its first major acquisition, Yoga guru Baba Ramdev-led Patanjali Ayurved walked away with debt-ridden edible oil firm Ruchi Soya with a bid of ₹4,325 crore, sources said. Patanjali acquired Ruchi Soya Industries in an insolvency auction started by lenders to recover over ₹9,300 crore loans. Homegrown FMCG major almost got a walk over after rival Adani Wilmar decided to pull out from the race despite being selected the highest bidder few months back.

IPL 2019 playoffs: Meet the top four teams to battle it out for the title

As IPL league matches ended on Sunday and four teams have now remained to battle it out for the coveted title, let's look at who made the cut and who faced elimination. Three spots for playoffs had already been grabbed by Delhi Capitals, Chennai Super Kings and Mumbai Indians, while there was an intense fight for the fourth spot. Chennai comfortably qualified for a playoff berth while Delhi defeated Royal Challengers Bangalore on Sunday.

Major Gogoi faces loss of seniority for 'fraternising' with Kashmir woman

Major Leetul Gogoi, who was at the centre of the 2017 'human shield controversy', has been "severely reprimanded" and will suffer the ignominy of reduction in seniority for "fraternising" with a local woman last year, officials said here on Sunday. This follows confirmation by the army headquarters of court martial proceedings against Major Gogoi and his driver Sameer Malla who were found guilty on two counts -- "fraternising" with a local woman in spite of instructions to the contrary and "being away from the place of duty while in operational area".

Sonu Sood honoured to play Pullela Gopichand in PV Sindhu biopic

Ever since actor Sonu Sood announced in 2017 that he would be making a biopic on badminton star PV Sindhu's life, there has been a lot of speculation around who would play the titular role. While that mystery has still not been solved, we have learned that Sonu himself would be playing the role of the former badminton player and chief national coach for the Indian badminton team, Pullela Gopichand. The actor sounds excited to be able to portray the part and shares that he has met and discussed the same with Gopichand, too.

Odisha braces for Cyclone Fani, over 1 million people evacuated

NEW DELHI: India is evacuating about a million people to safer places as the country's worst cyclone in more than five years is set to make landfall in Odisha on Friday morning, raising fears of widespread devastation. Odisha along with West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh joined hands with the central government to prepare rescue and relief steps ahead of Cyclone Fani's expected landfall in Odisha's Puri district.

IPL 2019 POINTS TABLE

The Indian Premier League is back with its 12th season and all the eight franchises are ready to battle it out for T20 supremacy. A lot of new faces and young talent will be on show in this year's IPL along with the seasoned campaigners. Just like every year, the eight teams will play against each other in home and away matches. Two points will be awarded to the winner of each match while one point is awarded to either team in case of no result.

Jail term in drug case will not impact Ness Wadia: Company

NEW DELHI: Maintaining that the jail term by a Japanese court for Ness Wadia in a drug case remains suspended, the business conglomerate on Tuesday said that the development will not impact Wadia Group heir in discharging his responsibilities. "The judgement is clear. It is a suspended sentence. Hence it will not impact Ness Wadia in the discharge of any of his responsibilities and he will continue to play the role that he has done hitherto, both within the Group and outside,"

Most SC judges rally behind CJI Gogoi, question Justice Chandrachud's letter to inquiry panel

New Delhi: After a three-judge inquiry panel dismissed a sexual harassment complaint against Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi, an overwhelming majority of Supreme Court judges on Monday expressed solidarity with the CJI and questioned the propriety of Justice D Y Chandrachud's letter to the panel suggesting alteration of the inquiry procedure. Contrary to reports in a section of media that views shared by Justice Chandrachud

Godrej Properties buys RK Studios for an undisclosed sum

Raj Kapoor's RK Studios in Chembur, an eastern suburb of Mumbai, has slipped into history. The 2.2-acre iconic landmark has been sold to Godrej Properties, the Godrej group's real estate company. Although neither party is willing to put a figure to the deal, the industry estimate is that the plot went under the hammer for close to Rs 200 crore. The plot is located on the Sion-Panvel highway, an arterial road that connects the southern tip of the city with many townships of Navi Mumbai.

Father, brother killed in accident on exam eve, Ghaziabad girl scores 92.4% in class 10

On the eve of class 10 board exams, while other students were busy with last-minute revisions and hectic preparations, Tiya Singh was coping with her world crumbling around her. For the 15-year-old, it was sleepless night, one that was fraught with grief and trauma. Only hours before, she had lost her father and her 11-year-old brother to a road accident. They had gone on the motorcycle to fetch dinner for the family from a dhaba and were run over by a speeding truck near Shastri Nagar around 9.30pm.

ICICI Bank Q4 net profit falls 5 per cent to Rs 969 crore

MUMBAI: ICICI Bank reported a 5 per cent drop in its January-March quarter net profit to Rs 969 crore over the corresponding quarter the previous year, on higher expenditure and a drop in other income which got a boost last year from the sale of stake in a subsidiary. Net profit for the fiscal year 2018-19 fell by 50 per cent on year to Rs 3,363.30 crore on lower other income and increase in provisions.

TCS overtakes RIL to become most valued company again

Software services major Tata Consultancy Services on Thursday reclaimed the status of the country's most valued firm by market valuation, surpassing Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL). RIL shares have been on a downhill, falling for the fourth day in a row on Thursday. In four days, the shares have plunged 10.79 per cent to ₹ 1,255.15 on the BSE. Following the plunge in its share price, RIL's market valuation dropped to ₹ 7,95,628.55 crore on the BSE. "Reliance Industries is leading the massive fall in Nifty.

May hand over stuck projects to govt bodies for completion, top court warns Amrapali

The Supreme Court (SC) indicated on Wednesday it could take away the Amrapali Group's ownership of unfinished projects and hand them to government agencies, reiterating that it will protect the interests of tens of thousands of homebuyers after the realty developer failed to deliver flats despite being paid. Approximately 46,000 flats have not been delivered by Amrapali Group companies, which have the largest tract of land for a real estate developer across Noida and Greater Noida in the National Capital Region.

India joins US, Japan, and Philippines for naval drills in South China Sea

NEW DELHI: Two Indian naval ships joined their counterparts from the US, Japan, and The Philippines for a "Group Sail" exercise through the contested waters of the South China Sea, underlining India's commitment to working with partners to ensure safe and open sea lanes, the Indian Navy said in a statement on Thursday. Incidentally, the two ships –INS Kolkata and Shakti -- that participated in the "Group Sail" were the same vessels that took part in the International Fleet Review in China's port city of Qingdao as part of the 70th anniversary.

Want to ban burqa then outlaw 'ghunghat' too, says Javed Akhtar

Veteran lyricist Javed Akhtar on Thursday said he was not averse to enacting a law banning the burqa if it was accompanied with a similar action against the 'ghunghat' system prevalent among women in Rajasthan. Akhtar's comment came in the wake of the Shiv Sena mouthpiece on Wednesday urging the Modi government to emulate Sri Lanka in banning the burqa on grounds of national security.

McDonald's buys out partner, will temporarily shut 165 outlets

NEW DELHI: McDonald's has decided to temporarily shut down 165 of its outlets in north and east India after finally ending its six-year-long bitter battle with its Indian franchise partner, Vikram Bakshi, to take over the 50:50 joint venture, Connaught Plaza Restaurants (CPRL). While the terms of the deal, including the settlement of the contentious \$330 million claim by CPRL, were not disclosed by the two estranged partners, Bakshi, who exited the nearly 25-year-old JV, is padding up for a second innings in the domestic fast-food market.

Lok Sabha election 2019: UP, Rajasthan record around 50% polling till 3 pm

Voting began on Monday for the fifth phase of Lok Sabha election in 51 constituencies spread across seven states with many political bigwigs, including Rajnath Singh, Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and Smriti Irani, being in the fray. About 8.75 crore people will decide the fate of 674 candidates in the fifth of the seven-phase elections. The Election Commission has set up 94,000 polling stations/booths and made elaborate security arrangements.

Noida CEO is new YEIDA chairman

NOIDA, GREATER NOIDA: The CEO of Noida Authority, Alok Tandon has been appointed as the Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development Authority (YEIDA) chairman. The post fell vacant after the retirement of Dr Prabhat Kumar on April 30. Kumar was the chairman of YEIDA for about two years. Tandon, a 1986-batch IAS officer, has over 30 years of experience in long-term project and resource management and negotiations with regulatory bodies. He has also headed a public sector organization in the power sector for four years.

'Chowkidar chor hai' remark: Rahul Gandhi tenders unconditional apology to Supreme Court

Congress president Rahul Gandhi tendered an unconditional apology in the Supreme Court for wrongfully attributing to the apex court the 'chowkidar chor hai' remark in the Rafale verdict. He also sought closure of the criminal contempt proceedings against him on a petition filed by BJP MP Meenakshi Lekhi. In a fresh three-page affidavit, Gandhi said he holds the apex court in the "highest esteem and respect" and that he has never sought.

Rooh Afza back in retail stores: Hamdard

Amid reports of an acute shortage of the summer refreshment syrup Rooh Afza in India, its maker Hamdard Laboratories (India) on Thursday said that the syrup is now available in the market and can be bought from major retail stores and grocery outlets across the country. In a statement, Hamdard said: "Full capacity production and a well-planned distribution infrastructure are ensuring it is reaching all corners of the country."

IPL Final 2019: Ahead of final against CSK, Rohit Sharma identifies key player for Mumbai Indians

The lure of an unprecedented fourth IPL title or facing a Chennai Super Kings side they have beaten thrice this season isn't making Mumbai Indians skipper Rohit Sharma breathe easy. "We are not going into the final thinking about our fourth title. That will take care of itself. What they have done won't be a major concern. I would rather focus on my team. The tournament itself is the biggest challenge. I see every team as a threat.

Piramal, CPPIB in tie-up for India's 1st renewables InvIT

Mumbai: Piramal Enterprises Ltd on Tuesday said it has signed an agreement with Canada's largest pension fund manager, Canada Pension Plan Investment Board (CPPIB), to co-sponsor India's first renewable energy-focused infrastructure investment trust (InvIT). The proposed InvIT will have an initial targeted corpus of up to \$600 million with an option to scale up further, Piramal said in a regulatory filing.

Fani declared 'Extremely Severe' natural calamity

NEW DELHI: Centre has declared cyclone Fani an 'extremely severe' natural calamity with the death toll rising to 35. This allows the Naveen Patnaik government to seek logistic and financial assistance at the national level. Among the worst hit are Bhubaneswar, Puri and the adjoining areas where thousands of people are still grappling with snapped power supply and acute water shortage. Last year, Kerala floods were categorised as 'severe' after the state government's demand.

India, China set up joint working group to tackle crude volatility

New Delhi: India and China, two most sought-after customers of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec), have put in place a mechanism to figure out ways to fight crude oil volatility and teamed up for other energy issues in global markets. The two countries have set up a joint working group that would identify subjects of cooperation in the energy sector, including ways to rein in global oil prices. The group, set up a month ago, will be co-chaired by a joint secret.

India's G.S. Lakshmi first woman to be inducted into ICC match referee panel

India's G.S. Lakshmi has become the first woman to be appointed to ICC's international panel of match referees and will be eligible to officiate in international games with immediate effect. Claire Polosak had become the first ever woman umpire to stand in a men's ODI, earlier this month. Lakshmi, 51, who first officiated as a match referee in domestic women's cricket in 2008-09, has overseen three women's ODI matches and three women's T20I matches.

Pat on the back from BAT to make Sanjiv Puri's job easier

KOLKATA: British American Tobacco plc, the largest shareholder in ITCNSE -0.82 %, has expressed confidence that the cigarettes-to-hospitality conglomerate will continue its excellent performance under new chairman Sanjiv Puri, in a virtual endorsement of his elevation. The British cigarettes multinational, which owns 29.58% in ITC, in an email response to ET also said it's "happy" with its current shareholding.

Free India's first terrorist was a Hindu, his name is Nathuram Godse: Kamal Haasan

Makkal Needhi Maiyam (MNM) founder Kamal Haasan has stoked a possible controversy by saying "free India's first terrorist was a Hindu," referring to Nathuram Godse who killed Mahatma Gandhi in 1948. Addressing an election campaign at Aravakurichi in Tamil Nadu on Sunday night, the actor-politician said he was one of those "proud Indians" who desired an India with equality and where the "three colours" in the Tricolour, an obvious reference to different faiths, "remained intact."

Shrinking Moon generating lunar quakes: study

The Moon is shrinking as its interior cools — getting over 50 metres skinnier through the last several hundred million years — and causing quakes on the lunar surface, a study has found. Just as a grape wrinkles as it shrinks down to a raisin, the Moon gets wrinkles as it shrinks, researchers said. Unlike the flexible skin on a grape, the Moon's surface crust is brittle, so it breaks as the Moon shrinks, forming "thrust faults" where one section of crust is pushed up over a neighbouring part.

West Bengal poll campaign cut short by a day

NEW DELHI: The Election Commission (EC), in a first-of-its-kind decision, curtailed all electioneering in West Bengal by a day on grounds that the state government had failed to provide a level playing field to all candidates. In a six-page order, the commission took the unanimous view that some "special measures are urgently needed to arrest the prevailing situation in these nine parliamentary constituencies" to create a conducive law and order situation to hold free, fair and peaceful.

Vidyasagar bust vandalism: Trinamool submits 'proof' of BJP's 'involvement' to ECI

Intensifying its attack on the BJP over the desecration of a bust of social reformer Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar in a college during BJP president Amit Shah's mega rally in Kolkata on Tuesday, the Trinamool Congress on May 15 released videos to claim that "BJP goons" damaged the statue. A Trinamool team comprising Derek O'Brien, Sukhendu Sekhar Ray, Manish Gupta and Nadimul Haque also met the Election Commission.

SoftBank, Tiger Global deliver \$220 million in fresh funds to Grofers

BENGALURU: Grofers has raised \$220 million from SoftBank Vision Fund and other investors, marking the biggest fundraising in India's online grocery delivery industry and ratcheting up pressure on larger rival BigBasket. The latest funding comes after the startup executed a quick turnaround plan following a fund-raising at a beaten-down valuation in February 2018. South Korean investment firm KTB Ventures and existing investors Tiger Global and Sequoia Capital also invested in the latest round, Grofers said on Wednesday.

Maharashtra adds Rs 4,300 crore to fight against drought

MUMBAI: Faced with criticism, especially from NCP chief Sharad Pawar, for not doing enough to tackle the severe drought in the state, CM Devendra Fadnavis used the audio-bridge technology to connect with 24,000 elected representatives and 884 sarpanchs in a week, listen to their problems and stress that funds won't be a constraint. In all, 8,862 crore will be spent to tackle drought in 139 tehsils across 22 districts, said a senior bureaucrat.

Multilateral trade: India to hold 2-day WTO ministerial meeting from today

India has convened a WTO (World Trade Organization) ministerial meeting of 16 developing and six least developed countries starting Monday. Issues such as impasse on the appointment of WTO's appellate body members and way forward on reforms at the global trade body would be discussed in the meeting of developing countries in New Delhi on May 13-14. The meeting is being held at a time when the multilateral rule-based trading system is facing serious and grave challenges.

General election 2019 | Campaigning ends for final phase of polls in 59 seats

Campaigning for the last phase of the staggered Lok Sabha elections spread over more than a month drew to a close on May 17 as top leaders sought to muster a final show of strength in the contest for 59 seats with Prime Minister Narendra Modi among those in the fray. Polling will be held on May 19 in the seventh phase in all 13 seats in Punjab, as many seats in Uttar Pradesh, nine in West Bengal, eight seats each in Bihar and Madhya Pradesh, four in Himachal Pradesh, three in Jharkhand and the lone seat Chandigarh.

Lok Sabha Election 2019: Result Dates, Schedule, Facts - All Details Here

NEW DELHI: India is heading for Lok Sabha election 2019 - the world's largest democratic election exercise. According to Indian General Election 2019 schedule, the national election will be held in seven rounds from April 11 and the election results 2019 will be announced on May 23. This general election will choose the 17th Lok Sabha. The members of the largest party or coalition will then choose the Prime Minister.

Monsoon likely to be delayed, may hit Kerala on June 6: IMD in forecast

The Southwest monsoon is likely to be delayed this year, with the onset expected in Kerala on June 6 instead of June 1, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said Wednesday in its monsoon onset forecast for 2019. "Upon reaching the south Andaman Sea, the monsoon may take three to four days additionally to cover the Andaman Sea and further over to the Andaman and Nicobar islands.

Ex-SC judge A K Sikri appointed chief of News Broadcasting Standards Authority

Former Supreme Court judge A K Sikri has been appointed as the chairperson of the News Broadcasting Standards Authority, the News Broadcasters Association (NBA) said Tuesday. The News Broadcasting Standards Authority (NBSA) is an independent body for self regulation of 24x7 news channels, who are members of the NBA. Justice (retd) Sikri will succeed Justice (retd) R V Raveendran, who completes his term on May 25.

***Need to closely monitor asset-liability mismatch in financial sector:
Krishnamurthy Subramanian***

NEW DELHI: Chief economic adviser Krishnamurthy Subramanian has said there is a need to closely monitor the asset-liability mismatch in the financial sector and called for an improvement in the disclosure framework for defaults, as embattled non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) face a liquidity squeeze and rating downgrades. In a wide-ranging interaction at the ET office, Subramanian termed the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) a big change, and said the economy.

Jet's revival looks bleak as top executives resign with immediate effect

Grounded Jet Airways has been left without any top-level executive, days after Abu Dhabi-based Etihad put in its letter of interest to re-invest in the airline as a minority partner. The chances of Jet's revival appeared bleak without any sign of a majority partner, and with the exit of key officials and a large number of its fleet going to rivals. The top executives who have put in their papers with immediate effect include Jet's chief executive officer (CEO).

Airtel narrows gap with Jio on ARPU in Q4

Kolkata: Bharti AirtelNSE 1.00 % has managed to narrow the gap with Reliance Jio in average revenue per user in the quarter ended March, but has fallen further behind on local mobile services revenue and needs to boost subscriber additions to keep pace with its newest rival, analysts say. The Sunil Mittal-led telco, they said, needs to refocus aggressively on subscriber growth and traction to effectively combat the Mukesh Ambani-led telco.

'Demerger of consumer arm to be positive for Tata Chem'

MUMBAI: The demerger of the consumer products segment is an incremental positive for Tata Chemicals (TCL) because it unlocks hidden value of Tata Salt in a tax-efficient manner and without creating any cross-holdings, analysts said. Post demerger, TCL's chemicals business is available at an attractive price with a medium term upside of nearly 15%, according to analysts. TCL's Consumer Products segment will be demerged into Tata Global Beverages (TGBL), which will be renamed 'Tata Consumer Products'.

Chandrayaan-2 will carry 13 payloads: ISRO

India's second Moon mission that is planned for a July launch will have 13 payloads and one passive experiment from American space agency NASA, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) said on Wednesday. The spacecraft with a mass of 3.8 tonnes has three modules — Orbiter, Lander (Vikram) and Rover (Pragyan). All the modules are getting ready for Chandrayaan-2 launch during the window of July 9-16 window, with an expected Moon landing on September 6, the space agency had earlier said.

Flipkart pitches its manufacturing prowess to major electronic brands

Flipkart, India's largest e-commerce firm, has long yearned to replicate the success of Amazon Basics, the private label brand of arch rival Amazon.com Inc, in India. Under a new strategy, Flipkart is wooing international original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) to create new product models in high-selling categories like electronics for sale on its platform. The e-commerce major is pitching its manufacturing capacity.

Sanjiv Puri steps into Deveshwar's shoes at ITC

NEW DELHI/MUMBAI: ITC Ltd, India's largest cigarette maker, on Monday named managing director Sanjiv Puri, 56, as its chairman. He will take over the legacy of Y.C. Deveshwar, the company's longest serving chairman who died on 11 May. Puri was set to take over the role by 2021-22, and was being mentored by Deveshwar for the post of chairman. Deveshwar helped ITC diversify from a cigarettes company to one with business interests in retail, packaged foods.

SC grants bail to BJP worker Priyanka, tells her to say sorry to Mamata

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Tuesday granted bail to a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) youth wing worker from West Bengal, Priyanka Sharma, who was arrested for posting a morphed picture of chief minister Mamata Banerjee on social media but asked her to tender an unconditional written apology. Sharma was arrested on 10 May for sharing the morphed photograph in which Banerjee's face was superimposed on an image of actor Priyanka Chopra.

We need to be unique and disruptive, says MG Motor India President Rajeev Chaba

MUMBAI, MAY 15 The Chinese-owned British carmaker MG (Morris Garages) Motor made its debut in the Indian market on Wednesday by unveiling the Hector, which the company claims is India's first internet car — with more than 50 connected features — as well as India's first 48V hybrid SUV. In an interview to BusinessLine, Rajeev Chaba, President & Managing Director, MG Motor India, talks about Hector's features, differentiating factors and the company's strategy in India.

Trade Deficit widens to \$15.33 billion in April

New Delhi: India's merchandise export growth slowed down to a fourmonth low in April with only 0.64% rise to \$26.07 billion, while imports increased at a six-month high of 4.48% to \$41.4 billion, according to official data released on Wednesday. Trade deficit widened to a fivemonth high in April 2019 to \$15.33 billion, as against \$13.72 billion a year ago, on the back of higher oilNSE 0.51 % imports at \$11.38 billion, a jump of 9.26%, and a 53.99% jump in gold imports to \$3.9 billion.

INTERNATIONAL CURRENT AFFAIRS

Avengers Endgame: The Marvel Cinematic Universe explained

Marvel sequel Avengers: Endgame hits UK cinemas on 25 April and is widely expected to be the biggest release of 2019. The film will be the 22nd entry in the Marvel Cinematic Universe, which began with 2008's Iron Man. If you want to watch Endgame, but feel daunted by the sheer size of the MCU, never fear! Here's everything you need to know. What is the Marvel Cinematic Universe? The Marvel Cinematic Universe - or MCU for short - is the shared place where all 22 films featuring the comic book characters are set.

US election 2020: Joe Biden launches presidential bid, joining crowded field

In a video announcement, Mr Biden argued that the "core values of the nation... our very democracy, everything that has made America America, is at stake". The 76-year-old, who has already run twice for the presidency, enters a crowded race for the 2020 Democratic nomination. He is up against 19 other hopefuls. They include Senators Elizabeth Warren, Kamala Harris and Bernie Sanders. What else did he say? Mr Biden, who served as President Barack Obama's deputy for two terms, recalled President Donald Trump's.

NASA Probe Detects Likely 'Marsquake' – an Interplanetary First

NASA's robotic probe InSight has detected and measured what scientists believe to be a "marsquake," marking the first time a likely seismological tremor has been recorded on another planet, the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in California reported on Tuesday. The breakthrough came nearly five months after InSight, the first spacecraft designed specifically to study the deep interior of a distant world, touched down on the surface of Mars to begin its two-year seismological mission on the red planet.

Norway nets 'trained Russian weapon': A whale

A harness recovered from an unusually friendly white whale in north Norway may indicate the animal had been trained by the Russian navy as part of a marine mammal special force, experts in Norway have said. The harness, which had the words "Equipment of St. Petersburg" labelled on it, could be used to attach cameras or other instruments, the experts added. The beluga whale was first sighted last week in waters off Finnmark — Norway's most northerly county which borders Russia.

Naruhito: Japan's new emperor pledges to be symbol of unity

Japan's Emperor Naruhito has pledged to fulfil his role as a "symbol of the state and unity", in his first public address since taking the throne. The 59-year-old was speaking as he officially began his reign on Wednesday in a short but symbolic ceremony at the Imperial Palace. Naruhito succeeds his father, 85-year-old Akihito, who abdicated citing his age and failing health. He is the first Japanese emperor to stand down in more than 200 years.

Billionaire Warren Buffett gives new hint about his successor

OMAHA: Billionaire Warren Buffett on Saturday gave a clue on who might succeed him to run his Berkshire Hathaway empire, but did not completely reveal his hand. The world's third-richest man also said at his company's annual shareholder meeting that its recent investment in Amazon was not a shift in strategy to focus on Silicon Valley firms, which have largely remained missing from Berkshire's voluminous portfolio. Buffett, 88, was pressed by questions -- each greeted.

Saurav Ghosal, Joshna Chinappa win Asian Championship titles

In a memorable day for India, Saurav Ghosal and Joshna Chinappa won the individual titles in the Asian Squash Championship on Sunday. Joshna Chinappa, the second seed, successfully defended her title, beating the top seed Annie Au of Hong Kong 11-5, 8-11, 11-6, 11-6 in the summit clash. Ghosal, the top seed and finalist last year, ensured there was no slip this time when he downed the fourth seed Leo Au Chun Ming, also of Hong Kong.

Jacinda Ardern Got Engaged. New Zealand Almost Didn't Notice

WELLINGTON, New Zealand — Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern is engaged to be married, and it took a sharp eye for New Zealand to find out. Ms. Ardern, 38, and her partner of more than five years, Clarke Gayford, 41, became engaged over Easter weekend, a spokesman for Ms. Ardern confirmed on Friday. The prime minister made global headlines last June when she became the second elected world leader in modern times to give birth while in office, and she has since received widespread praise for her response to the Christchurch terrorist attacks.

Caster Semenya: Olympic 800m champion loses appeal against IAAF testosterone rules

Caster Semenya has lost a landmark case against athletics' governing body meaning it will be allowed to restrict testosterone levels in female runners. The Court of Arbitration for Sport (Cas) rejected the South African's challenge against the IAAF's new rules. But Cas said it had "serious concerns as to the future practical application" of the regulations. Olympic 800m champion Semenya, 28, said in response to the ruling that the IAAF "have always targeted me specifically".

Thailand king surprises with royal wedding to bodyguard ahead of coronation

Just days before his official coronation, Thailand's King Maha Vajiralongkorn on Wednesday married the deputy head of his personal guard force and gave her the title Queen Suthida. The surprise announcement was carried in the Royal Gazette, and footage from Wednesday's wedding ceremony was later shown on the nightly Royal News segment aired on all Thai television channels.

WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange sentenced by London court to 50 weeks in jail for skipping bail

WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange was sentenced by a London court to 50 weeks in jail for breaching bail conditions, after he submitted a letter to the court, apologising to those who "consider I've disrespected them". The sentence at the Southwark Crown Court was about Assange's bail conditions, while he faces another hearing in the extradition case at the Westminster Magistrates Court on Thursday brought by United States, where he is wanted to face charges of breaching secrecy laws.

India's Oyo hotel chain buys @Leisure for €369m

Oyo, the fast-growing Indian hotel chain, has secured its first big international acquisition with a €369.5m takeover of Netherlands-based property management business @Leisure. Founded in 2013 by Ritesh Agarwal when he was 19, Oyo has achieved rapid expansion through a technology-driven franchise model, focusing mainly on small budget hotels. The company already claims to be the world's sixth-biggest hotel brand by room numbers and aims to become the largest by 2023.

Masood Azhar terror listing: U.N. Sanctions Committee meets amid positive hints from China

A decision on whether Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammed chief Masood Azhar will be listed as a global terrorist by the United Nations will be known on May 1 as the world body's Sanctions Committee holds a crucial meeting, amid indications that China could lift its hold on the proposal to blacklist Azhar. The Council's 1267 Al Qaeda Sanctions Committee is expected to meet at the United Nations and the issue of Azhar's listing is likely to be considered.

Emperor Akihito: Japanese monarch declares historic abdication

In his last public address as emperor, Akihito handed over the symbols of power and thanked the public for their support during his 30-year reign. The 85-year-old was given permission to abdicate after saying he felt unable to fulfil his role because of his age and declining health. He is the first Japanese monarch to stand down in more than 200 years. Akihito technically remained emperor until midnight (15:00 GMT on Tuesday

Liverpool pull off epic comeback against Barcelona to book place in Champions League final

Thus far unable to catch Pep Guardiola's latest creation in the league, Liverpool took an almighty revenge on one he made earlier, and the history of this great club in European football may never be the same again. They thought they had written the book on the matter of comebacks in the Champions League – concerning that story you may have heard from 14 years earlier in Istanbul, although this one, it has to be said, bears comparison. Three goals down to the Barcelona of late-era Lionel Messi.

Royal baby name revealed: Prince Harry and Meghan name son Archie Harrison Mountbatten-Windsor

London — Prince Harry and Meghan, the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, have revealed the name of their first child. The new royal baby is named Archie Harrison Mountbatten-Windsor. The royal couple made the announcement Wednesday via their official Instagram account, ending several days of feverish speculation about their son's name. The announcement came with a black and white photo showing Queen Elizabeth II meeting her new grandson.

David Ferrer's career comes to an end with loss in Madrid

MADRID: David Ferrer's career came to an end with a 6-4, 6-1 loss to Alexander Zverev in the second round at the Madrid Open on Wednesday. The 37-year-old Spaniard had announced earlier that this would be his last tournament because he didn't feel he was fit enough to keep competing at a high level on tour. Ferrer finished his 20-year career with 27 singles titles, fifth-best among active players behind the top four of Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal, Novak Djokovic and Andy Murray.

Trump's taxes show losses of \$1.17 billion over a decade

US President Donald Trump defended his real estate tax strategy, saying his business was "entitled" to write-offs following a New York Times investigation that showed he reported losses of \$1.17 billion between 1985 and 1994. "You always wanted to show losses for tax purposes," Trump tweeted on Wednesday. "Almost all real estate developers did - and often re-negotiate with banks, it was sport."

TCS set to become world's third-largest IT services company

NEW DELHI: Tata Consultancy Services Ltd (TCS) is set to surpass DXC Technology Co. to become the world's third-largest software services provider in fiscal 2018-19, marking the first change in the pecking order of the information technology (IT) outsourcing industry in two years. If TCS does surpass DXC, it will only lag behind International Business Machines Corp. and Accenture Plc. DXC Technology, formed by the merger of Computer Sciences with a division of Hewlett Packard in 2017.

Pakistani Christian woman once on death row for blasphemy leaves for Canada

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan — Nearly a decade after a Pakistani Christian woman named Asia Bibi was accused of blasphemy during a dispute over a bucket of water, then condemned to death and imprisoned for eight years, she has been finally allowed to leave Pakistan and join her family in Canada, her attorney and Pakistani officials said Wednesday. Bibi, a 51-year-old farmworker and mother of five, was acquitted of the capital crime six months ago by Pakistan's Supreme Court, which overturned her original conviction for blasphemy.

Croatian World Cupper Igor Stimac set to be appointed Indian football team coach

Former Croatia international and manager Igor Stimac will be appointed as the Indian men's team coach after the All India Football Federation's (AIFF) technical committee recommended him for the post. The committee, headed by Shyam Thapa, interviewed the four candidates for the post — Stimac, Albert Roca, Hakan Ericson and Lee — on Thursday and zeroed in on Stimac.

Cortizo Declared Winner in Panama President Race

PANAMA CITY (AP) — Panama's Electoral Court has declared opposition candidate Laurentino Cortizo the winner of the country's presidential elections. The court said Cortizo of the Democratic Revolutionary Party won 33%, with 95% of votes counted from Sunday's vote. It said Cortizo, a cattle rancher, will formally be named president-elect on Thursday. Cortizo said just after midnight Monday that "I call on all Panamanians to join in a national effort to correct the country's path, rescue the country and get the economy on the right track."

Nirav Modi denied bail for a third time, to remain in 'unliveable' UK jail

LONDON: Fugitive diamond merchant Nirav Modi was denied bail by a UK court on Wednesday for the third time in his extradition case to India to face charges in the Punjab National Bank fraud & money laundering case amounting to up to USD 2 billion and will continue to be lodged in a London jail described by his lawyers as "unliveable". His bail, which had already been rejected twice before by Westminster Magistrates' Court in London.

Facebook co-founder calls for tech giant's break-up, says Zuckerberg has become too powerful

NEW YORK: One of the co-founders of Facebook called on Thursday for the social media behemoth to be broken up, warning that the company's head, Mark Zuckerberg, had become far too powerful. "It's time to break up Facebook," said Chris Hughes, who along with Zuckerberg founded the online network in their dorm room while both were students at Harvard University in 2004. In an editorial published in The New York Times, Hughes said Zuckerberg's "focus on growth led him to sacrifice.

Trump says tariffs on \$200 billion of Chinese goods will increase to 25%, blames slow progress in trade talks

President Donald Trump said Sunday that tariffs on \$200 billion of Chinese goods will increase to 25% on Friday, despite repeated claims by the administration in recent weeks that trade talks with Beijing were going well. The tariff rate on those goods was originally set at 10%. Trump had initially threatened to increase the tariffs at the start of the year, but postponed that decision after China and the U.S. agreed to sit down for trade talks.

Man makes deepest-ever dive in Mariana Trench and discovers ... litter

On the deepest dive ever made by a human inside a submarine, a Texas investor found something he could have found in the gutter of nearly any street in the world: litter. Victor Vescovo, a retired naval officer, made the unsettling discovery as he descended nearly 35,853ft (10,927 meters) to a point in the Pacific Ocean's Mariana Trench that is the deepest place on Earth, his expedition said in a statement on Monday.

Pakistan's rupee keeps sliding after IMF loan accord reached

KARACHI: The Pakistani rupee continued to fall to record lows on Friday, after the government agreed in principle to a \$6 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund that's expected to set tough conditions on Prime Minister Imran Khan's administration. The rupee, which lost 3.6 per cent on Thursday to close at 146.2 against the U.S. dollar in the interbank market, dropped further on Friday, dealers said, selling at 149.50 in the interbank market and 150 in the open market.

Nepali sherpa scales Mt. Everest for 23rd time; creates world record

A 49-year-old veteran Nepali sherpa has scaled Mount Everest for the 23rd time, breaking his own record in reaching atop the world's highest peak, media reports said Wednesday. Kami Rita Sherpa, who summited Everest 22nd time last year to set record of most summits on Mt. Everest, stood on top of the 8,850-metres peak together with other Sherpas on Wednesday morning, the Himalayan Times reported.

Cannes Film Festival: It's Apocalypse Now, Thanks to Jim Jarmusch

CANNES, France — The apocalypse arrived early at the Cannes Film Festival. In "The Dead Don't Die," the latest from Jim Jarmusch and this year's opening selection, catastrophe takes the form of zombies, who rise from their graves to destroy the living. It's the end of the world as we know it, which Jarmusch reminds us, is entirely our fault. "Polar fracking" has thrown Earth off its axis and now Iggy Pop is gnawing on innards that (this being a Jarmusch joint) he washes down with coffee.

Indian woman crosses Atlantic Ocean in light plane

Aarohi Pandit has been glued to her iPhone and Macbook, binge-watching movies and documentaries over the past 10 months. Not unusual for a 23-year-old, except these distractions come during the breaks in a mission unlike any undertaken by an Indian woman. After clocking 120 hours of flying across 18 countries and 37,000km over the past 10 months, Aarohi made history on Monday when she landed at Iqaluit airport in Canada.

Developing nations call for strengthening 'special and differential' provisions at WTO

Seventeen developing and least developed countries, representing about 100 members of the World Trade Organization (WTO), have called for strengthening of the special & differential treatment (S&DT) mechanism that entitles them to concessions and flexibilities and strengthening of the multilateral trading system. "S&DT provisions are the rights of developing members that must be preserved and strengthened in both current and future WTO agreements.

