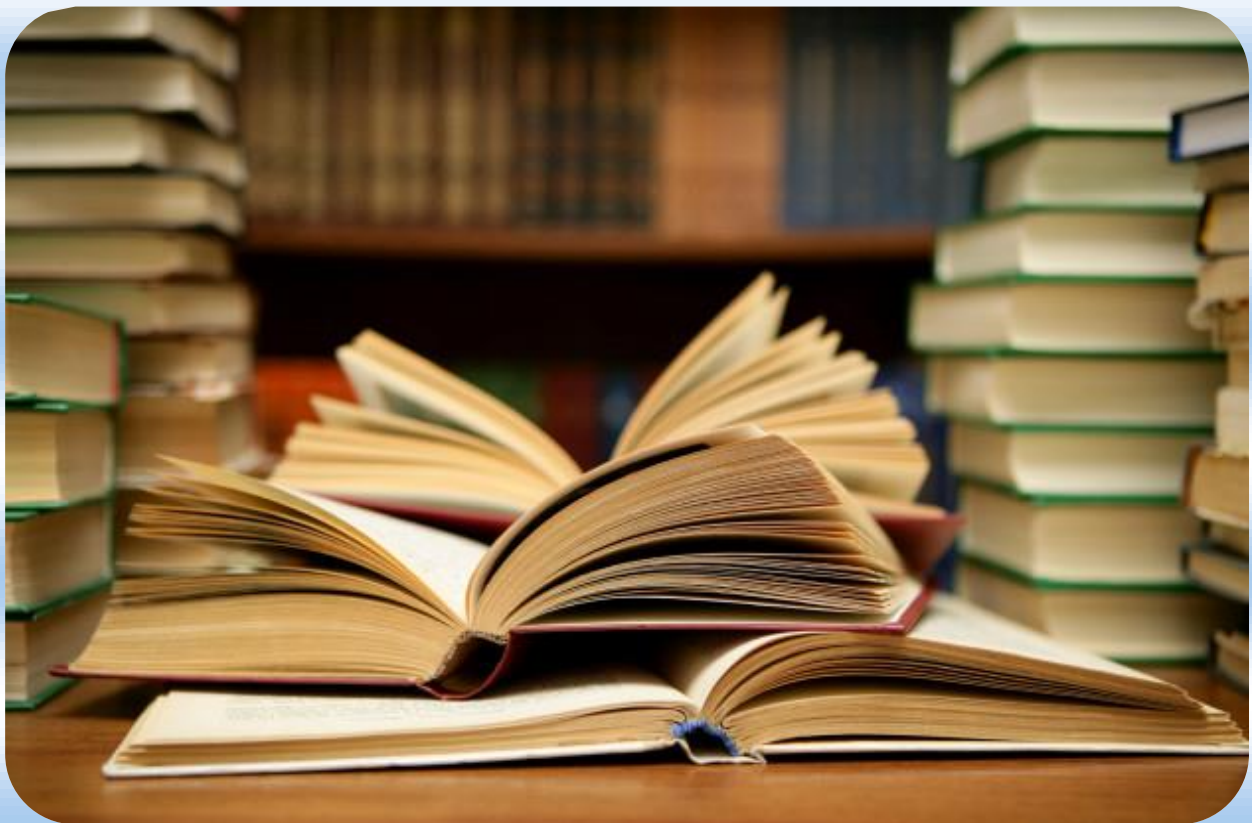


LIBRARY & RESOURCE CENTER, NOIDA

GENERAL KNOWLEDGE MONTHLY



SEPTEMBER-2019

NATIONAL CURRENT AFFAIRS

India's longest electrified train tunnel inaugurated in Andhra Pradesh

Vice President M. Venkaiah Naidu here on Sunday inaugurated the country's longest electrified rail tunnel between Cherlopalli and Rapuru and the electrified railway line between Venkatachalam and Obulavaripalli. Besides inaugurating the remodelled yard at Guduru railway station, the Vice President also flagged off a new inter-city superfast express train between Guduru and Vijayawada. Mr. Naidu termed the 6.7-km-long tunnel an "engineering marvel" and said it would provide viable rail connectivity between the Krishnapatnam Port and the hinterland for the seamless movement of freight.

Growth of eight core sectors slows to 2.1% in July 2019

Growth in core sector activity quickened in July 2019 to 2.1%, due almost entirely to a recovery in the cement sector, according to official data released on Monday. The Index of Eight Core Industries had grown at just 0.7% in June 2019. However, July's growth rate is far lower than the 7.3% growth registered in the same month last year. The cement sector saw growth accelerating to 7.9% in July 2019 compared with a contraction of 1.7% in the previous month. The coal sector, however, slipped into contraction in July, contracting 1.4% compared with a growth of 3.2% in June.

'Ashok Leyland's heavy duty trucks becomes 1st to get BS-VI certification

Ashok Leyland, a flagship company of the Hinduja Group and the country's second largest commercial vehicle manufacturer, said on Tuesday it has become the first Indian original equipment manufacturer to meet the Bharat Stage VI emission norms across its full range of heavy duty trucks with gross vehicle weight of 16.2 tonnes and above. Company's Chief Technology Officer N Saravanan received the certificates confirming compliance to BS-VI emission standard from the Automotive Research Association of India (ARAI).

Mukesh Ambani rolls out JioFiber, offering minimum 100 Mbps internet speed for Rs.699/month

Billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Jio on Thursday announced launch of fiber-based broadband services, offering minimum internet speed of 100 Mbps for a monthly rental of Rs 699. JioFiber will offer broadband internet speeds of up to 1 Gbps for Rs 8,499 per month, the company said in a statement. The broadband service will offer unlimited data, free voice calling to anywhere in India as well as TV video calling/conferencing. For those opting for annual subscription, it offered a free set top box.

India's first-ever helicopter summit held in Dehradun

The Ministry of Civil Aviation organised India's first-ever helicopter summit here on Sunday, the Indian Air Force (IAF) said. The Indian Air Force was invited at the summit to talk on the "role of IAF helicopters in MEDEVAC (Medical evacuation) at the national level". The conclave was attended by Uttarakhand Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat, the Aviation Secretary, and the Chief Secretary of Uttarakhand, amongst others.

IPPB rolls out Aadhaar-enabled payment services

India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) on Monday said that it has rolled out Aadhaar enabled payment system (AePS) services. With this, IPPB has now become the single largest platform in the country for providing interoperable banking services to the customers of any bank. Union Minister for Communications and IT Ravi Shankar Prasad today announced the rollout of AePS services on IPPB's first anniversary. Things to know about IPPB's AePS services 1) With AePS services, any person with a bank account linked to Aadhaar.

PM inaugurates Multi-Modal Cargo Terminal at Sahibganj

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will dedicate to nation the second Multi Modal Terminal built at Sahibganj in Jharkhand on 12 September, 2019. The terminal was built at a cost of ₹290 crores. It took two years to complete the terminal which was constructed on the river Ganga under Jal Marg Vikas Project (JMVP) In November 2018, Prime Minister Modi dedicated the first Multi Modal Terminal at Varanasi.



GSTN to make Aadhaar authentication mandatory for new dealers from January 2020

In order to check malpractices in GST, the GST Network on Saturday decided to make Aadhaar authentication or physical verification mandatory for new dealers from January 2020. "Aadhaar authentication of new dealers will be mandatory. Earlier it was optional. But we have noticed in two years that there's good number of fly-by-night operators. They make fake invoices," Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Sushil Kumar Modi, who heads the group of Ministers of GST Network told reporters after a meeting here.

RBI expands coverage of Bharat Bill Payment System

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has expanded the scope and coverage of Bharat Bill Payment System (BBPS) to include all categories of billers who raise recurring bills (except prepaid recharges) as eligible participants on voluntary basis. Currently, BBPS covers bills of five segments – direct to home (DTH), electricity, gas, telecom, and water. The objective of BBPS is to implement an integrated bill payment system that offers interoperable and accessible bill payment services to customers through a network of agents.

MFIN and Sa-Dhan launches 'Code for Responsible Lending'

Three self-regulatory organisations on Monday jointly released a code for responsible lending for the micro-credit industry with an aim at bringing more transparency and address customer-centric issues. The Code for Responsible Lending (CRL) was launched by Microfinance Institutions Network (MFIN) and Sa-Dhan along with FIDC. The Code, launched at Sa-Dhan's 15th Annual National Conference, aims to lay down uniform principles for customer-conduct in micro-credit, and is sector specific and entity agnostic.

Govt scraps import duty on open cell TV panel used to make TV sets

New Delhi: The government on Tuesday removed import duties on open cell LED panels used in the production of television sets, a move that could lower the input costs for TV makers who have been complaining about a slump in demand. Imported open cell panels, which constitute a chunk of cost for television sets, earlier attracted an import duty of 5%. In a notification released by the ministry of finance late of Tuesday night it has been notified that "customs on (15.6" and above) use in the manufacturing of Liquid Crystal Display (LCD).

Digital Payment Abhiyan: DSCI, MeitY and Google India join hands

Nasscom's Data Security Council of India (DSCI) on Thursday said it has collaborated with the electronics and IT ministry (MeitY) and Google India to launch a nationwide awareness campaign 'Digital Payment Abhiyan'. Communications and Electronics & IT Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad launched the campaign that will educate end-users on the benefits of making digital payments and urge them to adopt security and safety best practices, a statement said.

Centre cuts Corporate Tax Rate for domestic investors

In its boldest gambit yet to stir up the economy, the government on Friday issued an ordinance to reduce the corporate tax rate for domestic firms and new manufacturing units by 10 to 12 percentage points, effectively bringing India's tax rates on par with its competing Asian peers. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said that the effective tax rate for domestic corporates, inclusive of surcharges, will fall from 34.94% to 25.17% if they stop availing any other tax sops.

CBDT to set up National e-Assessment centre in New Delhi

A national e-assessment centre (NeAC) will be set up in the national capital as part of the government's ambitious plan to launch faceless and nameless assessment for income tax payers from next month. The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT), that frames policy for the Income-tax department, has issued an order for the creation of the Centre. The Centre will have 16 officials and will be headed by a Principal Chief Commissioner of Income-tax (PCCIT) as its chief.

Economic Advisory Council to PM reconstituted under Bibek Debroy

With two existing part-time members — Rathin Roy and Shamika Ravi — not finding a place, the strength of the reconstituted Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM) has been reduced to four from five earlier. The new council has been reconstituted under current chairman Bibek Debroy for a period of two years. Economist Sajjid Chinoy has been roped in as the new part-time member. Ratan P Watal will continue as Member Secretary of the EAC-PM. Ashima Goel continues to be one of the part-time members.

PK Sinha appointed Principal Advisor to PM Modi

Former Cabinet Secretary P K Sinha has been appointed the principal advisor to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, an official order said on Wednesday. Sinha was last month appointed as Officer on Special Duty (OSD) in the PMO. The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has approved the appointment of P K Sinha, currently functioning as OSD in the Prime Minister's Office, as Principal Advisor to Prime Minister with effect from 11th September, 2019, according to the order.

Justice P Lakshmana Reddy appointed as 1st Lokayukta of Andhra Pradesh

Justice P Lakshmana Reddy, a retired judge of the erstwhile Andhra Pradesh High Court, was on Sunday sworn-in as the first Lokayukta of the state after its bifurcation in 2014. Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan administered the oath of office to Justice Reddy at a function in Vijayawada. Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy, judges of the High Court and senior state government officials attended the event. Justice Lakshmana Reddy will be in office for five years.

Rajnath Singh becomes 1st Defence Minister to fly LCA Tejas

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday flew in the Tejas fighter aircraft from the HAL airport in Bengaluru, becoming the first defence minister to fly in the indigenously-built light combat aircraft (LCA). After the sortie which lasted for around 30 minutes, the defence

minister said he chose the aircraft because it was built indigenously and that the experience of flying in the aircraft was thrilling.



Air Marshal HS Arora appointed as Vice Chief of Indian Air Force

Air Marshal HS Arora has been appointed the Vice Chief of Indian Air Force. He will succeed Air Marshal RKS Bhadauria who will take over as the Chief of Air Staff on September 30. The Centre on September 19 appointed Air Marshal Rakesh Kumar Singh Bhadauria the next chief of the Indian Air Force (IAF). Bhadauria, who is currently Vice Chief of Air Staff, will take over the charge as the Chief of Air Staff after his predecessor and the incumbent IAF Chief BS Dhanoa retires on September 30. Meanwhile, Air Marshal B Suresh has been appointed as Western Air Commander of the Air Force. He will succeed Kargil war hero Air Marshal Raghunath Nambiar on October 31.

CHC Farm Machinery: Multilingual Mobile App launched for farmers

Farmers will now be able to hire farm machineries including tractors NSE -2.51 % at an affordable price through an app based mobile application the way people hire Ola and Uber taxis over mobiles. The government, on Tuesday, launched multilingual app based service - CHC Farm Machinery for Custom Hiring Centres (CHCs). This service, will facilitate local farmers the use of shared resources including tractors and other farm machineries at affordable prices.

PM Modi receives Global Goalkeepers Award

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday received the 2019 Global Goalkeeper Award for Swachh Bharat Mission from Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Swachh Bharat Mission was launched on October 2, 2014 by Bharatiya Janata Party-led National Democratic Alliance government. Narendra Modi dedicated this award to the 130 crore Indians who transformed the Swachh Bharat campaign into a "people's movement". "The success of Swachh Bharat Mission is due to the people of India," said Narendra Modi while receiving the award.



Infosys wins UN Global Climate Action Award in 'Climate Neutral Now' category

Digital services and consulting major Infosys has won the United Nations Global Climate Action Award in 'carbon neutral now' category, becoming the only Indian corporate to earn the recognition for its efforts to combat climate change. The announcement of winners came shortly after the UN Climate Summit in New York was convened by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres earlier this week. The award will be presented to Infosys at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP25) at Santiago in Chile during December.

Gully Boy selected as India's official entry to Oscars 2020

New Delhi: Director Zoya Akhtar's musical drama Gully Boy starring Ranveer Singh and Alia Bhatt has been selected as India's official entry to the Academy Awards in the foreign film category for next year. Co-producer Farhan Akhtar confirmed the news in a tweet. India has submitted films for the foreign film category at the Oscars since 1957, a year after the incorporation of the category. The award is given annually by the United States Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences to a feature-length motion picture produced outside the US that contains primarily non-English dialogue.

Ladakhi Shondol dance enters Guinness book of world record

Leh, September 21: Shondol dance, which is known as the royal dance of Ladakh, has created history by entering into the Guinness Book of World Records as the largest Ladakhi dance. Shondol is a famous dance, which artistes used to perform for the king of Ladakh. As many as 408 women attired in traditional dresses and beautiful head gears performed the dance. It was held on the concluding day of the ongoing Buddhist carnival Naropa festival near the Hemis Monastery. The festival had begun on September 16 and concluded on Friday.

Vaishno Devi shrine named country's 'Best Swachh Iconic Place'

JAMMU: The famous Mata Vaishno Devi shrine atop the Trikuta hills in Reasi district of Jammu and Kashmir has been adjudged 'Best Swachh Iconic Place' in the country, an official said on Tuesday. According to the spokesperson of the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board (SMVDSB), President Ram Nath Kovind will confer the award during the 'Swachh Mahotsav' to be organised by the ministry.

Rishabh Pant: Fastest Indian wicket-keeper to claim 50 dismissals in Test cricket

Young Rishabh Pant became the fastest Indian wicket-keeper to claim 50 dismissals in Test cricket, surpassing former India captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni. The 21-year-old wicket-keeper batsman on Sunday claimed his 50th victim in his 11th Test while Dhoni had taken 15 Tests to touch the milestone. Pant took an easy catch to dismiss West Indies' Kraigg Brathwaite off an Ishant Sharma delivery in the second innings of the hosts in the second Test.

Athlete Hima Das named brand ambassador of Gatorade by PepsiCo

PepsiCo India has roped in star athlete Hima Das as the brand ambassador for its sports drink brand Gatorade. She joins ace shuttler PV Sindhu and javelin star Neeraj Chopra as the brand's ambassadors in the country. "Gatorade India will also work with Hima Das during the period of partnership to understand her training and race-day nutrition better," the company said in a statement. Tarun Bhagat, Director-Marketing, Hydration and Cola, PepsiCo India said, "We are delighted to welcome Hima Das into Gatorade's family of athletes.

IBSF World Billiards Championship: India's Pankaj Advani wins title

Pankaj Advani, on Sunday, bagged a record 22nd world title by winning a fourth straight final in the 150-up format at the IBSF World Billiards Championship here. The 34-year-old has brought home a world trophy every year ever since returning from a professional stint in the UK in 2014. In the short format of billiards, this is Pankaj's fifth title in the last six years. "It's such a touch-and-go format and so unpredictable that winning this four years on the trot and five out of the last six is extremely special," said the champion athlete.

India's Divij Sharan clinches St. Petersburg doubles title

Divij Sharan and partner Igor Zelenay clinched the men's doubles title at the USD 1,248,665 ATP Tour tennis tournament in St. Petersburg, Russia, on Sunday. In the final, they defeated the Italian pair of Matteo Berrettini and Simone Bolelli 6-3, 3-6, 10-8. The champion team collected 250 ATP points and USD 66,740. The runners-up won 150 points and USD 34,200. It was the fifth Tour doubles title for the 33-year-old Divij, who had started the season brightly.

World Wrestling Championships: India's bags 5 medals

Junior worlds gold medallist Deepak Punia bagged an Olympic berth by reaching the semifinals of the World Wrestling Championships in the men's freestyle 86kg category. The 20-year old beat Carlos Izquierdo of Colombia 7-6 in the quarterfinals on Saturday at Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan on Saturday. Commonwealth Games gold medallist Rahul Aware, contesting in a non-Olympic 61kg category, entered the semifinals with a 10-7 win over Kazakhstan's Rassul Kaliyev.

India lift SAFF U-18 Championship title for first time

India U-18 defeated Bangladesh by 2-1 in the final of SAFF U-18 Championship 2019 to lift the title here on Sunday. From the beginning, India played aggressively and Vikram Pratap Singh did not take much time to hand India a 1-0 lead. Singh scored in the second minute of the game. Before the conclusion of the first half, Bangladesh's Yeasin managed to score an equaliser which brought the scoreline to 1-1. In the second half, both the teams gave each other tough competition and restricted each other from scoring a goal.

Telangana government declares 2020 as Artificial Intelligence year

The Telangana government has decided to declare 2020 as Artificial Intelligence year by organising various activities related to the emerging technology, Jayesh Ranjan, principal secretary, IT and Industries said here on Wednesday. "The year 2020 is going to be celebrated in Telangana as AI year. And throughout the year, we will be running multiple programs and activities.

Rajasthan launches 'Jan Soochna Portal'

Rajasthan on Friday launched a portal for quick access to information on government departments, claiming that the site is the first of its kind in the country. Launching the 'Jan Soochna Portal' under the Rajasthan Innovation Vision (RAJIV) campaign here, Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot said the move will bring transparency and accountability, and empower the right of the people to seek information.

'Tikki Mausi' mascot: unveiled by Odisha govt. and UNICEF

With an aim to spread awareness about child and woman's nutrition, Women and Child Development and Mission Shakti Department in collaboration with the UNICEF unveiled a mascot named 'Tikki Mausi' here on Thursday. The department also launched a comprehensive state-level communication strategy in collaboration with the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF).

INTERNATIONAL CURRENT AFFAIRS

India, Switzerland Automatic Exchange of Financial Account Information kicks in

Banking details of Indians with accounts in Switzerland will be available to tax authorities here from Sunday as the automatic exchange of information regime kicks off between the two countries. The move, the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) said, is a significant step in the government's fight against black money and the era of "Swiss bank secrecy" will finally be over from September. The CBDT frames policy for the Income-Tax Department.

Kalimantan: Indonesia to move capital from Jakarta to Borneo Island

Indonesia's president announced on Monday that the country's capital will move from overcrowded, sinking and polluted Jakarta to a site in sparsely populated East Kalimantan province on Borneo island, known for rainforests and orangutans. President Joko Widodo said intense studies over the past three years had resulted in the choice of the location on the eastern side of Borneo island. The new capital city, which has not yet been named, will be in the middle of the vast archipelago nation and already has relatively complete infrastructure.

India to contribute \$22 mn to GFTAM for 2020-22

India has announced a contribution of \$22 million to the Global Fund for AIDS, TB and Malaria (GFTAM) for the 6th replenishment cycle (2020-22). This is an increase of 10 per cent over the amount contributed by the US in the 5th cycle. The Global Fund is a partnership designed to accelerate the end of AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. As an international organization, the Global Fund mobilizes and invests more than \$4 billion a year to support programs run by local experts in more than 100 countries.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh addresses 8th Seoul Defense Dialogue 2019

India has never been an aggressor but that does not mean it would balk at using its strength to defend itself, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Thursday. His comments at a defence dialogue in Seoul came in the backdrop of spiralling tension between India and Pakistan over the Kashmir issue. "India has never been an aggressor in its history nor will it ever be. But that does not mean that India would balk at using its strength to defend itself," Mr. Singh said, in presence of South Korea's top military brass. The Defence Minister arrived in Seoul on Wednesday on a three-day visit. He posted a series of tweets from his handle.

India hosts 6th India-China Strategic Economic Dialogue

India will host the 6th India-China Strategic Economic Dialogue that will focus on collaboration between two countries on areas of infrastructure, energy, high-tech, resource conservation, pharmaceuticals and policy coordination. The three-day dialogue will be held from September 7-9 and will be chaired by NITI Aayog vice chairman Rajiv Kumar and Chinese side will be led by chairman, National Development and Reforms Commission (NDRC).

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh meets his South Korean counterpart Jeong Kyeong-doo

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday held bilateral talks with his South Korean counterpart Jeong Kyeong-Doo where they reviewed defence cooperation between both countries. During the meeting, both sides agreed that there was great potential to further boost defence ties. "Had productive discussions with the Minister of National Defence of RoK (Republic of Korea), Mr Jeong Kyeong-Doo during a bilateral meeting.

Hurricane Dorian: India announces \$ 1million humanitarian aid for Bahamas

India on Sunday announced disaster relief aid of \$1 million to help people in the Bahamas affected by Hurricane Dorian. Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Raveesh Kumar said India stands in solidarity with the country in this difficult time. "We are saddened by the large scale destruction caused in The Bahamas by Hurricane #Dorian. In solidarity with the friendly people of The #Bahamas in this difficult moment, the Government of India is extending an immediate disaster relief of \$ 1 million," he tweeted.

24th World Energy Congress held in Abu Dhabi

ABU DHABI, Sept. 9 (Xinhua) -- The 24th World Energy Congress (WEC) kicked off in Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), on Monday, gathering participants from around 150 countries and regions to explore new energy, critical innovation and new strategies. Under the theme "Energy for Prosperity", the congress presents a four-day interactive program designed to address the most critical issues facing the global energy industry.

Russia holds Center-2019 International Command Exercise

Amid tensions with Pakistan, an Indian Army contingent is in Russia for Exercise Tsentr 2019, which began on Tuesday. The Armies of China and Pakistan, besides those of the Central Asian Republics, are taking part in it. At the same time, another Indian Army contingent is in the U.S. for Yudh Abhyas, an annual bilateral exercise. Later this week, the Army will host the first conference of military medicine for the members of the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation (SCO). Yudh Abhyas is being held at Joint Base Lewis McChord at Tacoma, Washington, from September 5 to 18.

Sri Lanka unveils South Asia's tallest tower in Colombo

Sri Lanka on September 16 unveiled South Asia's tallest tower, costing over \$100 million, 80% of which has been funded by China under the controversial Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The 350-metre-tall 17-storey Lotus Tower, located in the heart of Colombo city, comprises a television tower, a hotel, a telecommunications museum, restaurants, auditorium, an observation deck, a shopping mall and a conference centre. The tower, spread over an area of 30,600 sq. metres, was constructed at a cost of over \$100 million, 80% of which was funded by China, Sri Lankan media reports said.

US President names Robert O'Brien as USA's new National Security Adviser

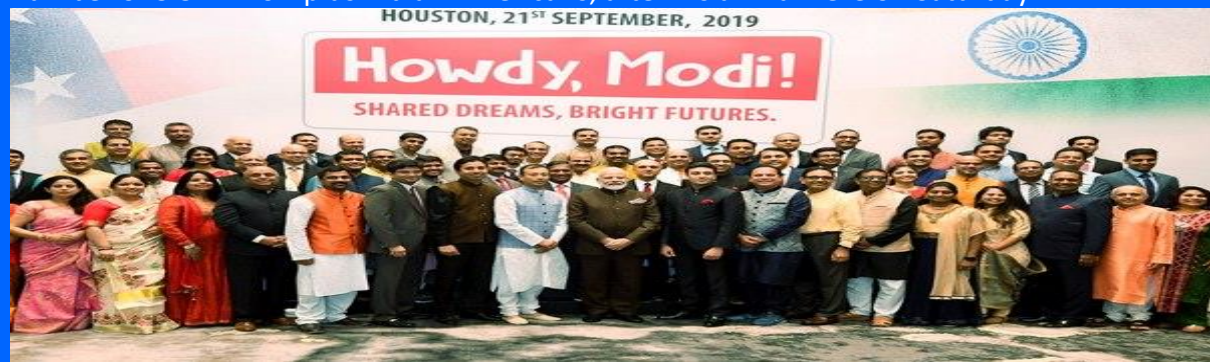
Robert O'Brien has had a long career in foreign policy working for both main US parties and currently heads hostage negotiations at the State Department. He is Mr Trump's fourth national security adviser. As top adviser on national security, Mr O'Brien will be tasked with tackling everything from immigration policy to heightened tensions with Iran. The president and his new appointee spoke with reporters on Wednesday morning in Los Angeles.

India Post starts Speed Post Service to 6 new Foreign Countries

India Post on Wednesday expanded speed post service to six new foreign destinations in Asia, Europe and South America. "The Department of Posts has announced commencing of International Speed Post (EMS) Service to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Ecuador, Kazakhstan, Lithuania and North Macedonia," the postal department said in a statement. EMS or Express Mail Service is a premium service that enables its users to send documents.

Howdy Modi event held in Houston, Texas

New Delhi: Houston was readying on Sunday to host Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the largest ever Indian community event held in the US with a record 50,000 people in attendance. This is Modi's third engagement in Houston, which is home to a significant number of 3.5-million-plus Indian Americans, after his arrival here on Saturday.



Google win in European Union's top court on the "right to be forgotten" globally

The EU's top court has ruled that Google does not have to apply the right to be forgotten globally. It means the firm only needs to remove links from its search results in Europe - and not elsewhere - after receiving an appropriate request. The ruling stems from a dispute between Google and a French privacy regulator. In 2015, CNIL ordered the firm to globally remove search result listings to pages containing damaging or false information about a person.



What is CTRL-Labs? Why Facebook is acquiring it?

Facebook on Monday announced the acquisition of CTRL-labs, a New York startup that specializes in allowing humans to control computers using their brains. The startup will join Facebook Reality Labs, a division of the social media company that is working to develop augmented-reality smart glasses. The size of the deal was between \$500 million and \$1 billion, sources familiar with the matter told CNBC. A Facebook spokesperson said it was lower than \$1 billion.



Gandhi Peace Garden inaugurated at UN HQ in New York

In a first of its kind symbolic effort by India at the UN, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate a 50KW 'Gandhi Solar Park' next week during his visit to the world organisation, a gesture that highlights India's willingness to go beyond the talk on climate change. At a contribution of about one million dollars, India has gifted solar panels that have been installed on the roof of the UN Headquarters here, one panel each for every 193 UN Member State.

Kristalina Georgieva appointed as new IMF chief

Bulgarian economist Kristalina Georgieva has been selected as the new managing director of the International Monetary Fund. Ms Georgieva, who was previously chief executive of the World Bank, becomes the first person from an emerging economy to lead the IMF.



First India-Caribbean Summit – 2019

Prime Minister Narendra Modi met the leaders of the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) during the first-ever India-Caricom leaders' summit here, with a focus on fighting climate change and increasing India's participation with the grouping. Modi announced a \$14-million grant for community development projects in the CARICOM and another \$150 million line of credit for solar, renewable energy and climate-change related projects, a statement released by the Ministry of External Affairs said. The CARICOM grouping has 15 members-states and five associate members.

India to attend SAARC Council of Ministers meeting

Pakistan and India boycotted each other's statements at a meeting of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Foreign Ministers here. Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi said he would not attend the speech by External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar first, announcing at the last minute that he would not attend the SAARC Minister's lunch while Mr. Jaishankar was speaking. Mr. Jaishankar then made his statement and left the meeting, minutes before the Pakistani Foreign Minister's arrival, ensuring that the two Ministers were not present in the room together at any point.

China launches its first Amphibious Assault Ship

China's first amphibious assault ship was launched in Shanghai on Wednesday, coming closer to the completion of its construction project. The People's Liberation Army Navy said in a statement that after a brief ceremony starting at 9:20 am at an unidentified shipyard, waters began to be pumped into a dry dock in which the ship's hull was built. Participants at the ceremony – officials from the central and Shanghai governments.

Mahatma Gandhi's 80-year-old Letter wishing Jews 'Era of Peace' Unveiled

JERUSALEM: A short handwritten letter by Mahatma Gandhi 80-years-ago on the same day the World War II broke out, wishing the "afflicted (Jewish) people" an "era of peace", has been unveiled for the first time by the National Library of Israel. Gandhi wrote the letter to Head of the Bombay Zionist Association (BZA) A E Shohet, who was trying to enlist support of Indian leaders in favour of the movement to establish a national home for the Jewish people.

UNWTO selects India as host country to celebrate World Tourism Day 2019

The soul of a tourist is an insatiable one as no matter how many places one visits, the urge to explore newer terrains and every nook and corner of the place just never diminishes. Curious people have been travelling to landscapes both known and unknown since time immortal. The desire to explore new places and cultures has helped the world to come together and connect effectively. Today, travelling has become more economical, convenient and easy with new technologies coming in.

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to offer tourist visas for the first time

Saudi Arabia said Friday it will offer tourist visas for the first time, opening up the ultra-conservative kingdom to holidaymakers as part of a push to diversify its economy away from oil. Kickstarting tourism is one of the centrepieces of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's Vision 2030 reform programme to prepare the biggest Arab economy for a post-oil era. The announcement comes just two weeks after devastating attacks on Saudi Arabia's.

