

LIBRARY & RESOURCE CENTRE, NOIDA

GENERAL KNOWLEDGE MONTHLY



SEPTEMBER – 2020

NATIONAL CURRENT AFFAIRS

Doorstep Banking Services launched by Public Sector Banks

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Wednesday launched a doorstep banking services initiative by public sector banks (PSBs) which will provide convenience to customers. This is part of EASE (enhanced access and service excellence) reforms that the Department of Financial Services had undertaken in 2018. As part of the EASE reforms, the doorstep banking initiative is envisaged to provide convenience of banking services to customers.

Atal Innovation Mission Launched Aatmanirbhar Bharat ARISE-ANIC Initiative

The Atal Innovation Mission (AIM), a flagship initiative of the Indian Government's policy think-tank NITI Aayog, on September 9, launched the Aatmanirbhar Bharat ARISE – Atal New India Challenges (ANIC) to spur applied research and innovation in MSMEs (micro, small and medium enterprises) and startups by challenging them to come up with innovative solutions to sectoral problems.

Indian Air Force to formally induct Rafale Fighter Jets in Ambala

Five Rafale fighter jets were formally inducted into the Indian Air Force on Thursday at a glittering ceremony in the Ambala air base, in a major boost to India's air power capability at a time the country is engaged in a tense border row with China in eastern Ladakh.



What is Digital Payment Index?

New Delhi: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is in the process of constructing a digital payment index to assess the extent of digitisation in the country and innovation in existing modes and channels to bridge digital divide, a senior official of the apex bank said on Wednesday. Observing that digital payments in India have been growing rapidly, RBI Executive Director T Rabi Sankar said there is still a lot of catching up to do as per-capita penetration is still quite low.

NSO's Report on Literacy Rate

Schools across the country have now been closed for six months due to COVID-19, but this means vastly different things for different people. For the child in urban Himachal Pradesh, where Internet penetration is higher than 70%, it likely means online schooling, Zoom classes and digital textbooks. For the child in rural Odisha, where less than 6% of households have Internet facilities, such options are out of the question.

Vodafone and Idea launches integrated brand identity 'Vi'

New Delhi: The rebranding of Vodafone Idea – Vi -- using just the initials of the two companies, may have come two years after the merger of the telecom companies but reflects the spirit of integration, according to the company. A statement from Vodafone Idea Ltd said that Vi (read as We) is more than just an abbreviation of Vodafone and Idea. It is shorter, simpler and while referencing the origin of the two brands also reflects the collective nature of the Indian society. "It is not just about me, it's especially about we," it added.

CII to create a 'National strategy for future business' along with DPIIT

Future Business Group, an initiative by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) to provide support to new businesses launched during the past few years, was launched on Thursday. Together with the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), CII will create a 'national strategy for future businesses' as part of the initiative. It will also provide policy inputs, identify new growth segments and establish international partnerships with a focus on growing such businesses.

Government Bans 118 Chinese apps

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Government of India on Wednesday invoking its power under section 69A of the Information Technology Act banned 118 mobile apps including PUBG Mobile in India. This is the third wave of the ban after the government banned popular apps like TikTok and others in the first two waves that were announced in June and July respectively. In June, the government banned 59 apps followed by another 47 apps in the second wave.

ICICI Prudential Life Insurance launches AI-powered voice chatbot- LiGo

ICICI Prudential Life Insurance has introduced a chatbot service 'LiGo' on 'Google Assistant' for its policyholders. This will help ICICI Pru policyholders to have their queries answered by simple voice commands such as "Ok Google, I want to speak to ICICI Prudential Life LiGo" or "May I talk to ICICI Prudential Life LiGo". The company is expanding its innovation with digital technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and providing convenience for its customers.

GDP contracted by 23.9 % in first quarter of 2020-2021

India's April-June quarter GDP contracted by a massive 23.9 per cent year-on-year (YoY), the first GDP contraction in more than 40 years. As per the National Statistical Office (NSO), gross value added (GVA) came in at -22.8 per cent.



One Nation, One Ration Card Scheme

Three more states, including Manipur, Nagaland and Uttarakhand, along with the Union Territory (UT) of Jammu and Kashmir have been integrated with the 'one nation, one ration card' scheme, Food Minister Ram Vilas Paswan tweeted. With this, now a total of 24 States/UTs are connected under 'one nation, one ration card' with effect from 1st August 2020. These 24 States/UTs are namely Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu, Goa, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Jharkhand, etc.

SHUKRAYAAN: ISRO to launch Venus Mission in 2025

NEW DELHI: ISRO is scheduled to launch its Venus mission in 2025 and France will participate in it, French space agency CNES said on Wednesday. The VIRAL (Venus Infrared Atmospheric Gases Linker) instrument co-developed with the Russian federal space agency Roscosmos and the LATMOS atmospheres, environments and space observations laboratory attached to the French national scientific research centre CNRS has been selected by the ISRO.

Brahmos Missile with an indigenous booster: Test Flight Successful

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) on Wednesday successfully test-fired the BrahMos surface-to-surface cruise missile with an indigenous booster and air frame sector, along with other sub-systems made within the country.



MECL begins gold mining in Kolar after 16 years

The Mineral Exploration Corporation Limited (MECL) started exploration of the Kolar Gold Fields (KGF) on Monday, said Union Minister for Coal and Mines Pralhad Joshi. "Happy to convey that exploratory drilling at Betrayaswamy block of Kolar Gold Fields commenced today," the Union Minister tweeted. Sharing photographs on Twitter on the commencement of the activities, Joshi said the mining would help resolve Bharat Gold Mines Limited (BGML) issue over exploration in KGF that has been pending for the last 16 years.

COVID-19 Vaccine: Serum Institute of India to produce additional 100 million doses for India

The Pune-based Serum Institute of India (SII) on Tuesday committed to producing an additional 100 million doses of the vaccine it is testing. This brings the total number of doses to 200 million to be available at \$3 a dose to a group of at least 61 'low and middle income countries (LMIC)' that includes India. This arrangement doesn't make clear how many of the 200 million doses will be made available to India.

Namami Gange: Six Mega Projects, "Ganga Avalokan" to be inaugurated

'Namami Gange Mission' gets a massive boost! A total of six mega projects have been inaugurated by Prime minister Narendra Modi in Uttarakhand under the 'Namami Gange Mission' via video conferencing. These projects include upgradation of the existing 27 MLD STP at Jagjeetpur, development of a 68 MLD sewage treatment plant (STP) as well as the building of an 18 MLD STP at Sarai in Haridwar. Besides, 'Ganga Avalokan' was also inaugurated by PM Modi, which is the first museum on Ganga aimed at showcasing the biodiversity, culture, and rejuvenation activities done in the river, according to a PTI report. The museum, Ganga Avalokan is situated at Chandi Ghat, Haridwar.

Senior IAS Officer PD Vaghela appointed TRAI Chairman

Senior bureaucrat P D Vaghela was on Monday appointed as chairman of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), according to a Personnel Ministry order. Vaghela, a 1986-batch IAS officer of Gujarat cadre, is currently Secretary, Department of Pharmaceuticals. He has been appointed as the TRAI chief for three years or till he attains the age of 65, the order said.

India-Israel to develop hi-tech weapon systems

NEW DELHI: India and Israel now plan to further crank up their already expansive defence partnership by going in more co-development and co-production projects of high-tech weapon systems and exporting them to other friendly Countries. A new sub-group to promote such joint projects, under the overarching joint working group on defence cooperation headed by Indian defence secretary and his Israeli counterpart, was set up on Thursday.

RBI to introduce Positive Pay System to check Cheques

Mumbai: In order to check banking fraud, the Reserve Bank of India has decided to introduce from January 1, 2021, the 'positive pay system' for cheque, under which re-confirmation of key details may be needed for payments beyond Rs 50,000. Availing of this facility would be at the discretion of the account holder. However, banks may consider making it mandatory in case of cheques for amounts of Rs 5 lakh and above.

Kerala wins United Nations Award for Control of Non-Communicable Diseases

Kerala bagged a United Nations award on Thursday for its "outstanding contribution" towards the non-communicable diseases-related sustainable development goals. The UN Interagency Task Force (UNIATF) award this year on prevention and control of non-communicable diseases was announced by World Health Organization director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. The award recognises achievements during 2019 on the multisectoral action in the prevention and control of NCDs, mental health and the wider NCD-related sustainable development goals (SDGs).

FAME Scheme: 670 new electric buses and 241 charging stations sanctioned

The government on Friday said it has sanctioned 670 electric buses for Maharashtra, Goa, Gujarat and Chandigarh and 241 charging stations in Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Gujarat and Port Blair under Phase-II of the FAME India Scheme.



RBI releases Cyber Security Vision Framework for Urban Cooperative Banks

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Thursday released a cybersecurity vision framework for urban cooperative banks (UCBs). Considering the heterogeneity of the UCB sector in terms of size, regions, financial health and digital depth, the central bank said a 'one-size-fits-all' approach may not be suitable while prescribing cyber security guidelines for UCBs. As a result, four guiding principles were taken into account while formulating the framework.

Gol forms five task forces to revive MSME sector

The government has constituted five task forces to make India's micro, small and medium enterprises future-ready and formulate a concrete strategy towards making the country a leading exporter, a top government official said on Thursday. MSME Secretary A K Sharma expressed confidence that it would be on the path of implementing the futuristic initiatives by the start of next year. "We have formed five ministerial task forces which will be headed by our key officers.

India successfully conducts testing of Prithvi II missile

BALASORE : India on Wednesday conducted a successful night testfire of its indigenously developed nuclear capable surface-to-surface Prithvi-II missile as part of a user trial by the Army from a base in Odisha, defence sources said.



Banking Regulation (Amendment) Bill, 2020

Lok Sabha on Wednesday passed Banking Regulation Amendment Bill, 2020 to bring the cooperative banks under the supervision of the Reserve Bank of India. In the wake of deteriorating condition of cooperative banks in the country, the central government amended the Banking Regulation Act, 1949. "For the last two years, depositors of cooperative banks and small banks are facing problems. We are trying to bring this amendment in order to protect the depositors," finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Thursday in the Lok Sabha.

Parliament passes Taxation and Other Laws (Relaxation and Amendment of Certain provisions) bill

Parliament on Tuesday gave its approval to a taxation bill that seeks to provide various reliefs in terms of compliance requirements for taxpayers amid the coronavirus pandemic. The Taxation and Other Laws (Relaxation and Amendment of Certain Provisions) Bill, 2020, which seeks to replace an ordinance and make few other changes in direct and indirect tax laws, was returned by a voice vote in Rajya Sabha. The bill was returned amid several opposition parties boycotted the House proceedings protesting suspension of eight members.

ICMR to allow COVID-19 vaccines with 50% efficacy

The vaccine against coronavirus disease (Covid-19) is likely to be anywhere between 50 to 100% effective, according to director general of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR). "All the vaccines for respiratory viruses are not 100% effective. The World Health Organisation (WHO) says that there are three things key for a vaccine: safety (how safe it is for human use), immunogenicity (whether it is able to provoke body's immune response) and its efficacy (how effective it is against the virus)," said director general, ICMR, Dr Balram Bhargava.

World Largest Telescope to have IT controls built in India

NEW DELHI: The Square Kilometre Array (SKA) programme, an international initiative building the world's largest radio telescope will have control systems designed and built by an Indian IT multinational firm — Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) — while multiple Indian scientific institutions are also contributing to the project. The National Centre for Radio Astrophysics (NCRA) of the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR) is the lead Telescope Manager (TM) of the project.

Insolvency and Bankruptcy (Second Amendment) passed in Rajya Sabha

The Rajya Sabha on Saturday passed the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Second Amendment) Bill (IBC), 2020 to ensure that fresh insolvency proceedings will not be initiated for at least six months starting March 25 amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The Bill replaces an ordinance passed in June. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman informed the Rajya Sabha on Saturday that the IBC is not a recovery law, and saving the lives of the companies is important than recovery of loans, which may be utilised through other options.

Indian Teenager Udit Singhal named in UN List of 2020 Class of Young Leaders for SDG

UNITED NATIONS: Udit Singhal, an 18-year-old boy from India has been named by the United Nations to the 2020 cohort of young leaders for the Sustainable Development Goals, the highest profile recognition opportunity at the world body for youngsters who are leading efforts to combat the world's most pressing issues. Singhal has been named to the 2020 Class of 17 Young Leaders for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Gol to launch Rs 25,000 crore plan to cut Chinese Imports

NEW DELHI: With the aim to reduce dependence on China for import of chemicals, the government is planning a production linked incentive scheme to boost local manufacturing of some of the key chemicals used in pharmaceuticals insecticides and in other critical industrial usage, sources said. In a series of recent meetings, the department of chemicals has identified around 75 critical chemicals and more are likely to be added to the list.

India's first private Jet Terminal at New Delhi

India opened its first exclusive terminal for private airplanes to cater to the world's fastest growing ultra-rich population. The new terminal at the Indira Gandhi International Airport will allow movement of 150 jets daily, Delhi International Airport Ltd. said in a statement. The new terminal will be able to handle over 50 passengers an hour. This will make movement of business jets and chartered aircraft easier, a long-pending demand of Indian billionaires seeking friendlier skies with a network of airports just for private jets.

World Bank's Human Capital Index 2020: India Ranks 116th

India has been ranked at the 116th position in the latest edition of the World Bank's annual Human Capital Index that benchmarks key components of human capital across countries. However, India's score increased to 0.49 from 0.44 in 2018, as per the Human Capital Index report released by the World Bank on Wednesday. The 2020 Human Capital Index update includes health and education data for 174 countries covering 98 per cent of the world's population up to March 2020.

ONGC exits from Sudan

Oil and Natural Gas Corp (ONGC) has exited Sudan oilfields after the African nation refused to pay for oil it lifted from the fields. ONGC Videsh Ltd (OVL), the overseas investment arm of the state-owned firm, as also its Chinese partner CNPC and Malaysia's Petronas have withdrawn from the block, a top company official said. OVL had a 25 per cent stake in Block 2A&4 in Sudan while CNPC had 40 per cent and Petronet 30 per cent. Sudan's Sudapet had 5 per cent interest.

TATA group to construct New Parliament Building

New Delhi/Mumbai: Tata Projects is set to win the contract to build India's new Parliament building as a part of the government's Central Vista redevelopment plans, beating Larsen & Toubro. The Tata group company offered to execute the project for Rs 861.9 crore, only Rs 3.1 crore less than L&T's bid of Rs 865 crore. A Tata Project spokesperson confirmed the development. The government is likely to award the contract to Tata Projects soon and is keen that construction starts after the monsoon session of Parliament, which ends on October 1.

Parliament passed Institute of Teaching and Research in Ayurveda Bill, 2020

The Rajya Sabha (RS) on Wednesday passed the Institute of Teaching and Research in Ayurveda Bill, 2020. The institute will be declared an institution of national importance following the passage of the bill and will be instrumental for the promotion of quality and excellence in education, research and training in Ayurveda. The bill seeks to merge three institutes into one integrated centre.

Lok Sabha Passes Bill to reduce salaries of MPs by 30%

Parliament on Friday passed a Bill to reduce for one year the salaries of parliamentarians by 30% "to meet the exigencies arising out of COVID-19 pandemic." Rajya Sabha passed the Salary, Allowances and Pension of Members of Parliament (Amendment) Bill, 2020. It had got the approval of Lok Sabha on Tuesday. The Bill was introduced in the upper house by Parliamentary Affairs Pralhad Joshi on Thursday.

Harivansh Narayan Singh re-elected as Rajya Sabha Deputy Chairman

The Opposition parties on Monday let go of a contest for the post of Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, allowing JD(U) MP Harivansh to be re-elected for a second time by voice vote. Mr. Harivansh's name was proposed by BJP president and party MP Jagat Prakash Nadda. Leader of the House Thawarchand Gehlot seconded it. The Opposition had fielded RJD MP Manoj Jha. Leader of the Opposition Ghulam Nabi Azad moved the motion for Mr. Jha, which was seconded by DMK MP Tiruchi Siva and Samajwadi MP Javed Ali Khan.

Bills Introduced in Lok Sabha to Transform the Agriculture

New Delhi: BJP national president JP Nadda on Wednesday supported the three agriculture related bills introduced in the Lok Sabha even as the government is facing opposition on these bills from its allies like the Akali Dal and from farmers in Haryana and Punjab, who are protesting against the reforms bills. The three bills are the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill, 2020, the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020.

The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020

The government has undertaken landmark agricultural reforms, freeing farmers from restrictions on sale of their produce and ending the monopoly of traders. It has also opened the window for private capital by allowing farmers to enter into deals with large buyers such as exporters and retailers. This is expected to catalyse the sector, bring in much-needed private investment and boost rural incomes.

India beats China to become Member of UN's Commission on Status of Women

New Delhi: India defeated China to enter the prestigious Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), a body of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The victory is significant amid China's rapidly growing influence in the UN and its claim of promoting the activities of the CSW. India will be a member of the commission for four years from 2021. India, Afghanistan and China contested the election. India and Afghanistan won the ballot among the 54 ECOSOC members.

PM inaugurates Three Petroleum Sector Projects

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday dedicated three petroleum sector projects in poll-bound Bihar to the nation. These projects that will help meet the demand for domestic cooking gas in the state include state-run Indian Oil Corporation's 193-km long Durgapur-Banka section of the Paradip-Haldia-Durgapur liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) pipeline that will supply cooking gas for bottling at the new Banka plant in the state.

Tripura's First Ever Special Economic Zone

Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb, Friday laid the foundation stone for Tripura's first-ever Special Economic Zone (SEZ) at Sabroom, the southernmost town of the state bordering Bangladesh. Deb said that with the SEZ, Sabroom, around 120 km from Agartala, would emerge as the commercial capital of the Northeast. He said the Ministry of Commerce and Industries in December had given the approval for the SEZ, which would be set up at Jalefa in Sabroom subdivision with an investment of Rs 635 crore.

Hindi Diwas is being observed across the country

Happy Hindi Diwas 2020: The day is celebrated across the country on September 14, 2020 to mark the adoption of Hindi written in Devanagari as the official language of the country by the Constituent Assembly in 1949.



Rajasthan Partners with SIDBI to develop MSMEs

Rajasthan's Department of Industries and Sidbi will work together to provide financial, technical, marketing and export support to MSMEs in the state, Industries Minister Parsadi Lal Meena said on Friday. The Small Industries Development Bank of India (Sidbi) has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Rajasthan government to develop the MSME ecosystem in the state. Meena said the MSME Act was amended to promote industries and exempt such businesses from all kinds of permissions and inspections for three years.

Moody's revises estimate of India's Growth

Moody's Investors Service has forecast India's real GDP to contract by 11.5 per cent in fiscal 2020-21, much weaker than its previous estimate of a 4.0 per cent contraction. The global rating firm said the collapse in India's GDP in the first quarter was one of the sharpest among all major G-20 economies. However, Moody's said, growth is expected to rebound to 10.6 per cent in 2021-22, reflecting a strong statistical base effect from the low GDP levels of 2020 as economic activity slowly normalises. India's real GDP contracted by 23.9 per cent year-on-year in the April-June 2020 quarter, registering the economic impact of the nationwide lockdown measures which were in place from late March till a phased lifting of restrictions began in June.

J&K announces New Universal Health Insurance Scheme

Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Friday announced a universal health insurance scheme, on the lines of the Centre's Ayushman Bharat, to cover the entire population of the Union territory at an annual expenditure of Rs 123 crore. The scheme will provide health insurance cover free of cost to all residents and shall include the serving and retired employees and their families as well, he said. "Today, we have approved an important public health benefit proposal which is probably the first of its kind in the entire country. The Jammu and Kashmir Health Scheme will provide universal health coverage to nearly 70 lakh residents of the Union territory who are not covered under the Ayushman Bharat scheme," Sinha told reporters here.

Ranking of States on Support to Start-up Ecosystems

NEW DELHI: Gujarat and Andaman & Nicobar Islands have emerged as the best performers among states and UTs in the second edition of ranking of the startup ecosystem in the country, followed by Karnataka and Kerala who were "top performers". The States' Startup Ranking Framework 2019 is based on seven broad reform areas consisting of 30 action points ranging from institutional support, easing compliances, relaxation in public procurement norms, incubation support, seed funding support.

10th virtual meeting of BRICS NSAs

India's National Security Adviser Ajit Doval is set to join his Chinese counterpart Yang Jiechi for a virtual meeting of the NSAs of the Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa (Brics) grouping on Thursday against the backdrop of the border standoff. The 10th meeting of the NSAs of the grouping is part of a series of events being hosted by Russia, the current chair of Brics. This will be the fourth time this month that top Indian and Chinese leaders have been part of multilateral meetings hosted by Russia, following a virtual meeting of Brics' foreign ministers, and meetings of the defence and foreign ministers of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in Moscow.

Airbus to launch World's first Commercial Hydrogen aircraft by 2035

NEW DELHI: Aviation giant Airbus on Monday revealed three concepts for the world's first zero-emission commercial aircraft which could enter into service by 2035. All of these concepts are powered by hydrogen - an option that the European firm believes holds exceptional promise as a clean aviation fuel and is likely to be a solution for aerospace and many other industries to meet their climate-neutral targets.



Global Innovation Index, 2020

New Delhi: India climbed four spots on the Global Innovation Index 2020 and is now at 48th position in the list of top 50 innovative countries in the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) annual ranking. Switzerland, Sweden, US, UK and Netherlands are in the top spots of this year's ranking. According to an official release, India occupied the 52nd position in 2019 and was ranked 81st in the year 2015. The WIPO had also accepted India as one of the leading innovation achievers of 2019 in the central and southern Asian region, as it has shown a consistent improvement in its innovation ranking for the last 5 years.

INTERNATIONAL CURRENT AFFAIRS

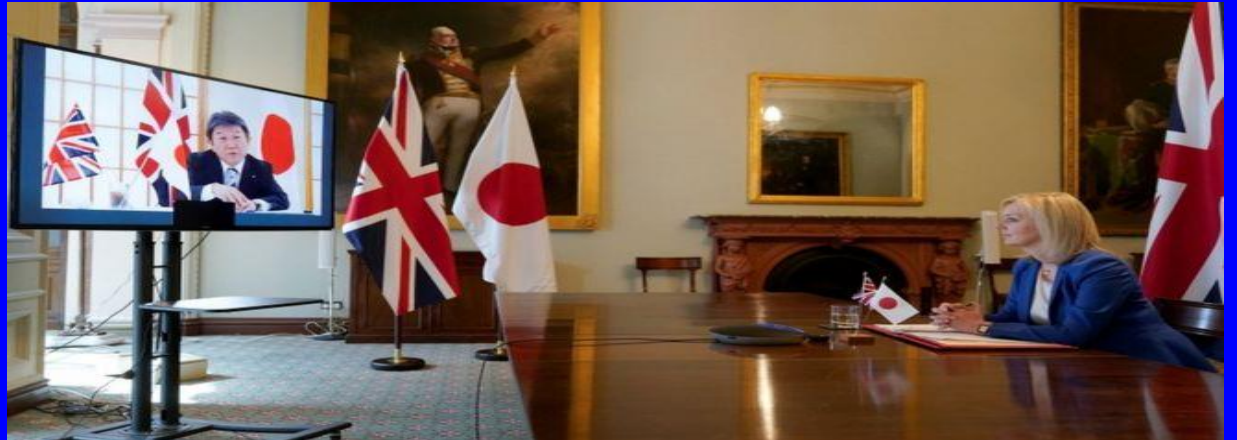
Beijing Imposed New Restrictions on US Diplomats

China has announced new restrictions on the activities of U.S. diplomats working in mainland China and Hong Kong, in what it called a justified response to similar measures imposed on Chinese diplomats in the U.S. last year. In a statement posted online late on Friday, a foreign ministry spokesperson said the rules would apply to senior diplomats and all other personnel at the American Embassy in Beijing and consulates throughout China.



UK Enters into First Major Post-Brexit Deal with Japan

The UK has struck its first major post-Brexit trade pact after signing a deal with Japan that aims to boost trade between the countries by about £15bn. International Trade Secretary Liz Truss said it was a "historic moment". She said it would bring "new wins" for British businesses in manufacturing, food and drink, and tech industries. Critics said while the deal may be of symbolic importance it would boost UK GDP by only 0.07%, a fraction of the trade that could be lost with the EU. Friday's deal still needs approval by Japan's parliament, which the country's Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi forecast would be passed by January.



Yoshihide Suga to Succeed Shinzo Abe as the PM of Japan

TOKYO — Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party elected 71-year-old Yoshihide Suga to succeed Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on Monday in a landslide vote billed as ensuring continuity in economic and foreign policies. Suga served as Abe's right-hand man and behind-the-scenes fixer during Abe's nearly eight years as prime minister, with the official roles of chief cabinet secretary and chief government spokesman. Suga received 377 votes in the leadership contest, beating Fumio Kishida, a former foreign minister who scored 89, and Shigeru Ishiba, a former defense minister and critic of Abe who obtained 68 votes.

ADB: Asian Economy to shrink for First Time since 1960s

Developing Asia's coronavirus-battered economy will shrink for the first time since the early 1960s, with the level of output next year still seen below pre-pandemic projections even as growth recovers, according to the Asian Development Bank. The region's gross domestic product will decline by 0.7% in 2020, down from June's projection of an increase of 0.1%, the Manila-based bank said in a report Tuesday. A contraction this year would be the first since 1962, Yasuyuki Sawada, the ADB's chief economist, said in a live-streamed briefing.

Abraham Accord: UAE and Bahrain to deal with Israel

U.S. President Donald Trump on Tuesday hosted Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and foreign ministers of the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain for the signing of the historic Abraham Accord, which is the first Arab-Israeli peace deal in 26 years.



Global Smart City Index: Indian cities slip; Singapore tops

Four Indian cities -- New Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad, and Bengaluru -- witnessed a significant drop in their rankings in the global listing of smart cities that was topped by Singapore. The Institute for Management Development, in collaboration with Singapore University for Technology and Design, has released the 2020 Smart City Index, with key findings on how technology is playing a role in the covid-19 era. In the 2020 Smart City Index, Hyderabad was placed at the 85th position (down from 67 in 2019), New Delhi at 86th.

Libyan Prime Minister resigns: Libyan crisis, Civil War, role of United Nations

Libyan Prime Minister Fayez al-Serraj says he intends to “hand over” power to the next executive authority by the end of October. He is currently the head of the internationally recognised government in Tripoli. There has been a renewed drive by the international community for a new political solution for Libya, with talks taking place in several countries. In his televised address on Wednesday night.

Pakistan to elevate Gilgit-Baltistan to a full-fledged province

Islamabad: Pakistan has decided to elevate Gilgit-Baltistan's status to that of a full-fledged province, a Pakistani media report on Thursday quoted a senior minister as saying. India has clearly conveyed to Pakistan that the entire union territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, including the areas of Gilgit and Baltistan, are an integral part of the country by virtue of its fully legal and irrevocable accession.

WHO to launch 120 million Rapid Diagnostic Tests for COVID-19

Some 120 million rapid diagnostic tests for coronavirus will be made available to low- and middle-income countries at a maximum of \$5 each, the World Health Organization (WHO) said on Monday. The wider availability of quick, reliable and inexpensive testing will help 133 countries to track infections and contain the spread, closing the gap with wealthy ones, it said. WHO Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said the manufacturers.

Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict

Story so far: Fresh clashes erupted on the Armenia-Azerbaijan border on Sunday, threatening to push the countries back to war 26 years after a ceasefire was reached. Dozens have been killed so far as the violence is entering the third day. The conflict between the two former Soviet republics has wider geopolitical implications as Turkey, which shares a border with Armenia, is backing Azerbaijan, while Russia, which has good ties with both countries.

In US, Amazon granted approval to deliver packages by drones

Getting an Amazon package delivered from the sky is closer to becoming a reality. The Federal Aviation Administration said on Monday it had granted Amazon approval to deliver packages by drones.



Turkey renews talk on sharing resources with Greece

Turkey's Foreign Minister said on Tuesday his country favours a dialogue with rival Greece that would lead to the fair sharing of resources in the eastern Mediterranean, where the two countries are locked in a tense standoff that threatens to spill into a conflict.



Facebook Is Preparing for Myanmar's 2020 Election

Facebook Inc said on Tuesday that it was preparing for Myanmar's 2020 election scheduled for November by improving the detection and removal of hate speech and content that incites violence and preventing the spread of misinformation. The company said in a blog <https://bit.ly/31KFCKj> it has expanded its misinformation policy in Myanmar so that "it will now remove misinformation that could lead to voter suppression or damage the integrity of the electoral process". Facebook also said it was working with two partners in Myanmar to verify the official national Facebook pages of political parties. It now has three fact-checking partners in Myanmar, BOOM, AFP Fact Check and Fact Crescendo.

Google partners with Bangladesh for Flood Forecasting

As floods wreak havoc in South Asian countries, Google on Tuesday said it is expanding its Artificial Intelligence (AI)-powered flood forecasting to all of India and Bangladesh that will provide greater details on timing and water depths in alerts in nine new local languages. Google launched a new forecasting model that will allow it to double the lead time of many of its alerts providing more notice to governments in India and Bangladesh and giving tens of millions of people an extra day or so to prepare.

Japanese companies relocating from China to India

Japan will extend subsidy to its companies under a 23.5-billion yen (about \$221 million) plan for moving their factories from China to India and a few others, in the latest sign of deepening engagement between Tokyo and New Delhi to bolster supply chain amid Beijing's growing belligerence in the region. According to a report in the Nikkei newspaper, Japan will add India and Bangladesh to the list of "relocation destinations". In April, following the Covid-19 pandemic, Tokyo had announced a large subsidy programme of 220 billion yen.

Global Economic Freedom Index, 2020

India has fallen 26 spots to the 105th position on the Global Economic Freedom Index 2020, according to a report released on Thursday. The country was at the 79th spot in last year's rankings. The Economic Freedom of the World: 2020 Annual Report by Canada's Fraser Institute has been released in India in conjunction with New Delhi-based think tank Centre For Civil Society. The report said prospects for increasing economic freedom in India depend on next generation reforms in factor markets and in greater openness to international trade.

India-China Five-Point Action Plan to resolve Border Disputes

After a two and a half-hour meeting that went into the night in Moscow, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi said they agreed on a five-point course of action to disengage and reduce tensions along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), where Indian and Chinese troops have been engaged in a four and a half month long stand-off. "The two Foreign Ministers agreed that the current situation in the border areas is not in the interests of either side. They agreed, therefore, that the border troops of both sides should continue their dialogue, quickly disengage, maintain proper distance and ease tensions,".

Scientists Found Life Harboursing Gas on Venus

Traces of a pungent gas that waft through the clouds of Venus may be emanations from aerial organisms – microbial life, but not as we know it. Astronomers detected phosphine 30 miles up in the planet's atmosphere and have failed to identify a process other than life that could account for its presence. The discovery raises the possibility that life gained a foothold on Earth's inner neighbour and remnants clung on – or floated on, at least – as Venus suffered runaway global warming that made the planet hellish.



**Thank
You!!!**