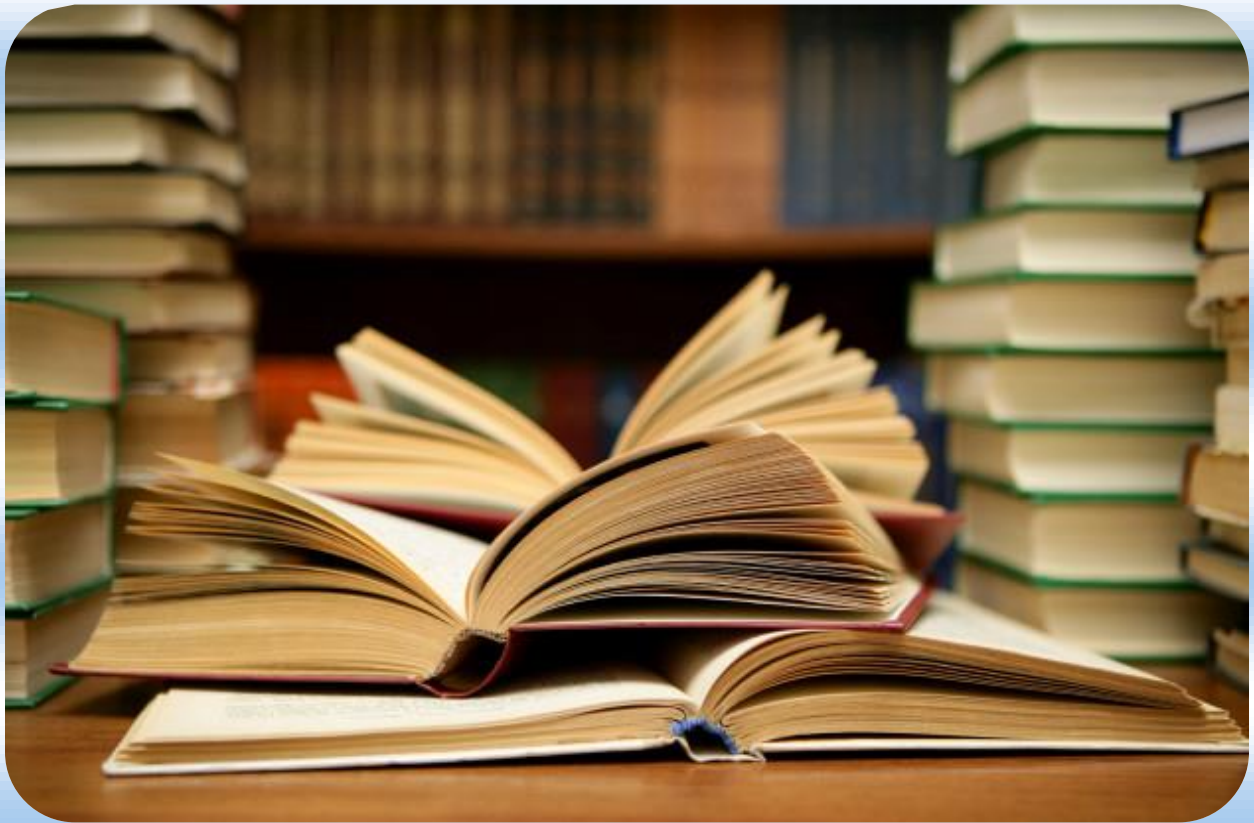


LIBRARY & RESOURCE CENTER, NOIDA

GENERAL KNOWLEDGE MONTHLY



OCTOBER-2023

NATIONAL CURRENT AFFAIRS

Oil firms raise aviation turbine fuel (ATF), or jet fuel and commercial LPG prices

New Delhi: Prices of flight tickets may rise further as oil marketing companies (OMCs) have raised the prices of aviation turbine fuel by around 5% across the four metro cities. In the national capital, jet fuel now costs ₹1,18,199.17 per kilolitre (kl), up 5.14% from ₹1,12,419.33 last month. Similarly, the price of jet fuel in Kolkata increased 4.65% to ₹1,26,697.08 per kl. In Mumbai and Chennai, jet fuel is now priced at ₹1,10,592.31 and ₹1,22,423.92 per kl, respectively, according to data from the OMCs.

Gross GST revenue growth slowed to 10.2% in September

Growth in India's gross Goods and Services Tax (GST) revenues slowed to a 27-month low of 10.2% in September, from around 10.8% in the previous two months. However, collections improved 2.3% over August revenues to touch ₹1,62,712 crore. Revenues from domestic transactions, including services imports, were 14% higher than the tax collected from these sources during September 2022. This is the fourth time that the gross GST kitty has crossed the ₹1.60 lakh crore mark in 2023-24, the Finance Ministry said.

Bihar government released the report of a caste survey conducted in the State; OBCs, EBCs comprise more than 63% of State's population

AT A TIME when the BJP and Congress are vying with each other for the OBC vote in the coming elections, Bihar Chief Minister and JD(U) supremo Nitish Kumar on Monday stole a march over them. Choosing Gandhi Jayanti to make the announcement, the Nitish government revealed the results of its caste survey, putting the combined OBC strength in the state at 63% – a 10% leap over their share estimated by the 1931 census, the last time caste enumeration was done in the country – and adding fresh vigour to the Opposition's demand for a caste census.

Concept of SC/ST, OBC reservation would not apply to minority institutions, says Madras HC

The Madras High Court has held that the concept of communal reservation or reservation for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other Backward Classes of citizens would not apply to minority institutions. The first bench comprising Chief Justice S V Gangapurwala and Justice P D Audikesavalu gave the ruling while partly allowing an appeal and a petition from Justice Basheer Ahmed Syed College for Women (Autonomous) in the city, assailing a November 2021 order, rejecting the extension of religion.

Indian Railways releases its new All India Railway Time Table known as "Trains At A Glance (TAG)"

The Ministry of Railways Tuesday released its new All India Railway Time Table known as "Trains at a glance (TAG)" effective from 1st October, 2023. The new time table has included 64 services of Vande Bharat Trains and 70 other train services. "The new timetable is designed to enhance connectivity between various cities and reduce travel time. Passengers are advised to check the departure and arrival timings as per the new timetable," the railway ministry said while issuing the new All India Railway Timetable.

The World Bank retained India's growth forecast at 6.3% for the year 2023-24

The Indian economy is estimated to grow at 6.3 per cent in the current financial year 2023-24, showing resilience despite elevated inflation and global headwinds, the World Bank said in its India Development Update released Tuesday. Though the growth estimate by the Bank has been retained from its earlier update in April, it is 20 basis points lower than the 6.5 per cent growth estimate both by the government and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) for FY24.

Sachin Tendulkar was announced as the Global Ambassador for the Men's Cricket World Cup 2023 by the International Cricket Council

With just two days remaining and for the ball to start rolling for the marquee tournament, the International Cricket Council (ICC) on Tuesday announced that it has chosen former Indian cricketer and 2011 world cup fame, Sachin Tendulkar to be the "ICC Global Ambassador for Men's Cricket World Cup 2023."



The Hindustan Aeronautics Limited hands over twin seater variant of LCA Tejas fighter aircraft to Indian Air Force

The Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) Wednesday handed over the first trainer version of the twin seater Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas to the Indian Air Force (IAF) in Bengaluru. Seven more LCA twin seater aircraft will be delivered next year, the HAL said.



SBI launches Mobile Handheld Device to enhance accessibility and convenience

The State Bank of India (SBI) on Wednesday launched 'Mobile Handheld Device' to provide banking services to its financial inclusive customers. The move is aimed at enhancing accessibility, convenience in availing banking services and to empower financial inclusion and extend essential banking services to the masses. "The Mobile Handheld Device is set to revolutionize banking accessibility by bringing kiosk banking directly to customer's doorstep.

Tata Motors to reskill 50% staff by 2027 to manufacture Electric Vehicles

Tata Motors on Thursday said it plans to equip over 50 per cent of its overall workforce with new-age auto tech capabilities within five years as part of its strategy to develop skilled and future-ready staff focused on electric vehicles and other emerging technologies in the auto industry. The company, which has over 57,000 employees across different functions, has collaborated with organisations such as ARAI, Bosch, Mathworks, SAE, and Tata Technologies, among others to provide its employees.

UGC to train over 1,000 teachers to teach Indian knowledge systems from degree level

More than 1,000 university teachers across the country are being equipped with a working understanding of Indian traditions, culture and way of life, to enable them to teach relevant courses on Indian knowledge systems at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels from the next academic session.



Automotive retail in September 2023 showcased a robust 20 percent double-digit year on year growth

Automotive retail in September showcased robust double-digit year-on-year (YoY) growth of 20 per cent, and except for tractors, which witnessed a 10 per cent decline, all other categories experienced growth, with two-wheelers (2W) seeing a 22 per cent increase.



IMF raises India's growth forecast to 6.3 % from 6.1 per cent

India's economic growth forecast for the current fiscal year has been raised to 6.3 per cent from 6.1 per cent earlier, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said in its October 2023 World Economic Outlook (WEO) report that was released on Tuesday, October 10. The global lender expects retail inflation in the country to rise to 5.5 per cent in fiscal 2023-24 before easing to 4.6 per cent in 2024-25.

Cabinet approves MoU between India and France on cooperation in the field of Digital Technologies

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved the country's three separate memorandum of understandings with Papua New Guinea, France, Trinidad and Tobago in the field of digital technologies. The MoU (memorandum of understanding) with France intends to promote closer cooperation and exchange of information pertaining to digital technologies, and will mutually support each participant's goal to promote access to digital technology in their countries, according to an official statement.

India launches 'Operation Ajay' to evacuate Indian national from Israel-Hamas conflict zone

As the Israel-Hamas war escalated and countries scrambled to bring home their people trapped in the fighting or looking for a way out of the war zone, India Wednesday announced it was launching Operation Ajay to repatriate its citizens from Israel and Palestine starting Thursday.



Cabinet approves royalty rates for mining of Lithium, Niobium, and Rare Earth Elements strategic minerals

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday fixed the royalty rates for lithium, niobium and rare earth elements (REEs). Under the new regime, while the mines will be auctioned by the Centre, the royalty will continue to be accrued to the states where these minerals lie. Prior to this decision, there was no royalty rate specified for these minerals and it was pegged at 12% of the average sale price (ASP), similar to other unspecified ones.

Non-residents and foreign companies opening bank accounts in IFSC Gift City will not have to furnish PAN

Non-residents and foreign companies opening bank accounts in IFSC Gift City will not have to furnish PAN and instead file a declaration. The non-resident or the foreign company opening a bank account at the International Financial Services Centres (IFSC) will have to file a declaration in Form 60 and should not have any tax liabilities in India. The Finance Ministry has amended Income Tax Rules exempting non-residents opening a bank account from the requirement of submitting PAN.

'INDIA' alliance writes to Meta, Google to remain 'neutral' ahead of Lok Sabha election next year

New Delhi: The opposition INDIA bloc has written to Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg and Google CEO Sundar Pichai over their social media platforms' alleged role in "aiding communal hatred" in the country and demanded that the platforms maintain neutrality in the upcoming elections. The letters came after the Washington Post newspaper flagged alleged bias of Facebook, WhatsApp and YouTube towards the ruling BJP and the Narendra Modi dispensation.

RBI starts pilot programme for wholesale digital rupee in call money market

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Tuesday initiated a pilot program for the wholesale segment of its central bank digital currency (CBDC) in the interbank call money market, according to dealers from participating banks. Dealers said nine banks, including four public sector banks and five private sector banks, are participating in the e-rupee call money pilot. This is the second use case of testing wholesale CBDC.

RBI slaps Rs 5.39 crore penalty on Paytm Payments Bank for violating series of norms

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Thursday imposed a monetary penalty of Rs 5.39 crore on Paytm Payments Bank for violating Know Your Customer norms, among others. RBI said Paytm Payments Bank had failed to meet certain regulatory provisions under Know Your Customer (KYC), as well as the norms on enhancement of maximum balance at the end of the day as indicated in the licensing conditions of payments banks.

EESL will set up an e-commerce portal that will feature electric appliances with the highest efficiency ratings

To encourage the adoption of energy efficient appliances, Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL), a joint venture of public sector undertakings (PSU) under the Ministry of Power, will set up an e-commerce portal that will exclusively feature electric appliances with the highest efficiency ratings. The objective of this exercise would be to "create demand" and encourage consumers to opt for electric cookers, fans, refrigerators and other devices that were rated "five star and above", Vishal Kapoor, CEO, EESL said at a conference on Friday.

Indian Oil Corporation to invest Rs 1,660 cr in joint venture with NPTC

Indian Oil Corporation, the nation's biggest oil firm, will invest Rs 1,660.15 crore as equity in a newly set up joint venture with energy major NTPC Ltd for setting up renewable power plants. In June, IOC and NTPC had formed a 50:50 joint venture company, IndianOil NTPC Green Energy Pvt Ltd, to set up renewable energy projects to meet round-the-clock power requirements of refineries of the oil company. In a stock exchanging filing, IOC said its Board in a meeting on October 13.

Skill India partners with Coca-Cola India to launch Retailer Skill Development Program

The National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), operating under the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), has unveiled a collaborative initiative with Coca-Cola India. This partnership aims to bolster the retail sector in Odisha and Uttar Pradesh through the 'Super Power Retailer Programme', as part of the Skill India Mission. The initial phase of the programme is being tested in Odisha, according to an official release.

Walmart invests USD 39 million in farmer livelihood enhancement in India

Walmart Foundation said that, since 2018, through its market access programme it has invested over \$39 million in India to reach 500 Farmer Producer Organizations/Farmer Producer Groups targeting 8,00,000 farmers, of which more than half are women. NGOs like PRADAN, ACCESS, Mercy Corps and Srijan are working with the Walmart Foundation's Market Access Program to provide on-ground impact.



IMF raises India's growth forecast to 6.3 % from 6.1 per cent

India's economic growth forecast for the current fiscal year has been raised to 6.3 per cent from 6.1 per cent earlier, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said in its October 2023 World Economic Outlook (WEO) report that was released on Tuesday, October 10. The global lender expects retail inflation in the country to rise to 5.5 per cent in fiscal 2023-24 before easing to 4.6 per cent in 2024-25.

One Million Learners were certified through UNICEF's Passport to Earning Initiative

UNICEF's global learning-to-earning solution, Passport to Earning (P2E), has skilled and certified more than one million young people in India in areas of financial literacy and digital productivity. This milestone marks a major step towards helping them gain skills relevant to the future of work and life. Notably, 62% of the young learners who benefitted from P2E courses in India are adolescent girls and young women. Sanjay Kumar, Secretary, Department of School Education & Literacy, Ministry of Education, attended an online programme organised by UNICEF on October 11, the UN International Day

Centre directs YouTube to put disclaimers on 'fake news' channels

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has asked Google-owned YouTube to initiate necessary legal measures against "fake news channels" and advised the platform to incorporate a disclaimer to address this issue effectively. In a notification, MeitY advised YouTube to put a disclaimer "news not verified" on "fake news channels".

Prime Minister Narendra Modi unveiled the 'Amrit Kaal Vision 2047', a long-term blueprint for the Indian maritime blue economy

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday unveiled 'Amrit Kaal Vision 2047', the long-term blueprint for the Indian maritime blue economy while inaugurating Global Maritime India Summit 2023 in Mumbai through video-conference. The blueprint outlines strategic initiatives aimed at enhancing port facilities, promoting sustainable practices, and facilitating international collaboration.

President Droupadi Murmu gave away the national film awards for 2021; Dada Saheb Phalke Award was conferred on veteran actor Waheeda Rehman

Screen icon Waheeda Rehman on Tuesday became the eighth woman artiste to receive the prestigious Dadasaheb Phalke Award, the highest recognition in the field of Indian cinema, an honour she dedicated to her "dear film industry" and its various departments. President Droupadi Murmu presented the award to Rehman, 85, during the 69th National Film Awards ceremony, held at Vigyan Bhawan here.



IBM, MeitY join hands to boost AI, quantum and semiconductors in India

Global tech giant IBM has signed three memoranda of understanding (MoUs) with entities engaged with the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) to boost research & development (R&D) and skilling in artificial intelligence (AI), semiconductors and quantum technology in India. As part of the three MoUs, the company intends to build a national AI Innovation Platform (AIIP) under the IndiaAI programme. It will also establish a research centre for the semiconductor R&D ecosystem, and develop local quantum services and infrastructure in India.

Karthikeyan Murali wins against World No. 1, Magnus Carlsen at the Qatar Masters 2023

India's Karthikeyan Murali became just the third player from the country to defeat World number one Magnus Carlsen in classical chess. The 24-year-old Indian managed to topple Carlsen while playing with black pieces in the seventh round of the ongoing Qatar Masters tournament.



Volleyball has been removed from National Games in India

Despite India's impressive early run in the recent Asian Games in Hangzhou, where its men stunned former three-time champion South Korea and a higher-ranked Chinese Taipei before finishing sixth, volleyball will not be a part of the National Games which begin in Goa on October 26.



Google to assemble Pixel line of phones in India from 2024

Alphabet Inc's Google on Friday announced it will manufacture its flagship Pixel line-up of phones in India, the latest tech giant after Apple and Samsung to make devices in the country. Google said it will make the Pixel 8 in India and the devices will roll out in 2024. The tech titan outlined its plans at the annual Google for India event . Google senior vice-president for devices and services Rick Osterloh said the company will partner international contract manufacturers to make the phones. "We will start manufacturing Google Pixel series smartphones in India," Osterloh said at the event here.

India's contribution to global economic growth will rise by 2 percentage points to 18% in 5 years: IMF official

The International Monetary Fund expects India to increase its contribution to global growth over the next five years as the economy continues to grow fairly rapidly. India will likely account for 18 per cent of world growth by 2028, up from 16 per cent currently, Krishna Srinivasan, director of the Asia and Pacific Department of IMF, told reporters in Mumbai on Thursday. India's faster growth compared with China's economic slowdown could see the South Asian nation make a bigger contribution to global growth than its larger rival — only temporarily — the latest IMF figures show.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi flagged off the country's first Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS) Namoo Bharat

Prime Minister Narendra Modi flagged off the country's first Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS) on Friday, calling the Namoo Bharat train a glimpse of India's promising future. Mr. Modi purchased a ticket and took a ride with schoolchildren on the completed 17-km stretch from Sahibabad to Duhai Depot in Uttar Pradesh; the full 82-km Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut corridor is scheduled to be functional by 2025.



GOCL Corporation has bagged a ₹766-crore order from state-owned Coal India Ltd. (CIL) to supply explosives

GOCL Corporation has bagged a Rs 766 crore order from state-owned Coal India Ltd (CIL) to supply explosives. The order will be completed over the period of two years -- from October 2023 to October 2025, the company said in a statement on Friday. "The company announces receiving an order from Coal India worth Rs 766 crore," it added. The order involves supplying bulk explosives to the maharatna company, the statement said.

RBI opens dated securities to help Russia park its rupee surplus

Russia can get some comfort over its mounting surplus rupee problem as it, along with 21 other countries, can now invest in dated Government Securities and Treasury Bills through a rupee account. The new system will be apart from options to invest through the Foreign Portfolio Investor (FPI) route and Special Rupee Vostro Account (SRVA). There have been issues with the use of surplus rupee deposited which prompted India to work on some mechanism. In fact, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov.

India set to be world's third-largest economy by 2030, says S&P Global

India will become the world's third-largest economy, overtaking Germany and Japan, by 2030 on the strength of its youthful demographic profile and rapidly rising urban household incomes, S&P Global Market Intelligence has projected. Now India is in fifth position.



FSSAI has recommended the use of quick response (QR) codes on food products to help the visually disabled

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has recommended the inclusion of QR code on food products for accessibility by visually impaired individuals stating that this will ensure access to safe food for all including individuals with special needs such as visually impaired individuals. In its recent advisory signed by Director, Science and Standards Division, Amit Sharma, the authority notes that ensuring inclusive access to information is a fundamental right of citizens.

iPhone maker, Taiwan's Wistron approved the sale of its India unit, Wistron InfoComm to the Tata Group.

Tata Electronics Pvt Ltd (TEPL), the Tata Group's manufacturing arm, is acquiring Wistron's operations in India for \$125 million (Rs 1,000 crore). That will make it the first Indian company to manufacture Apple iPhones. Taipei-based Wistron Corp's board on Friday granted approval "to sign the share purchase agreement with TEPL for the sale of its 100% indirect stake in Wistron InfoComm Manufacturing (India) Pvt. Ltd (WMMI). The transaction price is tentatively estimated as \$125 million (approximately NTD3.89 billion)," it said in a statement.

INTERNATIONAL CURRENT AFFAIRS

Indonesia is set to launch China-funded high-speed rail, first in Southeast Asia

Indonesia has launched Southeast Asia's first-ever bullet train, a high-speed rail line that will connect two of its largest cities. The \$7.3 billion project, part of China's Belt and Road infrastructure initiative and largely funded by Chinese state-owned firms, opened to the public on Monday following a series of delays and setbacks.



Pakistan's inflation rises to 31.4% year-on-year amid high energy prices

Pakistan's inflation rate rose to 31.4% year-on-year in September from 27.4% in August, statistics bureau data showed on Monday, as the nation reels from high fuel and energy prices. The country is embarking on a tricky path to economic recovery under a caretaker government after a \$3 billion loan programme approved by the International Monetary Fund in July averted a sovereign debt default, but with conditions that complicated efforts to rein in inflation.

Nobel Prizes 2023

This year's Nobel Prize for Physiology or Medicine has been jointly awarded to Katalin Karikó and Drew Weissman for their "discoveries concerning nucleoside base modification that enabled the development of effective mRNA vaccines against COVID-19", The Royal Swedish Academy of Science announced on October 2, 2023.



Sri Lanka to take over as Chair of Indian Ocean Rim Association

Several Foreign Ministers, including those of India, Bangladesh, Mauritius, Iran, Malaysia and South Africa, will participate in the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) Council of Ministers meeting in Colombo on October 11, 2023, according to the Sri Lankan government, which is preparing to take over as Chair of the regional grouping this week. The Council of Ministers meeting in Colombo will see the participation of 16 Ministers, including the Foreign Ministers.

Dubai becomes the world's fastest-recovering destination in the services sector

Dubai, a global economic powerhouse, has proven its mettle as the world's fastest-recovering destination in the services sector, marking an impressive growth rate of 3.2% in the first half of 2023. This achievement has underpinned Dubai's standing as a leading city that defies economic challenges, driven by visionary leadership.



Australian voters have rejected greater rights for Indigenous citizens

Australians have resoundingly rejected a proposed reform to the country's constitution that would recognise Indigenous people, a referendum's results have shown. With most of the vote counted on Saturday, it became clear that the "Yes" votes have failed to reach the required threshold with the goal of creating an Indigenous advisory body called the "Indigenous Voice to Parliament".

World Cup 2023: India defeats Pakistan by 7 wickets

India vs Pakistan World Cup 2023 Highlights: Skipper Rohit Sharma led from the front with a 63-ball 86 as India beat Pakistan by seven wickets in a much-anticipated World Cup clash here on Saturday. The hosts thus registered their third win in as many outings in the tournament.



Former businessman Christopher Luxon wins New Zealand elections and is set to become the next Prime Minister

The opposition National Party has won the New Zealand election, taking enough seats to form a coalition with its allies on the right wing of politics. Incumbent prime minister Chris Hipkins, of Labour, phoned National's leader Chris Luxon to concede defeat.



Qatar Airways has signed an agreement with SpaceX to make Starlink WiFi available to every passenger

Elon Musk's SpaceX has inked a key deal with Qatar Airways, latest reports say. According to the media reports, the agreement is regarding WiFi connectivity to the passengers flying with Qatar Airways. Soon, Musk's Starlink will offer free WiFi to all Qatar flyers.



U.S. House rejects Trump ally's third bid for Speaker

US House Republicans voted in a secret meeting on Friday to end populist firebrand Jim Jordan's attempt to become Speaker, extending weeks of Capitol Hill uncertainty that will delay Congress's ability to approve more aid for Israel and Ukraine.



US emerges as India's biggest trading partner during April-September this fiscal

The US has emerged as India's biggest trading partner during the first half of the current financial year despite global economic uncertainties and declining exports and imports, according to government data. According to the provisional data of the commerce ministry, the bilateral trade between India and the US has declined by 11.3 per cent to USD 59.67 billion during April-September 2023 against USD 67.28 billion in the same period last year.

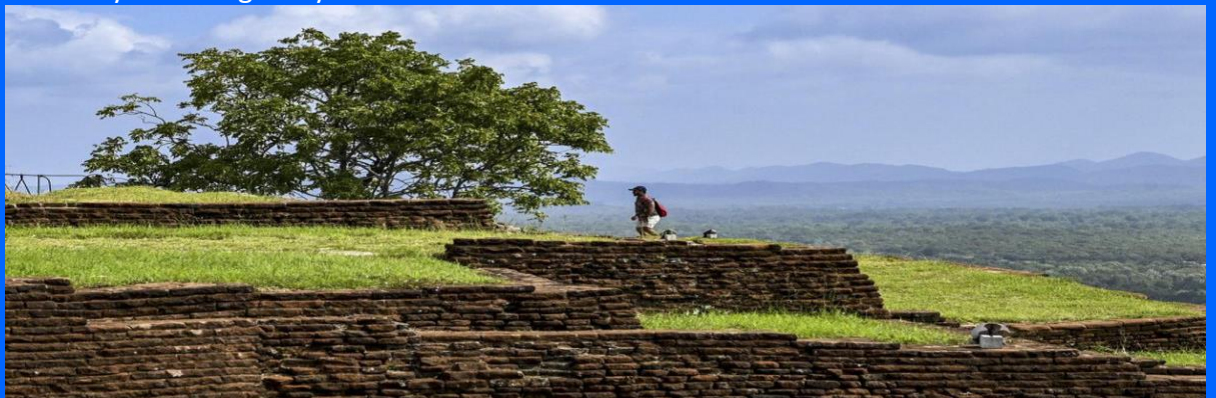
Israeli air strikes kill more than 700 people in one day

Rapidly expanding Israeli airstrikes across the Gaza Strip killed more than 700 people in the past day as medical facilities across the territory were forced to close because of bombing damage and a lack of power, health officials said on Tuesday. The soaring death toll from Israel's escalating bombardment was unprecedented in the decades-long Israeli-Palestinian conflict.



Sri Lanka waived visa fee for Indians and tourists from six other countries, as part of its efforts to boost tourist arrivals

Sri Lanka on October 24 waived visa fee for Indians and tourists from six other countries, as part of its efforts to boost tourist arrivals and help rebuild the island nation's battered economy following last year's financial crash.



ODI World Cup: Virat Kohli becomes the fastest to 26,000 international runs

In a thrilling World Cup 2023 match against Bangladesh, Indian cricket maestro Virat Kohli showcased his extraordinary batting prowess, notching up his 48th One Day International (ODI) century. This remarkable achievement was accompanied by another historic milestone, as Kohli became the quickest player to reach 26,000 international runs, a testament to his exceptional consistency and dominance.



EU Global Tax Evasion Report 2024 has called for a global minimum tax on billionaires equal to 2% of their wealth

Pointing out that tax evasion is enabling billionaires to enjoy effective tax rates equivalent to 0% to 0.5% of their wealth, the European Union Tax Observatory in its 'Global Tax Evasion Report 2024' has called for a global minimum tax on billionaires equal to 2% of their wealth.

