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Current Affairs [PDF] -January 1-15, 2019 [PDF]

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News Headlines: January 1-15, 2019

Current Affairs – NEWS HEADLINES: January 1, 2019

India

- Lok Sabha passes Indian Medical Council (Amendment) bill to allow a panel of eminent professionals to run the scam-tainted Medical Council of India (MCI)
- Former IFS Officer Sudhir Bhargava appointed as new Chief Information Commissioner (CIC)
- HRD Ministry to turn 3 deemed universities imparting education in Sanskrit into central universities
- The three institutions are: Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan, New Delhi, Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeeth, New Delhi, and Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeeth, Tirupati
- West Bengal govt. to give financial aid of Rs 5,000 per acre for all peasant families in the state
- West Bengal govt. to provide life insurance coverage of Rs 2 lakh for farmers under Krishak Bondhu scheme from 2019
- CM Nitish Kumar announces setting up of Bihar Industrial Security Force (BISF) to protect businessmen, industrialists
- Gujarat: School students to answer roll call with 'Jai Hind', 'Jai Bharat' from Jan 1
- Nagaland: Centre extends Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) for a period of six months
- Meghalaya: Indian Navy divers start operation to rescue trapped miners in coal mine since Dec 13
- Telangana, AP to have separate high courts at Hyderabad and Amaravati from Jan 1
- Dipika Kakar wins season 12 of reality show Bigg Boss
- Veteran Kannada actor C. H. Loknath dies in Bengaluru at 91

Economy & Corporate

- Non-subsidised LPG rate cut by Rs 120.50/cylinder, subsidised by Rs 5.91 from January 1
- Eight core industries grew at its slowest pace in 16 months at 3.5 per cent in November
- Asset quality of PSBs showed improvement with gross non-performing assets' (GNPAs) ratio declining to 14.8% in September 2018 from 15.2% in March 2018: RBI
- India's external debt fell by USD 19.3 billion (3.6%) to USD 510.4 billion during the 6-month period ended September: RBI
- infuses Rs 10,882 crore in 4 PSBs: UCO Bank- Rs 3,074 crore, Bank of Maharashtra-Rs 4,498 crore, Syndicate Bank-Rs 1,632 crore and Central Bank of India-Rs 1,678 crore
- Loan subsidy for middle-income group under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) extended till March 31, 2020
- K. Yadav succeeds Ashwani Lohani as new Railway Board Chairman

World

- Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina's Awami League wins landslide victory in Parliamentary elections
- Cyclone Usman leaves 68 dead in Philippines
- 'City on Fire' director Ringo Lam dies at 63 in Hong Kong

Sports

- Smriti Mandhana wins ICC 'Women's Cricketer' and 'ODI Player of the year' awards
- Bangladesh: ODI captain Mashrafe Mortaza wins election as an Awami League candidate

Current Affairs – NEWS HEADLINES: January 2, 2019

India

- ISRO launches a new platform named "Samwad with Students" (SwS) in Bengaluru
- Kerala: Women form 620-km long human 'wall' from Kasaragod to Thiruvananthapuram to uphold gender equality
- Justice AK Sikri nominated as the Executive Chairman of National Legal Services Authority (NALSA)
- Actor Prakash Raj to join politics, to contest Lok Sabha election as an independent candidate
- Actor-writer Kader Khan, who made his debut in 'Daag' (1973), dies at 81 in Toronto
- Thottathil B. Radhakrishnan sworn in as 1st Chief Justice of the Telangana High Court in Hyderabad
- Siddhu Siddrameshwar Humanabade, who saved 10 people from a fire in a Mumbai hospital on Dec

31, honoured by MoS for Labour & Employment (I/C) Santosh Kumar Gangwar

Economy & Corporate

- RBI gives relief to MSME sector, provides for one-time restructuring of loans
- Govt appoints Hemant Bhargava interim chairman of LIC
- Manufacturing of items of defence aerospace and warships will now be covered by Industries (Development and Regulation) Act and will not require any licence from the commerce & industry ministry
- Saurabh Kumar takes over as the Director General of Ordnance Factories (DGOF) and Chairman of the Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) in Kolkata

World

- India and Pakistan exchange a list of their nuclear installations for the 28th consecutive year
- A bilateral agreement prohibits India and Pakistan them from attacking each other's atomic facilities
- India and Pakistan exchange details of civilian prisoners and fishermen lodged in each other's jails
- USA and Israel officially quit UNESCO with the close of 2018
- Qatar ceases to be a member of OPEC from Jan 1

Sports

- Third Elite women's National Boxing Championships starts in Vijayanagara, Karnataka

Current Affairs – NEWS HEADLINES: January 3, 2019

India

- Govt tables bill in Lok Sabha for voluntary use of Aadhaar for obtaining services like opening bank account and getting mobile phone connection
- Cabinet approves continuation of "Umbrella Scheme for Family Welfare and Other Health Interventions" till 2019-20
- Cabinet approves restructuring of existing National Health Agency as "National Health Authority" for better implementation of PM-JAY (Pradhan Mantri – Jan Arogya Yojana)
- Cabinet approves continuation of Rastriya Yuva Sashaktikaran Karyakram Scheme for welfare of adolescents till 2019-2020
- Union Cabinet approves constitution of a high-level committee to make recommendations for effective implementation of the 'Assam Accord' inked in August 1985
- Haryana approves 11 projects for revival of ancient Saraswati River
- Former diplomat Sujan R. Chinoy appointed Director General of the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi

Economy & Corporate

- RBI constitutes an expert committee headed by former SEBI Chairman U. K. Sinha to ensure timely and adequate availability of finance for MSMEs
- Cabinet approves bill to provide statutory recognition to trade unions; the present act provides for only registration of trade unions
- Govt releases 6-crore LPG connection under PMUY (Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana)
- Oil PSUs sign agreement with IIT-Bombay to set up a Centre of Excellence in Oil, Gas and Energy
- Cabinet approves amalgamation of Dena Bank and Vijaya Bank with Bank of Baroda that will create country's 3rd largest bank

World

- President Xi Jinping says that China will not give up the use of military force as an option to ensure the reunification of Taiwan
- Somalia labels UN Special Representative Nicholas Haysom as a 'persona non-grata'
- On first day of 2019, estimated 395,000 babies born worldwide, most (69,944) in India: UNICEF
- NASA's Juno probe photographs volcanic plumes on Jupiter's moon Io

Sports

- Sachin Tendulkar's childhood coach and Dronacharya awardee Ramakant Achrekar dies in Mumbai



at 87

Current Affairs – NEWS HEADLINES: January 4, 2019

India

- Rajya Sabha passes National Council for Teacher Education (Amendment) Bill, 2019 that seeks to retrospectively grant recognition to certain institutions running teacher education courses
- Parliament passes the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (Amendment) Bill, 2018 to abolish the no-detention policy in schools
- PM Modi adds Jai Anusandhan to ex-PM Lal Bahadur Shastri’s famous slogan of Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan and Atal Bihari Vajpayee’s Jai Vigyan
- 106th Session of the Indian Science Congress being held at Jalandhar, Punjab from Jan 3 to 7, Theme: ‘Future India: science & Technology
- 27th New Delhi World Book Fair from Jan 5 to 13 with its focus on ‘Readers with Special Needs’; UAE’s emirate Sharjah is ‘guest of honour’
- Veer Savarkar International Airport in Port Blair declared as an authorized Immigration Check post for entry into/exit from India
- Odisha: Kathak exponent Anindita Neogy Anaam presented National Nritya Shiromani award at Cuttack Mahotsav: International Dance and Music festival
- Sahitya Akademi awardee Bengali writer Dibyendu Palit dies in Kolkata at 79
- Retired justice Chandrashekhar Shankar Dharmadhikari, who delivered a landmark verdict during the Emergency on human rights, dies in Mumbai at 91

Economy & Corporate

- HDFC MF surpasses ICICI Prudential MF to become largest AMC in India as of December-end
- E-commerce rules do not allow foreign investment in multi-brand retail: DIPP
- Sun Pharma completes acquisition of Japan-based Pola Pharma

World

- Pakistan: Provincial Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government declares Panj Tirath Hindu religious site in Peshawar as national heritage
- Pakistan abolishes the long-standing facility of visa on arrival for Afghan nationals
- China’s lunar explorer Chang’e-4 probe makes first-ever landing on far side of moon
- US: Pharma giant Bristol-Myers Squibb buying Celgene in USD 74 bn deal

Sports

- Switzerland enter final of Hopman Cup mixed team tennis tournament in Perth
- Former FIFA referee Alex Vaz dies in Mumbai at 84

Current Affairs – NEWS HEADLINES: January 5, 2019

- PM IN MANIPUR
- Inaugurates Integrated Check Post at Moreh on border with Myanmar
- Inaugurates the Dolaithabi Barrage Project and the FCI Food Storage Godown at Sawombung
- Dedicates to the nation the 400 kV Double Circuit Silchar-Imphal Line

India

- Lok Sabha passes bill to amend the Aadhaar Act. This will allow individuals to offer voluntarily biometric ID as a means of identity verification for opening bank account and procuring mobile phone connection
- 106th Indian Science Congress in Jalandhar: Time Capsule with items representing today’s technology and India’s scientific prowess buried for 100 years at the Lovely Professional University (LPU)
- Swachh Survekshan 2019 (Annual Cleanliness survey) being conducted across 4,237 Urban Local Bodies from January 4 to 28
- Indian Panorama Film Festival being organised in New Delhi from January 4 to 13
- Afghan National Security Adviser Hamdullah Mohib meets his Indian counterpart Ajit Doval in New Delhi

Economy & Corporate

- India's foreign exchange reserves rose marginally to US\$ 393.40 billion in the week ended December 28
- Nikkei India Services Business Activity Index falls to 53.2 in December from 53.7 in November
- National Entrepreneurship Awards 2018 presented to the winners in New Delhi
- Andhra Pradesh tops Asia Competitiveness Institute (ACI), Singapore's 2018 Ease of Doing Business (EDB) Index of Indian states
- AP Govt. bags Central Board of Irrigation and Power (CBIP) award for speedy execution of Polavaram multipurpose project on the Godavari River
- Lok Sabha passes the Companies (Amendment) Bill, 2018 that seeks to improve ease of doing business, declog the NCLT and prescribe strong action against non-compliant companies
- Lok Sabha passes bill to set up a new international arbitration centre in New Delhi with an aim to make India as hub of international arbitration
- Conventional coaches will be replaced with modern LHB (Linke Hofmann Busch) design coaches in all long distance trains: Railway Minister Piyush Goyal

World

- Veteran Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi elected as Speaker of the House of Representatives in US Parliament
- Tropical storm 'Pabuk' makes landfall in Thailand
- United Nations observes the first World Braille Day on January 4

Sports

- 80th National Table Tennis Championship began at Jawaharlal Nehru Indoor Stadium in Cuttack

Current Affairs - NEWS HEADLINES: January 6, 2019

- PM IN ODISHA
- Baripada: Unveils plaque to mark start of conservation work at Rasika Ray Temple and Excavated Structure at Ancient Fort Haripurgarh
- Balasore: Inaugurates Balasore-Haldia-Durgapur section of the Paradip-Haldia-Durgapur LPG pipeline of IOCL
- Balasore: Inaugurates Multi Modal Logistic Park
- Balasore: Flags off the second passenger train from Tatanagar to Badampahar
- PM IN JHARKHAND
- Palamu: Witnessed the e-Grih Pravesh of 25,000 beneficiaries under Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana
- Palamu: Lays Foundation Stone for the revival of North Koel (Mandal Dam) project & Kanhar Sone pipeline irrigation scheme

India

- Odisha: CM Naveen Patnaik announces interest-free loans of up to Rs 3 lakh for the women self-help groups (WSHG)
- Mumbai: Veteran journalist Dinu Randive conferred with lifetime achievement award by the Mantralaya and Vidhimandal Vartahar Sangh, an association of journalists covering Maharashtra legislature and secretariat
- 'Crusade against corruption', a book written by Manohar Manoj, released

Economy & Corporate

- Liquor baron Vijay Mallya becomes 1st person to be declared a 'fugitive economic offender' under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) by a special court in Mumbai
- NGT imposes fine of Rs. 100 crore on Meghalaya government for failing to curb illegal coal mining in the state
- NHAI to collaborate with Oil Marketing Companies for issuance of FASTags through petroleum retail outlets
- ONGC Videsh makes second oil discovery in Colombia; to drill more wells

World

- Tropical storm Pabuk kills 3, forces over 34,000 to evacuate in Thailand

Sports

- Tata Open Maharashtra tennis in Pune: Rohan Bopanna & Divij Sharan win Men's Doubles title; South Africa's Kevin Anderson wins Men's Singles title
- Bengaluru Bulls beat Gujarat Fortune Giants in final 38-33 to win Pro Kabaddi League title in Mumbai

Current Affairs – NEWS HEADLINES: January 7, 2019

India

- Bihar CM, his cabinet colleagues declare their assets; CM Nitish Kumar owns assets worth Rs 56.18 lakh
- Centre sets up high-level committee headed by former Union tourism secretary M. P. Bezbaruah to assess the appropriate level of reservation of seats in the Assam Assembly and local bodies for the Assamese people
- Cyclone Pabuk: IMD issues orange warning for Andaman and Nicobar Islands
- Meghalaya: Operations to rescue 15 trapped in flooded coal mine in East Jaintia Hills district enter 25th day

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Economy & Corporate

- 'Rail Kumbh Seva Mobile App' launched to help those arriving in Allahabad for the Kumbh Mela starting from January 15

World

- Malaysia's 15th King, 49-year old Sultan Muhammad V, resigns from Kingship
- China passes law to make Islam 'compatible with socialism'
- United States: Pentagon Chief of Staff Kevin Sweeney resigns

Sports

- Qatar Open tennis: Spaniard Roberto Bautista Agut defeats Tomas Berdych of the Czech Republic 6-4, 3-6, 6-3 in the final to win Men's Singles title
- Brisbane International tennis: Japan's Kei Nishikori defeats Russia's Daniil Medvedev 6-4, 3-6, 6-2 in the final to win Men's Singles title
- Brisbane International tennis: Karolina Pliskova of Czech Republic beats Ukraine's Lesia Tsurenko 4-6, 7-5, 6-2 in the final to win Women's Singles title
- WTA Auckland Classic tennis: Germany's Julia Goerges beats Canada's Bianca Andreescu in the final 2-6, 7-5, and 6-1 to win Women's Singles title
- Switzerland beat Germany 2-1 in final to win Hopman Cup mixed team tennis tournament in Perth
- South Africa (431, 43/1) beat Pakistan (177, 294) by 9 wickets in 2nd test at Newlands, Cape Town; take 2-0 lead in 3-test series
- Xiamen Marathon in China: Ethiopians Dejene Debela (2:09:26) and Medina Deme (2:27:25) win Men's and Women's races respectively
- Asia Cup Football in Abu Dhabi: India beat Thailand 4-1 in their opening match; country's 1st win in the tournament since 1964

Current Affairs – NEWS HEADLINES: January 8, 2019

India

- Union Cabinet approves 10% reservation in jobs and educational institutions for the economically backward section in the general category
- Lok Sabha passes 'The Personal Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2018' to remove leprosy as ground for divorce
- Assam: Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), which has 14 MLAs in 126-member Assembly, pulls out of the BJP-led coalition govt
- Assam Assembly (126): BJP-61, Bodoland People's Front-12, Congress-25, All Indian United Democratic Front (AIUDF)-13, AGP-14

- HRD Minister Prakash Javadekar approves an increase of 5,000 seats at Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas across the country
- MEA and the Observer Research Foundation organising 4th edition of Raisina Dialogue in New Delhi on January 8-10, theme: 'A World Reorder: New Geometries; Fluid Partnerships; Uncertain Outcomes'
- External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj holds talks with her Japanese counterpart Taro Kono in New Delhi
- PM of Norway Erna Solberg attends Indo-Norwegian Business Summit 2019 in New Delhi
- French Navy Chief Vice Admiral Christophe Prazuck hold talks with his Indian counterpart Admiral Sunil Lanba in New Delhi
- DRDO pavilion receives 'Exhibitor of the Year Award' at 106th Indian Science Congress at Jalandhar, Punjab
- UGC decides to set up Consortium for Academic and Research Ethics (CARE) to refine and strengthen research publication
- Tamil Nadu Minister P. Balakrishna Reddy sentenced to three years imprisonment by a special court in Chennai for damaging buses with stones in 1998
- Private FM channels to broadcast All India Radio News from January 8

Economy & Corporate

- Indian economy is expected to grow at 7.2% in 2018-19 (6.7% in 2017-18): Central Statistics Office
- to allow PSUs ONGC and Oil India Ltd. to induct private and foreign partners in oilfields to raise output and also give special incentive to make their discoveries in difficult areas viable
- Bandhan Bank Ltd to buy mortgage provider Gruh Finance Ltd in a share-swap deal

World

- India takes over operations of the strategic Chabahar port in the Sistan-Balochistan province of Iran's southern coast
- 2019 Golden Globe Awards presented in Los Angeles: 'Bohemian Rhapsody' wins Best Motion Picture Drama award, Best Motion Picture Musical or Comedy award won by 'Green Book'

Sports

- 4th and final Test between India (622/7d) and Australia (300, 6/0) in Sydney ends in draw; India win series 2-1 — their first ever series win in Australia

Current Affairs – NEWS HEADLINES: January 9, 2019

India

- SC reinstates Alok Verma as CBI Director, restrains him from taking policy decisions
- Lok Sabha passes Bill for providing citizenship to minorities (Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, Christians and Parsis) who came to India from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh before 2015
- Lok Sabha passes Bill seeking to provide 10% reservation in jobs and education for the general category poor (Economically Weaker Sections-EWS)
- PM Modi meets Norwegian PM Erna Solberg in New Delhi
- 5-Judge Constitution bench of SC headed by CJI Ranjan Gogoi constituted to hear the title suit in the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid Ayodhya case from Jan 10
- IPS Officer Kumar Rajesh Chandra appointed Director General of the (DG) Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB)
- "We are Displaced", book written by Nobel Peace Prize winner Malala Yousafzai, released in India
- STATES
- Playback singer P. Suseela chosen for the Harivaranam award instituted by the Kerala government
- Kerala HC sets a 7-day notice period for political parties and individuals to call a hartal and general strike in the State
- West Bengal govt. hikes retirement age for college and university teachers to 65 years and that of VCs to 70 years
- Former West Bengal Governor Gopalkrishna Gandhi conferred D.Litt (Honoris Causa) by the



University of Calcutta

Economy & Corporate

- RBI constitutes high-level committee headed by Aadhaar architect Nandan Nilekani to suggest measures to strengthen the safety and security of digital payments in the country
- FASTags, which are RFID (radio-frequency identification) tags used to pay toll automatically on national highways, now available at petrol pumps across the country
- Information and Broadcasting Ministry hikes advertisement rates for print media by 25%
- Centre’s net direct taxes collections grew 13.6 per cent in April-December 2018 to ₹43 lakh crore

World

- The ‘Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2018’ released by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)
- Pranav R Mehta takes charge as 1st President of Washington-based Global Solar Council (GSC)
- World Bank President Jim Yong Kim resigns more than three years before his current term was due to expire
- India-born Gita Gopinath joins IMF as its Chief Economist

Sports

- Khelo India Youth Games in Pune: Gymnasts Mohammed Rafey of UP and West Bengal’s Prathista Samanta becomes first gold medal winners
- Football: Egypt selected to host the 2019 Africa Cup of Nations in June-July after Cameroon’s exit

Current Affairs – NEWS HEADLINES: January 10, 2019

India

- Arunachal Pradesh: India’s longest (300 m) single-lane steel cable suspension bridge inaugurated over river Siang by CM Pema Khandu
- UP: PM launches Gangajal Project to provide better and more assured water supply in Agra
- Uttarakhand: Children residing in the state-owned orphanages to get 5% reservation in govt. jobs
- West Bengal: Trinamool Congress (TMC) expels 2 Lok Sabha MPs from the party – Anupam Hazra from Bolpur and Saumitra Khan from Bishnupur
- Former Solicitor General Ranjit Kumar appointed amicus curiae for Jagannath temple reforms by Supreme Court
- Shah Faesal, who became the first Kashmiri to top IAS exam in 2009, resigns from the Indian Administrative Service
- WCD Ministry launches online campaign ‘Web-WonderWomen’ to exceptional achievements of women on social media

Economy & Corporate

- World Bank forecasts 7.3% growth for Indian economy in FY 2018/19 in its 2019 Global Economic Prospects report
- India is set to become the world’s third largest consumer market behind only USA and China by 2030: WEF

World

- Norway ranked first on The Economist’s Democracy Index; India ranked 41st
- The first India-Central Asia Dialogue to be held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan on January 12-13
- World Bank forecasts global economic growth at 2.9% in 2019 in its newly-released Global Economic Prospects report
- Guatemalan Government unilaterally terminates the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG)
- CICIG was set up as an independent body set up by the UN and Guatemala to high-level corruption in the country
- Henley Passport Index: Japan tops list of most powerful passports, India ranks 79th

Sports

- National Table Tennis Championship in Cuttack: A. Sharath Kamal (PSPB) and Archana Kamath

(PSPB) win Men's and Women's Singles titles respectively

- Liverpool and Egypt forward Mohamed Salah wins the 2018 Confederation of African Football (CAF) Player of the Year award
- Harendra Singh removed as Indian men's hockey coach

Current Affairs – NEWS HEADLINES: January 11, 2019

India

- Winter Session of Parliament concludes: Productivity of Lok Sabha: 47% & Rajya Sabha: 27%; 5 Bills passed by both Houses
- CBI Director Alok Verma ousted by PM-led panel; posted as DG Fire Services
- Alok Verma removed as CBI Director by a 3-member committee (comprising PM, Supreme Court Judge Justice A. K Sikri. and Leader of Congress in Lok Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge) in a 2-1 decision on the basis of CVC report; posted as Director General Fire Service, Civil Defence and Home Guards
- Chhattisgarh govt. withdraws general consent accorded to the CBI to probe cases in the state
- World Hindi Day celebrated on January 10 to mark the holding of World Hindi Conference on January 10, 1975 in Nagpur
- Rajya Sabha passes the Constitution amendment Bill to provide 10% reservation in jobs and education to economically backward sections in the general category
- New Ambassadors present credential to President: Ron Malka-Israel, Sekou Kasse-Mali, Andrei Rzhzheussky- Belarus, Bounneme Chouanghom-Laos and Leko Ado-Niger
- Union Cabinet approves setting up of 3 new AIIMS – 2 in J&K: Vijaynagar in Samba district and Awantipora in Pulwama and 1 in Gujarat: Rajkot
- SC suggests setting up of a high-powered committee comprising Infosys co-founder Nandan Nilekani, and computer scientist Vijay P. Bhatkar to suggest reforms for fair conduct of govt. competitive examinations
- Union Minister for Electronics & Information Technology and Law & Justice, Ravi Shankar Prasad inaugurates the Command & Control Centre (CCC) and Centre of Excellence (CoE) for Artificial Intelligence in New Delhi
- Japanese delegation led by the Minister of Justice, Japan, Takashi Yamashita meets Union Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad, in New Delhi
- Union Environment Minister Harsh Vardhan launches National Clean Air Programme to improve air quality by 20-30% in next 5 years with 2017 as the base year
- West Bengal CM announces her state's exit from the Centre's Ayushman Bharat scheme

Economy & Corporate

- RBI allows charitable institutions and govt. entities to deposit gold in Gold Monetisation Scheme (GMS), 2015
- Businesses with turnover up to Rs 40 lakh exempted from GST, threshold limit doubled from Rs 20 lakh
- Bureau of Energy Efficiency and CPWD sign MoU on promoting energy efficiency in buildings
- Godrej Group Chairman Adi Godrej conferred the Lifetime Achievement Award by the Institute of Company Secretaries of India (ICSI)
- WEF recognises Tata Steel's Netherlands plant as 'factory of the future'
- Virat Kohli is the most valuable celebrity brand in India with a brand value of USD 170.9 million in 2018: Duff & Phelps
- Sino-Indian Digital Collaboration Plaza (SIDCOP), a partnership between NASSCOM and municipal governments of Guiyang and Dalian in China, launched in New Delhi

World

- Congo: Opposition leader Felix Tshisekedi wins Presidential election
- Anatoly Lukyanov, the last chairman of the USSR's Supreme Soviet, dies at 88

Sports

- International Boxing Association's (AIBA) rankings: M. C. Mary Kom ranked world No: 1 in women's

48 kg category

Current Affairs – NEWS HEADLINES: January 12, 2019

India

- 2nd lunar mission Chandrayaan-2 with a lander and rover will be attempted in mid-April: ISRO Chairman K. Sivan
- CMs of 6 states – Delhi, Rajasthan, UP, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand – sign agreement for Renukaji Multipurpose Dam project
- Renukaji Multipurpose Dam project will be project on Giri river (tributary of Yamuna) in Sirmour district of Himachal Pradesh
- 4 of the 9 members of the high-level committee formed by the Centre to implement Clause 6 of the Assam Accord have declined to be a part of it
- AP CM N. Chandrababu Naidu announces enhancement of old age pensions from Rs 1,000 to Rs 2,000
- SC Collegium recommends names of Justice Dinesh Maheshwari of Karnataka HC and Justice Sanjiv Khanna of Delhi HC for elevation as judges of the apex court
- NITI Aayog's Atal Innovation Mission releases the Atal Tinkering Lab Handbook on eve of National Youth Day
- A day after being shunted out as CBI Director, senior IPS officer Alok Verma resigns from service
- Senior bureaucrat Jaideep Govind appointed Secretary General of National Human Rights Commission
- Former chief statistician T. C. A. Anant appointed as member of UPSC
- Banker-turned-politician Meera Sanyal dies at 57 in Mumbai
- CBI court convicts Gurmit Ram Rahim in journalist Ram Chander Chhatrapati murder case of 2002

Economy & Corporate

- Industrial output growth drops to a 17-month low of 0.5% in November
- Foreign exchange reserves jump by USD 2.68 billion to touch USD 396.084 billion in the week to January 4
- GST Council allows Kerala to levy calamity cess up to 1% over and above GST
- Delhi government to open 6 world class skill centres (WCSCs) in the national capital in March
- "Fair Value for Innovation" initiative launched by Global Innovation Policy Center (GIPC) of US Chamber of Commerce at the Raisina Dialogue in New Delhi
- Former bureaucrat Ashok Chawla resigns as Chairman of National Stock Exchange

World

- China announces that the Chang'e-4 mission, the first-ever probe to land on the moon's dark side, was a complete success

Sports

- Britain's Andy Murray announces retirement from tennis at the age of 31. Won Singles titles at US Open in 2012, Wimbledon in 2013 & 2016 and Olympic gold in 2012 & 2016
- Bengaluru Raptors enter final of the Vodafone Premier Badminton League
- Asian Cup football tournament: India lost 0-2 to UAE in 2nd Group-A match in Abu Dhabi
- BCCI suspends Hardik Pandya and KL Rahul pending inquiry into comments on TV show
- Virat Kohli, Ravi Shastri receive honorary membership of Sydney Cricket Ground
- President of the Indian Weightlifting Federation (IWF), Birendra Prasad Baishya, named Chef de Mission for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics

Current Affairs – NEWS HEADLINES: January 13, 2019

India

- President Ram Nath Kovind confers the honorary rank of General of the Indian Army on Purna Chandra Thapa, the Chief of the Army Staff of Nepalese Army
- President Ram Nath Kovind signs into law Constitution Amendment Bill, which provides for 10% reservation for economically weaker sections in the general category



- Former bureaucrat MP Bezbaruah refuses to be a part of the nine-member panel, which was set up by the Home Ministry on January 7 to suggest ways to implement Clause 6 of the Assam Accord
- Sikkim: CM Pawan Kumar Chamling launches 'One Family One Job' scheme which entitles one govt. job for every family in the state
- National Youth Parliament Festival-2019 being held across the country from Jan 12 to Feb 24
- Birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda on Jan 12 celebrated as National Youth Day
- UP: SP-BSP announce alliance for Lok Sabha polls, to contest 38 seats each out of 80 in the state

Economy & Corporate

- Sovereign gold bonds on sale at Rs 3,214 a gram during Jan 14-18: Govt.
- 25th edition of CII's Partnership Summit being held in Mumbai on Jan 12-13

World

- Macedonia: Parliament unanimously agrees to change the name of the country to the Republic of North Macedonia
- US Govt. shutdown due to Republican President Donald Trump's row with Democrats over building a Mexico border wall enters a record 22nd day
- 18-year-old Saudi girl, Rahaf Mohammed al-Qunun, who fled from her family in Kuwait to Thailand, granted asylum in Canada

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Sports

- Australia (288/5) beat India (254/9) by 34 runs 1st ODI at Sydney; Jhye Richardson is Man of the Match for his 4/26 in 10 overs
- Mahendra Singh Dhoni becomes 5th Indian after Sachin Tendulkar, Sourav Ganguly, Rahul Dravid and Virat Kohli to make 10,000 runs in ODI cricket
- Sydney International tennis: Petra Kvitova of Czech Republic beats Australia's Ashleigh Barty 1-6, 7-5, 7-6 (3) in the final to win Women's Singles title; Alex De Minaur of Australia beats Italy's Andreas Seppi 7-5, 7-6 (7-5) to win Men' Singles title
- CCI International JSW Indian Squash Circuit in Mumbai: Tarek Momen of Egypt beats compatriot Fares Dessouky 3-2 in final to win Men's Singles title

Current Affairs – NEWS HEADLINES: January 14, 2019

India

- PM releases Commemorative Coin of Rs. 350 to mark birth anniversary of Guru Gobind Singh
- 352nd birth anniversary of Guru Govind Singh celebrated as Prakash Utsav on Jan 13
- re-promulgates the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Ordinance, 2019 banning the practice of instant triple talaq
- Bhopal Literature and Art Festival: Namita Gokhale given Sushila Devi Literature Award for her novel "Things to Leave Behind"
- Gujarat to implement 10% reservation in govt. jobs and higher education for economically backward sections in the general category from Jan 14
- Puducherry govt to ban single-use plastic products from March 1: CM V Narayanasamy
- Former Finance Secretary Ashok Chawla resigns as Chairman of The Energy Resources Institute (TERI)
- Niyogi Books launches new imprint Bahuvachan dedicated to Hindi titles

Economy & Corporate

- Bihar Deputy CM Sushil Modi to head 7-member committee to look into revenue shortfall being faced by states after GST roll-out

World

- First India-Central Asia Dialogue held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan on Jan 12-13; co-chaired by EAM Sushma Swaraj and Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan, Abdulaziz Kamilov
- Pakistan: Saudi Arabia to establish \$10bn oil refinery in Gwadar port city in Balochistan province

Sports

- Former India footballer Mohammed Zulfiqaruddin, member of team in 1956 Melbourne Olympics,

dies in Hyderabad at 83

Current Affairs – NEWS HEADLINES: January 15, 2019

India

- PM Modi receives Philip Kotler Presidential award for his 'outstanding leadership for the nation' in New Delhi
- Director Buddhadeb Dasgupta conferred 'Satyajit Ray Lifetime Achievement' award by West Bengal Film Journalist Association (WBFJA) in Kolkata
- The Hindu Prize 2018 — English writer Neelum Saran Gour wins Fiction prize for her novel 'Requiem in Raga Janki', Bengali writer Manoranjan Byapari wins Non-Fiction Prize for his book 'Interrogating my Chandal Life: An Autobiography of a Dalit'
- Ex-Chairman of Maharashtra Legislative Council Shivajirao Deshmukh of Congress dies in Mumbai at 84
- UP: EC allots "key" (chaabi) as election symbol to Shivpal Yadav's Pragatisheel Samajwadi Party-Lohia (PSPL)
- Rajasthan govt. to honour those who adopt stray cows on Independence Day and Republic Day
- 2nd edition of the India-Myanmar bilateral army exercise, IMBEX 2018-19, being held in Chandigarh from Jan 14 to 19
- Armed Forces Veterans Day observed on January 14
- Devendra Swarup, former Editor of RSS magazine 'Panchjanya', dies in New Delhi at 93
- Malayalam filmmaker & Chairman of the Kerala Film Development Corporation, Lenin Rajendran, dies in Chennai at 67
- 'India in Chaos, Only Judiciary Can Save by Electoral Reforms & Playing A Third Eye', written by K. C. Agrawal, released

Economy & Corporate

- Wholesale Price Index (WPI)-based inflation falls to 8-month low of 3.8% in December
- Consumer Price Index (CPI)-based inflation (retail inflation) falls to 18-month low of 2.19% in December
- launches Global Housing Technology Challenge (GHTC) aimed at constructing houses faster with lower cost
- Finance Secretary Ajay Narayan Jha gets one-month extension; appointed member of 15th Finance Commission
- Finance Ministry asks public sector banks to bring down govt.'s equity to 52%

World

- 24th Critics' Choice Awards presented in Santa Monica (USA): Best Picture: 'Roma, Best Director: Alfonso Cuaron for 'Roma, Best Actor: Christian Bale for 'Vice', Best Actress: Lady Gaga for 'A Star is Born' and Glenn Close for 'The Wife'
- Newmont Mining Corp to buy Goldcorp Inc for \$10 billion creating the world's biggest gold producer by output

Sports

- South Africa beat Pakistan by 107 runs in third test at Wanderers Stadium in Johannesburg; win 3-match series 3-0
- Bengaluru Raptors beat Mumbai Rockets 4-3 in final at Bengaluru to win Premier Badminton League (PBL) title
- Indian badminton player Kidambi Srikanth signs 4 year Rs. 35-crore sports sponsorship deal with Chinese brand Li-Ning

January 1, 2019

Loan subsidy for middle-income group under PMAY extended till March 2020

The Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs Hardeep Singh Puri has said that the loan subsidy for the middle-income group under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, (PMAY) has been extended till 31st March 2020. The Minister said that more than Rs 6900 cr interest subsidy on housing loans has been disbursed to over

3.14 lakh beneficiaries of Credit Linked Subsidy Scheme (CLSS) under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban).

Credit Linked Subsidy under PMAY-Urban

The Credit Linked Subsidy Scheme (CLSS) is a component under the PMAY-Urban. Under the scheme, the central government provides interest subsidy or purchase/construction/extension/improvement of a house to cater Economical Weaker Section(EWS)/Lower Income Group(LIG)/Middle Income Groups (MIG). The CLSS is being implemented by two central nodal agencies in India, namely Housing Urban Development Corp and National Housing Bank. The CLSS is planned as a demand-side intervention to expand institutional credit flow to the housing needs of the urban poor.

The CLSS is the only central scheme under the PMAY-Urban and the remaining ones are implemented as sponsored schemes.

For Middle-Income group

CLSS for Middle-Income group covers two income segments in the MIG viz. Rs.6,00,001 to Rs.12,00,000 (MIG-I) and Rs.12,00,001 to Rs.18,00,000 (MIG-II) per annum.

For MIG-I, an interest subsidy of 4% has been provided for loan amounts up to Rs.9 lakh and for MIG-II, an interest subsidy of 3% has been provided for loan amount up to Rs.12 lakh. Housing loans beyond Rs. 9 lakh and Rs. 12 lakh will be at non-subsidized rates.

Bangladesh Elections: PM's Awami League registers landslide victory

The ruling coalition led by Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina of Awami League has registered a landslide victory in Parliamentary elections. The ruling coalition led by Sheikh Hasina's Awami League party won 288 out of 300 seats which are about 96 per cent of the seats.

JatiyoShangsad

Bangladesh has a unicameral legislature. The legislature is referred to as Jatiyo Shangsad in Bengali and House of the Nation in English. It is a 350 member's house of which 300 Members from 300 territorial constituencies are directly elected on the basis of adult Franchise and the remaining 50 seats are reserved for women who are elected on the basis of proportional representation in the Parliament through Single Transferable Vote based on the vote share in elections.

Opposition calls the elections as rigged

The opposition parties have rejected the election outcome calling the election farcical and are demanding a new election be held under the authority of a nonpartisan government. The opposition claims that the ruling alliance has rigged the elections to ensure a favourable outcome.

The Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has dismissed opposition claims that the vote was rigged. The Election commission of Bangladesh has ruled out any revote, saying there were no reports of large irregularities.

The United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called for restraint. Condemning violence against candidates and voters as unacceptable he has asked both sides to address complaints peacefully and legally.

RBI releases Fiscal Stability Report

The bi-annual Fiscal Stability Report discussing issues relating to the development and regulation of the financial sector has been released by the RBI. The Fiscal Stability Report reflects the collective assessment of the Sub-Committee of the Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC) on risks to the financial stability of the country, as also the resilience of the financial system.

Findings of the Fiscal stability Report

The December 2018 report has made the following observations:

- Banking system's asset quality has surprisingly started to show improvement. The gross non-performing assets (NPAs) have decelerated during September 2018 quarter.
- The asset quality of Scheduled Commercial Banks (SCB) showed an improvement with gross non-performing assets (GNPA) ratio declining from 11.5% in March 2018 to 10.8% in September 2018 and the net non-performing assets (NNPA) ratio has also registered a decline during the period.
- The number of banks with GNPA ratio less than 10% has gone down in September 2018 as compared to March 2018.

- Due to the withdrawal of various restructuring schemes the Restructured standard advances (RSAs) ratio steadily declined in September 2018 to 0.5%.
- The provision coverage ratio (PCR) of all SCBs was higher in September 2018 as compared to March 2018.
- The capital to risk-weighted assets ratio (CRAR) of SCBs has declined marginally from 13.8% in March 2018 to 13.7% in September 2018.
- Based on the Data, RBI predicts that projected GNPA ratio under the baseline scenario may decline from 10.8% in September 2018 to 10.3 per cent in March 2019.
- Analysis of portfolio of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) shows that, the performance of PSBs in the MSME segment trails that of other intermediaries (private banks and non-banking financial companies (NBFC)).

The findings of the report suggest that the worst case scenario is over for PSBs especially the ones who are not included in PCA framework and it is expected that the earnings may see some jump in upcoming quarters.

India's core sector growth drops to a 16-month low in November

The data from the Ministry of Commerce and Industries has shown that the growth in the eight core sectors of the economy fell to a 16-month low of 3.5 per cent in November. The eight core sectors are coal, crude oil, natural gas, refinery products, fertilizer, steel, cement and electricity.

Growth of Core Sectors

The following observations can be made from the data of the Ministry of Commerce and Industries:

- The growth in the eight core sectors of the economy fell to a 16-month low of 3.5 per cent in November, after it had hit a three-month high of 4.8 per cent in October.
- The cement production saw growth reduce by more than half in November.
- In the steel sector, the output registered a 6 per cent rise in November.
- The 3.7 per cent growth in coal production was a three-month low.
- The growth in electricity generation also halved to 5.4 per cent in November.
- Crude oil output contracted by 3.5 per cent.
- The natural gas production managed to barely make it back to the growth charts with 0.5 per cent
- The output of the fertiliser sector contracted by a significant 8 per cent.

Sector-wise growth for Nov '18

	Y-o-Y Growth (%)
Coal	3.7
Crude Oil	-3.5
Natural Gas	0.5
Refinery Products	2.3
Fertiliser	-8.1
Steel	6.0
Cement	8.8
Electricity	5.4
Overall	3.5

Source : Commerce and Industry Ministry

Economists contribute the slowdown to the unfavourable base effect, along with a sudden slowdown in the growth of cement production and electricity output.

Telangana to have separate High Court from 1st January 2019

Separate High Courts will start functioning for the states of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh from 1st January 2019. The High Court for Telangana is the 25th High Court in the country.

Telangana was carved out of Andhra Pradesh in 2014 and the two states continued to have a common high court in Hyderabad.

Separate High Courts

The modalities of the separate high courts are:

- The High Court for Telangana will function from the current High Court building in Hyderabad.
- The High Court for Andhra Pradesh will start functioning from a temporary building at Amaravati until it gets a permanent structure.
- 16 judges have been allocated to Andhra Pradesh High Court and ten have been allocated to Telangana High Court.
- Justice TBN Radhakrishnan will be sworn-in as Chief Justice of the Telangana High Court.

The government of Andhra Pradesh is constructing a complex known as Justice City in Amaravati where the High Court, subordinate courts and some tribunals would be accommodated.

Panel suggests not to allow new Engineering colleges from 2020

The Panel headed by IIT-Hyderabad chairman B V R Mohan Reddy has suggested All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) not to allow setting up of new Engineering colleges from 2020.

Recommendations of the Panel

The panel headed by B V R Mohan Reddy has made the following recommendations to the AICTE:

- To stop setting up new colleges from 2020 and review the creation of new capacity every two years after that.
- No additional seats should be approved in traditional engineering areas such as mechanical, electrical, civil and electronics and suggests that institutes should be encouraged to convert current capacity in traditional disciplines to emerging new technologies.
- To introduce undergraduate engineering programmes exclusively for artificial intelligence, blockchain, robotics, quantum computing, data sciences, cybersecurity and 3D printing and design.

Why the recommendations are made?

The recommendations are due to the following reasons:

- Current capacity utilisation in traditional disciplines is just 40% as opposed to 60% seat occupancy in branches such as computer science and engineering, aerospace engineering and mechatronics.
- As per the reports, there were no takers for 51 per cent of the 15.5 lakh B.E/B.Tech seats in 3,291 engineering colleges in 2016-17.

The panel has said that concessions should be made for applications already in the pipeline while not allowing new engineering institutes should be set up from 2020.

Factsheet: Initiatives for improving teaching quality in Higher Education

The following initiatives have been launched to improve teaching quality in Higher Education:

Diksha

Diksha Portal has been launched to provide a digital platform for teachers to learn and train themselves and connect with teacher community.

TEQUIP

Technical Education Quality Improvement Programme (TEQUIP) is a quality improvement program in technical education. It aims at bridging the regional gaps in technical education. Under TEQUIP, 200 IIT and NIT graduates have opted for 3 years teaching in educationally backward regions.

GIAN

Under Global Initiative of Academic Networks (GIAN), 700 professors from 58 countries have so far conducted about 1120 courses in specialized topics for students in Indian Higher Educational institutions and more than 40,000 students and associated Indian Faculty has benefited from this international teaching exposure.

PMMMNTT

Under Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya National Mission for Teachers Training (PMMMNTT), in-service training programs for more than 1,00,000 college and university teachers have been organized. Also, newly appointed teachers are now required to undergo six months pedagogical training, so they can develop a good rapport with students and the quality of the teaching improves.

Inter-University Centres for Teachers Education

Inter-University Centres for Teachers of teachers education and research (IUCTE) function as autonomous institutions for providing services and Programs for a group of universities and institutions.

Factsheet: Initiatives to monitor the quality of education in Government schools

The Central Government has launched the following mechanisms for the monitoring of quality of education in Government schools:

ShaGun Portal

Together with showcasing success stories and providing a platform for all stakeholders to learn from each other, and instill a positive competitive spirit among all the States and UTs, ShaGun also measures state-level performance and progress against key educational indicators. This enables the Government of India and the State and UT Departments of education to conduct real-time assessments which normal paper-based monitoring mechanisms did not allow.

Amendment to Rules under RTE act

The central government has amended the rules under the RTE Act to include the reference for class-wise, subject-wise Learning Outcomes. These references of learning outcomes have set a benchmark for student's capabilities to be achieved in each subject & class.

Shaala Siddhi

Shaala Siddhi is a School Standards and Evaluation Framework which enables the schools to self evaluate based on seven key domains. It has been developed by National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA).

PINDICS

Performance Indicators for Elementary School Teachers (PINDICS) is a framework for assessing teacher performance and providing constructive feedback for further improvement. It has been developed by NCERT.

National Achievement Survey

National Achievement Surveys has been carried out by NCERT to assess learning achievement of children in Classes – III, V, VIII, and X.

Factsheet: Initiatives for improving quality of education

The Central Government has launched the following mechanisms for improving the quality of education:

Amendment to RTI Act

The RTI act has been amended to make it mandatory for all untrained in-service teachers working in Government, Government aided, and Private un-aided schools to acquire minimum qualification as laid down by an academic authority.

Integrated Scheme for School Education-Samagra Shiksha

Integrated Scheme for School Education-Samagra Shiksha has been launched by subsuming three erstwhile Centrally Sponsored Schemes of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) and Teacher Education (TE).

The Samagra Shiksha scheme focuses on improving the quality of education by providing support for different interventions like; in-service training of teachers and schools heads, conduct of achievement surveys at National and State level, provision of textbooks as per Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009, remedial teaching for academically weaker students, ICT and digital initiatives etc.

Rashtriya Aavishkar Abhiyan

Rashtriya Aavishkar Abhiyan motivates and engages children of the age group from 6-18 years in Science, Mathematics and Technology through observation, experimentation, inference drawing, model building, etc. both through inside and outside classroom activities.

e PATHSHALA

e PATHSHALA has been launched as a single point repository of e resources containing NCERT textbooks and various other learning resources.

e PATHSHALA has been developed for showcasing and disseminating all educational resources including textbooks, audio, video, periodicals, and a variety of other print and non-print materials.

SWAYAM

SWAYAM portal offers various online courses for school education and higher education. NCERT is

providing course modules in the SWAYAM portal.

SWAYAM PRABHA DTH-TV

SWAYAM PRABHA DTH-TV has been launched to provide learning opportunities for the students, as per their convenience. Everyday four hour fresh slot is telecast and repeated six times in 24 hours.

Diksha Portal

Diksha Portal has been launched to provide a digital platform for teachers to learn and train themselves and connect with teacher community.

India to achieve 100 per cent electrification before 2019 Republic Day

India is likely to achieve 100 per cent household electrification before 2019 Republic Day. India has already provided electricity access to 2.39 crore out of the targeted 2.49 crore households under the Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana, Saubhagya scheme.

Status of Electrification

India has achieved the hundred per cent electrification of the households in 25 states by December 2018. About 10.48 lakh households are left to be electrified in 4 states of Assam, Rajasthan, Meghalaya and Chhattisgarh. The electrification got delayed in these states due to elections and Maoist problems. These states are now making concerted efforts to achieve 100 per cent household electrification in their respective states.

Saubhagya scheme

The centre had launched the Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana, Saubhagya scheme to provide electricity to all households by December 2018. The households identified via the Socio-economic and Caste Census (SECC) of 2011 are provided with free electricity connections and others were charged a nominal fee of Rs. 500. The scheme aims at providing last mile connectivity and electricity connections to all remaining households in rural as well as urban areas.

Pakistan to issue Panda Bonds to raise capital in China

The government of Pakistan has decided to launch Panda Bonds to raise loans from Chinese capital markets. Launching of Panda Bonds is part of Pakistan's plans to move towards giving the Chinese currency, a status at par with that enjoyed by the US dollar. The interest rates and the size of the bonds would be decided at a later stage.

The Finance Ministry of Pakistan has said that the Panda Bonds are part of its multipronged approach for bridging the foreign financing needs and building foreign exchange reserves. Panda Bonds will help Pakistan to diversify the investor base of capital market issuance and provide a source of raising renminbi. China is Pakistan's largest trading partner. Pakistan has the highest trade deficit with China. The raising of capital in Chinese currency will aid Pakistan to bridge the deficit.

Panda Bonds

Panda bonds are Chinese renminbi-denominated bonds from a non-Chinese issuer, sold in the People's Republic of China. The first two Panda bonds were issued in October 2005 on the by the International Finance Corporation and the Asian Development Bank on the same day.

The Philippines issued its inaugural Panda bonds in 2018. It was the first ASEAN member to issue Panda bonds.

Indian Bridge Management System

The Ministry of Road Transport & Highways has inventoried 1,72,517 bridges/structures under Indian Bridge Management System (IBMS). It comprises of 1,34,229 culverts, 32,806 minor bridges, 3,647 major and 1,835 extra-long bridges.

About IBMS

Indian Bridge Management System (IBMS) was launched by the Ministry of Road Transport & Highways to create an inventory of all bridges in the country and rate their structural condition so that timely repair and rehabilitation work can be carried out based on the criticality of the structure.

Lack of clear objective database on bridges in the country has led to a situation where the authorities were neither clear about the exact number and location of the bridges nor they were able to maintain this asset in proper working condition. IBMS has been brought in to address this anomaly.

The inventory under IBMS comprises of:

- Under the IBMS, each bridge is assigned a unique identification number or National Identity Number based on the state, RTO zone and whether it is situated on a National Highway, State Highway or is a district road.
- The precise location of the bridge in terms of latitude-longitude is collected through GPS and based on these, the bridge is assigned a Bridge Location Number.
- Engineering characteristics like the design, materials, type of bridge, its age, loading, traffic lane, length, the width of carriageway etc are collected and are used to assign a Bridge Classification Number to the structure.
- The Engineering characteristics are then used to do a structural rating of the structure on a scale of 0 to 9, and each bridge is assigned a Structural Rating Number.
- Socio-Economic Bridge Rating Number will be assigned based on the importance of the structure in relation to its contribution to the daily socio-economic activity of the area in its vicinity.

Based on the following data from inventory, IBMS will analyse data and identify bridges that need attention. Also, an inspection will be carried out wherever required to improve the operational availability of the structure, enhance its life and prioritize repair and rehabilitation work.

January 2, 2019

Samwad with Students

Indian Space Research Organisation (Isro) has launched an outreach programme called Samwad with Students. During Samwad with Students on 1st January Isro chairman K Sivan interacted with 40 students and 10 teachers from select schools.

Isro's outreach programme was aimed at motivating young India and tapping their scientific potential. During the interaction the Isro Chairmen engaged with students on a series of topics ranging from rockets, satellites, Chandrayaan, Gaganyaan and other space applications.

Further, Isro will be organising guided tours thrice in a year, especially during summer and Christmas holidays for students of class 11 and class 12. The students would be taken to Isro facilities in Thiruvananthapuram and Bengaluru and the launch centre at Sriharikota. Students would also be taken to space laboratories and would be allowed to make small satellites.

Japan to Withdraw from the International Whaling Commission

Japan has announced its decision to withdraw from the International Whaling Commission (IWC). The withdrawal would enable Japan to resume commercial whaling activities.

Japan has said that it would undertake commercial whaling from July 2019 limited to Japan's territorial waters and exclusive economic zones. As per the announcement, Japan would not undertake whaling activities in Antarctic waters or in the southern hemisphere.

Why the withdrawal?

The Japanese government was trying hard to persuade the IWC to allow its commercial whaling operations. IWC refused to budge and rejected the proposal of Japan.

Japan has said that since most whale species are not endangered and that eating whale is a part of its culture, Japan has been forced to withdraw from the IWC.

With the withdrawal Japan joins Iceland and Norway in openly defying the organization's ban on commercial whale hunting.

International Whaling Commission (IWC)

The International whaling commission was set up under the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling which was signed on 2nd December 1946 at Washington DC. The IWC aims at providing for the proper conservation of whale stocks and make possible the orderly development of the whaling industry.

IWC is accompanied by legally binding schedule which sets out specific measures that the IWC has collectively decided as necessary in order to regulate whaling and conserve whale stocks. Schedule can be amended by at least three quarters majority agreement unlike convention.

Conservation measures advocated under the schedule are catch limits (which may be zero as it the case for commercial whaling) by species and area, designating specified areas as whale sanctuaries, protection of calves and females accompanied by calves, and restrictions on hunting methods.



RBI launches SRPHi

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has launched Survey on Retail Payment Habits of Individuals (SRPHi). The Survey will capture payment habits of individuals in cities of Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Bengaluru and Guwahati.

About the Survey

Sigma Research & Consulting Pvt Ltd has been engaged by RBI to conduct the fieldwork of the survey. Around 6000 individuals from various socio-economic backgrounds across six cities would be covered under the survey.

The survey seeks qualitative responses from individuals on their payment habits. The findings of the survey will provide insights into awareness and usage habits of digital payment products.

Women's wall for Gender Equality in Kerala

On 1st January, around 30 lakh women stood shoulder to shoulder to form Vanitha Mathil, "women's wall" that ran across the length of Kerala. The wall stretched from Kasaragod in the north to Thiruvananthapuram in the south for about 620 Kms.

Vanitha Mathil, Women's Wall

The event was organised by the Government of Kerala with the support of several political, religious and social groups. The participants at the Women's Wall resolved to uphold the values of Kerala's renaissance, ensure gender justice, and counter moves to turn the state into a lunatic asylum.

The event was also a counterdemonstration against the agitations preventing women of menstruating age from entering the Sabarimala shrine in violation of the Supreme Court's ruling.

During the event, participants took a pledge to protect the values of social reformation movement, to support the idea of gender equality as conceived by the Constitution and to oppose any efforts to turn Kerala into "a lunatic asylum".

Centre approves renaming Allahabad to 'Prayagraj'

The Union Home Ministry has approved the proposal of the Uttar Pradesh Government to rename Allahabad as Prayagraj.

Why the name change was proposed?

The government of Uttar Pradesh has said that it is restoring the original name of the city. The government states that the city was rechristened during the reign of Mughal Emperor Akbar. Akbar called the city Illahabas, meaning the abode of God.

Before renaming by Akbar, the city was known as Prayag. Medieval texts, including Akbar's court historian Abul Fazl, called the city as Piyag.

Procedure for changing Names

The proposals of the states would be scrutinised by the Union Home Ministry according to the existing guidelines in consultations with agencies concerned. The Ministry approves the proposal after taking no-objections from the Ministry of Railways, Department of Posts and Survey of India, which confirms that there is no such city, town or village in their records with a name similar to the proposed one. Then an executive order is passed on the renaming of cities.

Justice AK Sikri nominated as Executive Chairman of NALSA

President Ram Nath Kovind has nominated Justice AK Sikri as Executive Chairman of National Legal Services Authority (NALSA). He will be replacing Justice Madan B Lokur.

National Legal Services Authority (NALSA)

The National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) has been constituted under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 to provide free Legal Services to the weaker sections of the society. The features of the NALSA are:

- NALSA was brought into existence to fulfil the provisions under the Article 39A of the constitution which provides for free legal aid to the poor and weaker sections of the society, to promote justice on the basis of equal opportunity.
- NALSA organises Lok Adalats for amicable settlement of disputes.
- The functions of the NALSA also includes spreading legal literacy and awareness, undertaking social justice litigations.
- The Chief Justice of India is the Patron-in-Chief and the Senior most Judge of the Supreme Court of

India is the Executive Chairman of the Authority.

- NALSA identifies specific categories of the marginalized and excluded groups from the diverse populace of the country and formulates various schemes for the implementation of preventive and strategic legal service programmes to be undertaken and implemented by the Legal Services Authorities at the various levels.

NALSA works in close coordination with the various State Legal Services Authorities, District Legal Services Authorities and other agencies for a regular exchange of relevant information, monitoring and updating on the implementation and progress of the various schemes. NALSA fosters a strategic and coordinated approach to ensure smooth and streamlined functioning of the various agencies and stakeholders.

RBI proposes loan restructuring of MSMEs

The RBI has proposed a one-time loan restructuring scheme for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs). The loan restructuring would be a big relief for troubled small businesses hit by demonetisation in late 2016 and the implementation of goods and services tax (GST) in July 2017.

Features of the Restructuring scheme

The features of the restructuring scheme proposed by the RBI are:

- The scheme is applicable to the stressed accounts provided the total fund and non-fund based exposure to such a borrower does not surpass Rs 25 crore.
- The scheme will be applicable to the existing loans of the MSMEs that are in default but classified as 'standard' as on January 1, 2019, without an asset classification downgrade.
- The restructuring has to be implemented by March 31, 2020.
- A provision of 5 per cent of the total outstanding loan, in addition to the money already set aside to cover potential losses, will have to be made for such borrowers.
- Each bank or non-banking financial company (NBFC) should formulate a policy which includes a framework for viability assessment of the stressed accounts and regular monitoring of the restructured accounts.
- The loan restructuring scheme would be applicable for the borrowers who are GST-registered on the date of implementation of restructuring.

The restructuring would aid provide a stimulus to the economy since the MSME sector contributes significantly to job creation and employs around 12 crore people, the second largest after the agriculture sector.

Norms for the manufacturing of defence items relaxed

The government has relaxed norms for the manufacturing of the defence items. As per new norms, manufacturing of items of defence aerospace and warships will now be covered by Industries (Development and Regulation) Act and will not require any licence from the Commerce and Industry Ministry.

The Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP), under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, has issued a clarification on the list of defence products requiring a compulsory licence under Industries (Development & Regulation) Act, 1951 (IDRA), and Arms Act, 1959.

The new norms together with enhancing the ease of doing business will aid in attracting investments and fasten the process of indigenisation of defence production.

India-Pakistan exchange list of Nuclear Installations

Both India and Pakistan have exchanged their list of nuclear installations. The exchange was in accordance with the Agreement on Prohibition of Attacks against Nuclear Installations and Facilities between Pakistan and India.

Agreement on Prohibition of Attacks against Nuclear Installations and Facilities

The Agreement was signed between India and Pakistan on 31 December 1988 at Islamabad and came into force on 27th January 1991. As per the agreement:

- Both India and Pakistan would refrain from undertaking, encouraging or participating in, directly or indirectly, any action aimed at causing the destruction of, or damage to, any nuclear installation or facility in the other country.

- Both India and Pakistan will inform each other about their nuclear installations and facilities on 1st January each year and also whenever there is a change.

Both countries have adopted the agreement as part of their efforts to uphold durable peace and develop friendly and harmonious bilateral relations. The exchange under the agreement is also a confidence-building measure in the bilateral relations.

New chairman for the Ordnance Factory Board

Saurabh Kumar has been appointed as the Director General of Ordnance Factories (DGOF) and chairman of the Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) in Kolkata.

Indian Ordnance Factories

Indian Ordnance Factories organisation is a family of 41 Ordnance Factories under the aegis of its corporate headquarters Ordnance Factory Board, Kolkata. It is working under the aegis of Ministry of Defence.

The ordnance factories form an integrated base for the indigenous production of defence hardware and equipment. The primary objective of the ordnance factories is achieving self-reliance in equipping the armed forces with state of the art battlefield equipment.

Saurabh Kumar

Saurabh Kumar is a 1982-batch Indian Ordnance Factory Service officer and has done his M-Tech in mechanical engineering from the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Kanpur.

Saurabh Kumar has served in the Ministry of Defence as the director of planning and coordination from 2002 to 2009. He has played an instrumental role in drafting the Indian offset policy for defence purchases and the 'Make' procedure in the Defence Procurement Procedure of 2003-04 during his tenure in the Defence Ministry.

Saurabh Kumar has also served as the general manager of the Engine Factory at Avadi (2012-13) was involved in operationalising the project and initiating an indigenisation programme which culminated in the handing over of fully indigenous engines of T-90 'Bhishma' and T-72 'Ajeya' tanks to the Raksha Mantri in July 2018.

Krishak Bandhu scheme of West Bengal

The government of West Bengal has announced the Krishak Bandhu scheme to address the farm distress in the state.

Features of the Scheme

The important features of the scheme are:

- The West Bengal government will give annual financial assistance of Rs 5,000 per acre in two instalments, one during Kharif and another during Rabi season.
- Farmers can also take the financial assistance at one go.
- The scheme also provides for a life insurance cover of Rs 2,00,000 in case of death, irrespective of the cause, of an earning family member (farmer) aged between 18 and 60 years. Framers are not required to pay any premium to avail the insurance benefit.
- The scheme would cover 72 lakh farmer and share-cropper families in the State.

Financial burden on the exchequer

The average land holding per cultivator in West Bengal is pegged at around 0.5 hectares (or 1.2 acres). Hence the average financial assistance to a farmer would come around to Rs 6000. To even cover 50 lakh farmers, the burden on the exchequer would be Rs 3000 Cr.

States set to roll out Parivesh

An ambitious web-based single-window system Parivesh (Pro-Active and Responsive facilitation by Interactive, Virtuous and Environmental Single-window Hub) for environmental clearances will be rolled-out at state levels by January 15. Parivesh provides for an automated system for submission, clearance and monitoring. Parivesh is expected to bring an end to the clearance nightmare for entrepreneurs. Parivesh has already been implemented at the Central level.

Parivesh

Parivesh is a web-based workflow application which has been developed for online submission and monitoring of the proposals submitted by the proponents for seeking Environment, Forest, Wildlife and CRZ Clearances from Central, State and district level authorities.

Parivesh automates the entire tracking of proposals which includes online submission of a new proposal, editing/updating the details of proposals and displays status of the proposals at each stage of the workflow.

Benefits of the Parivesh

The automated Parivesh provides the following benefits:

- Parivesh empowers the proponent to track real-time pendency of their proposals or applications. The system will show a bar chart about the delay at each level of clearance.
- The sharp reduction in the time taken for issuance of Terms of Reference (TOR) for a project is the biggest benefit of the scheme.
- Parivesh removes manual intervention and puts the proposals on the first-come-first-serve basis for agenda. Also barring a few special and specific mentions of a project, the minutes of a meeting will be auto-generated by the system and made available on the same day. This enhances the transparency of the system.

Parivesh provides for an amalgamation of various objectives of government like Digital India initiated by the Prime Minister and capturing the essence of Minimum Government and Maximum Governance.

Paper Sensor to detect freshness of Milk

Scientists from the Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati, have developed a paper kit to test the freshness of milk and determine how well the milk has been pasteurized. The kit can also aid in ensuring that milk is consumed before it turns too sour with the help of a smartphone app.

How does the Kit work?

The Kit uses an ordinary filter paper to prepare the detector. The filter paper which is cut into small pieces is impregnated with chemical probes that preferentially react with Alkaline Phosphatase, which is an indicator of the quality of the milk. When the filter paper impregnated with probes come in contact with the milk, its colour changes.

Alkaline Phosphatase or ALP is an indicator of milk quality. It's presence even after pasteurization indicates presence of microbes that may not have been rendered inactive with pasteurization.

The colour change is photographed by a Smartphone. The images are then processed to obtain corresponding colour values. These values are then compared with standard data stored in the phone. This provides information about the quality of the Milk. Since the sensors used works in both qualitative and quantitative mode, the kit can also be used to measure the quantity of the milk.

Kit

The probe discs were attached to a 2 cm square transparent cellulose acetate film. Another layer cellulose acetate film is coated as cover on the probe. The milk is injected through the tiny hole on the cover. The colour change is photographed and processed using a smartphone to get the results.

January 3, 2019

President Trump signs 'Asia Reassurance Initiative Act' into law

US president has signed the 'Asia Reassurance Initiative Act'. The law aims at countering the encroaching influence and growing threat from China, and to reinvigorate U.S. leadership in Asia.

Features of the Act

The important features of the act are:

- The act aims to establish a multifaceted U.S. strategy to increase U.S. security, economic interests, and values in the Indo-Pacific region.
- The act authorises the spending of \$1.5 billion over a five-year period to enhance cooperation with America's strategic regional allies in the region.
- Citing China's illegal construction and militarization of artificial features in the South China Sea and coercive economic practices, the new law calls for countering China's influence to undermine the international system.
- The act notes that increased presence throughout Southeast Asia of the Islamic State and other international terrorist organizations threaten the United States.
- The act recognizes the vital role of the strategic partnership between the United States and India in

promoting peace and security in the Indo-Pacific region and calls for strengthening and broadening of diplomatic, economic, and security ties between the United States and India.

- The act calls on the U.S. Secretary of State, in conjunction with the Secretary of the Treasury, to justify the termination of U.S. support for any United Nations Security Council resolutions sanctioning North Korea or the lifting of any unilateral U.S. sanctions on North Korea.
- The act reasserts US support to Taiwan and calls on President Trump to encourage the travel of high-level United States officials to Taiwan, in accordance with the Taiwan Travel Act

Significance for India

The act reiterates US commitment to all bilateral and security agreements and arrangements between the two countries, including the New Framework for the United States-India Defense Relationship, and the United States-India Defense Technology and Trade Initiative.

Noting that designation of India as a major defence partner, which is unique to India the law states that the designation elevates defence trade and technology cooperation between the United States and India to a level commensurate with the closest allies and partners of the United States.

Odisha reduced the cases of Malaria by 80 percent

Odisha is highly endemic for malaria and bears almost a quarter of the country's disease burden. Through its innovative methods involving non-health workers in malaria control, Odisha was able to reduce the number of cases by 80 per cent.

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How Odisha fought the battle?

The battle of Odisha resulted has resulted in the decline in the number of cases. Close to 4,44,850 cases of malaria in 2016 in the State and it dropped to around 55,360 till October 2018. Deaths were reduced from 77 in 2016 to four in 2018. Odisha achieved this significant achievement through:

- Additional investments were provided for the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) under the Comprehensive Case Management Programme (CMP) to experiment with the interventions required.
- Challenges such as unavailability of drugs when roads get cut off due to rain, or health workers facing difficulty in reaching remote villages when blocked by elephants, were addressed.
- Alternative providers like teachers, forest animators were trained to do mass screening by running blood tests and providing medication to villagers in the areas where Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs) were unable to reach.
- Districts were divided into a control block and an intervention block, based on instances of malaria under the CMP and activities were intensified while in the control block things went on as usual.
- People were screened even if they had no symptoms of malaria in hill-top areas. If their blood samples showed the presence of parasites, they were treated with anti-malarial drugs.

All these cohesive, concentrated efforts results resulted in the decline in the number of cases of Malaria in the state of Odisha. States like Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, and Assam, which have a high incidence of Malaria, can learn from the Odisha model to replicate the success.

Aadhaar amendment Bill introduced in Lok Sabha

The government has introduced the Aadhaar amendment bill in Loksabha. The bill aims to provide legal backing for voluntary seeding of biometric Aadhaar ID for mobile SIM card and bank account authentication purposes.

Features of the Bill

The important features of the Aadhaar and Other Laws (Amendment) Bill 2018 are:

- The bill seeks to amend the Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act, 2016, the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885 and the Prevention of Money-laundering Act, 2002.
- The amendment permits children, who would turn 18 years old, to opt out of the system.
- The amendments make sharing of Aadhaar details voluntary for opening bank accounts, school admissions and procuring mobile SIM cards.
- The bill provides for stiff penalties for violation of norms set for the use of Aadhaar.
- The amendment bill ban storing of core biometric information as well as Aadhaar number by service

providers in cases of individuals who have voluntarily offered the national ID as a means of authentication.

- The bill makes it clear that anyone not offering Aadhaar cannot be denied any service, be it a bank account or a SIM card.
- The bill lays down the procedure for offline verification of an Aadhaar number holder and confers enhanced regulator-like power on Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) to give directions as it may consider necessary to any entity in the Aadhaar ecosystem.

Why the amendments are proposed?

While upholding the constitutional validity of Aadhaar, the Supreme Court had held struck down Section 57 of the Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act, 2016 that permitted private entities like telecom companies or other corporate to avail of the biometric Aadhaar data. Hence to address the issues like recognising the authentication of those who provided Aadhaar as the identity proof, the amendments are brought in by the government.

Ujjwala Yojana beneficiaries register refill rate of 80%

The Ujjwala Yojana was first of its kind welfare scheme initiated by the Ministry of Petroleum. But the viability of the scheme was questioned citing that there would not be refills from the beneficiaries of the scheme. The current data from the Ministry of Petroleum has put the refill rate at 80%.

Refilling of cylinders under Ujjwala

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The data from the Ministry of Petroleum states that around six crore connections were disbursed under the Ujjwala scheme. There were 23 crore refills under the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana.

Almost 80 per cent of the recipients have opted for a refill of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) cylinders. The average refilling was four for the Ujjwala connections and in some cases, there were refills up to 12.

Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana

Under the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana LPG connections will be provided to BPL families with the support of Rs.1600 per connection. The connections will be issued in the name of women of the households. The identification of the BPL families will be done through 2011 Socio-Economic Caste Census Data.

The scheme aims to safeguard the health of women & children by providing them with a clean cooking fuel of LPG, so that they don't have to compromise their health in smoky kitchens or wander in unsafe areas collecting firewood.

Heritage conservation in Indian Railways

The Ministry of Railways has initiated several steps to promote heritage conservation. The conservation measures undertaken by railways include a revival of Steam Locomotives, up-keeping Hill Railways, a special delegation of powers to Divisions for promoting Hill and Steam tourism, strengthening Railway museums, conservation of built heritage, digitization of Railway Heritage and bringing it online for universal access etc.

Measures undertaken for Heritage conservation

The measures undertaken for heritage conservation are:

- Zonal Railways/Production Units are organising drives from time to time for identification and preservation of Railway heritage assets like buildings, bridges, rolling stocks, documents, photographs, artefacts, equipment, clocks, benches etc, which currently lying unnoticed or overlooked at different locations.
- A specific provision was made by the Ministry of Railways in the budget outlay for 2018-19 for the revival of steam locomotives including restoration and procurement of spares.
- A weekly regular timetabled train on steam traction has been made operational between Garhi Harsaru and Farukhnagar.
- Maintenance of five hill railways of India [Darjeeling Himalayan Railway (DHR), Nilgiri Mountain Railway (NMR), Kalka Shimla Railway (KSR), Matheran Light Railway(MLR) and Kangra Valley Railway (KVR)] are undertaken as per codal provision of Indian Railways and UNESCO Guidelines.
- Special powers have been delegated to Divisional Railway Managers of five hill railways for promoting tourism in these five hill railways.

Ministry of Railways had also organised a day-long event of heritage officers of Zonal Railways and Production Units to give complete attention to the century-old rich heritage of Indian Railways and to train them in heritage conservation approaches.

Parliamentary Panel Report on Western Ghats

The Western Ghats has an exceptionally high level of biological diversity and endemism and is recognized as one of the world's eight 'hottest hotspots' of biological diversity. The Western Ghats represents geomorphic features of immense importance with unique biophysical and ecological processes.

The Rajya Sabha Committee on Government Assurances has examined issues related to the categorisation of the Western Ghats as ecologically sensitive areas (ESA) as per the recommendations of two committees led by Madhav Gadgil and K. Kasturirangan.

Observations of the Committee

The Rajya Sabha Committee on Government Assurances has made the following observations:

- The ecologically sensitive areas (ESA) in the Western Ghats could not be earmarked due to State governments' 'insensitivity'.
- The recent floods in Kerala and parts of Karnataka must serve as an alarm bells for the governments in the States of Goa, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, which have failed to mark ESA in the Western Ghats.
- Despite three draft notifications issued over four years for earmarking ESA, the State governments could not be brought on board for action.
- As a result over 56,000 square km of ESA could not be earmarked as 'no-go' zones for polluting activities and deforestation. Hence large-scale deforestation, mining, and construction are continuing unabated, hurting the ecology of the Western Ghats.
- Insensitivity towards the ecology of the Western Ghats has made the Goa, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka vulnerable to floods and landslides.
- The committee recommends that implementation of the recommendations of the Kasturirangan report is only possible with the active support of the local population.

The parliamentary panel has urged the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change to constitute a committee to address the issues and grievances of State governments and local people.

Monuments of national importance

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has declared 6 monuments as Monuments of national importance in 2018.

Monuments of national importance declared in 2018

The six monuments declared as Monuments as Monuments of national importance in 2018 are:

- Old High Court Building in Nagpur, Maharashtra
- Haveli of Agha Khan in Agra
- Haveli of Hathi Khana in Agra
- Neemrana Baori in Rajasthan's Alwar district
- Group of Temples at Ranipur Jharail in Odisha's Bolangir district
- Vishnu Temple in Kotali, Pithoragarh district, Uttarkhand.

Criterion for the declaration of Monument of National Importance

The Archaeological Survey of India declares a site as Monument of National importance based on the following criterion:

- The remains of an ancient monument
- The site of an ancient monument
- The land on which there are fences or protective covering structures for preserving the monument
- Land by means of which people can freely access the monument

What is an Ancient Monument?

The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958 defines Ancient Monument as any structure, erection or monument, or any tumulus or place of interment, or any cave, rock-sculpture, inscription or monolith which is of historical, archaeological or artistic interest and which has been in existence for not less than 100 years.



Sabarimala Opens for Makaravilakku festival season

The Sabarimala shrine has been opened for the annual 21-day annual Makaravilakku festival season.

Women Enters Sabarimala Shrine

The History was made on 2nd January 2019. Women on the menstrual age entered the Sabarimala shrine during this season of Makaravilakku festival. Even though Supreme Court had struck down the century-old religious practice which barred the entry of women in the menstrual age to the temple, the entry of women was not possible due to widespread opposition by the religious groups. But during the early hours of 2nd January 2019 two women by name Bindu Ammini, 42 years and Kanaka Durga, 44 years entered the adobe of Swamy Ayappa.

Makaravilakku

Makaravilakku is the religious practice performed by the tribes in the forest of Ponnambalamedu. Once the Cyrus star (Makara Jyothi) appears in the sky during the day of the Makara Sankranti festival, the tribes perform their rituals in a temple at Ponnambalamedu forest.

As part of the ritual, the tribes perform aarathi by lighting camphor and ghee in a vessel and circling around the idol at the temple in the Ponnambalamedu forest 3 times. This Aarathi performed by the tribes is referred to as Makaravilakku.

Initiatives to reduce carbon emissions from Farming

Recognising the need to cut down on carbon emissions to tackle climate change, the government of India has taken the following steps to reduce the emissions from the farm sector:

- Crop diversification programme under Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY), National Food Security Mission (NFSM) and Bringing Green Revolution to Eastern India (BGREI).
- Increasing the area under System of Rice Intensification (SRI) as an alternative to the widely used practice of transplanted paddy.
- Deployment of zero tillage drill machines and other residue management equipment to enable planting of Rabi crop in the standing residue of rice crop to avoid stubble burning.
- Adopting the practices like alternate wetting and drying, direct seeded rice system of rice cultivation, use of slow-release nitrogen fertilizers, integrated nutrient management practices, leaf colour chart-based nitrogen application, use of urea super granules etc in rice cultivation.
- Neem coating of urea.
- Planting of trees under National Food Security Mission (NFSM), Bringing Green Revolution to Eastern India (BGREI), Sub-Mission on Agro-Forestry (SMAF) and National Bamboo Mission (NBM).
- Spreading of micro irrigation under Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana (PMKSY)-Per Drop More Crop
- Models of Integrated Farming System (IFS) have been developed for replication in Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) and in the States for enabling climate-resilient agriculture and cutting down the carbon emissions.

Together with above initiatives, various sub-programmes initiated by government like Soil Health Card (SHC), Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY), Mission Organic for Value Chain Development for North East (MOVCD), Rainfed Area Development (RAD), Sub-Mission on Agroforestry (SMAF) and National Bamboo Mission (NBM) are contributing towards cutting down of carbon emissions from farm sector.

Government to introduce Commercial Space Activities Bill in the Budget session

The government is likely to introduce the Commercial Space Activities Bill in the budget session. The government has said in [Lok Sabha](#) that "Steps are being taken so that the Bill could be possibly introduced during the Budget session 2019".

Features of the Space Activities Bill, 2017

The Space Activities Bill, 2017 is aimed at regulating space activities to ensure peaceful exploration and use of outer space. The important features of the bill are:

- The bill provides for a non-transferable licence to be provided by the Central Government to any person carrying out commercial space activity.
- The bill empowers the Central Government to formulate the appropriate mechanism for licencing, eligibility criteria, and fees for the licence.

- The Central Government would be required to maintain a register of all space objects (any object launched or intended to be launched around the earth) and develop space activity plans for the country.
- The Central Government would ensure safety requirements and supervise the conduct of every space activity of India and investigate any incident or accident in connection with the operation of space activity.
- The Central Government would share details about the pricing of products created by space activity and technology with any person or any agency in a prescribed manner.
- The bill provides for penal provisions if any person undertakes any commercial space activity without authorisation they shall be punished with imprisonment up to 3 years or fined more than Rs 1 crore or both.
- The bill requires licensed entities to carry out operations in a manner that prevents the contamination of outer space or damage to the earth's environment.

Shortfalls of the Bill

The criticisms against the bill are:

- The bill falls short in addressing the space-based activities separately.
- The bill tries to cover large swaths of the space value chain in one go. This would make the regulatory environment clumsy.
- The definition of space activity is ambiguous. The current definition puts every space object under its ambit; even hardware that carries GPS receivers could require a license.
- The bill will adversely affect the navigation services provided by companies such as Google Maps, Ola and Uber.

The bill had received responses from the public, Indian aerospace industry, related start-ups, space law experts, scholars, satcom companies and scientists. The government is in the process to address the concerns expressed by the stakeholders.

Union Cabinet approves bill to amend the ST list of Arunachal Pradesh

The Union cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the bill to amend the ST list of Arunachal Pradesh. The bill Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 2018 will now be introduced in the parliament for seeking the approval.

Amendment to the ST list of Arunachal Pradesh

The amendment bill Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 2018 aims to make following changes in the schedule tribes list of Arunachal Pradesh:

- The 'Nocte', 'Tangsa', 'Tutsa', 'Wancho' would be included in lieu of 'Any Naga Tribes' in serial No. 10 in the list of ST of Arunachal Pradesh.
- Deletion of 'Abor' in serial No. 1, as it is the same as 'Adi' in Serial No. 16.
- Replacing 'Tai Khamti' instead of 'Khampti' at serial No. 6.
- Inclusion of 'Mishmi-Kaman' (Miju Mishmi), Idu (Mishmi) and Taraon (Digaru Mishmi) in serial No. 8.
- Inclusion of Monpa, Memba, Sartang, Sajolong (Miji) in serial No. 9 in lieu of 'Momba'.

Procedure to amend the ST list

Under the article 342 (1) of the Constitution of India, the President of India was empowered to specify, the castes, races, tribes or parts of groups within castes or races, which shall be deemed to be Scheduled Tribes in relation to that State or Union territory. Thereafter to amend the ST list, a law must be passed by the Parliament.

GEF assisted Green – Ag Project to transform Indian Agriculture

The Government has launched the "Green – Ag: Transforming Indian Agriculture for global environmental benefits and the conservation of critical biodiversity and forest landscapes" in association with Global Environment Facility (GEF).

About the Project

The features of the project are:

- The project would be implemented in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organisation

(FAO) in high-conservation-value landscapes of five States namely, (i) Madhya Pradesh: Chambal Landscape, (ii) Mizoram: Dampa Landscape, (iii) Odisha: Similipal Landscape, (iv) Rajasthan: Desert National Park Landscape and v) Uttarakhand: Corbett-Rajaji Landscape.

- The Green-Ag project seeks to integrate biodiversity, climate change and sustainable land management objectives and practices into Indian agriculture.
- The project aims to catalyze a transformative change of India’s agricultural sector to support the achievement of national and global environmental benefits and conservation of critical biodiversity and forest landscapes.

The project supports harmonization between India’s agricultural and environmental sector priorities and investments to realise the national and global environmental benefits without compromising on India’s ability to strengthen rural livelihoods and meet its food and nutrition security.

January 4, 2019

Export Promotion Cell for MSMEs

The Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises has established an Export Promotion Cell. The cell aims to create a sustainable ecosystem for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs).

Exports from the MSME sector

The performance of the MSMEs in the exports is listed below

- The value of MSME-related export products was USD 147,390.08 million in 2017-18.
- The share of MSME-related products in the country’s exports was 48.56 per cent during 2017-18.

The MSMEs still have a huge untapped potential. To cap this potential the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises has set up an Export Promotion Cell.

Benefits of the Promotion Cell

MSMEs are the pillars of the Indian economy. The promotion cell aims to create a sustainable ecosystem for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs). The Promotion cell will aid the MSME sector in the following ways:

- Integration of MSMEs into the global value chain.
- Evaluation of readiness of MSMEs to export their products and services.
- Recognition of areas where improvements are required in order to be able to export effectively and efficiently.

Governing Council to be set up

In order to ensure the efficient delivery of the export-related interventions for the MSMEs, the MSME Ministry has decided to set up a governing council chaired by the secretary of the MSME ministry and co-chaired by the development commissioner, MSME.

The council will also comprise of senior officials and members from ministries of MSME and commerce, MSME Export Promotion Council, Export Development Authority, Commodity Boards, and other bodies.

High-level committee for the implementation of clause 6 of the Assam Accord

The Union cabinet has approved the setting up of a high-level committee for the implementation of clause 6 of the Assam Accord. The committee is formed to address the sense of feeling that clause 6 has not been fully implemented even almost 35 years after the accord was signed.

What the committee will look into?

The committee will look into the following aspects:

- The committee shall examine the effectiveness of actions since 1985 to implement the clause.
- The committee will suggest constitutional, legislative and administrative safeguards as envisaged in clause 6.
- Examine the measures to be taken to protect Assamese and other indigenous languages of Assam.
- Assessing the quantum of reservation in employment under the government of Assam and other measures to protect, preserve and promote the cultural, social, linguistic identity and heritage of Assamese people.
- Assess the required quantum of reservation of seats in Assam assembly and local bodies for Assamese people.

The committee will hold consultation with all the stakeholders and recommend the necessary measures to

the government.

Clause 6 of the Assam Accord

The clause 6 of the Assam Accord reads "Constitutional, legislative and administrative safeguards, as may be appropriate, shall be provided to protect, preserve and promote the cultural, social, linguistic identity and heritage of the Assamese people."

The Assam Accord came as a culmination of a movement against immigration from Bangladesh. The cutoff date to be considered as citizens of India under the accord was set at March 24, 1971. The immigrant's up to March 24, 1971, will get all rights as citizens of India. But the immigrants are not eligible for safeguards meant for Assamese people because the cutoff for defining "Assamese people" eligible for the proposed safeguards was set at National registry of Citizens, 1951. Hence those who migrated between 1951 and 1971 to Assam would be Indian citizens, but would not be eligible for safeguards meant for "Assamese people".

Measures to tackle stubble burning

Stubble burning in states such as Haryana and Punjab is a major cause of air pollution in north India in October and November. The stubble burning is one of the main reasons for the higher level of pollutants in the air in the National Capital Region. The Central government has initiated following steps to reduce and eradicate the stubble burning in the neighbouring states of NCR:

- In the budget of the 2018-19, the central government had announced a special scheme' to encourage farmers in these states to shift to alternative ways of dealing with agricultural waste.
- In pursuance of the announcement in the budget, the government announced a central sector scheme on 'Promotion of Agricultural Mechanization for In-Situ Management of Crop Residue in the States of Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and NCT of Delhi'.
- The scheme provides for in-situ crop residue management machinery to the farmers on subsidy, the establishment of Custom Hiring Centres (CHCs) of in-situ crop residue management machinery and undertaking Information, Education and Communication (IEC) activities for creating awareness among farmers to avoid stubble burning.
- The Union Ministry of Power has brought out a policy for biomass utilization for power generation through co-firing in pulverized coal-fired boilers. The Ministry of Power has decided that the States of Haryana and Punjab shall issue bids for all coal based Thermal Power Plants to use a minimum of 5 per cent of biomass pellets and up to 10 per cent to be co-fired with coal.
- The government is also taking steps to popularize zero tillage farming where the crop seed will be sown through drillers without prior land preparation and disturbing the soil where previous crop stubbles are present.

These measures have made a positive impact. The satellite data indicates that paddy residue burning events in 2018 have reduced by 29.5 per cent, 24.5 per cent and 11.0 per cent in the States of Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Punjab, respectively when compared with the paddy residue burning events in the year 2017.

Union Cabinet approves amendments to the Trade Union Act, 1926

The Union Cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the amendment to the Trade Union Act, 1926.

Amendments Proposed

The amendment bill provides for inserting of section 10A in the Trade Union Act, 1926 to power centre and state governments to recognize trade unions and federation of trade unions at central as well as state level.

The amendment bill once passed by the parliament, the Ministry of Labour would issue rules and regulations prescribing the manner of recognition of these trade unions.

Benefits from the Proposed recognition to Trade Unions

The benefits of formal recognition to the trade unions are:

- Ensure true representation of workers in the tripartite bodies in a transparent manner.
- Check on the arbitrary nomination of workers' representatives by the Government.
- Reduce the duplicacy of such exercise by different departments.

- The recognised trade unions may be assigned specific roles at Central or State level. This would aid in developing inclusive governance.

The Indian Trade Unions Act, 1926 provided for only registration of trade unions and there was a long pending demand to grant recognition to trade unions. The amendment bill fulfils this long-standing demand.

Go Green Initiatives in Indian Railways

Railways form the backbone of the Indian Transportation System. The Railways has undertaken following measures under its Go Green initiatives:

- Ministry of Railways has planned to set up 1000 Mega Watt (MW) solar power by 2020-21. This would help Railways to source about 10% of its electrical energy from renewable source.
- Wind energy plants of 36.5 MW have been installed by the Railways.
- Almost all electrified Railway stations and 99% of service buildings have been fitted with 100% LED luminaries by Indian Railways to reduce power consumption.
- Railways have started blending of 5% bio-diesel in High-Speed Diesel (HSD) for diesel locomotives.
- 20% Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) substitution in diesel engines of Diesel Power Cars of Diesel Electric Multiple Unit (DEMU) trains and the introduction of solar energy based DEMUs.
- Tree plantation to increase green cover in Railway Premises.
- Water Audits at major consumption centres as well as the proliferation of Water Recycling Plants and Rain Water Harvesting (RWH) Systems as a step towards better water management.
- Assessment and rating of Indian Railway's Production Units and major Workshops as Green Industrial Units.
- Nearly 163,000 bio-toilets have been installed in around 44,500 coaches.
- Increasing the pace of electrification to reduce the dependency on fossil fuels.

Also, the Ministry of Railways has taken a policy decision for allocating 1% cost in all sanctioned works for execution of environment-related works.

How Metro Policy 2017 can be made more effective?

The Metro rail Policy 2017 was released by the central government to issue clear directives for undertaking Metro rail projects in various urban centres. The policy was a welcome change from the meandering development in the Metro rail sphere happening all over the country.

Components of the Metro Policy 2017

The Metro Policy 2017 laid out three significant conditions for catalyzing the development of Metro rail systems. They are:

- It will be the responsibility of the state governments to explore and choose various options for urban mobility and then implement the project.
- A comprehensive mobility plan (CMP) is a mandatory prerequisite for planning Metro rail in any city.
- Constitution of a statutory body called the Unified Metropolitan Transport Authority (UMTA) for ensuring an integrated approach in planning and management of urban transport.

Making the Policy more Effective

Metro policy 2017 is a well-thought-out plan but it has left some gaps. The gaps lie in the details of the policy. The following amendments must be made to make the policy more effective:

- The UMTA must be set up as a statutory body and must be adequately staffed.
- CMP should be prepared and issued by the statutory body only, and no other agency.
- For Metro services to be effective, it is important to the metro system with secondary and tertiary transport feeder services. Hence UMTA should ideally have powers to regulate fares for all urban transport units and prepare, monitor and audit the CMP.
- It is a well-known fact that no Metro line anywhere in the world is financially remunerative. The Metro policy itself states that social and economic viability too must be assessed and be a part of the whole analysis. But it is necessary to bring clarity on how the viability gap will be bridged.
- It must be made mandatory for states to put a fare fixation committee in place in accordance with the Metro Railways Act, 2002 to ensure the Metro fares do not become a pawn in a political slugfest.

India is witnessing a rapid pace of urbanisation. It has become important to introduce an efficient transport system. Hence it has become an urgent need for introducing these amendments to the policy to ensure that the Metro rail projects are finalized after a holistic assessment. This will ensure that projects run smoothly once they are put into operation.

Parliament passes NCTE amendment Bill

The Parliament has given its approval to the National Council for Teacher Education (Amendment) Bill, 2018. The bill aims to protect the interest of the students who had completed courses from unrecognized institutes.

Features of the Bill

The important features of the bill are:

- The Bill grants retrospective recognition to institutions offering teacher education courses after the establishment of the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) until the academic year 2017-18.
- The Bill grants retrospective permission to start a new course or training in teacher education to institutions which satisfy certain conditions and which have offered teacher education courses after the establishment of the NCTE until the academic year 2017-2018.

Why the bill was necessary?

As per the data from the Ministry of Human Resource Development, 23 state and Central universities and colleges offering B.Ed courses were found not recognised by the National Council for Teacher Education. As a result, the fate of thousands of students who had completed the courses from these unrecognized institutes was in jeopardy as their degrees would not be recognized anywhere. Hence the granting of retrospective permission had become a necessity.

Parliament passes RTE amendment Bill

The Parliament has given its approval for the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (Amendment) Bill, 2018.

What was the amendment proposed?

The features of the amendment proposed are:

- The amendment bill does away with the no-detention policy mentioned in the law.
- The amendment bill now leaves it to the states to decide whether they want to continue the no detention policy.
- The states can choose to hold a regular examination either at the end of Classes 5 and 8, or both.
- Students who fail this test will be provided with additional instructions and the opportunity to appear for a re-examination within two months of the declaration of the result.
- If the student still does not pass the exam, the state government may decide to detain the student.
- If a state decides to continue with the no-detention policy till Class 8, the amendment bill makes it clear that no child can be expelled from school before they complete elementary education

No detention Policy

The features of the No detention policy are:

- The no detention policy was introduced in the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009. The act prohibited schools from detaining students till they complete elementary education.
- The no detention policy banned the practice of making under-performing children repeat classes in elementary school to ensure they do not drop out.
- The no detention policy was brought in to reduce the emphasis on year-end examinations and replace it with a form of evaluation that would track students' progress through the year.

Why the no detention policy was withdrawn?

The Parliamentary Standing Committee had made the following observations:

- The RTE act focused on the quantitative expansion of education. As a result, the quality aspects of teaching and learning were relegated to the backburner.
- The committee noted that there was no pressure on the children to learn and on the teachers to teach. Therefore, there was a need for policy change so as to improve the learning of children at

elementary stage of education.

- The NCERT's National Achievement Survey and the ASER report consistently pointed towards the abysmally low learning levels among school children.

To address these anomalies, a decision was made to leave it to the states to decide on the no detention policy to address the issue of deteriorating quality of education.

Pakistan withdraws on-arrival visa facility for Afghan Nationals

Pakistan has decided to withdraw the facility of on-arrival visas for Afghan nationals. Pakistan has cited security risks and the spike in terror attacks as the reasons for the withdrawal. Now the Afghan Nationals are required to apply for a visa from Pakistani missions in Afghanistan.

New Visa Policy for Afghans

As per the new policy:

- Afghans are required to apply for a visa from Pakistani missions in Afghanistan.
- After the issuance of Visa, Afghan nationals will be allowed to enter Pakistan.
- On entry, Afghans will be asked to fill out details including the time period and place of stay.
- Once the details are verified Afghan nationals will be issued residence and travel permits.

Impact on Afghan Population

Afghanistan is a war-hit country, still trying to bring back normalcy. Afghan refugees have fled their country due to war, violence and ensuing economic turmoil. Thousands of Afghans daily enter Pakistan for business, medical and educational purposes or meet their relatives. The new visa rules will create problems for those who need timely medical attention or other urgent visits.

Anindita Neogy Anaam honoured with National Nritya Shiromani award

Kathak exponent Anindita Neogy Anaam has been honoured with the prestigious National Nritya Shiromani award for her contribution towards preserving and promoting the dance form across the world. The award was conferred during the 10th Cuttack Mahotsav: International Dance and Music festival.

Cuttack Mahotsav: International Dance and Music Festival

The Cuttack Mahotsav is an International Dance and Music festival organised by Utkal Yuva Sanskrutik Sangh, in collaboration with the state government's department of Odia language.

Anindita Neogy Anaam

US-based Kathak exponent Anindita Neogy Anaam has been trained under Pandit Rajendra Gangani and Pandit Jaikishan Maharaj. She has acquainted herself with both Jaipur and Lucknow Gharana of the art-form. She has been awarded the National Nritya Shiromani award for her contribution towards preserving and promoting the Kathak dance form across the world.

New Delhi World Book Fair

The New Delhi World Book Fair will be held at the Pragati Maidan. The theme of the 27th edition of the New Delhi World Book Fair is "Readers with special needs". The UAE's third largest emirate Sharjah is the guest of honour for the New Delhi World Book Fair.

New Delhi World Book Fair

The New Delhi World Book Fair would be inaugurated by the Minister for Human Resource Development Prakash Javadekar. The theme "Readers with special needs" has been chosen to generate emotions of not sympathy but respect and equality.

An exclusive exhibition of Braille books, audio books, integrated print-braille books and books for people and children with different disabilities will be showcased in the Fair's theme pavilion.

An International Disability Film Festival "We Care" has also been organised where 45 films from 27 countries would be screened. To commemorate the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, an exhibition of books on and by Gandhi and his associates will also be put up at the book fair.

106th Session of Indian Science Congress Inaugurated

Prime Minister, Narendra Modi delivered the inaugural address at the 106th session of the Indian Science Congress. The 106th Indian Science Congress is being held at Jalandhar. The theme of the 106th science congress is 'Future India: Science and Technology'.

Reflecting on the theme of 'Future India: Science and Technology', PM Modi said that he would like to add Jai Anusandhan to former prime minister Lal Bahadur Shastri's famous slogan of Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan and

Atal Bihari Vajpayee's Jai Vigyan. He gave the nation a new slogan Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan, Jai Vigyan and Jai Anusandhan.

Indian Science Congress

Indian Science Congress is organised by the Indian Science Congress Association every year in the first week of January. The Indian Science Congress Association was started in the year 1914 in Kolkata and has a membership of more than 30,000 scientists.

The two British chemists, namely, Professor J. L. Simonsen and Professor P. S. MacMahon thought that scientific research in India might be stimulated if an annual meeting of research workers somewhat on the lines of the British Association for the Advancement of Science could be arranged. This led to the establishment of the Indian Science Congress Association and the annual session of the Indian Science Congress.

Ministry of Commerce clarifies on FDI rules in e-commerce

The Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP) under the Ministry of Commerce has clarified that the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) rules for e-commerce have not allowed foreign investment in the inventory-based model or multi-brand retailing.

Provisions for FDI in e-commerce

The DIPP has clarified on the following provisions:

- FDI is allowed only in the business-to-business (B2B) e-commerce segment and not in the business-to-consumer (B2C) segment which in effect is the multi-brand retail or the inventory-based e-commerce model.
- DIPP further has clarified that through FDI in B2B e-commerce, an e-commerce entity providing marketplace will not, directly or indirectly, influence the sale price of goods or services. If it does so, such renders such business would be rendered as an inventory based model.

The DIPP clarifies that an e-commerce platform operating an inventory based model does not only violate the FDI policy on e-commerce but also circumvents the FDI policy restrictions on multi-brand retail trading.

Pakistan's Provincial Government declares Panj Tirath Hindu religious site as national heritage

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) provincial government of Pakistan has declared the ancient Hindu religious site of Panj Tirath in Peshawar of North Western Pakistan as national heritage.

The Directorate of Archaeology and Museums of KP has issued a notification under the KP Antiquities Act 2016 declaring the land in the Panj Tirath Park as a heritage site.

Significance of the Site

Panj Tirath derives its name from the five pools of water in the site which also has a temple. According to the epic of Mahabharat, the mythical king Pandu belonged to this area and Hindus used to come to these pools for bathing during the auspicious month of Karteek and worship for two days under the trees.

NASA's New Horizon spacecraft flew past Ultima Thule

The New Horizon Spacecraft has flown past Ultima Thule, a trans-Neptunian object located in the Kuiper belt. This marks a new beginning in the era of exploration from the enigmatic Kuiper Belt region.

Discoveries about Ultima Thule

The New Horizon has discovered interesting facts about Ultima Thule:

- Ultima Thule (TOO-lee) has two reddish globes joined by a narrow neck, much like a
- Ultima Thule is 4 billion miles (6.4 billion kilometres) from Earth.
- Ultima Thule is spinning like a propeller.

New Horizon Mission

New Horizon Mission is an interplanetary space probe part of NASA's New Frontiers programme. The New Horizon was launched in 2006 to with

- The primary mission to perform a flyby study of the Pluto system in 2015.
- The secondary mission to fly by and study one or more other Kuiper belt objects.

The New Horizons mission was aimed at getting insights about the edge of our solar system by making the first reconnaissance of the dwarf planet Pluto and by venturing deeper into the distant, mysterious Kuiper Belt which is a relic of solar system formation.

China's Chang'e 4 probe makes historic touchdown

China's Chang'e 4 probe spacecraft has become the first spacecraft to land on the far side of the moon. Chang'e 4 is a Chinese lunar exploration mission that aims to achieve soft-landing on the far side of the Moon. The mission aims to deliver samples of Moon rock and soil to Earth.

About the Mission:

- For the first time, there would be soft-landing on the far side of the Moon.
- China's mission consists of a static lander and rover.
- The rover will touch down on the Von Kármán crater, located on the side of the Moon which never faces Earth.
- During the landing, the probe will descend on thrusters and touch down on the rugged terrain of the lunar far side.
- The landers will aid in characterising the region's geology and the composition of rock and soil.
- Chang'e-4's instruments would examine whether the impact which created the South Pole Aitken Basin has punched through the crust down to the Moon's mantle layer. This will shed light on the early history of our only natural satellite.
- The Chang'e-4 mission will also characterise the "radio environment" on the far side to lay the groundwork for the creation of future radio astronomy telescopes on the far side, which is shielded from the radio noise of Earth.
- To study the respiration of the seeds and the photosynthesis on the Moon the static lander is carrying a container with potato and Arabidopsis plant seeds to perform a biological experiment.
- The lander will send the data through the satellite Queqiao of China.

Von Kármán crater and the far side of Moon:

- Von Kármán crater is located within the oldest and largest impact feature on the Moon – the South Pole-Aitken Basin, which was formed by a giant asteroid impact billions of years ago.
- The far side of the moon is never visible from earth because of the phenomenon of tidal locking. As the Moon takes just as long to rotate on its own axis as it takes to complete one orbit of Earth, we are able to see only one face of the moon from the earth.
- Even though it is said as the dark side, it is also illuminated by the Sun and has the same phases as the near side. Dark in the context simply means unseen.
- The far side is rather different than the near side. The far side has a thicker, older crust that is pocked with more craters.

The Chang'e-4 mission is part of the Chinese larger lunar exploration mission. The first and second Chang'e missions were aimed at gathering data from orbit. The third and fourth missions concentrated on surface operations. The fifth and sixth are sample return missions, delivering lunar rock and soil to laboratories on Earth.

Chandrayaan-2 mission launch most likely in Feb

Indian Space Research Organisation (Isro) will most likely launch Chandrayaan-2, the country's second mission to the Moon in the month of February.

Chandrayaan-2

The features of the Chandrayaan-2 mission are:

- Chandrayaan-2 mission is a totally indigenous venture comprising of an orbiter, a lander and a rover.
- There would be a controlled descent and the lander would soft-land on the lunar surface at a specified site and deploy a rover.
- The rover would then move around the landing site on the lunar surface in a semi-autonomous mode as decided by the ground commands.
- The rover will observe the lunar surface and send back the data. This data will be useful for analysis of the lunar soil.
- The payloads will collect scientific information on lunar topography, mineralogy, elemental abundance, lunar exosphere and signatures of hydroxyl and water-ice.



- The 3,290-kg Chandrayaan-2 will orbit the Moon and perform the objectives of remote sensing the moon.

Accomplishments of Chandrayaan-1

India's first lunar probe Chandrayaan-1 was launched by the ISRO in October 2008 and operated till August 2009. The Chandrayaan-1 had confirmed the magma ocean hypothesis, which stated that the moon was once completely molten. In its ten-month orbit around the moon, Chandrayaan-1 had detected titanium and had confirmed the presence of calcium. Chandrayaan-1 had gathered the most accurate measurements yet of magnesium, aluminium and iron on the lunar surface.

January 5, 2019

Targets under the Street Lighting National Programme likely to be missed

Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Power and Renewable Energy, R K Singh has stated in [Lok Sabha](#) that the targets set under the Street Lighting National Programme are most likely to be missed.

Street Lighting National Programme

The Street Lighting National Programme was launched on 5th January 2015. The programme aims to replace 3.5 crore conventional street lights with energy efficient LED lights. This replacement is expected to result in an annual energy saving of 900 crore units and a financial saving of Rs 5,500 crore. Energy Efficiency Services Limited is the implementing agency for the programme.

Energy Efficiency Services Limited

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Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL), founded in 2009, is a joint venture of four national Public-Sector Undertakings NTPC Limited, Power Finance Corporation Limited, Rural Electrification Corporation Limited and POWERGRID Corporation of India Limited. EESL is leading the market-related activities of the National Mission for Enhanced Energy Efficiency (NMEEE), one of the eight national missions under the National Action Plan on Climate Change.

Implementation of Street Lighting National Programme

The Energy Efficiency Services Limited has installed over 76.77 lakh LED street lights against the target set to install 1.34 crore set by March 2019. The Street Lighting National Programme has not been implemented so far in Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland and Meghalaya and Union Territories of Daman & Diu, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Lakshadweep.

RBI forms expert committee to rejuvenate MSMEs

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has formed an expert committee to look into the various challenges being faced by MSMEs and suggest ways and measures to rejuvenate them.

Composition of the Committee

The eight-member committee would be chaired by former Securities and Exchange Board of India chairman UK Sinha. The other members of the committee are Ram Mohan Mishra, Pankaj Jain, PK Gupta, Anup Bagchi, Abhiman Das, Sharad Sharma, and Bindu Ananth.

Terms of Reference of the Committee

The Terms of Reference of the Committee include:

- Review the current institutional framework in place to support the MSME (micro, small and medium enterprises).
- Examine the factors affecting the timely and adequate availability of finance to the MSME sector.
- Study the impact of the recent economic reforms on the sector and identify the structural problems affecting its growth.
- Conduct a study about the best global practices with respect to MSMEs and recommend its adoption in India, wherever appropriate.
- Review the existing MSME focused policies and its impact on the sector.
- To propose measures for leveraging technology in accelerating the growth of the sector.

Significance of MSMEs for Indian Economy

The MSMEs are termed as engines of growth of India. MSMEs account for more than 80% of the total industrial enterprises in India creating more than 8000 value-added products and contribute about 8% to the GDP. About 45% of total manufacturing output and 40% of the total exports from the country are from MSMEs.

Lok Sabha Passes the Companies (Amendment) Bill, 2018

The [Lok Sabha](#) has passed the Companies (Amendment) Bill, 2018. The bill aims to amend the Companies Act, 2013. The bill would replace the ordinance promulgated on November 2018.

Features of the Companies (Amendment) Bill, 2018

The features of the bill are:

- It provides for re-categorisation of offences. The bill re-categorises 16 offences including the issuance of shares at a discount, and failure to file an annual return as a civil offence.
- The bill aims to remove the clause of imprisonment for officers for defaulting the rule which prohibits issuing shares at a discount, except in certain cases. Instead, the bill provides for a penalty equal to the amount raised by the issue of shares at a discount or five lakh rupees, whichever is lower.
- The Bill states that a company may not commence business, unless it files a declaration within 180 days of incorporation, confirming that every subscriber to the Memorandum of the company has paid the value of shares agreed to be taken by him, and files a verification of its registered office address with the Registrar of Companies within 30 days of incorporation.
- The Bill transfers the power to approve any changes in the financial year for a company associated with a foreign company and any alteration in the incorporation document of a public company which has the effect of converting it to a private company to the central government from the National Company Law Tribunal.
- The Bill provides that failure to make a declaration of interest when a person holds the beneficial interest of at least 25% shares in a company or exercises significant influence or control over the company may either be fined or imprisoned for up to one year or both.
- The bill increases the ceiling up to which the regional director can compound (settle) offences with a penalty of up to twenty-five lakhs from five lakh rupees.

The amendments are brought in as per the recommendations of a committee constituted to suggest changes to the Companies Act, 2013.

Atal Solar Krishi Pump Yojana

The government of Maharashtra has decided to give two LED bulbs, a DC fan and a mobile charging socket as freebies to farmers enrolling under the Atal Solar Krishi Pump Yojana.

Atal Solar Krishi Pump Yojana

The government of Maharashtra introduced the Atal Solar Krishi Pump Yojana to reduce losses due to non-payment of electricity bills and also promote solar energy. The features of the Atal Solar Krishi Pump Yojana are:

- The government would provide solar pumps at subsidised rates for the farmers.
- Under the Scheme, farmers with less than five acres will have to pay 5 per cent of the cost of a 3 HP solar pump while farmers with more than five acres will get a 5 HP solar pump for Rs 30000.

With the scheme, the government aims to reach out to farmers from remote areas where the agricultural feeder is not possible.

Utilisation of funds by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs

The data released by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs outlines the following trends in the utilisation of funds:

- Developing metro rail networks and housing development has been the top priority of the Central Government's urban development strategy.
- The central government has allocated Rs 53,000 crore to the States in four years to implement metro projects and Rs 33,000 crore for the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Urban.
- 17 cities are implementing 27 metro projects, of which 10 are 50:50 joint ventures between the Government of India and the respective States.
- The central government has allocated 40 per cent funds for metros and 25 per cent for the housing projects in four years.
- The allocation for the Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana (HRIDAY) was less than even 1 per cent of the total allocation.

Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana (HRIDAY)

HRIDAY was launched by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs was launched to preserve and revitalise soul of the heritage city to reflect the city’s unique character by encouraging aesthetically appealing, accessible, informative & secured environment.

The scheme is being implemented in 12 identified Cities namely, Ajmer, Amaravati, Amritsar, Badami, Dwarka, Gaya, Kanchipuram, Mathura, Puri, Varanasi, Velankanni and Warangal in a mission mode.

- Of the Rs 8,750 crore released to the states under the Swachh Bharat Mission–Urban, only 48 per cent funds has been utilised.
- The states have utilised 54 per cent i.e. Rs 9,876 crore of the Rs18,390 crore under the AMRUT scheme.
- The allocation to the North-Eastern Region Urban Development Programme (NERUDP) and the 10% Lumpsum Scheme of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs was just 1 per cent of the total allocation.

10% Lumpsum Scheme

Under the 10% Lumpsum Scheme of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, 10% of the Annual Plan Budget of the Ministry is earmarked for implementation of projects / schemes for the North Eastern States including Sikkim.

North-Eastern Region Urban Development Programme (NERUDP)

The North Eastern Region Urban Development Programme (NERUDP) has been taken up with the financial assistance from Asian Development Bank (ADB).

The scheme is being implemented in the capital cities of 5 North Eastern States viz. Agartala (Tripura), Aizawl (Mizoram), Gangtok (Sikkim), and Kohima (Nagaland) covering priority urban services like Water Supply, Sewerage and Sanitation, and Solid Waste Management besides capacity building, institutional and financial reforms of urban local bodies.

- The States have utilised 67 per cent of the Central funds provided under the eight urban development projects.

To monitor the progress of schemes and funds allocated to the States, various institutional frameworks such as submission of periodic progress reports, review meetings, video conferences and field visits have been put in place by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.

National Entrepreneurship Awards 2018 presented at New Delhi

The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) presented the National Entrepreneurship Awards 2018 by honouring 30 outstanding young entrepreneurs and three entrepreneurship ecosystem builders for their exceptional contribution in entrepreneurship development at a ceremony held in New Delhi.

Those honoured included:

- Roshan Kahtoon, 23, from Bihar, who despite her physical disability, has beaten all odds and has set up a small bangle manufacturing unit.
- Shruthi Reddy Sethi, 33, of Kolkata, who began Anthyesti Funeral Services to provide end-to-end funeral management service.
- Tana Sumpaaged, 35, of the Nyishi tribe, Arunachal Pradesh, who is successfully running piggery farms and fisheries and helping local people, women, housewives and unemployed youth with quality training and livelihood support.
- Mahipal Chary Kadivendi, 38, of Telangana, who has developed a self-propelled weeder-cum-cultivator that can be used for a number of agricultural processes such as hoeing, weeding, tilling, sowing and also for applying fertilizer or insecticides.

National Entrepreneurship Awards

The National Entrepreneurship Awards was instituted by the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship in 2016 to encourage a culture of entrepreneurship across the country.

Each of the enterprise/individual winners receives a trophy, certificate and a cash prize of Rs 5 lakh, while each of the winning organizations/institutes receives a trophy, certificate and a cash prize of Rs 10 lakh.



PM Modi inaugurated developmental works in Manipur

PM Modi inaugurated a slew of developmental works and laid the foundation stone for four projects during his visit to the North-Eastern state of Manipur.

Development Works Inaugurated

PM Modi inaugurated eight projects during his visit to the Manipur. They are:

- Integrated check post in Tengnoupal district.
- Dolaithabi Barrage project of Imphal East district.
- FCI food storage godown in Imphal East district.
- Buffer water reservoirs in Ukhrul district.
- Improved and upgraded water supply for Churachandpur zone.
- Eco-tourism complex at Thangapat in Kangpokpi district.
- Integrated tourist destination in Noney district.
- Water supply scheme at JNV, Lambui and its surrounding villages.

Foundation Stone for New projects

PM Modi laid the foundation stone for four new projects

- Infrastructure development of Dhanamanjuri University in Imphal West district.
- Floodlighting of hockey stadium and the main stadium at the Khuman Lampak Sports Complex in Imphal East district.
- AstroTurf laying in Langjing Achouba of Imphal West district

These developmental projects will aid in reaching out to the people of North-East especially Manipur and aid in the bridging of the gap between North-East and the rest of India.

Andhra Pradesh bags CBIP award for Polavaram project

Andhra Pradesh was conferred with CBIP's "Best Implementation of Water Resources Project" for better planning, implementation, monitoring and speedy execution of Polavaram multipurpose project on the Godavari River.

Polavaram Multipurpose project

Under the Polavaram Multipurpose project, a dam is constructed across the Godavari River in West Godavari District and East Godavari District of Andhra Pradesh. The reservoir of the dam also spreads to parts of Chhattisgarh and Orissa States.

Through the Polavaram Project, 291,000 ha of new land will be brought under irrigation in which 129,000 ha by the right canal and 162,000 ha by the left canal.

Central Board of Irrigation and Power

Central Board of Irrigation and Power (CBIP) is a Premier Institution of Indian government rendering dedicated services to the professional organization, engineers and individuals in the country related to Power, Water Resources and Renewable Energy Sectors for the last 90 years. CBIP was established in the year 1927.

Lok Sabha passes New Delhi International Arbitration Centre Bill

The [Lok Sabha](#) has passed the New Delhi International Arbitration Centre Bill to set up a revamped International Arbitration Centre at New Delhi with an aim to make India the hub of arbitration.

New Delhi International Arbitration Centre Bill

The features of the New Delhi International Arbitration Centre Bill are:

- The bill seeks to establish an independent and autonomous regime for institutionalised arbitration and for acquisition and transfer of undertakings of the International Centre of Alternative Resolution.
- The New Delhi International Arbitration Centre will take over the undertakings of the International Centre for Alternative Dispute Resolution (ICADR). The chief justice of India is the ex-officio chairperson of the ICADR.
- The New Delhi International Arbitration Centre is being set up as per the recommendation of the Justice B N Srikrishna committee formed to identify the roadblocks in the development of institutional arbitration in India.
- Justice B N Srikrishna committee had recommended that ICADR should be taken over with

complete revamp of its governance structure to include only experts of repute who can lend credibility and respectability to the institution and be re-branded as a centre of national importance to highlight its character as a flagship arbitral institution.

The bill to establish, New Delhi International Arbitration Centre is part of the government efforts to develop the centre into a world-class arbitration centre and India as the hub of international arbitration.

Asia Competitiveness Institute releases Ease of Doing Business Rankings for Indian states

The Asia competitiveness institute (ACI) has released the Ease of Doing Business Rankings for Indian states.

Rankings of Indian States

Andhra Pradesh has topped the Ease of Doing Business rankings. Maharashtra and Delhi came in second and third place respectively.

Performance of Andhra Pradesh

Andhra Pradesh has jumped from the 7th rank in 2016 to the 3rd rank in 2018 in Attractiveness to Investors and the rankings have been increased from 6th to the 1st position in Business Friendliness.

The ranking of Andhra Pradesh dropped from 2nd to the 4th rank in Competitiveness Policies. Overall the ranking of Andhra Pradesh has increased from 5th rank in 2016 to the top spot in 2018.

Scope for Improvement for Andhra Pradesh

The ACI has highlighted the following areas for improvement for Andhra Pradesh in its report:

- The report states that Andhra Pradesh needs to bridge numerous institutional and infrastructural gaps in order to sustain its position in the future.
- There was sufficient room for improvement in subenvironments such as facilitating business operations, infrastructure resilience and market
- The weakest indicators for the state of Andhra Pradesh were Worker density, foreign direct investment per capital, labour productivity, and the illiteracy rate.

Taking note of the findings of the report the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh has announced that the state government will consider the observations of the ACI EDB rankings report and strengthen the areas of weaknesses.

UN observes First-Ever World Braille Day

The United Nations observed the first official World Braille Day on 4th January to create awareness about the importance of Braille for approximately 1.3 billion people living with some form of distance or near vision impairment.

The proclamation for the celebration of World Braille Day was made by the United Nations General Assembly as a means for realising the human rights of visually-impaired and partially-sighted people, and bringing written language to the forefront as a critical prerequisite for promoting fundamental freedoms.

Why January 4th?

World Braille Day is celebrated on the January 4th to honour Louis Braille, who is credited for inventing the Braille script. Louis Braille was born in France on 4 January 1809. The World Braille Day is celebrated on his Birth Anniversary.

Indian Railways to replace the conventional coaches with modern LHB coaches

The Indian Railways has decided to replace conventional coaches with modern LHB (Linke Hofmann Busch) design coaches in all long distance trains.

Indian Railways is undertaking a massive retrofitting exercise to convert existing conventional coaches into LHB ones by providing crashworthiness features in these coaches. Safety parameters like strong couplers and anti-climbing features are being provided during the retrofit exercise.

The Railways has decided to stop manufacturing of ICF conventional coaches from 2018-19 and production of LHB coaches will be expedited from 2017-18 in a big way to provide a safer and comfortable ride for passengers.

Why the replacement is being undertaken?

The Linke Hofmann Busch (LHB) coaches are equipped with modern technology to prevent capsizing of coaches during derailments. The ICF coaches were getting overturned and capsized during the

derailments. As a result, there was more damage to life and property. Hence the Ministry of Railways has decided to replace conventional coaches with modern LHB coaches.

The LHB coaches provide advantages like anti-telescopic feature which do not penetrate into the adjacent coaches in case of accidents. Further, the LHB coaches do not climb on the adjacent coaches, due to the use of Center Buffer Coupling (CBC).

January 6, 2019

Swachh Survekshan Survey launched in New Delhi

The fourth edition of the Swachh Survekshan Survey has been launched in New Delhi. The Swachh Survekshan 2019 will be conducted by an independent third party across 4,237 towns and cities between January 4 and 28.

Objectives of the Swachh Survekshan Survey

The objectives of the Swachh Survekshan Survey are:

- To encourage large-scale participation of citizens.
- To ensure the sustainability of the initiatives taken towards garbage-free and open defecation-free cities.
- To foster a spirit of healthy competition among towns and cities to improve their service delivery to citizens and towards creating cleaner cities.

The Swachh Survekshan Survey 2019 will be a completely digital and paperless survey and would be completed in a record time of 24 days.

Vijay Mallya declared as Fugitive Economic Offender

The Prevention of Money Laundering (PMLA) court in Mumbai has declared Vijay Mallya as a Fugitive Economic Offender. Vijay Mallya is the first businessman to be charged under the new fugitive economic offender's act 2018.

Declaration of the Fugitive Economic Offender

Vijay Mallya is declared as the Fugitive Economic Offender under the following provisions:

- According to the Fugitive Economic Offenders Act, 2018 a fugitive economic offender is a person against whom an arrest warrant has been issued for his or her involvement in economic offences involving at least Rs. 100 crore or more and has left India to avoid prosecution.
- The investigating agencies have to file an application in a Special Court under the Prevention of Money-Laundering Act, 2002 containing details of the properties to be confiscated, and any information about the person's whereabouts.
- The Special Court will issue a notice for the person to appear at a specified place and date at least six weeks from the issue of notice.
- Proceedings will be terminated if the person appears. If not the person would be declared as a Fugitive Economic Offender based on the evidence filed by the investigating agencies.

The person who is declared as a Fugitive Economic Offender can challenge the proclamation in the High Court within 30 days of such declaration according to the Fugitive Economic Offenders Act, 2018.

Orange alert sounded for Cyclone Pabuk

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has stated that cyclone Pabuk will move northwestwards and cross the Andaman Islands late on 6th Jan as a cyclonic storm with wind speed up to 90 kmph. IMD has sounded an orange alert for the cyclone Pabuk. The Pabuk cyclone would cause heavy rain over the Andaman Islands.

Cyclone Pabuk

Cyclone Pabuk originated over the Gulf of Thailand and neighbourhood. The IMD predicts that Pabuk would move west-northwestwards and emerge into the Andaman Sea. Then it would move northwestwards and cross the Andaman Islands. Then recurve northeastwards towards Myanmar coast and weaken gradually.



Course of Cyclone Pabuk

Cyclone warnings

The four stages of cyclone warnings in India are:

- The First Stage warning Pre Cyclone Watch, issued 72 hours in advance. It contains an early warning about the development of a cyclonic disturbance in the north Indian Ocean, its likely intensification into a tropical cyclone and the coastal belt likely to experience adverse weather.
- The second stage warning is Cyclone Alert, is issued at least 48 hrs in advance of the expected commencement of adverse weather over the coastal areas. It contains information about the location and intensity of the storm likely direction of its movement, intensification, coastal districts likely to experience adverse weather and advice to fishermen, the general public, media and disaster managers.

Stage of warning	Colour code
Cyclone Alert	Yellow.
Cyclone Warning	Orange.
Post-landfall outlook	Red.

- The Third Stage warning is Cyclone Warning, issued at least 24 hours in advance of the expected commencement of adverse weather over the coastal areas and the landfall point is forecasted at this stage.
- The Fourth Stage of warning is Post Landfall Outlook and it gives likely direction of movement of the cyclone after its landfall and adverse weather likely to be experienced in the interior areas.

Even though there is no cyclonic situation for Odisha, Seven districts of Odisha have been put on alert and the weather in Odisha would be cloudy and dry.

National Health Agency to be restructured as National Health Authority

The Union Cabinet headed by Prime Minister Modi has approved the restructuring of existing National Health Agency as National Health Authority. The existing society, "National Health Agency" has been dissolved and it is now restructured as an Authority to effectively the implement Pradhan Mantri – Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY).

The National Health Authority would be empowered with full autonomy, accountability and the mandate to implement PM-JAY through an efficient, effective and transparent decision-making process by aligning the accountability with responsibility.

Why the Authority has been constituted?

The reasons for restructuring as an authority are:

- To enable faster decision-making.
- Replacing the multi-layered structure with a simplified structure.
- Authority will be able to specify treatment protocols and enforce their compliance.
- The Authority with a stronger mandate would be able to prevent, detect and control frauds, abuse and redress grievances, thus resulting in the reduction of leakages.

The National Health Authority would be chaired by Union Health Minister and have representation from the Government and domain experts.

Pradhan Mantri – Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY)

Pradhan Mantri – Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY) is a scheme of the government under Ayushman Bharat. The scheme aims to reduce the financial burden on poor and vulnerable groups arising out of catastrophic hospital episodes and ensure their access to quality health services was conceived. It also seeks to accelerate India's progress towards the achievement of Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and Sustainable Development Goal – 3 (SDG3).

Under the scheme about 10.74 crore poor, deprived rural families and identified occupational categories of urban workers' families as per the latest Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) data (approx. 50 crore beneficiaries) will have health benefit cover of Rs. 500,000 per family per year at free of cost. The health benefit cover includes more than 1,350 medical packages covering surgery, medical and daycare treatments, cost of medicines and diagnostics.

Two years of insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC)

The Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley has written a Facebook post titled "Two years of insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC)". In the post, he explains how things have been changed after the IBC was passed by the Parliament.

Once the IBC was passed by the government, the government took immediate steps to set up Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India and National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT).

Recovery of Debt

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The Finance Minister states that the recovery under the IBC was satisfactory and highlights the ways under IBC through which the money was recovered:

- The section 29 A of IBC mandated that persons who have contributed to the defaults of the corporate debtor or are undesirable due to incapacities as specified in the section or are a 'related party' to another defaulting party, are prevented from gaining control of the corporate debtor by being declared ineligible to submit a resolution plan under the Code.
- As a result, the companies are paying up in anticipation of not crossing the red line and being referred to NCLT.
- Many debtors are paying up once the creditor has filed the petition at a pre-admission stage so that the declaration of insolvency does not take place.
- NCLT has resolved some major cases & many are on the way of resolution.

There has been a definite improvement in the lending and borrowing behaviour, an increase in the conversion of NPAs into standard accounts and decline in new accounts are a testimony to this fact.

The Finance Minister notes that so far 1322 cases have been admitted by NCLT. 4452 cases have been disposed at the pre-admission stage and 66 have been resolved after adjudication. 260 cases have been ordered for liquidation. In 66 resolution cases, the realization by creditors was around Rs. 80,000 crores.

PM Modi lays Foundation Stone for Mandal Dam Project

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has laid the foundation stone for the Mandal Dam Project on the North Koel River. The Mandal Dam Project would be boon for the states of Jharkhand and Bihar.

Mandal Dam Project

The features of the Mandal Dam project are:

- The Mandal Dam project will help around one lakh eleven thousand hectares of agricultural land in Jharkhand and Bihar to get irrigation facilities.
- 24 MW of electricity will also be produced.
- The project is scheduled to be completed in 30 months at the estimated cost of Rs. 1622.27 crores.
- 60 Per cent would be financed by the central government as a grant from Long-Term Irrigation Fund (LTIF) under Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana (PMKSY).
- Remaining 40% will be borne by the States through loan financed by NABARD.

Why the project was stalled?

The construction of the Mandal Dam began in 1972 and continued till 1993. Later it was stalled over the concerns raised by the Bihar Forest Department.

The project threatens to submerge the portions of the Palamau Tiger Reserve and Betla National Park. The central government has now approved the 'in principle' for diversion of forest under Palamu Tiger

Reserve (PTR) for the construction of Mandal Dam. The Central Government has set some conditions in this regard.

North Koel River

North Koel River originates on Ranchi plateau in Jharkhand and joins the Sone River, a few miles north-west of Haidarnagar in Jharkhand. The river meanders through the northern part of Betla National Park. The principal tributaries of the North Koel River are Auranga and the Amanat.

Yarn Bank Scheme

The Ministry of Textiles, Government of India had launched a Yarn Bank Scheme as one of the components of PowerTex India scheme with an aim to avoid fluctuation in yarn price.

Objectives of the Scheme

The objectives of the Yarn Bank Scheme are:

- To provide interest-free corpus fund to Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) or Consortium to enable them to purchase yarn at a wholesale rate and give the yarn at a reasonable price to the small weavers.
- To avoid middleman and local supplier’s brokerage charge on sales of yarn.

Financial Assistance under the Scheme

Under the scheme, an interest-free corpus fund up to Rs.2.00 crore would be provided to the Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV)/Consortium formed by power loom weavers.

PowerTex India

PowerTex India is a comprehensive scheme for power loom sector development. The components of the scheme are:

- In-situ Upgradation of Plain Power looms.
- Group Workshed Scheme (GWS).
- Yarn Bank Scheme.
- Common Facility Centre (CFC).
- Pradhan Mantri Credit Scheme for Power loom Weavers.
- Solar Energy Scheme for Power looms.
- Facilitation, IT, Awareness, Market Development and Publicity for Power loom Schemes.
- Tex Venture Capital Fund.
- Grant-in-Aid and Modernisation & Upgradation of Power loom Service Centres (PSCs).

The PowerTex India is an integrated scheme for the development of the power loom sector. PowerTex India aims to boost common infrastructure and modernise the power loom sector in the country.

January 7, 2019

70-Point Grading Index to Assess Quality of School Education in the States

The Ministry of Human Resource Development has launched 70-Point Grading Index to assess the quality of school education in the states.

About the Grading Index

The salient features of the 70-Point Grading Index are:

- The 70-Point Grading Index will assess areas of deficiency in each state’s school education system so that targeted interventions can be made at every level from pedagogy to teacher training.
- The 70-Point Grading Index aims at helping states understand where they may be lagging behind and prioritise areas for intervention to ensure that the school education system is robust at every level.
- Under the grading index, 70 indicators will be used to grade state schooling systems on areas like number of existing teacher vacancies, number of direct entry recruitments especially at leadership positions, school infrastructure and so on.
- The index will assess states on a 1,000 point grading system with 10-20 points per parameter.
- The government will be setting up a separate fund over and above existing funding mechanisms to help states take up improvement exercises.
- The index will reinforce competitive federalism by giving the correct picture of where every state stands and inducing a fair competition to improve each other’s performances.

The Ministry has initiated the grading index to focus on quality improvement. The Ministry is also in the

process of setting up a Central Institute of Assessment to strengthen Continuous and Comprehensive Education and handhold states in ensuring customised teacher training and work on pedagogical improvements.

Nafed sell pulses to states under the scheme of Central Government

The National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd (Nafed) has sold over 5 lakh tonnes (lt) pulses to 10 States and a Union Territory at discounted rates under the scheme of central government.

Why the central government had introduced the scheme?

The first of its kind scheme was introduced by the central government to clear the stock procured during the past few years and improve nutritional indicators for poor households. The objectives of the scheme are:

- Making pulses available to poor people at affordable rates.
- Reduction of the sale of pulses, procured by the government procurement agencies, in the open market as it often brings down the mandi prices of the freshly harvested crop, which in turn is against the interests of farmers.

Features of the scheme

The salient features of the scheme are:

- The subsidised price of the pulses is Rs 15 lower than the weighted average mandi price of any of the pulses and the states have to borne by states.
- There is no limit on how much a State can buy from Nafed under the scheme, but the states are required to justify the demand.
- The states are required to distribute the pulses only through welfare schemes and should produce the evidence.

The scheme is already showing the desired impact particularly on the lifting of market prices. Reports suggest that the mandi prices of pulses have already increased on an average by Rs 300-1,000 a quintal in different markets, even though it was just two and a half months since the scheme was launched.

Centre sets up Bezbaruah committee to review the implementation of clause 6 of Assam Accord

As per the announcement made to set up a high-level committee to review the implementation of clause 6 of the Assam Accord, the government has set up a committee headed by former Union tourism secretary M.P. Bezbaruah.

Terms of Reference of the committee

Clause 6 of the Assam Accord provides for Constitutional, legislative and administrative safeguards to protect preserve and promote the cultural, social, linguistic identity and heritage of the Assamese people. The committee set up to review the implementation of clause 6 of the Assam Accord will look into the following aspects:

- The committee will examine the effectiveness of actions since 1985 to implement the clause 6 of the Assam Accord.
- The committee will also suggest constitutional, legislative and administrative safeguards as envisaged in clause 6.
- The committee will examine the measures to be taken to protect Assamese and other indigenous languages of Assam.
- The committee will assess the quantum of reservation in employment under the government of Assam and other measures to protect, preserve and promote the cultural, social, linguistic identity and heritage of Assamese people.
- The committee will assess the required quantum of reservation of seats in Assam assembly and local bodies for Assamese people.

The committee will be facilitated by the Noth East Division of the Home Ministry. The state government will provide the necessary administrative and logistic support to the committee.

Criticisms against the move

The State government has welcomed the move saying that the committee will work to fulfil a long-standing demand of the people of Assam to reserve seats in the assembly and local bodies for the

indigenous people.

There is also criticism that the committee is an attempt to cover up the central government's move to amend the Citizenship Act, 1955 which aims to grant citizenship to immigrants. It is said that some provisions of the amendment bill are contrary to the Assam Accord.

Rail Kumbh Seva Mobile App

Rail Kumbh Seva Mobile App has been launched by the North Central Railway (NCR) to help the devotees arriving in Allahabad for the Kumbh Mela.

About the Mobile Application

The Mobile Application 'Rail Kumbh Seva Mobile App' has been designed to provide critical and valuable information to the devotees, tourists and other passengers who will visit Allahabad during the Kumbh Mela period. The app will assist the devotees in the following ways:

- The app will assist to navigate through the city and the mela grounds.
- The app will also provide information regarding all the 'Mela special' trains that will be run during the period.
- The app will provide a link to the user to buy both unreserved and reserved train tickets.
- The app will aid in knowing their current location and also aid in getting directions to reach railway stations, the mela zone, major hotels, bus stations and other facilities within Allahabad city.
- The app will also provide information about passenger amenities available at the stations like parking lots, refreshment rooms, waiting rooms, book stall, food plaza, ATMs and train enquiry

Kumbh Mela at Allahabad

The Mythological story related to Kumbh is narrated below,

"During an ongoing war between the demons and the demigods for the possession of the elixir of immortality (Amruth), few drops fell to earth at four places: Allahabad, Haridwar, Nasik, and Ujjain. At each of the four places, Kumbh Mela is held. At Allahabad, the drop of Amruth is believed to be fallen near Sangam and people assemble near the Sangam during Kumbh Mela to purge themselves of all sins by taking a dip in the waters and attain Moksha (Salvation)."

The Kumbh Mela is held in these four places based on the astrological calculations it returns to each place after a gap of twelve years.

The normal Kumbh Mela is held every 3 years, the Ardh (half) Kumbh Mela is held every six years at Haridwar and Allahabad (Prayag) while the Purna (complete) Kumbh mela takes place every twelve years, at four places Prayag (Allahabad), Haridwar, Ujjain, and Nashik. The Maha Kumbh Mela is celebrated at Prayag after 144 years (i.e. after 12 'Purna Kumbh Melas').

China passes law to make Islam compatible with socialism

The Peoples Republic of China has passed a new law to regulate Islam and make it more compatible with socialism by "Sinicizing Islam".

Why the new law?

The new Chinese law aims to "Sinicise" Islam. The indifference of China towards Islam was garnering it loads of criticism:

- China has around 20 million Muslims and Islam is one of the five officially recognised religions in atheist China. Even then the top officials in the Chinese government have often likened the religion to "mental disease" that "needs to be cured".
- China has detained more than 1 million Muslim Uyghur's at the indoctrination camps of Xinjiang.
- Many heavy-handed measures like confiscating copies of the Quran, issuing diktats to Muslims not to grow beards, and not choose names for their wards which sound "too Islamic" have been witnessed in China.

Hence to address the criticisms China has brought in a law to "Sinicise" Islam.

China justifies the move

The Chinese Media justifying the law has stated that:

"Modern countries are secular and diverse in a globalized world. But the revival and spread of religion have impacted secular society. Fundamentalism has caused more religious violence. Religious nationalism is threatening countries' legitimate governments and is resulting in social instability."

"The main purpose of China's five-year plan to sinicise Islam is to seek Islam governance that tallies with Chinese practice, and it is not only limited to Islam. The government would take similar measures with other recognised religions of the People's Republic of China."

Reservation for Economically Weaker Sections

The government has announced a decision to provide ten per cent reservation in jobs and higher education for those belonging to the economically backward sections of the general category. The government aims to provide the aid of reservation to economically backward poor people who are not availing the benefit of reservation as of now.

Who will be provided reservation and how?

As per the reports, those with annual family income below Rs 8 lakhs and owning less than five acres of land will be provided reservations.

This 10% reservation would be over and above the existing 50 per cent reservation.

The government plans to introduce a constitutional amendment to amend Articles 15 and 16 of the Constitution for providing reservations.

Does it violate Supreme Court Judgments?

In the landmark verdict of Supreme Court in the Mandal case, the Supreme Court had held that the proposal to provide 10% Reservation for Other economically backward sections of the people who are not covered by any of the existing schemes of Reservation as constitutionally invalid.

The Supreme Court had held that mere economic backwardness or mere educational backwardness which is not the result of social backwardness cannot be the criterion of backwardness in Article 16 (4).

The Supreme Court has even ruled in the Indra Sawhney case that the share of jobs or educational or legislative seats reserved for different communities cannot together exceed 50%.

So the present order of the government to provide reservations violates some of the observations made by the Supreme Court in its previous judgments.

How can the government implement it?

The one way to implement the current reservation proposal is to include the law of providing reservations under the ninth schedule of the constitution. An example of this can be Tamil Nadu Backward Classes, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Reservation of Seats in Educational Institutions and Appointments or Posts in the Services under the State) Act, 1993 was placed in ninth schedule of the constitution to keep Tamil Nadu's reservation limit intact at 69%.

Even then the law must pass the judicial scrutiny as the supreme court has made it clear that any law placed in the Ninth Schedule after April 24, 1973 (which is the day the propounded the doctrine of in the Kesavananda Bharti's case was delivered).

The present proposal is also seen as an attempt by the central government to consolidate the upper caste votes just ahead of the general elections.

'Benefits of the Aadhaar – where it stands today'

The Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley has released a Facebook post titled 'Benefits of the Aadhaar – where it stands today' highlighting how the efficient use of the Aadhaar based identification has aided in improving the governance and in efficient delivery of services.

How Aadhaar has aided in reducing leakages?

The Finance Minister highlights the efficacy of Aadhaar in reducing leakages through following instances:

- The Minister cites that Aadhaar's use in the delivery of subsidies has helped saved Rs 90,000 crore in the last few years till March 2018 by eliminating several duplicate, non-existent and fake beneficiaries.
- The Digital Dividend Report of the World Bank estimates that India can save Rs 77,000 crore every year by the use of Aadhaar.

The Minister further states from savings through efficient implementation of Aadhaar the government can fund three schemes of the size of Ayushman Bharat.

How Aadhaar benefitted the people?

The Minister notes that with Aadhaar the government was able to eliminate middlemen and the benefits of various welfare schemes were directed to the bank accounts of the beneficiaries. Under the schemes like

- PAHAL and Ujjwala beneficiaries are given cooking gas subsidies through direct benefit transfer (DBT) in their Aadhaar-linked bank accounts.
- 33 crore MGNREGA cardholders are getting wage payment directly through DBT in their bank accounts.

The Finance Minister gave special credits to Shri Nandan Nilekani who spearheaded the Aadhaar in the beginning days and Dr Ajay Bhushan Pandey, who subsequently provided it with the direction and expansion.

Impact of increase in salinity on Gangetic Dolphins

A five-year study by researchers Sangita Mitra (National Biodiversity Authority, Chennai) and Mahua Roy Chowdhury, (a marine biologist from the University of Calcutta, West Bengal) has been published in the Journal of Threatened Taxa.

The research has found that raising water salinity level is threatening the habitat of Gangetic river dolphins.

Findings of the Study

The study was conducted in the lower stretch of river Hooghly, covering 97 km stretch of the western, central and eastern Sundarbans in India between 2013 and 2016 in different seasons. The study area was demarcated for boat-based and land-based surveys based on interaction with local fishing communities. Researchers also measured the salinity level of the water during the different points in the survey. The findings of the Survey are:

- No sighting record for Gangetic dolphin in waterways wherever the salinity level crosses 10 parts per trillion (ppt).
- The increase in salinity in the eastern and central region of Sundarbans has affected the habitat of the Gangetic Dolphin.
- The increase in the salinity was due to hydrological changes such as reduction in freshwater flow, reduced discharge from barrages, runoff from adjacent agricultural lands and river water abstraction for irrigation.
- The increasing salinity was conducive for marine cetaceans like Indo-Pacific hump-backed and Irrawaddy dolphins as these species can thrive in saline waters.
- The other major threats to the dolphin habitats are excessive fishing, use of vulnerable fishing gears, noise from motorized boats and lack of awareness among local communities.

Gangetic Dolphin

Gangetic Dolphins are the only surviving freshwater dolphin in India. Gangetic Dolphins are found in the river systems of Ganga, Brahmaputra, Meghna and Karnaphuli- Sangu in Nepal, India and Bangladesh. The IUCN status of the Gangetic Dolphin is Endangered. Gangetic Dolphin is the National Aquatic Animal of India.

The Impact of Crude Price Shock on CAD, Inflation and Fiscal Deficit

The RBI has released a paper titled 'The Impact of Crude Price Shock on CAD, Inflation and Fiscal Deficit'. The paper outlines how the crude price shock will have an adverse impact on current account deficit (CAD), Inflation and Fiscal Deficit.

Highlights of the Research Paper

Since India is heavily dependent on oil imports for meeting its domestic demand, it remains susceptible to global crude price shocks. The research paper highlights the interrelation between the crude prices, CAD, Inflation and Fiscal Deficit as explained below:

- An increase in crude price worsens the CAD and this adverse impact cannot be significantly contained through higher growth. Hence a crude price shock will result in high CAD to GDP ratio.
- The crude price of USD 85/barrel in the worst case scenario will result in deficit increases by USD 106.4 billion, which is 3.61 per cent of the GDP on account of the oil shock.
- Every increase of USD 10/barrel in crude prices leads to an additional USD 12.5 billion deficit. This is roughly 43 bps of the country's GDP. Hence every USD 10/barrel increase in crude price will shoot up the CAD/GDP ratio by 43 bps.
- The study states that if the price increase is passed on directly to the final consumers, it will result

in increased inflation.

- It is estimated that a USD 10/barrel increase in crude price at the price of USD 65/barrel will lead to a 49 basis points increase in headline inflation and a USD 10/barrel increase in crude price at the price of USD 55/barrel gives around a 58 bps increase in headline inflation.
- If the government decides not to pass on the USD 10/barrel increase in crude price to customers the fiscal deficit would increase by 43 bps.

The study concludes by stating that the actual impact on the inflation and fiscal deficit will depend on the level of government intervention through changes in tax and subsidy in the domestic oil markets.

CSO releases advance estimates of National Income for 2018-19

The Central Statistics Office (CSO) under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation has released the first advance estimates of National Income for 2018-19.

Highlights of the Estimate

The Estimate makes the following observations:

- The Indian economy is expected to grow at 7.2 per cent in the financial year 2018-19 which is higher than the 6.7 per cent GDP growth in the previous financial year 2017-2018.
- The Real GVA (Gross Value Added) is expected to grow at 7 per cent in the current fiscal as against 6.5 per cent in 2017-18.
- The CSO estimates that the expansion in activities in agriculture, forestry and fishing is likely to increase to 3.8 per cent in the current fiscal from 3.4 per cent in the preceding year.
- The manufacturing sector is expected to grow at 8.3 per cent in 2018-19, up from 5.7 per cent in 2017-18.
- India's per capita income in real terms (at 2011-12 prices) during 2018-19 is likely to attain a level of Rs 91,921 as compared to Rs 86,668 for the year 2017-18. The per capita income would grow at a rate of 6.1 per cent.

Central Statistics Office (CSO)

The Central Statistics Office (CSO) under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation coordinates the statistical activities in the country and evolves statistical standards.

The functions of the CSO include National Income Accounting, conducting of Annual Survey of Industries, Economic Censuses and its follow up surveys, compilation of Index of Industrial Production, as well as Consumer Price Indices for Urban Non-Manual Employees, Human Development Statistics, Gender Statistics, imparting training in Official Statistics, dissemination of statistical information, work relating to trade, energy, construction, and environment statistics, revision of National Industrial Classification, etc

Lok Sabha passes Personal Laws (Amendment) Bill 2018

The [Lok Sabha](#) has passed the Personal Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2018. The bill moved by Minister of State for Law PP Chaudhary seeks to remove leprosy as a ground for divorce in five personal laws – Hindu Marriage Act, Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act, Divorce Act (for Christians), Special Marriage Act and the Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act.

Why the amendment was moved?

The bill was introduced in [Lok Sabha](#) in August 2018. The bill was introduced as various recommendations were made to remove leprosy as a ground for divorce. Some of the recommendations are:

- The Law Commission in its 256th report had recommended repeal of laws and provisions which were discriminatory against leprosy affected people.
- India is a signatory to a UN Resolution which calls for the elimination of discrimination against persons suffering from leprosy. Leprosy as a ground for divorce was contradicting to the resolution.
- In 2014, Even the Supreme Court had asked the Centre and the state governments to take steps for rehabilitation and integration of leprosy-affected people into the mainstream.
- The National Human Rights Commission had long made a proposal for the government in this regard.

The Minister said that Leprosy is now a curable disease as against the earlier notion of it being incurable. Hence it would be wise to bring out an amendment in this regard.

Leprosy

Leprosy is a chronic infectious bacterial disease caused by *Mycobacterium leprae*. Leprosy mainly affects the skin, the peripheral nerves, mucosal surfaces of the upper respiratory tract and the eyes.

Even though the exact mechanism of transmission of leprosy is not known, the most widely held belief was that the disease was transmitted by contact between cases of leprosy and healthy persons. The possibility of transmission by the respiratory route is gaining ground more recently.

A centrally sponsored scheme National Leprosy Eradication Programme is being implemented in India to tackle the disease. India has eliminated leprosy as a public health problem, which means that there is less than 1 person in 10,000 infected with the disease. Even though the number seems low in percentage terms, when considered in absolute terms, it is humongous.

Rashtriya Gokul Mission

The Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare is implementing the scheme of Rashtriya Gokul Mission to conserve and develop indigenous breeds in a focused and scientific manner.

The scheme comprises of two components namely National Programme for Bovine Breeding (NPBB) and National Mission on Bovine Productivity (NMBP).

Objectives of the Mission

The objectives of the Mission are:

- Development and conservation of indigenous breeds.
- Undertaking breed improvement programmes for indigenous cattle breeds so as to improve the genetic makeup and increase the stock.
- Enhancing milk production and productivity.
- Upgrading nondescript cattle using elite indigenous breeds like Gir, Sahiwal, Rathi, Deoni, Tharparkar, Red Sindhi.
- Distributing disease free high genetic merit bulls for natural service.

Initiatives under the Rashtriya Gokul Mission

The following initiatives have been undertaken under the Rashtriya Gokul Mission:

- Establishment of integrated cattle development centres 'Gokul Grams' to develop indigenous breeds.
- Awards for encouraging farmers and breeder societies to rear Indigenous breeds of Bovines. Gopal Ratna award for farmers maintaining the best herd of Indigenous Breed and practising best management practices. Kamdhenu award for best managed Indigenous Herd by Institutions/Trusts/NGOs/ Gaushalas or best-managed Breeders' Societies.
- National Kamdhenu Breeding Centres are being established as Centres of Excellence to develop and conserve Indigenous Breeds in a holistic and scientific manner.
- An e-market portal "E-Pashu Haat"- Nakul Prajnan Bazaar for connecting breeders and farmers, an authentic market for quality- disease-free bovine germplasm in the form of i) semen; ii) embryos; iii) calves; iv) heifers and v) adult bovines with different agencies/stakeholders.
- Pashu Sanjivni Programme encompassing the provision of Animal Health cards ('Nakul Swasthya Patra') along with UID identification and uploading data on National Data Base.
- Advanced Reproductive Technology: Including Assisted Reproductive Technique- In-vitro Fertilization (IVF)/ Multiple Ovulation Embryo Transfer (MOET) and sex-sorted semen technique to improve the availability of disease-free female bovines.
- National Bovine Genomic Center for Indigenous Breeds (NBGC-IB) for selection of breeding bulls of high genetic merit at a young age using highly precise gene-based technology.

Rashtriya Gokul Mission aims to enhance the productivity of the indigenous breeds of India through professional farm management and superior nutrition.

January 8, 2019

National Policy for Domestic Workers

The Union Ministry of Labour and Employment has notified the draft National Policy on Domestic Workers. The policy aims to provide social security benefits to an estimated 39 lakh people employed as domestic workers by private households, of which 26 lakhs are female domestic workers.

Features of the Policy

The important features of the policy are:

- Facilitating the domestic workers to register as unorganised workers under the Unorganised Workers' Social Security Act, 2008. This will help domestic workers to access and obtain social security benefits like life and disability cover, health and maternity benefits, as well as old age protection.
- Providing domestic workers with the right to form their own associations and unions.
- Right to minimum wages and access to social security.
- Right to enhance their skills.
- Protection of domestic workers from abuse and exploitation, giving them access to courts.
- Tribunals for grievance redressal, the establishment of a mechanism for the regulation of private placement agencies.
- Establishment of a grievance redressal system for domestic workers.

Under the Unorganised Workers Social Security Act, 2008, the Central Government is providing social security benefits relating to life and disability cover, health and maternity benefits, old age protection to the unorganised workers including domestic workers.

The Union Ministry of Labour and Employment is also in process of drafting a universal social security code that would cover even domestic workers, who are otherwise deprived of benefits such as medical insurance, pension, maternity and mandatory leave.

MoU for sale of FASTag

A memorandum of understanding (MoU) has been signed between Indian Highways Management Company Limited (IMHCL) and leading Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) like BPCL, HPCL and IOCL for sale of FASTags through their petrol pumps.

FASTag

FASTag is an electronic toll collection system operated by the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI). FASTag enables automatic deduction of toll charges and lets you pass through the toll plaza without stopping for the cash transaction.

FASTags are linked to a prepaid account from which the applicable toll amount is deducted automatically. FASTag employs Radio-frequency Identification (RFID) technology.

Features of the FASTag

The features of the FASTag are:

- FASTag is bank neutral and can be linked to customers' choice of bank accounts.
- Together with providing flexibility and convenience to the users, FASTag is also user-friendly as there will be no requirement of fulfilling KYC obligations.
- FASTag apps provide provides real-time recharge of any FASTag through UPI by linking customer's bank account with IHMCL FASTags.

There are plans to expand the FASTag to allow purchasing fuel at petrol pumps in future.

Radio-frequency Identification (RFID) technology

Radio-frequency Identification (RFID) technology uses electromagnetic fields to automatically identify and track tags which are containing electronically-stored information.

A two-way radio transmitter-receivers called interrogators or readers send a signal to the tag and read its response. The RFID reader transmits an encoded radio signal to interrogate the tag. The tag receives the message and then responds with its identification and other information.

National programme for organic production

The Ministry of Industries and Commerce had initiated the National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP) to assist the organic producers to tap the market which is growing steadily in the both in domestic and export segments.

Objectives of the National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP)

The Ministry of Industries and Commerce is implementing the NPOP since 2001 with the following objectives:

- To provide the means of evaluation of certification programme for organic agriculture and products

as per the approved criteria.

- To accredit certification programmes of Certification Bodies seeking accreditation.
- To facilitate the certification of organic products in conformity with the prescribed standards.
- To facilitate certification of organic products in conformity with the importing countries organic standards as per equivalence agreement between the two countries or as per importing country requirements.
- To encourage the development of organic farming and organic processing.

The Agricultural & Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) is the implementation agency for the NPOP. APEDA is providing assistance to the exporters of organic products under various components of its export promotion scheme.

Agricultural & Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA)

The APEDA was established by the Government of India under the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority Act passed by the Parliament in December 1985. APEDA replaced the Processed Food Export Promotion Council (PFEPCC). APEDA is mandated with the responsibility of promotion and development of the export of agricultural and its allied products.

Digital Initiatives for to promote the Ease of Doing Business of MSMEs

In the World Bank's Doing Business (DB) rankings for 2019, India has climbed 23 spots to rank 77th globally. India has witnessed a substantial jump in the rankings for the second consecutive year. In the year 2018 India had jumped 30 places. The various digital interventions have been a great contributing factor for India in making this significant improvement.

To increase the ease of doing business rankings, it is a pre-requisite for India to give a special focus towards MSMEs to ensure that there is a robust and conducive environment for the sector. The Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) has introduced various digital initiatives in this regard. Some of them listed below:

Udyog Aadhaar Memorandum

Udyog Aadhaar Memorandum (UAM) is a one-page registration form which constitutes a self-declaration format under which the MSME will self-certify its existence, bank account details, promoter/owner's Aadhaar details and other minimum information required. There shall be no fee for filing the Udyog Aadhaar Memorandum. Once the UAM is submitted, Udyog Aadhaar Number would be sent through e-mail.

MSME SAMADHAAN Portal

MSME Delayed Payment Portal – MSME SAMADHAAN has been launched for empowering micro and small entrepreneurs across the country to directly register their cases relating to delayed payments by Central Ministries, Departments, CPSEs or State Governments.

MSME SAMBANDH Portal

MSME SAMBANDH Portal has been launched to monitor the implementation of the Public Procurement from MSMEs by Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs). Together with assisting MSMEs for participation process it also helps Ministries and the CPSEs to assess their performance in procurement process as stipulated in Procurement Policy, 2012.

MSME SAMPARK Portal

The MSME Sampark portal is a digital platform, wherein, job seekers (passed out trainees / students of 18 MSME Technology Centers) and recruiters register themselves for getting employment and getting right kind of manpower respectively.

NASA Discovers New Planet

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) of USA has discovered a new planet. It is the third new planet discovered by the NASA mission, Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS).

HD 21749b- New Planet

The salient features of the newly discovered planet are:

- The new planet HD 21749b is outside our solar system and orbits a dwarf star 53 light years away.
- HD 21749b orbits a bright star in the constellation Reticulum.
- It has the longest orbital period of all the three discoveries made by TESS.
- HD 21749b orbits its star in a relatively leisurely 36 days.

- It is predicted that the surface of the new planet is likely around 300 degrees Fahrenheit, which is relatively cool, given its proximity to its star, which is almost as bright as the sun.

Other planet discovered by TESS

The other two discoveries made by the TESS probe are Pi Mensae b and LHS 3844b. Pi Mensae b has an orbit of 6.3 days and LHS 3844b has an orbit of just 11 hours.

TESS Mission

The Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS) mission of NASA is an explorer mission which is undertaking an all-sky survey to search for planets transiting nearby stars. The objective of the TESS mission is to discover planets smaller than Neptune that transit stars bright enough to enable follow-up spectroscopic observations that can provide planet masses and atmospheric compositions.

Indian Forest Service to be renamed as Indian Forest and Tribal Service

The Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions has initiated an inter-ministerial consultation note to rename the Indian Forest Service as Indian Forest and Tribal Service. The consultation note also contains the proposal to train the cadre to be more receptive towards tribals and forest dwellers.

Why the proposal has been made?

The proposal has been made according to the recommendations made by the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) in its annual report. The NCST had made the following observations in this regard:

- The NCST highlights the close ties between tribals, the forest and forest ecosystem as a resource-base.
- NCST recommends the renaming of the Indian Forest Service into Indian Forest and Tribal Service in recognition of the close ties between tribals, the forest and forest ecosystem.
- NCST argues that merging forest and tribal welfare administrations will further the participation of 'tribals' in forest management.
- The NCST states that renaming will also engender greater sensitivity on the forest department's part towards the needs of 'tribal' communities.

Indian Forest Service

The erstwhile Imperial Forest Service was constituted in 1867 recognising the need to have a premier forest service to manage the varied natural resources of the vast country like India and to organize the affairs of the Imperial Forest Department.

After the subject of Forestry was moved to the "Provincial List" by the Government of India Act, 1935, the recruitment to the Imperial Forest Service was discontinued.

In the year 1966, the government of India constituted Indian Forest Service as one of the three All India Services under the All India Services Act, 1951.

The Indian forest service was provided with the mandate of the implementation of the National Forest Policy which envisages scientific management of forests and to exploit them on a sustained basis for primary timber products, among other things.

Airports Authority of India bans single-use plastic items

The Airports Authority of India has banned the single-use plastic items at its 129 airports across the country. The Airports Authority of India has initiated numerous steps like banning of single-use plastic items like straws, plastic cutlery, plastic plates etc.

The AAI has already declared 16 of its airports as "Single-Use Plastic Free" based on the third-party assessment carried out by Quality Council of India.

Single-use plastics

Single-use plastics, or disposable plastics, are used only once before they are thrown away or recycled. Petroleum-based plastic is not biodegradable and usually goes into a landfill where it is buried or it gets into the water and finds its way into the ocean. They degrade into tiny particles after many years. In this process of degradation, they release toxic chemicals (additives that were used to shape and harden the plastic) which make their way into our food and water supply.

Airports Authority of India

The Airports Authority of India was created under the Airports Authority of India Act, 1994. The Airports Authority of India came into being on 1st April 1995.

The Airports Authority of India was brought into existence as a single Organization entrusted with the responsibility of creating, upgrading, maintaining and managing civil aviation infrastructure both on the ground and airspace in the country by merging erstwhile National Airports Authority and International Airports Authority of India.

SC verdict on reinstating CBI chief Alok Kumar Verma: Key Facts

The Supreme Court of India has reinstated CBI director Alok Kumar Verma, setting aside the Centre’s order to divest him of his powers. The Supreme Court has restrained him from taking any major policy decision till the CVC probe into corruption charges against him is over.

Observations made by the Supreme Court

The Supreme Court has further asked the high-powered committee which selects and appoints the CBI director to take any further decisions once the CVC submits its report after the probe.

The selection committee of the CBI director comprises the Prime Minister, the leader of opposition and the Chief Justice of India.

There is no provision in the law which permits the government to divest the CBI director of his powers and functions without prior consent from the high powered select committee.

Supreme Court cited the Vineet Narain verdict of 1997 where the Supreme Court underlined the fact that the tenure of the CBI director had been fixed to two years after the Delhi Special Police Establishment (DSPE) Act.

Vineet Narain verdict of 1997

The Supreme Court had delivered a landmark verdict in the case of Vineet Narain vs Union of India case, popularly known as the Jain hawala case. The Supreme Court in its verdict had pronounced measures to shield the CBI director from outside interference and make the director’s post more transparent. The measures are:

- The CBI director shall have a minimum tenure of two years, regardless of the date of his superannuation.
- The Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) shall be responsible for the efficient functioning of CBI.
- The transfer of an incumbent Director, CBI in an extraordinary situation, including the need for him to take up a more important assignment, should have the approval of the selection committee.

The Supreme Court had laid down these measures recognising the need to provide permanent insulation to agencies such as CBI against extraneous influences to enable them to discharge their duties in the manner required for proper implementation of the rule of law.

DNA Technology (Use and Application) Regulation Bill, 2018 introduced in Lok Sabha

The DNA Technology (Use and Application) Regulation Bill, 2018 was introduced in [Lok Sabha](#) by the Minister of Science and Technology Harsh Vardhan.

Features of the Bill

The bill aims to allow the use of DNA technology for establishing the identity of certain persons, including victims, offenders and missing persons. The features of the bill are:

- The Bill regulates the use of DNA technology for establishing the identity of persons in respect of matters listed in a Schedule which include criminal matters (such as offences under the Indian Penal Code, 1860), and civil matters such as parentage disputes, emigration or immigration, and transplantation of human organs.
- The Bill seeks to establish a National DNA Data Bank and Regional DNA Data Banks.
- As per the provisions of the bill, every Data Bank is required to maintain the following indices: (i) crime scene index, (ii) suspects’ or undertrials’ index, (iii) offenders’ index, (iv) missing persons’ index, and (v) unknown deceased persons’ index.
- The Bill establishes a DNA Regulatory Board to accredit the DNA laboratories that analyse DNA samples to establish the identity of an individual.
- It is mandatory to get written consent by individuals to collect DNA samples from them. The consent is not required for offences with the punishment of more than seven years of imprisonment or death.

- The Bill provides for the removal of DNA profiles of suspects on the filing of a police report or court order. The DNA profiles of undertrials can be removed on the basis of a court order. Profiles in the crime scene and missing person's index will be removed on a written request.

The members of the house citing privacy concerns requested for referring the bill to the standing committee of the Parliament.

Government approves around 5000 additional seats in Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas

The Union Minister of Human Resource Development Prakash Javadekar has announced an increase of around 5,000 seats at Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas across the country. This is the biggest-ever expansion and the number of seats has increased from 46,600 to 51,000 at the Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas (JNVs).

Why the increase?

The increase in the number of seats was part of the government efforts to increase the access to quality education for the student, especially from rural areas.

Over the time there has been an increase in the number of students applying for the exam to get enrolled in the Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas. The number of applicants increased from 5.50 lakh aspirants in 2001 to 31.10 lakh aspirants in 2019.

The increase in the number of applicants reflects the growing aspirations of rural children for acquiring quality education. Hence the government has increased the number of seats to provide more opportunity for talented children from rural areas to get a quality education in the nearly free of cost residential schools.

Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas

Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas were set up under the provisions of National Policy on Education-1986. The Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas were set up to nurture and provide opportunities for children with special talent or aptitude to progress at a faster pace by making good quality education available to them irrespective of their capacity to pay for it.

It was a unique experiment in India where the students are selected for admission to Class 6 based on their performance at the entrance examination. These schools are fully residential and co-educational schools affiliated to the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), New Delhi and provide education from class VI to XII standard.

Initiatives to promote e-vehicles

The following initiatives have been taken to promote e-vehicles in the country:

- The government has granted an exemption to Battery Operated Transport Vehicles and Transport Vehicles running on Ethanol and Methanol fuels from the requirement of a permit.
- The Ministry of the Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises has launched FAME (Faster Adoption and Manufacture of (Hybrid and) Electric Vehicles) to incentivize the production and promotion of eco-friendly vehicles including electric vehicles and hybrid vehicles.
- To incentivise the development of charging infrastructure for e-vehicles the Ministry of Power has issued a policy statement on charging infrastructure and has issued a notification clarifying that charging electric vehicles will be a service, not a sale of electricity.
- The Indian Space Research Organisation (Isro) has agreed to commercialize indigenously developed lithium-ion battery technology and has selected 14 companies for transfer of technology.
- The government think tank, NITI Aayog has taken an initiative to provide a Model Concessionaire Agreement (MCA) document for introducing Electric-Bus Fleet in Cities for Public Transportation on Public-Private Partnership (PPP) mode on Operational Expenditure (per km basis) Model rather than paying the upfront capital cost.
- The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs has made amendment in the Urban and Regional Development Plans Formulation and Implementation (URDPFI) guidelines to provide for electric vehicle charging stations in private and commercial buildings.

The government of India even has a plan of converting the entire new fleet of vehicles to fully electric by 2030.

UGC approves journals for Consortium for Academic and Research Ethics (CARE)

The University Grants Commission (UGC) has approved the list of journals for the "CARE Reference List of Quality Journals". The Consortium for Academic and Research Ethics (CARE) is tasked to scrutinise and then compile a list of journals for social sciences, humanities, language, arts, culture, Indian Knowledge system etc.

Consortium for Academic and Research Ethics (CARE)

UGC had established Consortium for Academic and Research Ethics (CARE) to prepare a "CARE Reference List of Quality Journals". The Consortium would compile a list of "credible quality journals" which would ultimately replace UGC's own list of journals.

The Consortium would be headed by the UGC Vice Chairman and would consist of government bodies and statutory councils.

Why the UGC has formed the Consortium?

A research paper led by Professor Bhushan Patwardhan had found that 88% of 1,009 journals recommended by universities and included in the white list were dubious and only 112 journals met the criteria set by UGC to be included in the list.

This high instance of the dubious journals had adversely impacted the image of UGC and as well as India at the international stage. Hence the UGC had announced the setting up of Consortium for Academic and Research Ethics to scrutinise and then compile a list of quality journals,

With Consortium for Academic and Research Ethics (CARE), UGC which is the principal funding agency for the universities aims to effectively discharge the responsibility of setting up academic standards and ensuring that they are followed.

Defence India Start-up Challenge

The Defence India Startup Challenge has been launched by the Defence Innovation Organisation to boost innovations under the Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX) scheme. The initiative has been launched with support from the Department of Defence Production, Ministry of Defence, Atal Innovation Mission and NITI Aayog.

The Defence India Startup Challenge calls for proposals to address specific technological needs of the Indian defence establishment.

Problem Statements under the Defence India Startup Challenge

The Ministry of Defence has stated 11 problem statements for prospective solutions to be provided by the Indian startup ecosystem. The problem statements are:

- Individual Protection System with built-in sensors
- See Through Armour
- Carbon Fibre Winding (CFW)
- Active Protection System (APS)
- Secure hardware based offline Encrypt or Device for Graded Security
- Development of 4G/LTE based Tactical Local Area Network
- Development of Advanced Technology Based Desalination System (Water Purification) and Bilge Oily Water Separation System
- Artificial Intelligence in Logistics & SCM
- Unmanned Surface and Underwater Vehicles
- Remotely Piloted Airborne Vehicles
- Laser Weaponry

Start-ups showing capability, intent, and promise to be able to produce functional prototypes or to productise existing technologies in areas listed in the problem statement will be awarded up to Rs. 1.5 crores, on a milestone basis in the form of grant/equity/debt/other relevant structures along with incubation and mentoring support.

Defence Innovation Organisation

Defence Innovation Organisation is a 'not for profit' company under section 8 of the Companies Act. The Defence Innovation Organisation is funded by two Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSUs), namely Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) and Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL). The headquarters of the

Defence Innovation Organisation is located at Bengaluru.

Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX) scheme

Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX) scheme is aimed at the creation of an ecosystem to foster innovation and technology development in Defence and Aerospace by engaging Industries including MSMEs, Startups, Individual Innovators, R&D institutes and Academia and provide them grants/funding and other support to carry out R&D which has good potential for future adoption for Indian defence and aerospace needs. The Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX) will function as the executive arm of the Defence Innovation Organisation.

January 9, 2019

GDP forecasts by Standard Chartered Plc: Key Facts

Standard Chartered Plc, a multinational company has made long term forecasts about the shake-up of the world's gross domestic product (GDP) rankings. The key elements of the forecast are:

- Seven of the world's top 10 economies by 2030 most likely would be emerging markets of the present.
- China would become the largest economy by 2020, based on purchasing power parity exchange rates and nominal GDP.
- India's GDP would be most likely larger than the US in 2020 based on purchasing power parity exchange rates and nominal GDP. bharath.kumar | bharathauto94@gmail.com |
- Indonesia will break into the top 5 economies by 2020.
- The study projects that India's growth would accelerate to 7.8% by the 2020s.
- China's growth would moderate to 5% by 2030 reflecting a natural slowdown given the size of the economy.
- The share of Asia in global GDP which is about 28% would further increase to 35% by 2030. This would be equal to the combined share of Euro area and US.

Standard Chartered Plc has undertaken the long-term growth forecasts based on one key principle that countries' share of world GDP should eventually converge with their share of the world's population, driven by the convergence of per capita GDP between advanced and emerging economies.

Gross domestic product

Gross domestic product (GDP) is the market monetary value of all the final goods and services produced in a period of time, often annually or quarterly. It is the measure of the nation's overall economic activity.

Standard Chartered Plc

Standard Chartered Plc is a British multinational banking and financial services company headquartered in London, England. Standard Chartered Plc is a universal bank with operations in consumer, corporate and institutional banking, and treasury services.

Gita Gopinath becomes the first female chief economist of IMF

Gita Gopinath has joined International Monetary Fund as its chief economist. She is the first woman to occupy the post of chief economist of IMF. She is the 11th chief economist of the IMF.

Role of Chief Economist of IMF

The chief economist of IMF undertakes the following functions:

- The Chief Economist is also the Director of the Fund's Research Department and is responsible for providing independent advice to the Fund on its policy issues, integrating ideas of the research in the design of policies, conveying these ideas to the policymakers inside and outside the fund and managing all research done at IMF.
- The Chief Economist is part of the senior leadership team of the IMF and directly advises the Managing Director.
- The Chief Economist also leads about a hundred PhD economists in the Research Department.

Gita Gopinath

Gita Gopinath is an Indian-American Economist. Prior to her present role as the Chief Economist of IMF, she was serving as the John Zwaanstra Professor of International Studies and Economics at Harvard University.

Born in Mysore, she holds a B.A. degree from Lady Shri Ram College for Women, University of Delhi (1992), Masters in economics from Delhi School of Economics, University of Delhi (1994). She also completed her M.A. at the University of Washington (1996). In 2001, she completed her PhD at Princeton University.

Nilekani Panel to strengthen the Digital Payments Ecosystem

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has constituted a high-level committee under Nandan Nilekani to suggest measures to strengthen the safety and security of digital payments in the country.

Members of the Committee

Nandan Nilekani will be the head of the committee which comprises of former RBI deputy governor H.R. Khan, former MD and CEO of Vijaya Bank Kishore Sansi, former secretary in ministries of IT and steel Aruna Sharma and chief innovation officer, Centre for Innovation, Incubation & Entrepreneurship (CIIE), IIM Ahmedabad, Sanjay Jain.

Terms of the Reference

RBI has provided the following terms of reference for the committee:

- To encourage digitisation of payments and enhance financial inclusion through digitization.
- Reviewing the existing status of digitisation of payments in the country, identifying the current gaps in the ecosystem and suggesting ways to bridge them.
- Assessing the current levels of digital payments in financial inclusion.
- Suggest measures to strengthen the safety and security of digital payments.
- Suggest a road map for increasing customer confidence and trust while accessing financial services through digital modes.
- Undertake cross-country analysis to identify best practices to accelerate digitisation of the economy and financial inclusion through greater use of digital payments.
- Suggest a medium-term strategy for deepening of digital payments.

RBI has asked the committee to submit its report within a period of 90 days from the date of its first meeting.

Addressing the delays in settlements of claims under PMFBY

The operational guidelines of the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) prescribe the timeline of two months of completion of Crop Cutting Experiments/harvesting period for settlement of claims by insurance companies. This timeline is subjected to conditions like timely release of subsidy and yield data to the insurance companies.

Reasons for the delay in settlement of claims

One of the biggest drawbacks in the PMFBY was the delayed settlements of claims. The main reasons for the delay were:

- Delayed transmission to yield data.
- Dispute raised by Insurance Companies on yield data.
- Reconciliation of individual farmer data on the portal by bank branches.
- Late release of their share in premium subsidy by some States.
- NEFT related issues.

Revised guidelines to overcome the delays

The government has comprehensively revised the Operational Guidelines of the PMFBY scheme to ensure better transparency, accountability and timely payment of claims to the farmers. The following provisions have been made in the operational guidelines:

- Provision of 12% interest rate per annum to be paid by the Insurance Company to farmers for any delay in settlement of claims beyond 10 days of prescribed cut off date for payment of claims.
- State Governments are required to pay 12% interest rate for delay in the release of the State share of Subsidy beyond three months of prescribed cut off date/submission of requisition by Insurance Companies.

Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY)

Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) is the government-sponsored crop insurance scheme that integrates multiple stakeholders on a single platform. It was supposed to provide a breakthrough by enhancing the coverage of the crop insurance and protect the farmers from the vagaries of the monsoon.

Under the scheme, there is a uniform premium of 2% to be paid by farmers for all Kharif crops, 1.5% for all Rabi crops and 5% in case of annual commercial and horticultural crops. The balance premium would be paid by the government. The scheme is being implemented in an area-based approach.

CAG report on the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management: Key Facts

The CAG report on Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management has been tabled in the parliament. The important observations made in the report are:

- CAG recommends the government to frame a policy on off-budget financing and sources of such funding in view of its fiscal implication.
- The off-budget financial arrangements defer committed liability (subsidy arrears/bills) or create future liability and increase the cost of subsidy due to interest payment.
- The report states that since the off-budget financing is outside the parliamentary control, it has implications for fiscal indicators as they "understate" the government's expenditure in the year by keeping them off the budget.
- Hence the CAG recommends the government to put in place a policy framework for off-budget financing which would specify the rationale and objective of off-budget financing, quantum of off-budget financing, sources of the fund among others.
- The CAG also recommends the government to consider disclosing the details of off-budget borrowings through disclosure statements in Budget as well as in accounts.

Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG)

The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India is a constitutional body established under Article 148 of the Constitution of India. The CAG is responsible for undertaking audits of all receipts and expenditure of the Government of India and the state governments, including those of bodies and authorities substantially financed by the government. CAG is also the external auditor of Government-owned corporations and conducts the supplementary audit of government companies. CAG also serves as head of the Indian Audit and Accounts Department.

The reports of the CAG is examined by the Public Accounts Committees and Committees on Public Undertakings.

Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2018: Key Facts

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has released the Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2018. The report draws information from 142 countries, examining trafficking trends and patterns.

Findings of the Report

The important observations made in the report are:

- Human trafficking has taken a horrific dimension as armed groups and terrorists are using it to spread fear and gain victims to offer as incentives to recruit new fighters. The report cites child soldiers, forced labour and sexual slavery as examples.
- There was a steady increase in the number of victims reported since 2010. Improved methods of detecting, recording and reporting data on trafficking or a real increase in the number of victims are cited as possible reasons for the increase in the number of victims reported.
- Regions of Asia and the Americas witnessed the largest increase in the numbers of victims detected.
- The large numbers of victims of trafficking detected outside their region of origin are from East Asia, followed by sub-Saharan Africa. There has been an increase in the number of convictions for trafficking in these regions.
- Large areas of impunity still exist in many Asian and African countries, and conviction rates for trafficking remain very low.
- Trafficking for sexual exploitation was the most prevalent form in European countries and in sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East, forced labour is the main factor driving the illicit trade in humans.
- Women and girls formed the most trafficking victims worldwide. Almost three-quarters of women and girls were trafficked for sexual exploitation, and 35 per cent of them were trafficked for forced labour.

- The report notes that in conflict zones, where the rule of law is weak, and civilians have little protection from crime, armed groups and criminals may take the opportunity to traffic them.
- The report acknowledges that significant gaps in knowledge remain and many countries in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and some parts of East Asia still lack sufficient capacity to record and share data on trafficking in persons.

Addressing human trafficking is a key component of the UN Sustainable Development Agenda. It requires the Member States to monitor progress in tackling the problem, and report the number of victims by sex, age and form of exploitation.

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) is a UN office established as Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention by combining the United Nations International Drug Control Program (UNDCP) and the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Division in the United Nations Office at Vienna.

It was established in the year 1997 and is headquartered at Vienna. The United Nations Secretary-General appoints the agency's Executive Director.

UNODC was established to ensure a coordinated, comprehensive response to the interrelated issues of illicit trafficking in and abuse of drugs, crime prevention and criminal justice, international terrorism, and political corruption.

Kumar Rajesh Chandra appointed Director General of the Sashastra Seema Bal

The appointment of Kumar Rajesh Chandra as the Director General of Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) has been approved by the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet. As per the notification, he would continue in the post up to 31.12.2021 i.e. date of his retirement on superannuation or until further orders, whichever is earlier.

Kumar Rajesh Chandra is a 1985 batch IPS officer of the Bihar cadre.

Appointments Committee of the Cabinet

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet headed by the Prime Minister decides on the appointments to several top posts under the Government of India. The committee also has Union Home Minister as the member.

Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB)

After the Chinese incursion of 1962, it was felt that the borders of the country could not be protected with the force of rifles alone. The government realised the importance of the backing and resolute will of a committed border population together with an in-depth understanding and familiarity of the terrain as well as the culture and ethos of the border population was required to defend the borders effectively.

Hence a unique, unconventional yet specialized organization, which would function in the far, flung, vulnerable, strategic, remote, climatically and topographically difficult border areas and motivate the border population across several states towards the cause of protecting our national sovereignty was conceived as Special Service Bureau in 1962. It was eventually created in March 1963. This Special Service Bureau was renamed the Sashastra Seema Bal in January 2001.

Lok Sabha passed 124th constitutional amendment bill to provide reservations to the economically weaker sections

The [Lok Sabha](#) has passed the 124th constitutional amendment bill to provide reservations to the economically weaker sections. The central government is planning to introduce a ten per cent reservation for those belonging to economically weaker sections of society.

Features of the Bill

The features of the 124th constitutional amendment bill are:

- The Bill states that people from the economically weaker sections of the society have largely remained excluded from attending the higher educational institutions and public employment on account of their financial incapacity to compete with the persons who are economically more privileged.
- The Bill is brought into to fulfil the commitments under the Directive principles of the state policy listed in the Article 46 of the Constitution which urges the government to protect the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of society.



- The Bill amends Article 15 of the Constitution to provide reservations to economically weaker sections for admission to educational institutions including private educational institutions, whether aided or unaided by the State, other than the minority educational institutions
- The Bill also amends Article 16 of the Constitution to provide reservations to people from economically weaker sections in government posts.
- The Bill caps the reservation to economically weaker sections at 10%.
- The Bill states that the criterion for the economically weaker sections would be notified by the State from time to time on the basis of family income and other indicators of economic disadvantage.

The government has stated that the bill is part of the government's endeavour to ensure that every poor person, irrespective of caste or creed gets to lead a life of dignity, and have access to all possible opportunities.

Citizenship Amendment Bill passed in Lok Sabha

The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019 was passed in [Lok Sabha](#). The protests have erupted in Assam against the passage of the bill. The people of Assam fear that the amendment bill undermines the Assam Accord of 1985.

Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2019

The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019 seeks to amend the citizenship Act, 1955. The features of the amendment bill are:

- The bill aims to grant Indian citizenship to all persecuted religious minorities like Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists and Parsis from three neighbouring countries of Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan.
- The bill is applicable to all states and union territories of the country and the beneficiaries of the can reside in any part of the country.
- The bill when passed would provide a big relief to the persecuted migrants who have come through western borders of the country to States like Gujarat, Rajasthan, Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, and other states.

As per the reports, the government would set the cut off date at December 31, 2014, to provide citizenship to persecuted religious minorities.

Addressing the concerns against the Bill

The Union Home Minister provided the following assurance to allay fears about the bill:

- The burden of the persecuted migrants will be shared by the entire country and not by Assam alone.
- The Union Home Minister also assured full support for the state governments in the implementation of the bill.

Protestors led by Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti (KMSS) in Assam have imposed an economic blockade and have said that they would not allow locally produced oil, petroleum products, coal, forest products and limestone to be taken out of the state.

5-Judge Constitution Bench to hear Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid Case

The Supreme Court has formed a 5-Judge Constitution Bench to hear Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid Case. The bench would be headed by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi and comprise of justices SA Bobde, NV Ramana, UU Lalit and DY Chandrachud.

What is the case?

In the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid Case 14 appeals were filed against the 2010 Allahabad High Court judgment. The verdict of the Allahabad High Court judgment had partitioned the 2.77-acre land equally among the three parties – the Sunni Waqf Board, the Nirmohi Akhara and Ram Lalla.

The Allahabad High Court had concluded that Lord Ram, son of King Dashrath, was born within the 1,482.5 square yards of the disputed Ramjanmabhoomi-Babri Masjid premises over 9,00,000 years ago during the Treta Yuga.

Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid Dispute

The Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi case is a property dispute over the land where the Babri Masjid, a 16th-century mosque once stood. The mosque was razed by kar sevaks on 6 December 1992.

The Hindu groups claim that the exact site of Lord Ram's birthplace is where the Babri Masjid was once located. They argue that the Mughals demolished a Hindu shrine that marked the spot of Lord Ram's birthplace and constructed a mosque in its place. Those opposed to this view argue that such arguments arose only in the 18th century and that there is no evidence for the spot being the birthplace of Rama. The political, historical and socio-religious debate over the history and location of the Babri Mosque, and whether a temple was demolished or modified to create the Masjid has become the focal point of the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid Dispute.

Khelo India Youth Games 2019

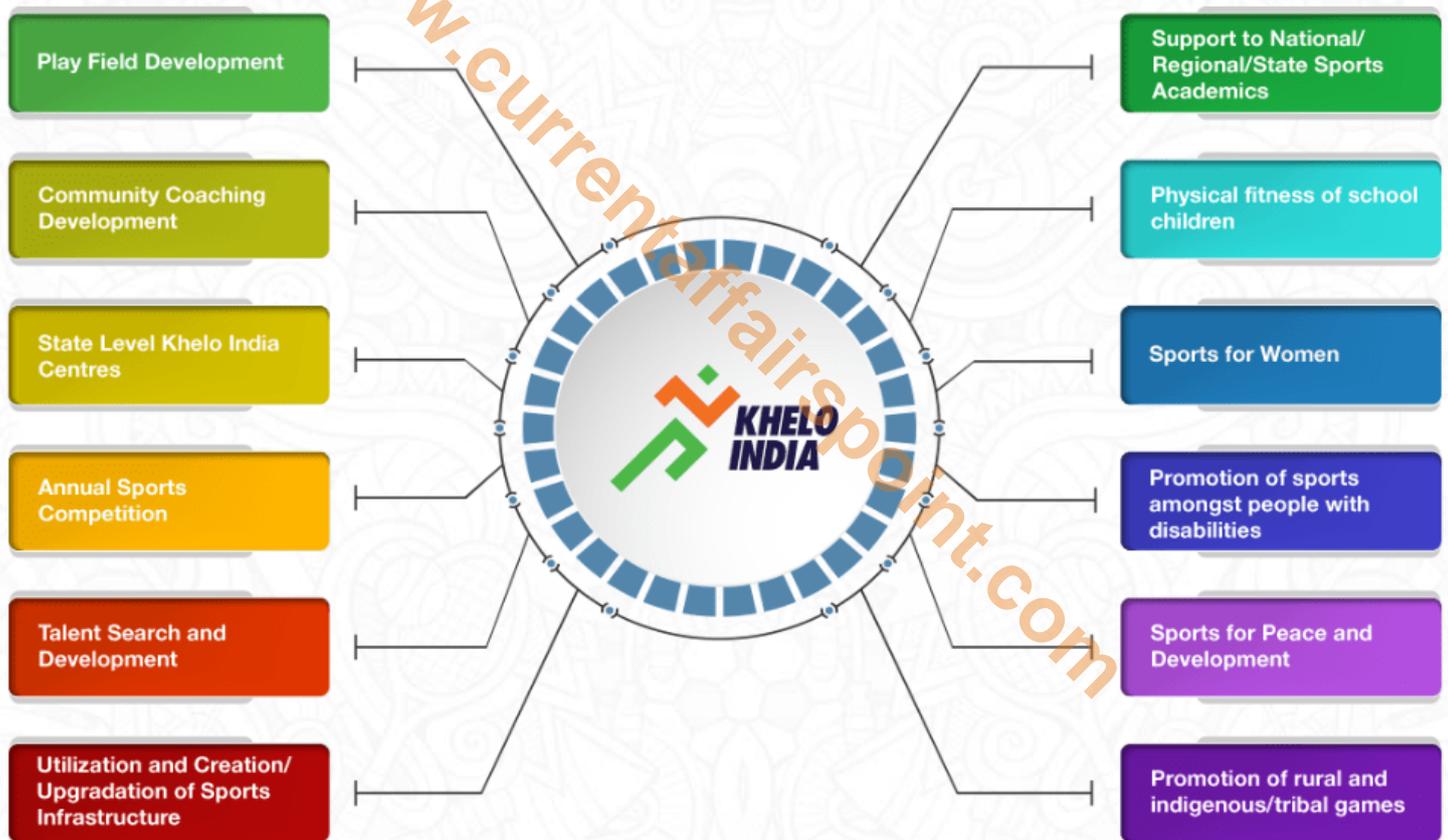
Khelo India Youth games 2019 are being held at Shree Shiv Chhatrapati Sports Complex in Pune. Previously called as Khelo India School Games, it has been now renamed as Khelo India Youth Games.

Khelo India Youth games

Khelo India Youth games are held annually in January or February as the national level multidisciplinary grassroots games. The games are held in two categories- under-17 years school students and under-21 college students.

Khelo India Youth games are part of Khelo India programme, which was introduced to revive the sports culture in India at the grass-root level by building a strong framework for all sports played in our country and establish India as a great sporting nation.

Khelo India programme has been divided into 12 verticals, namely:



Verticals of Khelo India

Talented players identified in priority sports disciplines at various levels by the High-Powered Committee will be provided annual financial assistance of INR 5 lakh per annum for 8 years.

Kerala High Court makes notice mandatory for strike and Hartals

The High Court of Kerala has set a seven-day notice period for political parties and individuals to call for hartal and general strike in the State.

Why the 7 day notice period?

The Kerala High Court has provided the following reasons for setting a seven-day notice period:

- To provide time for the citizens to approach the court with their objections and to enable courts to examine the legality of the hartal call on request of citizens.



- To provide an opportunity for the State to be prepared for safeguarding the interests of the citizens.
- Even though the court recognised the fundamental right of those who call for a strike to demonstrate their protests, it made it clear that the rights cannot be exercised in violation of the fundamental rights of other citizens.
- The court made it clear that the fundamental right of the citizens to life and livelihood would outweigh the fundamental right of persons calling for strikes and hartals.
- The court further said that since the call for hartals and general strikes denies the fundamental rights of traders, the general public, migrant labourers and those in unorganised sectors, those persons who call for hartals will be held responsible for the losses suffered due to the event.

Observations of the High Court

The court observed that Kerala's economy had taken a severe hit during the recent devastating floods and the frequent strikes will only cause more sufferings for the economy of the state. Kerala's economy is dependent on tourism and the travel advisories issued by foreign countries against visiting Kerala cannot be ignored.

The Court noted that in 2018, 97 hartals and strikes had taken place in the State and in 2019 one hartal was called on January 3, Trade unions have also called for a two-day strike starting January 8. Frequent strikes like these are a cause of concern.

Pranav R Mehta becomes President of the Global Solar Council

Pranav R Mehta, President of the National Solar Energy Federation of India has become the president of the Global Solar Council. He has become the first Indian to head the Global Solar Council.

Global Solar Council

Global Solar Council is an international non-profit association of the national, regional and international associations in solar energy and the world's leading corporations.

The Global Solar Council headquartered in Washington D.C., USA. came into being following the historic United Nations Climate Change Conference (UN COP 21).

The Global Solar Council is an International Coalition of more than 30 nations, utilising maximum solar energy which have decided to harness the renewable energy for the greater good.

National Solar Energy Federation of India

National Solar Energy Federation of India is an umbrella organization of all solar energy stakeholders of India working in the area of policy advocacy for Solar Energy.

National Solar Energy Federation of India aims to provide a platform at the National level for addressing all issues connected with solar energy growth in India.

January 10, 2019

Sikkim to Introduce Universal Basic Income

The ruling party of Sikkim, Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) has assured the implementation of the universal basic income in Sikkim by 2022. If things go as per plan, Sikkim would become the first state in the country to implement the Universal Basic Income (UBI).

Universal Basic Income (UBI)

Universal Basic Income (UBI) refers to a programme wherein the people are provided with a fixed amount of money irrespective of their income, resources or employment status.

Resources for Funding the UBI

The state of Sikkim aims to mobilise the resources for funding the UBI through the following avenues:

- Sikkim is a power-surplus state. Sikkim produces 2200 MW and the requirement of the state is only 200-300 MW. The power generation capacity would further go up to 3000 MW in a few years. The revenue from the selling of the surplus power would provide extra revenue, which the government plans to divert to implement UBI.
- Sikkim also plans to subsume other subsidies and allowances in order to provide a particular amount every month to people.

Benefits of UBI

The 2017 Economic Survey had proposed UBI as a conceptually appealing idea which could be a possible alternative to social welfare programmes targeted at reducing poverty.

The advocates of the UBI praise the concept as futuristic which will allow the people to look into the future

without worrying too much about income to sustain themselves.

The pilot programmes for the UBI has been successfully implemented in the states Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and tribal belts with fairly large samples.

IIT-M recreates Space Fuel

The researchers from the Indian Institute of Technology-Madras (IIT-M) have recreated space fuel by simulating interstellar conditions in the laboratory. It is a big breakthrough for India in the exploration of cleaner and sustainable alternatives to fossil fuel.

The discovery has the potential to convert atmospheric carbon dioxide into a next-generation energy source to curb greenhouse gases and global warming.

The research of the IIT-M in this regard has been published in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS).

Study of Space Fuels

The team from IIT-M was able to create methane-containing clathrate hydrates in ultra-high vacuum (1000 billion times below the atmospheric pressure) and at a temperature close to -263oC. i.e. the conditions at deep space.

This discovery of hydrates at extremely low pressures and ultra-cold temperatures is highly unexpected. The team predicts that molecules like methane and ammonia in space could exist in a completely different form than what is known to us.

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Tackling Climate Change

Clathrate hydrates are crystalline solids containing gases like methane and carbon dioxide trapped in well-defined cages of water molecules. These hydrates, especially of methane, are considered to be the fuel of the future.

The researchers then repeated the experiments with carbon-di-oxide and similar hydrates were produced. This can be a breakthrough in dealing with global warming. Now carbon dioxide can be trapped from the atmosphere and carbon dioxide gas can be sequestered as solid hydrates under the sea bed.

January 10: World Hindi Day

Every year 10th January is celebrated as World Hindi Day to create awareness about the language of Hindi across the World and to present Hindi as an international language.

Why 10th January?

The first world World Hindi Conference was organized in Nagpur on January 10, 1975. The conference saw representation from 30 countries. To commemorate the occasion, the government of India since 2006 is celebrating 10th January as World Hindi Day.

How it is different from Hindi Divas?

Every year Hindi Divas is celebrated on September 14th because it was the day Hindi was recognised as an official language. On 14 September 1949, the constituent assembly adopted Hindi written in Devanagari script as the Official Language of the Union.

While the World Hindi Day is aimed at the promotion of the Hindi language at the global stage, the Hindi Divas is being observed across the country at the national level.

Constitutional Provisions for the Promotion of Hindi

Hindi is the fourth most spoken language of the world. Various constitutional provisions like Article 120, Article 210, Article 343, Article 344 and Articles from 348 to 351 are aimed at the promotion of Hindi.

India's longest single-lane steel cable suspension bridge inaugurated in Arunachal Pradesh

The Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh, Pema Khandu inaugurated India's longest single-lane steel cable suspension bridge over Siang River in Upper Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh.

Key Facts about the Bridge

The important Facts about the Bridge are:

- The bridge is 300-metre-long and is also known as byorong bridge.
- The bridge will reduce the distance between Yingkiong and Tuting in Arunachal Pradesh by almost 40 km.
- The bridge was constructed under the non-lapsable central pool of resources (NLCPR) of Ministry of

Development of North Eastern Region at a cost of Rs 48.43 crore.

- The bridge would help the movement of people residing on both sides of the river bank. The bridge would be of great help to around 20,000 people on living on both sides of the Siang river.
- The bridge will also bolster defense preparedness and facilitate the army in their operations.

Siang River

The Siang River is considered as lifeline of Arunachal Pradesh. The Tsangpo river originates in the Angsi Glacier in the Himalayas. The river enters India through Arunachal Pradesh where it is called by name Siang. The river is also called as Dihang in the plain regions. As the river flows through the plains it is joined by the rivers Dibang and Lohit. Downstream of the confluence of Lohit, the river is called by name Brahmaputra.

PM launches Gangajal Project

The Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Gangajal Project. The project aims to improve water supply to the city of Agra.

About the Gangajal Project

The key facts about the project are:

- The Gangajal project aims to provide a better supply of drinking water which will benefit the residents as well as tourists.
- The Gangajal project aims to bring 140 cusecs of Ganga water to Agra to help in meeting the drinking water demands in the city.
- The project was launched in 2005 in collaboration with the Japan International Cooperation Agency and was scheduled to be completed by March 2012.
- The project missed several deadlines and even the cost of the project escalated from Rs 345 crore in 2005 to over Rs 2,800 crore.
- Under the Gangajal project, Agra will get 140 cusec water supply per day from Palra headworks in Bulandshahr's Upper Ganga canal through the pipelines.
- Together with Agra, Mathura and Vrindavan will also get water through these pipelines.

Japan International Cooperation Agency

Japan International Cooperation Agency is an agency of the Japanese government which coordinates official development assistance (ODA) for the government of Japan. It aims to assist economic and social growth in developing countries and promote international cooperation. Japan International Cooperation Agency is advancing its activities around the pillars of a field-oriented approach, human security, enhanced effectiveness, efficiency, and speed.

Web- Wonder Women Campaign

The Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India has launched an online campaign Web- Wonder Women to discover and celebrate the exceptional achievements of women, who have been driving positive agenda of social change via social media.

About the Campaign

The features of the Web- Wonder Women campaign are:

- Through the campaign, the Ministry aims to recognize the fortitude of Indian women stalwarts from across the globe who have used the power of social media to run positive & niche campaigns to steer a change in society.
- The Campaign is aimed at encouraging, recognizing and acknowledging the efforts of these meritorious Women.
- The Campaign has been launched by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India in association with the NGO Breakthrough and Twitter India.
- Based on the nominations received from a large number of categories including Health, Media, Literature, Art, Sports, Environmental protection, fashion, the entries would be shortlisted. Then the shortlisted entries will be open for public voting on Twitter. The finalists would then be selected by the panel of judges.

Breakthrough NGO

Breakthrough NGO is a global human rights organization working to end violence against women and

girls. Some of the well-known programmes of the NGO are Bell Bajao! (Ring the Bell!), Nation Against Early Marriage, Deport The Statue, #ImHere.

Democracy Index 2019 : Key Facts

The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) has released the Democracy Index which ranks 167 countries by 60 indicators across five broad categories.

The categories considered for the index are electoral process and pluralism, the functioning of government, political participation, democratic political culture and civil liberties.

The index classifies each country either as a full democracy, flawed democracy, hybrid regime or authoritarian.

Highlights of the Democracy Index

The important findings of the democracy index are:

- Only 4.5% of the world's people live in a full democracy.
- The overall global score remained stable in 2018 for the first time in three years.
- 42 countries experienced a decline in their index score compared with 89 in 2017 and 48 countries have improved their score.
- The Index notes that threats to democracy around the world have become increasingly obvious. The Arab spring fizzled, China's leader is poised to rule for life, Populists with autocratic tendencies have won elections in the Philippines, Brazil and Mexico. Democratic institutions have been subverted in Hungary, Turkey and Poland.
- The subversion of the democratic institutions have become so glaring that strongmen in different countries often copy each other's tactics, sound bites and voters have become scapegoats.
- Political participation is the most improved category in the index.

Rankings of the Countries

The countries rankings are highlighted below:

- Australia and New Zealand are the only "full democracies" in the entire Asia-Pacific region
- Eight countries Algeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, Timor-Leste, Ethiopia, North Korea, Laos, Nepal and Sri Lanka which have the word "democratic" in full titles were not fully democratic.
- India was at the 41st place with a score of 7.23/10 and was placed in the flawed democracies category.

<https://t.me/pdf4exams>



The world's most democratic countries by rank

Rank	Country
1	Norway
2	Iceland
3	Sweden
4	New Zealand
5	Denmark
6	Canada
7	Ireland
8	Finland
9	Australia
10	Switzerland

Source: Economist Intelligence Unit

Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU)

The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) is the research and analysis division of The Economist Group, which is a British multinational media company headquartered in London. It provides forecasting and advisory services through research and analysis, such as monthly country reports, five-year country economic forecasts, country risk service reports, and industry reports. It publishes a number of reports each year focussing on current issues affecting specific countries, regions and industries.

First India-Central Asia Dialogue to be held in Uzbekistan

The first India-Central Asia Dialogue will be held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan on January 12 and 13. The Dialogue will be co-chaired by External Affairs Minister (EAM) Sushma Swaraj and the Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan, Abdulaziz Kamilov.

The Foreign Ministers of Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan will participate in the event. The Foreign Minister of Afghanistan will participate in the dialogue as a special invitee for the session dedicated to connectivity issues in the region.

Objective of the Dialogue

India and the Central Asian countries are bound together through shared history and cultural linkages. The objectives of the first India-Central Asia Dialogue are:

- To enhance their cooperation in wide-ranging spheres including exploring ways to substantially enhance India's economic involvement in business and development sector of Central Asia.
- Developing viable connectivity options between India and Afghanistan and Central Asia to further facilitate trade and economic activity in the region.
- Strengthen India's engagement, including political, economic, development partnership and cultural, with all the Central Asian countries and take it to a new level.

The first India-Central Asia Dialogue aims at taking forward the bilateral relations which have strengthened following the Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to all the five Central Asian nations – Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan – in 2015 and the EAM's tour across the region in August 2018.

Henley Passport Index

The Henley Passport Index measures the access each country's travel document affords. The Index is based on the data provided by the International Air Transport Authority (IATA) and covers 199 passports and 227 travel destinations.

Ranking of the Jurisdictions

The Rankings of the jurisdictions based on the rankings in the Henley Passport Index are:

- Japan retained its top spot as the world's most travel-friendly passport due to the document's access to 190 jurisdictions.
- South Korea and Singapore are at joint second position offering access to 189 jurisdictions.
- China has jumped almost 20 places in just two years, from 85th in 2017 to 69th this year.
- India jumped two positions from 81st in 2018 to 79th this year.
- European Union member states along with Norway and the US occupy the places behind the top three nations in the rankings.
- The rankings of the USA and UK have continued to drop.
- The top 5 positions are held by Japan (190 countries), Singapore, South Korea (189), France, Germany (188), Denmark, Finland, Italy, Sweden (187), and Luxembourg, Spain (186)
- The bottom 5 positions are held by Eritrea (38), Yemen (37), Pakistan (33), Somalia, Syria (32) and Afghanistan, Iraq (30).

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Observations

Christian Kalin, Chairman of the Henley & Partners' Group who is also the creator of the index notes that the ranking is a bright spot in an increasingly isolationist world.

Open-door policies have the potential to contribute billions to the global economy, as well as create significant employment opportunities around the world. The ascent in the rankings of South Korea and the United Arab Emirates are examples of what happens when countries take a proactive foreign affairs approach, an attitude which significantly benefits their citizens as well as the international community.

Guatemala unilaterally terminate the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) agreement

The Foreign Minister of Guatemala Sandra Jovel had notified the UN secretary-general of the Government's decision to terminate the agreement which established the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG). The International Commission had mandate till 3rd September this year.

Guatemala is a Central American Country bordered by Mexico to the north and west, Belize and the Caribbean to the northeast, Honduras to the east, El Salvador to the southeast and the Pacific Ocean to the south.

Why the termination?

The President of Guatemala Jimmy Morales terminating the agreement had reasoned that the CICIG has put at risk the nation's security, public order, governance, respect for human rights and above all the sovereignty of the state of Guatemala.

But the speculation was that the decision of termination was taken by the President because the commission was investigating Guatemala's business and political elite, including Morales and his family.

Termination Suspended by the Court

But the Guatemala constitutional court had suspended the president's decision to unilaterally terminate the government's pact with the United Nations. The UN has made it clear that the commission would continue with the mandate respecting the rule of law in Guatemala and the decision of the Constitutional Court.

International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG)

The International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) was set up as an international body to examine and investigate the serious crime in Guatemala.

The commission was established in response to a request for assistance from the Government of Guatemala to investigate illegal security groups and clandestine security organizations in Guatemala and criminal groups believed to have infiltrated state institutions, fostering impunity and undermining democratic gains in Guatemala since the end of the country's armed conflict in the 1990s.

The commission was set by UN in conjunction with the Guatemalan Government had successfully highlighted corruption cases involving hundreds of politicians, bureaucrats and business people.

WEF Report- 'Future of Consumption in Fast-Growth Consumer Market – India' – Key Facts

The World Economic Forum has released the report 'Future of Consumption in Fast-Growth Consumer Market – India'. The report was produced based on consumer surveys conducted by Bain & Company across 5,100 households in 30 cities and towns in India and draws from more than 40 interviews with private and public-sector leaders.

Highlights of the Report

The key facts highlighted in the report are:

- India would become the world's third largest consumer market behind only USA and China by 2030.
- The consumer spending in India is expected to grow from USD 1.5 trillion at present to nearly USD 6 trillion by 2030.
- The domestic private consumption, which accounts for 60 per cent of the country's GDP, is expected to grow into a USD 6-trillion growth opportunity.
- The report states that as India continues its path as one of the world's most dynamic consumption environments, private and public-sector leaders will have to take shared accountability to ensure such consumption is inclusive and responsible.
- In spite of high growth rates, India needs to address critical societal challenges including skills development and employment of the future workforce, socio-economic inclusion of rural India and creating a healthy and sustainable future for its citizens
- Growth in income will transform India from a bottom of the pyramid economy to a middle class-led one.
- The consumption growth will be driven by rich and densely populated cities and the thousands of developed rural towns.
- India's top 40 cities will form a USD 1.5 trillion opportunities by 2030 and thousands of small urban towns will also drive an equally large spend in aggregate.
- There will also be an opportunity to unlock nearly USD 1.2 trillion of spending in developed rural areas by improving infrastructure and providing access to organised and online retail.

World Economic Forum

World Economic Forum is the International Organization for Public-Private Cooperation. It is a not-for-profit foundation and is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland. The World Economic Forum is committed to improving the state of the world by engaging business, political, academic, and other leaders of society to shape global, regional, and industry agendas.

Global Economic Prospects report 2019: Key Facts about India

The World Bank has released the Global Economic Prospects report 2019 titled "Darkening Skies". The key findings of the report related to India are:

- India's GDP is expected to grow at 7.3 per cent in the fiscal year 2018-19, and 7.5 per cent in the following two years. The growth rates are attributed to an upswing in consumption and investment.
- India would continue to be the fastest growing major economy in the world. The report estimates China's growth to slow down to 6.2 per cent each in 2019 and 2020 and 6 per cent in 2021.
- China had an estimated growth rate of 6.5 per cent as against India's 7.3 per cent in 2018.
- China's growth rate at 6.9 per cent growth was marginally ahead of India's 6.7 per cent in 2017 because of the slowdown witnessed in the Indian economy due to demonetisation and implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST).
- World Bank notes that domestic demand has strengthened as the benefits of structural reforms such as the GST harmonisation and bank recapitalisation take effect.
- Strong domestic demand may further widen the current account deficit to 2.6 per cent of GDP in 2020. Inflation is projected to be above the midpoint of the Reserve Bank of India's target range of 2 to 6 per cent, mainly owing to energy and food prices.
- The introduction of the GST and demonetisation has encouraged a shift from the informal to the formal sector.

- Public sector banks in India, which represent roughly 70% of the banking sector assets, still report low profitability and high non-performing assets.

The report notes that growth performance of India as compared to other emerging markets has been quite impressive.

Global Economic Prospects report 2019- Key Facts

The World Bank has released the Global Economic Prospects report 2019 titled "Darkening Skies". The key findings of the report are:

- Growth among advanced economies is expected to drop to 2 per cent this year.
- Slowing external demand, rising borrowing costs and persistent policy uncertainties may weigh on the outlook for Emerging Market and Developing Economies (EMDE). As result growth rates of this group are anticipated to hold steady at a weaker-than-expected 4.2 per cent this year.
- South Asia is expected to grow at 7.1 per cent in 2019 driven by strengthening investment and robust consumption. Much of the contribution would come from India.
- The growth rate of Pakistan is anticipated to slow to 3.7 per cent in 2018-19 as financial conditions tighten in the face of rising inflation and external vulnerabilities.
- Bangladesh is expected to register a growth of 7 per cent in 2018-19, Sri Lanka is expected to speed up slightly to 4 per cent in 2019, and Nepal's growth is expected to slow to 5.9 per cent in FY 2018-19.
- The report warns that if a trade war between the US and China leads to a global slowdown, the spillover effects on the emerging market and developing economies (EMDEs) could be profound.
- The report underlines the importance of "rebuild policy buffers" for EMDEs while underscoring the need of laying a stronger foundation for future growth by boosting human capital, promoting trade integration, and addressing the challenges associated with informality.
- The global growth rates are moderating as the recovery in trade and manufacturing activity loses steam.
- Trade tensions among major economies combined with concerns about softening global growth prospects, have weighed on investor sentiment and contributed to declines in global equity prices.
- The report states that Growth in the US will continue to be supported by fiscal stimulus. As a result, there would be larger and more persistent fiscal deficits.
- Even though the probability of a recession in the United States is still low and the slowdown in China is projected to be gradual, markedly weaker-than-expected activity in the world's two largest economies will have a severe impact on global economic prospects.
- The report warns that sharper-than-expected tightening of global financing conditions, or a renewed rapid appreciation of the US dollar, could exert further downward pressure on activity in EMDEs, due to large current account deficits financed by portfolio and bank flows.
- The report estimates that if all tariffs under consideration were implemented, they would affect about 5% of global trade flows and could dampen growth in the economies involved, leading to negative global spillovers.

The World Bank has warned that the projected gradual deceleration of global economic activity over the forecast horizon could be more severe than expected because of the predominance of substantial downside risks.

January 11, 2019

Chhattisgarh withdraws general consent accorded to the CBI to probe cases in the state

The government of Chhattisgarh has withdrawn the general consent accorded to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to probe the cases in the state. The general consent was withdrawn under Section 6 of the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act, 1946.

Delhi Special Police Establishment Act, 1946

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) derives its powers to investigate the cases from the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act, 1946. The Delhi Special Police Establishment Act, 1946 provides for a special police force to investigate the offences specified by the central government through the Gazette notification.

Section 6

Section 6 of the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act, 1946 makes the consent of the states mandatory for the CBI to exercise its power and jurisdiction in the state. The government of Chhattisgarh has revoked section 6 of the Delhi Special police investigation act to withdraw the general consent.

Reasons for Withdrawal

The government of Chhattisgarh has cited the following reasons for the withdrawal:

- The credibility and integrity of the CBI have been compromised under the present central government.
- As a result of the free hand to CBI to operate in the state, the law and order and state officers were being disturbed.

The CBI is now required to seek permission from the state government before initiating any investigations.

Chhattisgarh has joined the list of West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh which have withdrawn the general consent for CBI to undertake investigations.

Union Cabinet approves setting up of 3 New AIIMS

The Union Cabinet headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the setting up of three new AIIMS institutions. The three new institutions would come up at Vijaynagar at Samba of Jammu Region, Awantipora in Pulwama of Kashmir Region and Rajkot in Gujarat under the pradhan mantri swasthya suraksha yojana.

The two new AIIMS for Jammu and Kashmir, one each for Jammu Region and Kashmir Region was announced by the Prime Minister under the Prime Minister's Development Package and the AIIMS in Rajkot, Gujarat was announced by the Finance Minister in his budget speech.

Prime Minister's Development Package

Prime Minister's Development Package was announced as a reconstruction plan for J&K.

The Reconstruction Plan aims at expanding economic infrastructure, expanding provision of basic services, providing thrust to employment and income generation and providing relief and rehabilitation to the victims of September 2014 floods and to strengthen Disaster Management Framework of the State. The reconstruction plan also seeks to strengthen the economic and social infrastructure and provide for the balanced development of the three regions of J&K.

Benefits of New AIIMS institutions

The new AIIMS institutions are set up with the following objectives:

- Each new AIIMS will add 100 UG (MBBS) seats and 60 BSc (nursing) seats, and the new AIIMS will have 15-20 super speciality departments.
- This will serve the dual purpose of providing super speciality healthcare to the population closer to their homes and help in creating a large pool of doctors and other health workers in these regions to strengthen the primary and secondary level institutions and facilities being created under the National Health Mission (NHM).

All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS)

All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) are the autonomous institutions set up under the act of parliament, AIIMS act 1956. They have been declared as Institutes of National Importance. The educational principles and practices being adopted at AIIMS are those which are best suited to the needs of the nation.

SC sets up panel for to suggest reforms for holding competitive exams

The Supreme Court has suggested setting up of a three-member panel comprising of Nandan Nilekani, a co-founder of Infosys, and renowned computer scientist Vijay P Bhatkar to suggest reforms for conducting of competitive examinations fairly by government bodies.

The Supreme Court has asked advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing for the petitioner, to suggest a name besides Nilekani and Bhatkar for constituting the panel.

What is the case?

The petitioner Shantantu Kumar had sought cancellation of 2017 SSC examination due to alleged tampering and leaking of question papers. The Supreme Court has put a stay on the declaration of results of SSC 2017 examinations.

The allegations of tampering and leaking of question papers had led to large scale protests from the aspirants. The SSC had recommended the CBI investigation in the case.

CBI had stated in the Supreme Court that FIR has been registered and people involved have been identified, therefore there was no need to cancel the 2017 examination. But the Supreme Court was not convinced and stated that it was not possible either identify the beneficiaries of question paper leaks or who all are innocents.

To overall the structure of conducting competitive exams by the government agencies and to bring in transparency, the SC has suggested setting up of a three-member panel to suggest reforms.

NIC Command and Control Centre Inaugurated

The Minister for Electronics and IT (MeitY) Ravi Shankar Prasad inaugurated the National Informatics Centre (NIC)'s Command and Control Centre (CCC) and its Centre for Excellence in Artificial Intelligence.

Role of Centre's Command & Control Centre

National Informatics Centre hosts over 10,000 e-Governance applications and offers Data Centre and Cloud services to the Government.

The Command and Control Centre is set up as a specialized facility with a nationwide view of ICT infrastructure for effective monitoring and management of the performance & availability of all these critical services. The Command and Control Centre will increase the agility of NIC's nationwide ICT infrastructure.

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Centre of Excellence in Artificial Intelligence

The Centre of Excellence in Artificial Intelligence aims to provide a platform to provide innovative new solutions and to test and develop solutions for projects undertaken by NIC at central and state level.

It has been established with a motto 'Inclusive AI' for responsive governance, to work towards improving Govt. service delivery to citizens. The centre of excellence will also provide Capacity Building & Institutionalizing AI in Ministries / Departments / Organizations.

National Informatics Centre

National Informatics Centre is the premier science and technology organisation of the Government of India in informatics services and information and communication technology (ICT) applications. Established in 1976, it works under the Department of Electronics & Information Technology of Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.

National Clean Air Programme Launched

The Union Environment Minister Harsh Vardhan launched the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP). The programme aims to tackle the challenge of increasing pollution in the cities and towns.

Features of the Programme

The important features of the programme are:

- It is a five-year action plan with a tentative target of 20-30% reduction in concentrations of PM10 and PM2.5 by 2024, with 2017 as the base year.
- The plan covers 102 non-attainment cities, across 23 states and Union territories, which were identified by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) on the basis of their ambient air quality data between 2011 and 2015.

Non-attainment cities

Cities are considered as Non-attainment cities, if they were consistently showing poorer air quality than the National Ambient Air Quality Standards. Cities included under the list of Non-attainment cities Delhi, Varanasi, Bhopal, Kolkata, Noida, Muzaffarpur, and Mumbai.

- The centre plans to scale up the air quality monitoring network across India under the programme.
- Studies would be conducted across 102 non-attainment cities to ascertain pollution sources and the extent of their contribution.
- The Apex committee in the Ministry of Environment would periodically review the progress of these components on the basis of appropriate indicators, which will be evolved.
- Each city would be asked to develop its own action plan for implementation based on sources of pollution.

- A three-tier system, including real-time physical data collection, data archiving, and an action trigger system in all 102 cities, besides extensive plantation plans, research on clean-technologies, landscaping of major arterial roads, and stringent industrial standards are proposed under the plan.
- State-level plans of e-mobility in the two-wheeler sector, rapid augmentation of charging infrastructure, stringent implementation of BS-VI norms, boosting public transportation system, and adoption of third-party audits for polluting industries are proposed part of the plan.
- The plan document is not binding on the states since the document is not a legal document.

The Environmentalists criticised the plan for not making it legally binding. The Environmentalists demand a more stringent action to ensure the safety and well being of millions of lives risk because of the continuously growing air pollution crisis.

West Bengal exits Ayushman Bharat scheme

The government of West Bengal has decided to exit from the Centre's ambitious Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Aarogya Yojana.

Reasons cited by the West Bengal for the Withdrawal

The letter of the West Bengal government to the Secretary of the Department of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India has cited the following reasons for the withdrawal:

- The Government of India was issuing entitlement letters to the beneficiaries without the knowledge of the state government. bharath.kumar | bharathauto94@gmail.com |
- Prior to the launch of the Ayushman Bharat scheme, West Bengal had well established Swasthyasathi. It was agreed to retain the name of Swasthyasathi, this was even acknowledged in the MoU between the State and the Ministry of Family and Health, Government of India. But the centre has unilaterally changed the name of the scheme to Ayushman Bharat- Pradhan Mantri Jan Aarogya Yojana.
- Even though the state government have a key role in the implementation and are shouldering 40% of the cost for the scheme, the centre is unilaterally taking important decisions and is projecting the scheme as of central scheme rather than centrally sponsored one.

The Government of West Bengal has alleged that the Central government was politicising the scheme by sending letters about its provisions to every household of the state with the picture of PM and a lotus symbol on top.

West Bengal has joined states of Telangana, Kerala, Odisha, and Delhi which have opted out of the scheme for varied reasons.

Pradhan Mantri – Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY)

Pradhan Mantri – Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY) is a scheme of the government under Ayushman Bharat. The scheme aims to reduce the financial burden on poor and vulnerable groups arising out of catastrophic hospital episodes and ensure their access to quality health services was conceived. It also seeks to accelerate India's progress towards the achievement of Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and Sustainable Development Goal – 3 (SDG3).

Under the scheme about 10.74 crore poor, deprived rural families and identified occupational categories of urban workers' families as per the latest Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) data (approx. 50 crore beneficiaries) will have health benefit cover of Rs. 500,000 per family per year at free of cost. The health benefit cover includes more than 1,350 medical packages covering surgery, medical and daycare treatments, cost of medicines and diagnostics.

RBI tweaks Gold Monetisation Scheme

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has made changes with the Gold Monetisation Scheme (GMS) to allow charitable institutions, central government entities and state government entities to deposit gold under GMS.

Now the entities allowed to deposit gold under the scheme include Resident Indians [Individuals, HUFs, Proprietorship & Partnership firms, Trusts including Mutual Funds/Exchange Traded Funds registered under SEBI (Mutual Fund) Regulations, Companies, charitable institutions, Central Government, State Government or any other entity owned by Central Government or State Government].

Why the ambit to deposit gold under the scheme was expanded?

The reasons for expanding the ambit are:

- To bring out the unaccounted gold with the charitable institutions.
- To enable the government agencies to deposit gold which they had confiscated.

Gold Monetisation Scheme

The Gold Monetisation Scheme was launched with the tagline Earn, while you secure. The scheme provides the dual benefit of, interest (denominated in gold) on the gold deposited and an option of encashing the gold at maturity. All the scheduled commercial banks except the RRBs are authorised to implement the scheme.

The gold deposits can be made under 3 term deposit plans:

- Short term:1 to 3 years
- Medium term:5 to 7 years
- Long term:12 to 15 years

Short-term deposit rates are decided by the banks concerned, while the medium and long-term deposit interest rates are decided by the Central Government.

The minimum deposit one can make in a gold monetisation scheme is 30 grams of any purity and there is no maximum limit. The capital gains from the scheme are exempted from capital gains tax, wealth tax and income tax.

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Important decisions of the GST council meet

The GST Council meeting on January 10 has taken the following important decisions:

- The exemption limit for Goods and Services Tax (GST) registration has been increased to Rs 40 lakh from the current Rs 20 lakh to ease the cost of compliance for small taxpayers or micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs).
- This exemption limit has been doubled to Rs 20 lakh for North-Eastern and hilly states.
- The increased exemption limit of Rs 40 lakh is applicable for those businesses who deal in goods and also do intra-state trade and not for those who do inter-state transactions.
- The small States such as Puducherry which have a small assess base have been given the option to 'opt in' or move to a lower exemption and registration limit.
- The threshold limit for the compensation scheme under which small traders and businesses pay a 1 per cent tax based on turnover has been increased to Rs 1.5 crore. The dealer under the composition scheme cannot issue tax invoice because the dealer cannot charge tax from their customers. They need to pay the tax out of their own pocket. The dealer is required to issue the bill of supply.
- Service providers and suppliers of both goods and services up to a turnover of Rs 50 lakh would be eligible to opt for the GST composition scheme and pay a tax of 6 per cent.
- Kerala has been allowed to levy a 1 per cent calamity cess on the intra-state sale of goods and services for a period of up to two years to mobilise revenues to meet the cost of rehabilitating parts of states that were ravaged by floods.
- A seven-member group of ministers would be formed to address the differences of opinion emerged at the meeting on the issues like the issues related to the lottery.

These decisions would be beneficial for MSMEs, which were adversely affected after the introduction of GST.

GST council

Goods and Services Tax Council is a constitutional body for making recommendations to the Union and State Government on issues related to Goods and Service Tax. The GST Council is chaired by the Union Finance Minister and other members are the Union State Minister of Revenue or Finance and Ministers in-charge of Finance or Taxation of all the States.

Every decision of the Goods and Services Tax Council shall be taken by a majority of not less than three-fourths of the weighted votes of the members present and voting. The vote of the Central Government shall have the weightage of one-third of the total votes cast, and the votes of all the State Governments taken together shall have a weightage of two-thirds of the total votes cast, in that meeting.



Tata Steel's Netherlands plant recognised as the Factory of the Future

The World Economic Forum has recognised Tata Steel's plant at IJmuiden in the Netherlands as Manufacturing Lighthouse with state-of-the-art production facilities which successfully adopt and integrate the cutting-edge technologies of the future and drive financial and operational impact.

Recognition to Tata Steel

The recognition of the Tata Steel was due to the following factors:

- Acknowledgement of the thriving culture of innovation at Tata Steel and advanced analytics team's vision and commitment to realise more efficient, productive and responsible steelmaking.
- The pioneering use of advanced analytics to optimise the way raw materials are used, increase the yield at every step of the steelmaking process and further improve logistics between the different processes and the quality of the product for customers.
- The Advanced Analytics Academy gives Tata Steel employees an impetus to find solutions for waste reduction, quality improvement and overall reliability of production processes.

Manufacturing Lighthouses

The World Economic Forum organizes a network of leading intelligent production companies as Manufacturing Lighthouses under its 'Shaping the Future of Production' initiative to allow the exchange of knowledge and promote collaborations in the area of the 'Fourth Industrial Revolution' in production.

These Manufacturing Lighthouses showcases how best a strategy for the Fourth Industrial Revolution be developed by training employees, cooperating with other parties, implementing changes in the workplace and in the value chain through greater efficiency and contribute to reducing the climate footprint of production companies by 50 per cent.

Cabinet approves Currency Swap Agreement with Japan

The Union Cabinet has approved India's Currency Swap Agreement with Japan. The \$75-billion bilateral currency swap arrangement is a milestone in mutual economic cooperation and special strategic and global partnership between two countries.

Currency Swap Agreements

A Currency swap agreement is a foreign exchange agreement between two parties to exchange a given amount of one currency for another and, after a specified period of time, to give back the original amounts swapped.

How Currency Swap Agreement can benefit India?

The currency swap agreement can be beneficial to India in the following ways:

- The currency swap facilities make it easier for India to pay for its imports. This aids in addressing the challenge of depreciation.
- Since the Currency swap agreement involves trading in local currencies. Countries pay for imports and exports through their own currencies rather than involving a third country currency. This does away with the charges involved in multiple currency exchanges.
- The currency swap makes it easier to improve liquidity conditions.
- Currency swap agreements help in saving for a rainy day when the economy is not looking in good shape.
- The swap agreements also contribute towards stabilising the country's balance of payments (BoP) position.
- The agreement aids in improving the confidence in the Indian market.
- Together with ensuring that the agreed amount of capital is available to India, it also brings down the cost of capital for Indian entities while accessing the foreign capital market.

The Currency Swap Agreement was concluded between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe during the summit level meeting at Yamanashi, Japan.

India Manufacturing Barometer 2019 Report: Key Facts

The India Manufacturing Barometer 2019 Report has been prepared by Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) in association with PwC.

The report was prepared based on the survey of companies which contribute approximately 12 per cent to the manufacturing Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the country from the automobiles, chemicals,

electrical machinery, food processing, leather, pharmaceuticals and textiles sectors.

Findings of the Report

The important findings in the India Manufacturing Barometer 2019 are:

- India would witness faster growth in the next 12 months driven by expanding domestic market, technology and increased spending.
- Around 74 per cent of companies surveyed believes that the next 12 months will see faster growth in their sector.
- Around 58 per cent of those surveyed believes that their sector would grow faster by at least 5 per cent.
- India’s economy is projected to grow anywhere between 7.3 – 7.7 per cent and the domestic market would be a major demand driver for India.
- Business leaders also anticipate an increase in turnover from global demand in the future.

Business Groups have asked India to concentrate on improving at the logistics front. Logistics cost in India is about 15 per cent of the overall cost whereas the cost is less than 10 per cent in countries like Japan. The reduced logistics cost can be of great benefit to India.

Agreement for Renukaji dam multipurpose project Signed

The Agreement for the construction of Renukaji Dam Multi-Purpose Project was signed by six states, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Delhi, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh in the presence of Union Water Resources Minister Nitin Gadkari.

Features of the Project

The important features of the project are:

- Renukaji Dam Multi-Purpose Project is a storage project on the Giri river which is tributary of the Yamuna at Sirmour district of Himachal.
- A 148 m-high rock-filled dam would be constructed across the river Giri.
- The project also involves the generation of 40 MW of power during peak flow to be executed by Himachal Pradesh Power Corporation Ltd (HPPCL).
- The project would increase by the river flow about 110 per cent which will be used to meet the drinking water needs of Delhi and the other Yamuna basin states up to some extent in the lean period.
- The share of stored water among the states will be as follows, Haryana-47.8 per cent; Uttar Pradesh/Uttarakhand-33.65 per cent; Himachal-3.15 per cent; Rajasthan-9.3 per cent and NCT of Delhi: 6.04 per cent.
- The Central government will bear 90 per cent of the cost of irrigation/drinking water component, and the balance cost will be borne by the states.

Along with the Renukaji dam multipurpose project other two projects are planned in the Yamuna river basin, Lakhwar Project on the River Yamuna in Uttarakhand, Kisau Project on the River Tons in Uttarakhand and Himachal for the effective utilisation of the water resource.

Introduction of a Bill to amend the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950

The Government has proposed a bill to amend the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950. The features of the proposed amendment are:

- On the basis of recommendation the government of Karnataka, it has been proposed to amend Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950 relating to Karnataka. The amendment aims to grant Scheduled Tribe status to the communities, namely Parivara and Talawara which are Synonyms of Nayaka and Siddi community of Dharwad and Belagavi districts along with existing ‘Siddi’ community of Uttar Kannada district.
- On the basis of recommendation the government of Assam, it has been proposed to amend Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950 relating to Assam. The amendment aims to grant Scheduled Tribe status to the communities, namely Chutiya, Matak, Moran, Koch Rajbongshi, Tai Ahom and states’ 36 tea tribes.

The persons belonging to the above-mentioned communities would become eligible to get benefits meant for the Scheduled Tribes in the respective States, once the bill is passed in the parliament.

January 12, 2019**Sanskriti Kumbh**

The Uttar Pradesh Governor Shri Ram Naik inaugurated the Sanskriti Kumbh at Prayagraj. The Sanskriti Kumbh celebrates the conglomeration of Spiritual Consciousness and Cultural Heritage of India in the main premises of Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj. It is being organised by the Ministry of Culture, Government of India under the Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat initiative.

Celebrating the Diversity of India

The Sanskriti Kumbh is aimed at showcasing the vibrancy of India. The Sanskriti Kumbh will give a chance to people to experience all the colours of Indian Culture at one place. This cultural extravaganza aims to promote and reconnect the people especially the youth with our magnificent and multifaceted culture along with the opulence and its historical significance.

The cultural performances would display the legacy of India's Spiritual and Mythological practices. The performances will showcase the inclination of visitors towards devotion and Kumbh tradition. The folk dances, representing states from East West North South India, will showcase the spirit of Unity in Diversity that is Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat.

Under the ambit of Sanskriti Kumbh, Rashtriya Shilp Mela is being organised to display handicrafts and live demonstration of the skill by craftsmen.

Kumbh Mela at Prayagraj

Kumbh Mela is one of the oldest and largest congregation in the world. The Kumbh Mela is now part of the UNESCO list of Intangible Cultural heritage for humanity in.

This year Kumbh Mela is being organized in the city of Prayagraj which is located at the confluence of the Ganges, the Yamuna and Mystic river of Saraswati in Uttar Pradesh.

Partnership Summit to be held in Mumbai

The Partnership Summit provides for a global platform to dialogue, debate, deliberate and engage Indian and global leaders on economic policy and growth trends in India. The 25th edition of the Partnership Summit would be inaugurated by Vice President of India, M Venkaiah Naidu in Mumbai.

The Partnership Summit is being organized by the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion, Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Government of India, State Government of Maharashtra and Confederation of Indian Industry. The Partnership Summit 2019 will showcase India in the present landscape of an emerging "New India" and the "New Global Economic Address".

The sessions will be held on the following themes in the Partnership Summit:

- Partnering with New India
- Reforms and De-regulation – Strategies to Boost Investment
- The Infra Expanse – A Super Imperative for Growth
- The Inclusion Dynamics – A Digital Wireframe for all

The Summit will be presided by Union Minister of Commerce & Industry, Suresh Prabhu. He will deliver the keynote address. A Special address will be delivered by Minister of Trade of South Korea, Kim Hyun Chong and Minister of Economy of UAE, Sultan bin Saeed Al Mansoori.

Sino-Indian Digital Collaboration Plaza

The Sino-Indian Digital Collaboration Plaza (SIDCOP) has been launched by the National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM) in association with Municipal Governments of Guiyang and Dalian.

About the SIDCOP

The initiative aims to bring Indian IT companies and Chinese enterprises closer to each other on a single AI enabled platform. This platform will be managed by a joint venture comprising of one Indian and Chinese company.

The initiative aims to encash the expertise of Indian IT enterprises in business transformation and operational optimization by using IT tools in complex business environments. Indian IT enterprises are successfully serving many international clients to transform their businesses and globalize and revolutionize with changing times.

The SIDCOP offers a boundary-less marketplace for Chinese enterprises in order to assist them in

operational optimization and adopting industry best practices in business solutions by connecting with Indian enterprises.

National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM)

NASSCOM is a not-for-profit industry association and is the apex body for the Indian IT-BPM industry. The membership of the NASSCOM is open for Companies registered in India and are focused on providing IT-BPM products and services.

NASSCOM aims to make sure that service quality and enforcement of Intellectual Property Rights have been properly implemented in the Indian software and BPM industry.

Index of Industrial Production of November: Key Facts

The Index of Industrial Production for the month of November has been released by the Central Statistical Office, under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.

The Index of Industrial Production (IIP) provides details about the growth of various sectors in an economy such as mineral mining, electricity and manufacturing. IIP is a composite indicator that measures the short-term changes in the volume of production of a basket of industrial products during a given period with respect to that in a chosen base period.

Key Facts about the IIP, November 2018

The IIP report of CSO makes the following observations:

- Industrial growth unexpectedly plummeted to a 17-month low in November as a result of the post-festival season decline in manufacturing, fewer working days in the month and tighter financial conditions.
- The Index of Industrial Production (IIP) stood at 0.47 per cent in November and the high base of last year has also contributed to the slowdown. IIP had witnessed a growth of 8.5 per cent in November 2017.
- Manufacturing which constitutes 77.63 per cent of IIP, shrank 0.4 per cent, the Manufacturing had witnessed a robust growth of 10.4 per cent in November 2017.
- The production of both capital goods and consumer goods saw a decline.
- Mining expanded by 2.7 per cent in November 2018 compared with 1.4 per cent in November 2017.
- The electricity generation rose 5.1 per cent.
- The Production of intermediate items was down 4.5 per cent.

The Industrial growth in India is still not on a sound footing due to the high variability in industrial growth across sectors and within sectors on a month-on-month basis. It is expected that incrementally improving liquidity, normalisation after festive season related disruptions and spending tied to elections would act as a catalyst for the growth.

Supreme Court gives its nod for Chardham Project

The Supreme Court has given its nod to Chardham Development Plan which connects the holy places of Yamunotri, Gangotri, Kedarnath and Badrinath by all-weather roads.

What is the issue?

The construction of all weather roads in the environmentally critical zone of Himalayas was questioned in the National Green Tribunal (NGT). The National Green Tribunal had cleared the Chardham Project and had formed an oversight committee to monitor the environmental safeguards during the construction of the project.

This order was questioned in the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court refused to stay the order of NGT and had asked the Centre to file its affidavit on a plea seeking a stay on the order of the NGT.

Significance of Chardham Yatra

As per Hindu traditions, Char Dham Yatra opens the gates of salvation by washing away all the sins. The term Chardham is believed to be coined by Shri Adi Shankaracharya, which means four abodes of God or Holy Destinations.

The Yatra begins from Yamunotri, then the pilgrims head to Gangotri, thereafter to Kedarnath and finally to Badrinath to complete the Chardham Yatra.

Yamunotri is the source of the sacred Yamuna River. According to Hindu Mythology, Yamuna was the sister of Yamraj and she was promised by Yamraj that whoever takes the holy dip in the Yamuna River will

not be taken to Yamlok and they would attain salvation. Yamunotri is also the seat of Goddess Yamuna. Gangotri i.e. Gomukh is the birth place of the Holy River Ganga. The stone on which King Bhagirath did meditation to bring Goddess Ganga to earth is located near Ganga Temple in Gangotri. A temple dedicated to Goddess Ganga is located in this pious area.

Kedarnath is one of the twelve jyotirlingas of Lord Shiva and the temple is believed to be restored by Adi Shankaracharya.

Badrinath is considered as the most sacred among the four shrines and is located on the left bank of the Alaknanda River. The temple at Badrinath is dedicated to Lord Vishnu, the protector and preserver of the divine Hindu Trinity (Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva). It is also believed that Adi Shankaracharya got freedom from the process of reincarnation at Badrinath.

The Chardham Development Plan is the project of the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways.

Amendments to Indian Cinematograph Act, 1952

The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has released the draft amendment bill to amend the Indian Cinematograph Act, 1952. The amendments are brought in counter the film piracy.

Amendments proposed

The features of the amendment bill are:

- To check piracy, particularly release of the pirated version of films on the internet which causes huge losses to the film industry and government exchequer, an enabling provision in the Cinematograph Act, 1952 would be added.
- The amendment bill aims to add a new sub-section (4) of section 7 of the Cinematograph Act, 1952.
- Under the amendment bill, the piracy would be a punishable offence with imprisonment of three years and fines of up to Rs 10 lakh or both.
- The punishment is prescribed those, who use any recording device to make or transmit a copy of the visual recording or sound recording of a film or attempts to make or transmit, or abet the making or transmission of such a copy without the written authorisation of the copyright owner.

The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has invited the Comments on the draft Cinematograph Act (Amendment) Bill.

Delhi to Open Six World-Class Skill Centres (WCSCs)

The government of Delhi has decided to open six World-Class Skill centres (WCSCs) in the national capital to prepare students to acquire different professional skills.

About the World Class Skill Centres

The decision to open the World Class Skill Centres was announced by the Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in 2017. The features of these skill centres are:

- The six skill centres would be opened at Institute of Basic Business Studies (Pusa); Integrated Institute of Technology Dwarka, Delhi Pharmaceutical Sciences and Research University; Society for Self Employment (SSE), Wazirpur; SSE, Jhandewalan; and RIT Rajokari.
- These skill centres would be set up at the unutilised space in the existing buildings of ITIs, polytechnics, degree colleges and universities.
- The courses in Health and Wellness, IT and IT-enabled Services, Retail Management, Hospitality and Tourism, Accounts, Banking and Finance, Automobile, Electronics, Media and Event Management, Production and Manufacturing, Apparel and Food Production will be provided in these skill centres.
- The government would set up six World class Skill Centres in phase 1 and 19 more Skill centres in Phase two.

The government of Delhi had announced the decision to open 25 World Class Skill Centres after the success of the first WCSC at ITI, Vivek Vihar, started in 2013.

January 13, 2019

Fair Value for Innovation launched at Raisina Dialogue

The Global Innovation Policy Center (GIPC) of the United States Chamber of Commerce has launched a new innovation initiative Fair Value for Innovation at the Raisina Dialogue in New Delhi.

Fair Value for Innovation

The Fair Value for Innovation initiative would

- Examine economic underpinnings that would enable breakthrough innovation.
- Explore how policymakers can harness innovation capital in India and around the globe through research, advocacy, partnerships, and programs.

Raisina Dialogue

The Raisina Dialogue is a multi-stakeholder, cross-sectoral discussion, involving heads of state, cabinet ministers and local government officials, as well as major private sector executives, members of the media and academics.

The Raisina Dialogue has emerged as India's flagship conference on geopolitics and geo-economics. The Dialogue is hosted by the Observer Research Foundation in collaboration with the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. It was designed on the lines of Singapore's Shangri-La Dialogue.

The dialogue is named after Raisina Hill, which is the seat of the Government of India, as well as the Rashtrapati Bhavan.

The first Raisina Dialogue was held in 2016 with the theme "Asia: Regional and Global Connectivity". The theme of the 2019 dialogue is "A World Reorder: New Geometries; Fluid Partnerships; Uncertain Outcomes".

Sarva Bhasha Kavi Sammelan of AIR Inaugurated

The Governor of Tamil Nadu inaugurated the Kavi Sammelan, a National Symposium of Poets in Chennai. The poems were recited in the original language by the poets themselves and then they were translated to Hindi and Tamil.

Sarva Bhasha Kavi Sammelan

Sarva Bhasha Kavi Sammelan of All India Radio (AIR) aims to provide a creative platform for national integration and linguistic harmony through mutual interaction and coordinated presentation of the best in contemporary poetry of all Indian languages.

This Kavi Sammelan made its beginning in 1956 and is one of its kind programme wherein 23 eminent poets from 22 Indian languages come together on one stage to offer their creative best.

The Kavi Sammelan is the reflection of rich culture, literacy and shared heritage of Indian languages

All India Radio

All India Radio is the National Radio Broadcaster of India. Living up to its motto – 'Bahujan Hitaya: Bahujan Sukhaya' it is striving to inform, educate and entertain the masses of the country. The All India Radio broadcasts programmes in 23 languages and 179 dialects.

Collegium Recommends names of Justice Dinesh Maheshwari and Justice Sanjiv Khanna for appointment as Judges of the Supreme Court

The Collegium headed by Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi has recommended appointing Justice Dinesh Maheshwari and Justice Sanjiv Khanna as judges of the Supreme Court.

The collegium headed by Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi also comprises four senior-most judges of Supreme Court which includes Justices A K Sikri, S A Bobde, N V Ramana and Arun Mishra.

Three Judges Case and Collegium System

The Constitution of India under Article 124 and Article 217 prescribes the procedure for the appointment of judges of Supreme Court and High Court respectively. The articles state that the judges would be appointed by the President in consultation with the Chief Justice and other judges of the Supreme Court and the High Courts as the President of India may deem necessary.

The Collegium system for appointment of Judges emerged out of the three rulings of the Supreme Court which are collectively referred to as the Three Judges Case.

In the first judge case, *S. P. Gupta vs Union of India*, the Supreme Court had held that the word "consultation" in Article 124 and in Article 217 does not mean "concurrence" and the ultimate power would be vested with President.

In the second judge case, *Supreme Court Advocates-on-Record Association vs Union of India*, the earlier judgment in the first judge case was overruled. It was said that in the event of a conflict between the President and the CJI with regard to appointments of Judges, the opinion of Chief Justice of India would have primacy, also would be determinative in the matter. It was in the second judge case the collegium system was instituted by the Supreme Court. For the appointment of judges of SC, the collegium would

consist of CJI and two senior most judges and for the appointment of judges of HC, the collegium would consist of Chief justice of High court along with two senior-most judges of the High Court.

In the Third judge case under the special reference to the Supreme Court by the President of India, the Court upholding the judgment of the Second Judge expanded the collegium to include four senior-most judges along with the chief justice.

NJAC

The Constitution (Ninety-Ninth Amendment) Act, 2014 sought to replace the Collegium system with the National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC). But the Supreme Court declared the amendment act as unconstitutional with a majority 4-1 judgment. This has been now referred to as Fourth judge case.

AMRUT Scheme : Only 20% of Projects completed

The data from the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs has revealed the following facts about the implementation status of AMRUT Yojana:

- With only a year to the deadline, only 20 per cent of the total projects were completed utilising 3 per cent of the total funds approved.
- States like Bihar and Assam were not able to complete even a single project.
- Tamil Nadu topped the list by completing 378 projects. Tamil Nadu was the only State to have completed more than 300 projects.
- West Bengal with the completion of 194 projects stands distant second.
- Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala have completed more than 50 projects.
- Work is in progress for 3,222 projects at a cost of Rs 53,319 crore.

Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT)

Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) launched in 2015 aims to establish an infrastructure that could ensure adequate robust sewage networks and water supply for urban transformation. The AMRUT aimed to

- Ensure that every household has access to tap with an assured supply of water and a sewerage connection.
- Increase the amenity value of cities by developing greenery and well maintained open spaces (e.g. parks).
- Reduce pollution by switching to public transport or constructing facilities for non-motorized transport (e.g. walking and cycling).

The Union Government funds 50 per cent of project cost for cities with a population of up to 10 lakhs each and one-third of project cost for cities with a population of above 10 lakhs each.

AMRUT aimed at providing better infrastructure to cities with a population of more than one lakh, cities on the banks of main rivers, state capitals, cities under HRIDAY scheme and so on. The mission period is up to March 2020.

Ama Ghare LED scheme of Odisha

The government of Odisha has launched the scheme Ama Ghare LED to provide LED bulbs at free of cost to about 95 lakh families in the state.

Features of the Scheme

The features of the Ama Ghare LED are:

- The beneficiaries of the scheme are those who have registered under the National Food Security Act (NFSA) and the State Food Security Scheme (SFSC).
- The implementing agency for the scheme is Odisha Power Transmission Corporation Ltd (OPTCL).
- The LED bulbs would be distributed through camps and PDS outlets.
- Biometric authentication is mandatory to avail the benefits of the scheme.

The people in the rural areas were forced to use incandescent or CFL bulbs due to non-availability of quality LED bulbs at a reasonable price. As a result, they were burdened with higher electricity bills. Distribution of LED bulbs at free of cost to the poor families together with reducing the financial burden would enhance the energy efficiency. It is estimated that Odisha would require about 3.8 crore LED bulbs to implement the scheme successfully.

Pravasi Bhartiya Divas 2019

The Pravasi Bhartiya Divas (PBD) will be held at Varanasi on January 21 and would be formally inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on January 22. The theme of the PBD 2019 is "Role of Indian Diaspora in building a New India."

The convention held during the Pravasi Bhartiya Divas (PBD) provides an important platform to engage and connect with the overseas Diaspora. The chief guest for this year's Pravasi Bhartiya Divas Pravind Jugnauth, Prime Minister of Mauritius.

Pravasi Bhartiya Divas

India celebrates Pravasi Bhartiya Divas on 9 January to mark the contribution of the overseas Indian community towards the development of India. 9th January also commemorates the return of Mahatma Gandhi from South Africa to Mumbai in 1915.

The decision to celebrate PBD was taken based on the recommendations of the High-Level Committee (HLC) on the Indian Diaspora under the chairmanship of L. M. Singhvi. The first PBD was celebrated in 2002 and the PBD was held every year on 9th January since then.

In 2015, a decision was made to celebrate PBD once in two years in different states and a smaller event would be held in Delhi every alternate year. Now India celebrates Pravasi Bhartiya Divas once in every two years to strengthen the engagement of the overseas Indian community with the Government of India and reconnect them with their roots.

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Why Postponed in 2019?

The PBD 2019 has been delayed to facilitate the dignitaries to participate in the Kumbh Mela being held at Prayagraj and the Republic Day celebrations in New Delhi.

PM releases commemorative coin and stamp on Sikh Guru Gobind Singh

Prime Minister Narendra Modi released a commemorative coin and stamp on Guru Gobind Singh to mark the 350th birth anniversary. On the occasion, Prime Minister Modi underlined the role of Guru Gobind Singh in uniting the country through Khalsa sect.

Commemorative Coin

Rs 350 commemorative Coin with the standard weight of 35 gram will have 50 per cent silver, 40 per cent copper and 5 per cent each of nickel and zinc. The front side of the coin bears the rupee symbol and denominational value '350' in international numerals below the Lion Capital. The reverse side bears the picture of "Takht Shri Harimandir Ji Patna Sahib" in the centre and the years '1666' and '2016' in international numerals will be on the left and right periphery of the coin.



Image: Commemorative Coin

Guru Gobind Singh

Guru Gobind Singh was the tenth and last of the human Gurus of Sikhism. He became Guru at the age of 9

in 1675 after the martyrdom of his father, the ninth Guru, Guru Tegh Bahadur.

Guru Gobind Singh played a vital role in moulding the Sikh religion into its present shape, with the institution of the Khalsa fraternity, and the completion of the sacred scripture, the Guru Granth Sahib.

Guru Gobind Singh lost his four sons died during his lifetime two in battle and two executed by the Mughal army. Later he himself declared Guru Granth Sahib as the next and perpetual Guru of the Sikhs before leaving his mortal body in 1708.

Khalsa Sect

After the martyrdom of his father, Guru Tegh Bahadur, Guru Gobind Singh had declared that he would create such a Panth which would challenge the tyrant rulers in every walk of life to restore justice, equality and peace for all of mankind. This led to the institution of the Khalsa Sect.

He infused the dual spirit of a saint and a soldier in the minds and hearts of the Khalsa sect followers to fight oppression in order to restore righteousness (Dharma) and to uplift the down-trodden people in this world.

He introduced the 5Ks, of the Khalsa: Kesh (uncut hair), Kangha(wooden comb), Kara(iron or steel bracelet worn on the wrist), Kirpan (sword or dagger) and Kacchera (short breeches).

National Wildlife Board Approves Trishna Gas Project of ONGC

The National Wildlife Board has given its approval for the Trishna Gas project of ONGC which falls in the Trishna Wildlife Sanctuary in the Gomati district of Tripura.

Trishna gas project

ONGC has discovered 10-12 gas bearing wells in the Trishna Wildlife sanctuary. The gas extracted from these wells would be supplied to the North Eastern Electric Power Corporation Ltd (NEEPCO) owned 100 MW gas-based thermal power project at Monarchak in Sonamura subdivision of Sipahijala district of Tripura.

The Tripura unit of ONGC has also committed to provide Rs 25 crore to the state government for carrying out Swacch Bharat Abhiyan.

Trishna Wildlife Sanctuary

The Trishna Wildlife Sanctuary was established in 1988. The vegetations in the sanctuary fall under four broad categories of tropical semi-evergreen forest, the east Himalayan lower Bhanar sal, Moist mixed deciduous forest and the Savanah woodland.

Prominent medicinal plant species are Kurcha, Tulsi, Vasak, Sarpaganda, Rudraksha, Bel, Chirata, and Kalamegh can be found here. The wildlife prominent in the sanctuary comprises of Indian Gaur(bison), Deer, Hooklock Gibbon, Golden Langur, Capped Langur, Pheasants and Reptiles.

National Wildlife Board

National Board for Wild Life is a statutory organization constituted under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972. It is an apex body to review all wildlife-related matters and approves projects in and around national parks and sanctuaries.

The National Board for Wild Life is chaired by the Prime Minister, Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change is the vice-chairman of the Board and the members include 15 non-government members, 19 ex-officio members and 10 government officials such as secretaries.

Political Parties Oppose Footing Bill for ads on criminal record

The political parties have opposed the directive of the Election Commission that a candidate should bear the bill to publicise his criminal record since it eats up the share of the election expenditure limit. Political Parties have written to the Election Commission expressing concerns over the Election Commissions directive.

What is the Issue?

To check the increasing criminalisation of politics in the Country, the Supreme Court had made it mandatory for every candidate contesting the election to inform the public at large about his criminal record in bold letters at least three times after filing of nomination papers through newspapers at large and electronic media.

The Election Commission had implemented this order of the Supreme Court in the recently held assembly polls in the states of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Manipur, Chhattisgarh and Telangana.

The Election Commission had added the cost of these advertisements into candidate's electoral expenditure while the Supreme Court order was silent on whether the expenditure would go on to the electoral expenditure account of the candidate.

Why the political parties are opposing?

The political parties are arguing that the candidates should not be made to bear the cost of advertising their criminal records since they are faced with an expenditure limit as per EC rules and this could impose a constraint on their campaign-related expenses.

The political parties also pointed out at the differential impacts on urban centres when compared to that at rural centres as newspaper and TV advertisements pricing is typically higher in cities.

Way Forward

A suggestion has been made that to shift the expenditure of these advertisements to the political party's account from the candidates account as there is no expenditure limit for the party as of now.

There is also an argument that it is unfair to expect the political parties and candidates to bear the expense for advertising their own criminal record. Hence airtime and newspaper space could be allocated for this purpose as done for campaign purposes.

Proposal to revive National Register of Indian Citizens Project

The Central Government is actively considering the proposal to revive the National Register of Indian Citizens project as part of its efforts to identify and deport the illegal immigrants from the Country.

National Register of Indian Citizens

The Department of the National Population Register (NPR) under the Registrar General of India would be tasked with the responsibility to prepare the National Register of Indian Citizens. The department would prepare two databases, one National Register of Indian Citizens and the rest would become National Register of Residents.

The idea of creating National Register of Indian Citizens was first floated during the regime of NDA 1 with Atal Bihari Vajpayee as PM to contain the influx of illegal immigrants.

The Group of Ministers' (GoM) report after the Kargil war had recommended the government to identify citizens and non-citizens, and providing both different identity cards. The committee had recommended to implement it in border districts, or maybe in a 20-kilometre border belt in first phase and then to expand it gradually all over the country.

Even a pilot project Multi-Purpose National Identity Cards (MPNIC) to citizens was also undertaken during NDA 1. But the proposal got abandoned with the change of government in 2004.

The National Register of Indian Citizens project has now got a push after the National Register of Citizens (NRC) exercise in Assam is heading towards conclusion.

Atal Tinkering Lab Handbook Released

The Atal Tinkering Lab Handbook Naye Dishayen, Naye Nirman, Naya Bharat was released by the NITI Aayog's Atal Innovation Mission.

During the occasion an announcement of 10 Month Student Entrepreneurship Programme to help the top six innovations across six crucial themes having broader social impact, namely, Clean Energy, Waste Management, Agritech, Healthcare, Smart Mobility and Water Resources under the Atal Tinkering Marathon 2017 to transform these innovative prototypes into functioning, scaled and Go-to-Market products was made.

Atal Tinkering Lab Handbook Naye Dishayen, Naye Nirman, Naya Bharat

The Atal Tinkering Lab Handbook together with capturing the experiences of the young innovators of the country with the Atal Tinkering Lab, provides for a compendium of guidelines, resources, methodologies, key learning, case studies of the ATL ecosystem.

The handbook showcases the outcome and impact that is being created by the Atal Tinkering Labs has been showcased, including some case examples of celebrating and rewarding innovation, over the last two years.

The Handbook also serves as an action plan to provide for a smooth scale-up approach for the Atal Tinkering Lab initiative, via the public-private-partnership and Centre-State cooperation.

Atal Innovation Mission

Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) is the Government of India's flagship initiative to promote a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship in the country.

AIM aims to create an umbrella structure to oversee innovation ecosystem of the country and revolutionize the innovation eco-system by touching upon the entire innovation life cycle through various programs.

While the Atal Tinkering Laboratories under the Atal Innovation Mission aims to create innovators and the Atal Incubation Centres would provide support to these innovations to scale up to market and helps to create enterprises around these innovations.

National Youth Day: January 12

India celebrates National Youth Day on January 12 to commemorate the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda.

The National Youth Day is celebrated on the birth anniversary of the Swami Vivekananda so that the philosophy of Swami Vivekananda and the ideals for which he lived and worked could be a great source of inspiration for the Indian Youth. The government aims to imbibe the students and youth with the philosophy and ideals of Swami Vivekananda, the man who brought a change in the thought process of the Indian youth.

Swami Vivekananda

Swami Vivekananda was born in 1863. He was a renowned philosopher, poet, writer, social reformer and orator. His works include 'Jnanayoga', 'Bhaktiyoga', 'Rajayoga', 'To the youth of India'. He also founded the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission.

Swami Vivekananda was the main force behind the introduction of Indian philosophies of Vedanta and Yoga to the western world. Swami Vivekananda's speech at the Parliament of the World's Religion at Chicago is cherished even today. He is credited with raising interfaith awareness and bringing Hinduism to the status of major world religion in the late 19th century.

He passed away on July 4, 1902, at the age of 39. Within this short span of time, his works, ideals, and ideas became immortal in Indian history. To commemorate the great contribution of the Swami Vivekananda to Indian society and to ensure his ideas, ideals and philosophies continue as guiding light for Indian youth, his birth anniversary is celebrated as National Youth Day.

One family One Job scheme of Sikkim

The Chief Minister of Sikkim Pawan Kumar Chamling has announced the One family one job scheme to provide employment to the youth of Sikkim.

About the Scheme

One family one job scheme entitles one government job for every family in the state. The Chief Minister handed over appointment letters to over 12,000 unemployed youths at an employment fair organised at the Paljor Stadium in Gangtok. Only members of those families which do not have a government job at present are eligible for government employment under the scheme.

The government has announced that the nature of the job is not temporary and would be regularised after five years.

Sikkim is the first state in the country to launch an exclusive programme which entitles every family in the state with a government job and Sikkim earmarks 70 per cent of its revenues towards salaries for state government employees.

January 14, 2019

Macedonia renamed as the Republic of Northern Macedonia

The Parliament of Macedonia has passed the resolution to amend the constitution of the country to rename it as the Republic of Northern Macedonia. The opposition parties had boycotted the vote and the proposal narrowly got the two-thirds majority vote required for the constitutional amendment.

The renaming is in line with a landmark agreement with Greece to end a decades-long dispute.

Dispute between Macedonia and Greece

The use of the name "Macedonia" was disputed between the European countries of Greece and the Republic of Macedonia, formerly a state within Yugoslavia. After the declaration of independence of

Macedonia from erstwhile Yugoslavia, the country named it as the Republic of Macedonia.

The dispute was mainly due to the ambiguity in nomenclature between the Republic of Macedonia, the adjacent Greek region of Macedonia and the ancient Greek kingdom of Macedonia. Greece opposed the use of the name "Macedonia" by the Republic of Macedonia without a geographical qualifier such as "Northern Macedonia".

Greece accused the Republic of Macedonia of appropriating symbols and figures that are historically considered part of Greek culture such as the Vergina Sun and Alexander the Great, and of promoting the irredentist concept of a United Macedonia, which involves territorial claims on Greece, Bulgaria, Albania and Serbia.

Due to the conflict over the name, Greece vetoed Macedonia's attempt to join Nato in 2008 and even blocked its EU membership ambitions. The opposition of Greece was so fierce that the United Nations was forced to refer Macedonia as "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia".

Agreement with Greece

After a lot of negotiations, an agreement was reached between Greek prime minister Alexis Tsipras and his Macedonian counterpart Zoran Zaev. The agreement is famously referred to as the Prespa Agreement. As per the agreement the Republic of Macedonia would be renamed as the Republic of North Macedonia. The language of the country would be referred to as Macedonian and its people known as Macedonians (citizens of the Republic of North Macedonia).

National Youth Parliament Festival 2019

The Minister of State (I/C) for Youth Affairs and Sports Col Rajyavardhan Rathore (Retd) launched the National Youth Parliament Festival 2019 as part of the National Youth Day celebrations.

About the National Youth Parliament Festival

The Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the December Mann Ki Baat address had shared the idea of organizing Youth Parliaments for young people in every district of the country. As a step forward the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports has shaped the initiative of National Youth Parliament to:

- Capture the voice of Youth.
- Provide a chance to the youth to brainstorm about new India and to find ways and chalk out plans to realize our resolves before 2022.
- Hear the voice of Young minds in the age bracket of 18-25 who are allowed to vote, but not allowed to contest in elections.
- To engage with public issues, understand the common man's point of view, form their opinion.

The theme of the National Youth Parliament festival is "Be the Voice of New India" and "Find solutions and contribute to policy".

How it would be organised?

Through District Youth Parliaments, the festival would be taken to the doorstep of the youth. This is to ensure a large number of Youth participate in the initiative.

The participants for the District Youth Parliament would be selected through two screening processes i.e. Digital and Walk-in screenings.

Three best speakers from each District Youth Parliament will participate at the State Youth Parliament and two best speakers selected from each State Youth Parliament will participate as speakers in the National Youth Parliament.

The highest scorer from each of the District Youth Parliament (DYP) will participate in the National Youth Parliament (NYP) as a delegate.

A cash award of Rs. 2 Lakhs, Rs. 1.50 Lakhs and Rs. 1 Lakh would be awarded for three best speakers at the National Youth Parliament.

Sovereign gold bonds on sale between Jan 14-18: Govt

The government has decided to issue new series of sovereign gold bonds between January 14 and January 18 at Rs 3,214 per gram and those who subscribe to the bonds online will get a discount of Rs 50 per gram.

Sovereign gold bond scheme

The Sovereign gold bond scheme was introduced by the government in 2015 to reduce the demand for physical gold by shifting a part of the physical bars and coins purchased every year for investment into

gold bonds. The features of the scheme are:

- Sovereign gold bonds are issued by the RBI on behalf of the government
- Sovereign gold bonds are denominated in grams of gold and investments can be done in multiples of one gram with a maximum limit of 4 kg per person.
- The Resident Indians including individuals (in his capacity as an individual, or on behalf of minor child, or jointly with any other individual), HUFs, Trusts, Universities and Charitable Institutions are eligible to avail these bonds.
- The tenor of the Bond is of 8 years with an exit option in 5th, 6th and 7th year.
- The investors will also be compensated at a fixed interest rate of 2.50 per cent per annum payable semi-annually on the nominal value.
- Bonds can be used as collateral for loans.
- The interest on Gold Bonds shall be taxable and are exempted from the capital gains tax on redemption.
- Bonds will be tradable on stock exchanges.

The Sovereign gold bonds also aid in maintaining the current account deficit as most of the demand for gold in India is met through imports.

Government promulgates Companies (Amendment) Ordinance, 2019

The government has re-promulgated the Companies (Amendment) Ordinance, 2019 to amend the Companies Act 2013. Even though the Companies (Amendment) Bill, 2018 for this effect was passed in [Lok Sabha](#), it was pending before Rajya Sabha. The ordinance was first issued in November and would have ceased to be operational from January 21. Hence the government has decided to re-promulgate the ordinance.

Features of the Companies (Amendment) Bill, 2018

The Loksabha had passed the Companies (Amendment) Bill, 2018. The bill had important features like re-categorisation of offences, reducing the burden on special courts and bringing down the applicable penalties for small companies, enhancing the jurisdiction of Regional Director for compounding offences, empowers the central government to allow certain companies to have a different financial year instead of being determined by the National Company Law Tribunal among others.

The main objective of the amendment bill was the promotion of ease of doing business along with better corporate compliance.

Promulgation of Ordinance

Article 123 of the Constitution empowers the President to promulgate Ordinances to amend certain laws when either of the two Houses of Parliament is not in session and hence it is not possible to enact laws in the Parliament.

Ordinances must be must be approved by Parliament within six weeks of reassembling or they shall cease to operate.

Similar power to promulgate the ordinance has been provided to the Governor of the state under Article 213.

Ordinances were provided as a stop-gap arrangement and not as an alternative legislation process. The promulgation of the ordinance is subject to judicial review

Right to Disconnect Bill introduced in Lok Sabha

A private members bill, Right to Disconnect Bill was introduced in the [Lok Sabha](#) by MP Supriya Sule.

Features of the Bill

The important features of the bill are:

- The bill empowers the employee with the right to not respond to employers' calls, texts or emails after office hours.
- The bill aims to reduce work-related stress and strive for a better work-life balance.
- The bill applies to companies with more than 10 employees.
- Such companies are required to set up an Employee Welfare Committee to ensure compliance.
- The bill stipulates that no disciplinary action can be taken against you if you choose to not respond to your employer after your stipulated work hours.

Global Examples

Some measures have been already taken in empowering the employees with Right to disconnect. For Example:

- France has already provided Right to disconnect since 2017 in companies with more than 50 employees with an aim to re-build the boundary between professional and personal life.
- Even Spain has a similar law which provides Right to Disconnect without any minimum employee criterion.
- German automobile maker Daimler had taken this bold step of introducing software that automatically deletes any emails you get while on vacation, back in 2014.

What is the Importance to Right to Disconnect?

Studies found that the need to be available 24X7 was adversely affecting the workers, even if workers weren't actively checking work emails after hours, they can still be harmed by the expectation that they should be available. This work culture was creating anxiety amongst workers.

Studies also showed that workers who answered work-related emails after 9pm had worse quality of sleep. Hence a campaign had gained ground demanding Right to Disconnect.

RBI cautions on NPAs due to MUDRA Loans

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has voiced concern on the spike in non-performing assets (NPAs) under the government's flagship scheme Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana to support micro-enterprises in the country.

Disbursements under Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana

The annual report of the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana provides following data about the disbursements under the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana:

- The total disbursements under the scheme stood at Rs 2.46 trillion in FY 18.
- 40 per cent of these disbursements went to women entrepreneurs and 33 per cent to social categories.
- More than 4.81 crore micro-borrowers have benefited through the scheme.

The RBI has raised the red flag over the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana since the bad loans under the scheme have increased to Rs 11,000 crore.

Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana

Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana (PMMY) launched in 2015 aims to provide loans up to 10 lakh to the non-corporate, non-farm small/micro enterprises. The loans are provided through Commercial Banks, RRBs, Small Finance Banks, Cooperative Banks, MFIs and NBFCs. The Mudra loans are provided under three categories:

- Under Shishu up to Rs 50,000 under.
- Under Kishore for loans between Rs 50,001-Rs 5 lakh.
- Under Tarun for loans between Rs 5,00,001 and Rs 10 lakh category.

The categories signify the stage of growth/development and funding needs of the beneficiary microunit/entrepreneur and also provide a reference point for the next phase of graduation/growth.

GoM on GST revenue shortfall faced by states

The GST Council has decided to set up a seven-member committee to look into revenue shortfall being faced by the states after the GST roll-out, and suggest steps for augmenting collections.

The committee would be headed by Deputy Chief Minister and Finance Minister of Bihar Sushil Modi. Other members of the committee include Punjab Finance Minister Manpreet Singh Badal, Kerala Finance Minister Thomas Isaac, Karnataka Rural Development Minister Krishna Byre Gowda, Odisha Finance Minister Shashi Bhushan Behera, Haryana Taxation Minister Capt Abhimanyu and Goa Panchayat Minister Mauvin Godinho.

Terms of Reference of the Committee

The committee headed by Sushil Modi will look into the following aspects:

- Analyse reasons for the shortfall in revenue collections by the states since July 2017.
- Undertake data analysis using econometric and statistical tools and suggest suitable measures and policy interventions for course correction for revenue augmentation, particularly for the states

suffering high revenue shortfall.

- Look into account trends of revenue collection before and after implementation of goods and services tax.
- Structural patterns of major sectors of the economy impacting revenue collection, including the services sector.
- Identify reasons for deviation in revenue collection trends, compare it with original assumptions worked out at the time of design and implementation of GST.
- Only Andhra Pradesh and five northeastern states — Mizoram, Andhra Pradesh, Manipur, Sikkim and Nagaland — have recorded revenue increase post the GST roll out.

Revenue Trends under GST Regime

The GST revenue data shows the following trends:

- A large number of States including Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Chattisgarh, Uttarakhand, Jammu and Kashmir, Odisha, Goa, Bihar, Gujarat and Delhi are facing revenue shortfall following the implementation of goods and services tax.
- The revenue shortfall experienced by these states was in the range of 14-37 per cent.
- Among the Union Territories, Puducherry is facing a maximum shortfall of 43 per cent.

The Goods and Services (State compensation for loss of revenue) act provides for compensation to the states for loss of revenue arising on the account of implementation of the Goods and Services Tax for a period of 5 Years and the projected revenue nominal growth rate for a state during the transition period shall be 14% per annum.

Women of India Organic Festival

The Women of India Organic Festival has been organised by the Ministry of Women and Child Development at Leisure Valley, Sector-10, Chandigarh, to celebrate and promote women farmers and entrepreneurs in the organic sector from the remotest parts of India.

About the Festival

The objectives of the Women of India Organic Festival are:

- To encourage Indian women entrepreneurs and farmers to connect with more buyers and thus, empower them through financial inclusion, while promoting organic culture in India.
- To educate people about its various initiatives and schemes relating to women and children.
- To provide a platform to showcase the varied products of women farmers and entrepreneurs.

The festival would provide an opportunity to showcase over 1,000 varied organic products, including fabric, wellness, grains, seeds, jewellery, bakery items and a lot more. The Festival is being held annually since 2015 and for the first time, it is being held in Chandigarh.

Hunar Haat Exhibitions Inaugurated in New Delhi

Finance Minister Shri Arun Jaitley and Union Minority Affairs Minister Shri Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi inaugurated Hunar Haat exhibitions in New Delhi. Hunar Haat plays an important role in national and international branding of the heritage of master artisans in India. Hunar Haat is aimed at "Development with Dignity" of the artisans and craftsmen from the minority communities.

Benefits from Hunar Haat

Hunar Haat provides following benefits:

- Projecting the talent of Indian artisans.
- Build a credible brand of Indigenous Talent of Indian artisans and craftsmen.
- Promoting the artisan and craftsmen heritage of India which had been marginalised for a long time.
- Provides an Empowerment & Employment Exchange platform for master artisans and craftsmen.
- Provides a platform to fulfil the commitments under "Make in India", "Stand up India" and "Startup India".

Hunar Haat

Hunar Haat exhibitions are organised by the Ministry of Minority affairs under its USTAAD (Upgrading the Skills & Training in Traditional Arts/Crafts for Development) scheme.

USTAAD scheme aims to preserve the heritage of traditional arts and crafts of minority communities, build the capacity of traditional craftspersons and artisans and establish linkages of traditional skills with

the global market

Together with boosting the skill of craftsmen, weavers and artisans engaged in the traditional ancestral work, USTAAD scheme aims to enhance the market access to the traditional arts and crafts, so that the rich heritage of the minority communities are preserved for future generations.

Sakhi Centres

Sakhi centre or One Stop Centre (OSC) is a fully sponsored scheme of Central Government. These centres are set up through the Nirbhaya Fund under the National Mission for Empowerment of women by the Ministry of Women and Child Development.

About the Sakhi centre

Sakhi centres offer integrated services like medical, legal, psycho-social support and temporary shelter under one roof. These centres provide necessary support to women facing physical, sexual, emotional, psychological and economic abuse, irrespective of age, class, caste, education status, marital status, race and culture will be facilitated with support and redressal.

The objectives of these one-stop centres are:

- To provide integrated support and assistance to women affected by violence, both in private and public spaces under one roof.
- To facilitate immediate, emergency and non-emergency access to a range of services including medical, legal, psychological and counselling support under one roof to fight against any forms of violence against women.

These are 24×7 centres and any woman in an adverse situation or someone on her behalf can seek help from the Sakhi Centre by dialling Women's toll-free helpline 181.

Due attention is given to the training of staff in these centres to ensure that survivors of violence who have faced tremendous physical, emotional and psychological trauma are not further victimised and treated with sensitivity and care.

Nirbhaya Fund

Nirbhaya Fund was announced by the government of India in the 2013 Union Budget. The fund was established to support initiatives by the government and NGOs working towards protecting the dignity and ensuring the safety of women in India.

Nirbhaya Fund is administered by the Department of Economic Affairs of the finance ministry. The Ministry of Women and Child Development together with concerned ministries will work out details of the structure, scope and the application of this fund.

Nirbhaya which means fearless was the pseudonym given to the 2012 Delhi gang-rape victim to hide her actual identity.

Namita Gokhale awarded Sushila Devi Literature Award

Renowned writer Namita Gokhale was awarded Sushila Devi Literature Award for her work "Things to Leave Behind". She was honoured in the 'Best Book of Fiction Written by a Woman Author' category at the inaugural edition of Bhopal Literature and Art Festival.

Sushila Devi Literature Award

Sushila Devi Literature Award is constituted by Ratanlal Foundation. The award recognises the Best Book of Fiction Written by a woman author. It is a newly constituted award and comes with a cash prize of Rs 2 lakh.

Bhopal Literature and Art Festival

Bhopal Literature and Art Festival was the brainchild of former bureaucrat Raghav Chandra and was conceptualised by the Society for Culture and Environment, Heartland Stories. The festival draws inspirations from glorious traditions and rich history of Central India. The literature festival is organised by the Society for Culture and Environment, Heartland Stories in association with Sahitya Akademi.

Namita Gokhale

Namita Gokhale is an Indian writer, publisher and festival director who has authored sixteen books including nine works of fiction. She has also conceived and curated over a hundred episodes of 'Kitaabnama: Books and Beyond', a book-show broadcast on Indian's national broadcaster Doordarshan.

Namita Gokhale is a founder-director of the 'Jaipur Literature Festival' along with William Dalrymple. She

has also served as member-secretary of Indian Literature Abroad (ILA), an initiative by the Ministry of Culture, Government of India, to translate and promote contemporary literature from the Indian languages into the major international languages, particularly the six UNESCO languages (English, French, Arabic, Spanish, Russian and Chinese).

Puducherry to Ban Single-Use Plastic from March 1

The government of Puducherry has decided to ban the production, sale and use of single-use plastic products from March 1. To ensure the ban is effective on the ground both in letter and spirit, the government of Puducherry would be conducting a massive drive to create awareness among the merchants and the public on the necessity of the ban.

The government of the neighbouring state of Tamil Nadu had announced on World Environment Day 2018, that it would ban the use of plastic items including non-biodegradable carry bags from January 1, 2019.

Industrialists argue that it is not the plastics which have become a problem. It is the way in which human beings deal with disposable plastics is the real cause for concern. It is only the disposable kind that harms the environment. Hence it would be wise to regulate the use rather than ban so that it doesn't harm the industry.

The government has said that the decision to ban single-use plastic was taken to gift a plastic-free Puducherry to the future generation and curb the plastic in the larger interest of the environment.

PM Narendra Modi receives first ever Philip Kotler Presidential Award

Prime Minister Narendra Modi was awarded first ever Philip Kotler Presidential Award. Philip Kotler Presidential Award aims to spread examples of individuals and companies who create an innovative culture for the economic, social and technological advancements of an industry or a country.

Why PM Modi was conferred with the award?

The citation of the award underlines the following achievements of the PM Modi for conferring the award:

- PM Modi was selected for his outstanding leadership for the nation.
- PM Modi's selfless service towards India, combined with his tireless energy has resulted in extraordinary economic, social and technological advances in the country.
- Under PM Modi's leadership, India is now identified as the centre for innovation and value-added manufacturing (Make in India), as well as a global hub for professional services such as information technology, accounting and finance
- Modi's visionary leadership has also resulted in the digital revolution (Digital India), including the Unique Identification Number, Aadhaar, for social benefits and financial inclusion.
- Initiatives such as Make in India, Startup India, Digital India and Swachh Bharat have positioned India as one of the most lucrative manufacturing and business destinations in the world

Philip Kotler Presidential Award

Philip Kotler, a professor of marketing at Northwestern University, Kellogg School of Management is also known as 'Father of Modern Marketing'. Apart from marketing, Philip Kotler has extensively written on education, environment, government marketing, healthcare, hospitality, and innovation.

The Philip Kotler Presidential Award is constituted to honour mastery in the field of marketing and management. The award recognises and celebrates achievements of organisations, marketing teams, and individuals in different industries around the world.

January 15, 2019

January 15: Army Day

India celebrates Army Day on January 15. Army Day is celebrated to salute the valiant soldiers who sacrificed their lives to protect the country and its citizens.

Why January 15?

It is in recognition of Field Marshal Kodandera M. Cariappa taking over as the first Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army from General Sir Francis Butcher, the last British Commander-in-Chief of India, on 15 January 1949.

Rise of Women Power

For the first time in the history of Indian Army, Lieutenant Bhavana Kasturi will lead the Indian Army's

Service Corps (ASC) contingent and Captain Shikha Surabhi, a female officer, will be leading the Army's Daredevils Motorcycle Display team comprising 33 men riding nine bikes in a pyramid formation.

Indian Army

Indian Army traces its origin to the Military Department which was created within the Government of the East India Company at Kolkata in the year 1776. With the motto of 'service before self', Indian Army is on the mission to ensure national security, national unity, defend the nation from external aggression and internal threats, and maintain peace and security within its borders.

103rd Constitutional Amendment Act: Key Facts

President Ramnath Kovind has given the assent to the 124th constitutional Amendment Bill (which is now Constitution 103rd amendment Act) providing 10 per cent reservation for economically weaker sections.

Key Facts about the 103rd Constitutional Amendment Act

The Important components of the 103rd constitutional Amendment are:

- The amendment changed two fundamental rights, Article 15 and 16. The amendments provide for the advancement of the "economically weaker sections" of the society.
- The amendment aims to fulfil the commitments of the directive principles of state policy under Article 46, to promote the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the society.

Criterion for Reservation

- People who have an annual income of less than Rs.8 lakhs, or
 - People who own less than five acres of farm land, or
 - People who have a house lesser than 1,000 sq feet in a town (or 100 sq yard in a notified municipal area).
- The constitutional amendment is yet to pass the judicial scrutiny since the Supreme Court had set the cap of 50% on reservations.
 - 'Youth for Equality' has questioned the constitutional validity of the 103rd constitutional amendment act which was passed by the both the Houses of Parliament after being presented as the Constitution (124th Amendment) Bill, 2019.
 - The example of Tamil Nadu is been cited to propose that there are ways and means to protect the amendment from the Supreme Court declaring it unconstitutional.

Gujrat has become the first state to implement the 10% quota reserved for people from economically weaker sections proposed under the 103rd constitutional amendment act.

Quota for Economically Weaker Sections questioned in Supreme Court

A not for profit organisation Youth for Equality has questioned the constitutional validity of the 103rd constitutional amendment act which provides for 10 per cent quota for economically weaker sections.

Why the 103rd constitutional amendment act is questioned in Supreme Court?

Youth for Equality has questioned the constitutional validity of the 103rd constitutional act based on the following reasons:

- The amendment which inserts Articles 15(6) and 16(6) in the Constitution would alter the basic structure of the Constitution and annul various binding judgments of the Supreme Court.
- The amendments fail to consider that Articles 14 and 16 form the basic feature of equality. The amendment act violates restraints that were imposed on the reservation policy, i.e. the 50% ceiling limit and the exclusion of economic status as a sole criterion.
- The 103rd constitutional amendment act shows complete disregard for the Supreme Court's nine-judge bench judgment in Indira Sawhney (Mandal) case which held that the sole economic criteria could not be a basis for reservation and that the 50% ceiling limit ought not to be crossed.
- The petition also cites the judgment in the case of M Nagraj vs Union of India which had upheld the constitutional validity of Art 16(4A), 16(4B), subject to certain conditions like undertaking proper exercises by the State to show that there was inadequacy in the representation.
- The expression economically weaker section remained undefined by the amendment and was left to be notified by the state.

- It is unclear whether the central government and state governments can both define the expression separately, but they both may define it differently. This level of untrammelled vagueness makes the insertion arbitrary and unworkable.

The bill was introduced in the parliament at haste just months ahead of the 2019 general election. Even this put the intention of the government in question.

Garbage Dumps and Food Habits of Animals: Study in journal Current Science

A study by Gitanjali Katlam and Soumya Prasad from School of Life Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU); Mohit Agarwal from Asian Adventures and Raman Kumar from Nature Science Initiative, examined the relationship between animal type and behaviour vis-à-vis the risk of plastic ingestion. The Study was published in the journal Current Science.

Findings of the Study

The study outlines the following findings:

- Modern-day garbage dumps are full of harmful products and chemicals, are emerging as a serious threat to animal and plant life.
- Plastic together with causing environmental pollution through chemicals leaching from it, plastics are causing health complications and disruptive reproductive patterns in animals that accidentally ingest it.
- The food chain is witnessing an ecological shift wherein few animal species at some places are becoming more dependent on anthropological food waste.
- The study warns of disastrous implications on wildlife if proper waste management strategies, particularly in and around natural sites and forest areas are not adopted.
- Garbage dumping sites have resulted in both physical and toxicological implications on animal life. Plastics in the garbage which are ingested by wild animals is leading to lethal injuries and damage to digestive tract which results in starvation, ulceration of the stomach, reduced fitness, growth problems and premature death.

The study recommends that there should be segregation of waste generated from domestic and other activities at the source only in order to prevent harm to animal feeding on it and also to address the problem of the ecological impact of non-biodegradable waste accumulation.

Study shows Albumin as better indicator of Diabetes

A study by the scientists from National Chemical Laboratory, Pune indicates levels of free albumin and albumin attached to glucose molecules in the blood can be a better diagnostic test for diabetes.

Present Procedure

Most tests at present, use levels of glycated (or glucose-bound) haemoglobin in blood for diagnosis of diabetes. This is subject to large variations due to factors like stress levels, time of collection, diet and medications taken previous day etc.

Glycation refers to the process of binding of glucose to protein or lipid molecules. The glucose molecules get attached to the Hemoglobin in the blood. The level of glucose bound haemoglobin indicates the diabetic condition of an individual.

Challenges with the current procedure

The average lifespan of the Hemoglobin is four months. Hence the test results predict the diabetic condition of an individual from the previous four months.

The levels of glycated haemoglobin in blood are influenced by many factors like anaemia, iron deficiency, pregnancy. Hence the current results may not necessarily indicate accurate results.

New Study

The new researches have shown that glycation of both albumin and haemoglobin occurs at lower levels of albumin in blood. When the albumin level decreases or gets saturated with bound glucose, other proteins like haemoglobin are exposed to glucose and their glycation increases. Hence it is predicted that levels of albumin and glycated albumin can also help in predicting the onset of diabetes.

The new study proposes albumin and glycated albumin levels quantified in conjunction with glycated haemoglobin can provide for better diagnosis and management of diabetes.



Sita Rama Lift Irrigation Project

The Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has given its approval for the Sita Rama Lift Irrigation Project of Telangana. The project would be completed in three years and would lead to submergence of about 1,930-hectare area and 157 villages.

About the Project

The Sita Rama Lift Irrigation Project aims to divert Godavari river water to irrigate 2.72 lakh hectares in three districts of Bhadrachalam, Khammam and Mahabubabad districts of Telangana. The water from River Godavari will be diverted from the upstream of existing Dummugudem Anicut barrage.

Head regulator would be constructed at Dummugudem Anicut on Godavari river and lined canal of about 372 km would be constructed.

Objective of the Project

The project aims to provide water for irrigation as well as to enroute tanks, villages, towns and supplement some of the existing/ proposed irrigation schemes.

Survey on sanitation across Cities on the Bank of River Ganga

The Quality Council of India undertook a survey on the status of sanitation across cities and towns on the bank of River Ganga for the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs. There are 39 towns on the banks of river in West Bengal, 20 in Uttar Pradesh, 17 in Bihar and 14 and two towns respectively in Uttarakhand and Jharkhand.

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Findings of the Survey

The findings of the Survey are:

- Four out of five towns along the River Ganga have waste dumps along the banks and nearly 55 per cent of the towns have drains emptying into the river without any cleaning.
- Only 19 towns had municipal solid waste (MSW) plants and only 7 towns in the plains can claim installation of a trash cleaner in their territory.
- 72 per cent of towns have nullahs (drains) discharging into the river and 77 per cent of these drains do not have functional screens that filter out filth.
- 12 towns have scored A, 44 B-grade and the rest scored a poor C grade in performance.
- Poor-performing towns were in states of West Bengal, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

Different Grades

Grade A – Towns had good cleanliness and waste management services.

Grade B – Towns managed only a partial cleanliness around the ghats.

Grade C- Towns have a lot to do to achieve over improvement in cleanliness, solid waste management and in setting up infrastructure at treating sewage flowing into the river.

Quality Council of India

The Quality Council of India (QCI) is an accreditation body established by the government of India in partnership with the Indian industry.

Quality Council of India (QCI) is set up as a non-profit autonomous society to establish an accreditation structure in the country and to spread quality movement in India by undertaking a National Quality Campaign.

Yellow Vests Protests

The protestors are referred to as Yellow Vests because they don the "Gilets Jaunes" (yellow vests), which the French drivers are required to carry in their cars. It is a leaderless movement which no reported structure or leadership to the movement.

Why are they protesting?

Though there is no consensus on the French media about why the yellow vests are protesting. Some report that the protesters are primarily angry about what they see as President Emmanuel Macron's apparent indifference toward tough conditions for working people and for others the movement is evidence of a middle-class backlash. The increase of the taxes on the fuel provided an opportunity for the anger to outburst.

France Go Green Policy

The tax imposed by the government of France was in line with the pro-Green agenda espoused by

Macron's government. The government of France had already pledged to ban all gasoline-fueled cars by 2040.

Is this an anti-green movement?

US President Trump has linked the protests in France with Paris Climate deal. He said the protests are due to France's commitment to the expensive and ridiculous Paris Climate deal. But the movement has avoided any explicit anti-Green stance and the Fuel taxes in France are not the highest in Europe and are actually lower than Germany.

The workers feel they are squeezed by the government as only 20 per cent of the tax actually goes toward supporting the country's transition to cleaner energy.

The protestors see government as too technocratic and favouring the rich, ignoring the plight of the worker and the middle class. The rallying cry also includes an immediate increase in the minimum wage and pension benefits.

France U-turn on Tax Hike

The government of France has bowed down to the pressure and has suspended the proposed tax hike for six months. The government has even announced an immediate freeze on gas and electricity price.

The announcements have failed to satisfy the protestor's anger. They have vowed to continue their protest campaign dismissing the steps taken by the government as insufficient.

Pune to have Traffic Robot on its Roads

The Traffic Police Department of Pune is looking at a futuristic model to maintain traffic flow and spread awareness about the traffic rules.

Roadeo

The traffic police authorities of Pune are planning to introduce a robot named 'Roadeo' which would move around city roads, functioning as a quasi-traffic policeman and cautioning commuters about traffic rules and offences.

Roadeo consists of 16-inch LED display to showcase traffic rules and other important messages such as 'Wear a helmet', 'Do not jump the signal' and others. The Hands of the Roadeo is also engineered to move and show stop signs to vehicles. Roadeo is also equipped with a siren, skid-steering wheels and obstacle-detection sensors.

It is a first of its kind initiative in the entire country. If this pilot project turns out to be successful it would go a long way in easing the traffic management burden and reducing the workload of overburdened policemen.

The Robot "Roadeo" is developed by SP Robotics Maker Lab, a Pune based laboratory that trains people to learn about robotics and build tech themselves.

The Hindu Literary Prize 2018 Announced

The Hindu Literary Prize 2018 was awarded during The Hindu Lit for Life 2019. The winners under different categories are mentioned below:

- English writer Neelum Saran Gour, author of Requiem in Raga Jankibagged The Hindu Prize 2018 for Fiction.
- Activist Manoranjan Byapari, author of Interrogating my Chandal Life: An Autobiography of a Dalit, bagged The Hindu Prize 2018 for non-fiction.
- The Hindu Young World-Goodbooks Award for Best Book Fiction to Venita Coelho for Boy No: 32.
- A Brush with Indian Art of Mamta Nainy received The Hindu Young World-Goodbooks Award for Best Book Non-Fiction.
- Vinayak Varma's Angry Akku received The Hindu Young World-Goodbooks Award for Best Picture Book: Story.
- Rajiv Eipe's Ammachi's Amazing Machines received The Hindu Young World-Goodbooks Award for Best Picture Book: Illustration.

The Hindu Literary Prize was instituted to honour writers who have spent their lifetime mining the human spirit through their words and ideas. The idea of the Hindu Literary Prize was mooted in the 20th year of the Literary Review.

National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction (2018-2023)

The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has drafted National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction (2018-2023) for addressing the problem of drug and substance abuse in the country, dumping a long-pending draft policy on the matter.

Components of the Action Plan

The components of the National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction (2018-2023) are:

- The Action Plan aims to employ a multi-pronged strategy involving education, de-addiction and rehabilitation of affected individuals and their families to address the issue.
- The Action Plan focuses on preventive education, awareness generation, counselling, treatment and rehabilitation of drug-dependent people, besides training and capacity-building of service providers through the collaborative efforts of the Centre, state and NGOs.
- Several measures like coordination with implementing agencies for controlling the sale of sedatives, painkillers and muscle relaxant drugs, holding awareness generation programmes and checking online sale of drugs by stringent monitoring by the cyber cell are proposed under the Action Plan.
- The Action Plan also proposes awareness generation through social, print, digital and online media, and engagement of celebrities, besides strengthening the national toll-free helpline for drug prevention.
- The Action Plan calls for persuading principals, directors, vice chancellors of educational institutions to ensure that no drugs are sold within/nearby the campus.
- The Action Plan also aims at increasing community participation and public cooperation in the reduction of demand by involving Panchayati Raj institutions, Urban Local Bodies, Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan and other local groups like Mahila Mandals, self-help groups etc to tackle the menace of drugs.
- A steering committee would be constituted under the chairmanship of the secretary, Social Justice Ministry, and with representatives from the Ministries of Health, Human Resource Development, Women and Child Development, Home Affairs, Skill development and Entrepreneurship to monitor the effective implementation of the Action Plan.
- The Action Plan proposes module for re-treatment, ongoing treatment and post-treatment of addicts of different categories and age groups and database on substance use.

The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment in collaboration with the National Drug Dependence Treatment Centre (NDDTC) under the AIIMS, is conducting a national survey on the extent and pattern of substance abuse.

Global Housing Technology Challenge

The Union Minister of Housing and Urban affairs Hardeep Singh Puri launched the Global Housing Technology Challenge. The challenge is undertaken under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana Urban (PMAY-U).

Features of the Global Housing Technology Challenge

The features of the Global Housing Technology Challenge (GHTC) are:

- GHTC aims to fast-track the construction of affordable housing and meet the target of constructing 1.2 crore houses by 2022.
- GHTC focuses on identifying and mainstreaming proven demonstrable technologies for lighthouse projects and spotting potential future technologies for incubation and acceleration support through ASHA (Affordable Sustainable Housing Accelerators) — India.
- To enable adoption of construction techniques for housing that are affordable and takes minimum time as less as three months instead of the conventional three years for construction.
- Bring a paradigm shift in technology transition using large-scale construction under the PMAY-U as an opportunity to get the best available construction technologies across the globe.

Under GHTC, a grand expo-cum-conference on GHTC will be organised in March, wherein stakeholders will showcase their best technologies to build houses. This will provide builders plethora of technological innovations to choose from, for timely delivery of projects.

Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana Urban (PMAY-U)

The Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban) Mission has been undertaken by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation (MoHUPA). The Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban) Mission seeks to address the housing requirement of urban poor including slum dwellers through following programme components:

- In-situ Rehabilitation of existing slum dwellers using land as a resource through private participation.
- Credit Linked Subsidy.
- Affordable Housing in Partnership.
- Subsidy for Beneficiary-led individual house construction/enhancement.

Of these components, Credit linked subsidy is implemented as a Central Sector Scheme while other three components will be implemented as Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS).

IMBEX 2018-19

India-Myanmar bilateral army exercise, IMBEX 2018-19, has begun at Chandimandir Military Station which houses the headquarters of the Western Command.

Objectives of the IMBEX 2018-19

It is the second edition of the IMBEX. The objectives of IMBEX 2018-19 are:

- Train the Myanmar delegation for participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations under the UN flag.
- Training the Myanmar Army delegation on tactics, procedures, expertise and methodology required by contingents of the member nations for serving in UN peacekeeping operations.
- Provide opportunities to the army personnel of both the nations to serve effectively in UN missions by providing understanding about each other's training, tactics, procedures and best practices.

India is one of the largest contributors to the UN peacekeeping force and has a rich experience of serving in UN peacekeeping operations. This expertise will be shared with the delegation from Myanmar. This delegation would form the core group of trainers who will further impart training to Myanmar Army personnel who are likely to serve in UN peacekeeping operations.

United Nations Peace Keeping Force

United Nations Peace Keeping Force are employed in areas of armed conflict to maintain or re-establish peace. The UN Peacekeeping Forces would be employed only when both parties to a conflict accept their presence.

Often referred to as Blue Helmets, the peacekeeping operations are authorised by the United Nations Security Council which is authorised by the United Nations Charter to maintain global peace.

Multiple Choice Questions

1. Which city is the venue of the 42nd Indian Social Science Congress (ISSC)?

- [A] Bhubaneswar
- [B] Hyderabad
- [C] Kolkata
- [D] New Delhi

Correct Answer: A [Bhubaneswar]

Notes:

The 42nd Indian Social Science Congress (ISSC-2018) was inaugurated by Manipur governor Dr Najma Heptulla at KIIT University campus in Bhubaneswar, Odisha on December 27. The theme of the Congress was 'Human Future in Digital Era'. The ISSC is the annual meet of social scientists organised by Indian Social Science Academy (ISSA). It is a multidisciplinary national forum, which promotes integration of Science of Nature-Humans-Society through intra, inter and multi disciplinary appraisal of current research and theory.

2. Which Indian player has been named as the ICC Women's Cricketer of the Year 2018?

- [A] Jhulan Goswami
- [B] Harmanpreet Kaur
- [C] Mithali Raj

[D] Smriti Mandhana

Correct Answer: D [Smriti Mandhana]

Notes:

Stylish left-handed Indian opener, Smriti Mandhana has won the Rachael Heyhoe Flint Award for the ICC Women's Cricketer of the Year and also been named as the ICC Women's ODI Player of the Year. She scored 669 runs at an average of 66.90 in 12 ODIs and 622 runs at a strike-rate of 130.67 in 25 T20Is during the voting period, which ran from 1 January to 31 December 2018. Beside her, Australia's wicketkeeper-batter Alyssa Healy voted ICC T20I Player of the Year. England's Sophie Ecclestone named ICC Emerging Player of the Year. Mandhana is only the second Indian woman to win an ICC award after fast bowler Jhulan Goswami who was named the women's player of the year in 2007.

3. ESAF Small Finance Bank (SFB) has recently got RBI nod to operate as a scheduled bank. The headquarters of ESAF is located at ___?

[A] Thiruvananthapuram

[B] Chennai

[C] Thrissur

[D] Kolkata

Correct Answer: C [Thrissur]

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Notes:

As per 2nd schedule of the RBI Act of 1934, the ESAF Small Finance Bank (SFB) Ltd has got approval from Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to operate as a scheduled bank. This makes ESAF the fifth scheduled bank from Kerala after Federal Bank, South Indian Bank, Catholic Syrian Bank, and Dhanlaxmi Bank. Being a scheduled bank, ESAF can step up resource mobilisation through the issue of certificate of deposits and inter-bank borrowings at competitive rates of interest. The bank can also seek funds from trusts, associations, religious institutions and mutual funds. It will also enable the bank to avail higher refinance facility. It will also assume more responsibility for the implementation of government schemes and Aadhaar enrolment services. ESAF has a presence in urban, semi-urban, rural and unbanked rural areas with a network of 432 banking outlets across 13 States. The headquarters of ESAF is located at Thrissur, Kerala.

4. Who is the newly appointed Chief Information Commissioner (CIC)?

[A] Sudhir Bhargava

[B] Vanaja N. Sarna

[C] Suresh Chandra

[D] Yashwardhan Sinha

Correct Answer: A [Sudhir Bhargava]

Notes:

Sudhir Bhargava, a former Secretary to the Ministry of Social Justice, has taken charge as new Chief Information Commissioner (CIC) on January 1. Beside him, President Ram Nath Kovind has also appointed four new members as Information Commissioners – ex-IFS officer Yashwardhan Kumar Sinha, former IRS officer Vanaja N Sarna, former IAS Neeraj Kumar Gupta and former Law Secretary Suresh Chandra. Now, the only woman in the CIC will be ex-IRS officer Vanaja N. Sarna. The CIC is the highest appeal body under the Right to Information (RTI) Act. The authority deals with grievances related to RTI requests, and has jurisdiction over all central public authorities.

5. Norman Gimbel, the Oscar & Grammy-winning lyricist has passed away. He was from which country?

[A] United States

[B] France

[C] Germany

[D] Italy

Correct Answer: A [United States]

Notes:

Norman Gimbel (91), the Oscar & Grammy-winning American lyricist has passed away in New York on December 17, 2018. His lyrics graced hit songs such as Roberta Flack's "Killing me softly with his song"

and Jim Croce's "I got a name". He also wrote the English lyrics to the Brazilian bossa nova melody "The Girl From Ipanema".

6. Who has become the first Indian wicket-keeper to claim 20 catches in Test series?

- [A] Dinesh Karthik
- [B] MS Dhoni
- [C] Rishabh Pant
- [D] Ajay Ratra

Correct Answer: C [Rishabh Pant]

Notes:

Rishabh Pant became the first Indian wicket-keeper to claim 20 catches in Test series, during the final day of the 'Boxing Day Test' in Melbourne against Australia on December 30. He surpassed former cricketers Naren Tamhane and Syed Kirmani who had recorded nineteen dismissals in 1954-55 and 1979-80 respectively. Brad Haddin from Australia holds the record for taking most catches in a Test series (29). In 'Boxing Day Test', India beat Australia by 137 runs to take an unassailable 2-1 lead in the four-match series. India took a giant stride towards winning their first ever test series on Australian soil in seven decades.

7. Transgenders can file sexual harassment case under which section of IPC?

- [A] Section 357A
- [B] Section 356A
- [C] Section 354A
- [D] Section 358A

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Correct Answer: C [Section 354A]

Notes:

Recently, the Delhi High Court has ruled that Section 354A of Indian Penal Code (IPC) can be used by transgender persons to register complaints of sexual harassment. The Section 354A of the IPC deals with sexual harassment and punishment for sexual harassment. The development came after a transgender student's complaint of sexual harassment was not entertained by the police. The Delhi University student wanted to lodge a complaint against male students who allegedly sexually harassed her on the college campus. According to the police, there was a lack of an appropriate penal section under which they could register such a complaint. In it, the HC bench also allowed the petitioner to maintain anonymity and directed that the cause title would read, Anamika versus Union of India & Ors. The bench also stated that the Supreme Court's National Legal Services Authority of India (NALSA) judgment of 2014 was gender neutral.

8. Which toll-free helpline has been launched by NHRC to file complaint through CSC?

- [A] 14433
- [B] 14432
- [C] 14434
- [D] 14435

Correct Answer: A [14433]

Notes:

Justice (retired) H L Dattu, the Chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), has recently launched a toll-free number — 14433 — and also a facility to file complaints through Common Service Centre (CSC) at the Manav Adhikar Bhawan, New Delhi. The toll-free number would be available only during the office hours of the NHRC. The commission has shortlisted 750 CSC with at least one each in a district. The service will be expanded to all the CSCs in a phased manner. The NHRC is an autonomous public body constituted on 12th October 1993 under the Protection of Human Rights Ordinance of 28 September 1993. It is responsible for the protection and promotion of human rights, defined by the Act as "rights relating to life, liberty, equality and dignity of the individual guaranteed by the Constitution or embodied in the International Covenants".

9. Which country has announced 2019 as the 'Year of Active Investment and Social Development' in backdrop of wider business with India?

- [A] Kyrgyzstan

- [B] Tajikistan
- [C] Turkmenistan
- [D] Uzbekistan

Correct Answer: D [Uzbekistan]

Notes:

President of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoye has recently announced 2019 as the 'Year of Active Investment and Social Development' in the backdrop of proposed investments from India to boost economy of this Central Asian country, in his annual address to the Parliament. The President stated that concrete measures will be taken on creating an open economy, radically improving the business environment and investment climate, reducing the state presence in the economy. Activities on improving the health of the population will continue at a new level. He further stressed that investment was the driver of economy, new technologies, advanced experience and highly qualified specialists come with investments into all sectors and regions.

10. Who is the head of the government committee that suggested AICTE to stop setting up new engineering colleges from 2020?

- [A] Bhaskar Ramamurthy
- [B] B V R Mohan Reddy
- [C] Devang Vipin Khakhar
- [D] Partha Pratim Chakraborty

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Correct Answer: B [B V R Mohan Reddy]

Notes:

A government committee, headed by IIT-Hyderabad chairman B V R Mohan Reddy, has advised the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) to stop setting up new colleges from 2020 and review the creation of new capacity every two years after that. The panel has also suggested that no additional seats should be approved in traditional engineering areas such as mechanical, electrical, civil and electronics and that institutes should be encouraged to convert current capacity in traditional disciplines to emerging new technologies. This recommendation has been justified on the ground that current capacity utilisation in traditional disciplines is just 40% as opposed to 60% seat occupancy in branches such as computer science and engineering, aerospace engineering and mechatronics. For the same reason, the committee has urged the AICTE to introduce undergraduate engineering programmes exclusively for artificial intelligence, blockchain, robotics, quantum computing, data sciences, cyber security and 3D printing and design.

11. ISRO has launched which initiative with students to engage them on space science activities?

- [A] Space
- [B] Sansad
- [C] Samwad
- [D] Sangrah

Correct Answer: C [Samwad]

Notes:

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has recently launched Samwad with Students as part of its outreach programme. The Indian Space agency will engage youngsters across the country in activities concerning space science under this programme. The new conversation mission will inspire students cutting across schools and colleges. During the inauguration in Bengaluru, 40 students and 10 teachers from select schools interacted with ISRO Chairman Dr. K Sivan about the Indian Space Programme and their benefits to the common man.

12. Who has taken charge as the first Chief Justice of Telangana High Court?

- [A] T B Radhakrishnan
- [B] Chagari Praveen Kumar
- [C] Sarasa Venkatanarayana Bhatti
- [D] Akula Venkata Sesha Sai

Correct Answer: A [T B Radhakrishnan]

Notes:

Justice Thottathil B. Radhakrishnan has taken charge as first Chief Justice of Telangana High Court. Governor ESL Narasimhan administered the oath to him at a ceremony held at Raj Bhavan. The separate High Court for Telangana came into existence on 1st January 2, 2019 after the bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh in 2014. Later, Governor Narasimhan administered oath to Justice Chagari Praveen Kumar as the first Chief Justice of Andhra Pradesh High Court in Vijayawada on the same day. With this, the separate high courts for Telugu states became functional.

13. Which state's women has recently formed 620-km-long 'wall' to uphold gender equality?

- [A] Tamil Nadu
- [B] Karnataka
- [C] Kerala
- [D] Odisha

Correct Answer: C [Kerala]

Notes:

In Kerala, around 50 lakhs of women assembled under the aegis of the Left Democratic Front (LDF) to create an almost unbroken human wall that stretched 620 km from Kasaragod in north Kerala to Thiruvananthapuram in the south on 1st January 2019. Marshalled by the Kerala government and a section of Hindu organisations, the wall was organised against the backdrop of the Supreme Court verdict on Sabarimala. The programme ended with a joint pledge to harness the power of renaissance principles to insulate society against revanchist forces that sought to push Kerala back to the dark ages of casteism and discriminatory religious practices. The event was organised by the ruling CPI(M) along with over 176 other socio-political organisations, including the CPI, Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam and the Kerala Pulayar Maha Sabha.

14. Who has been sworn-in as new president of Brazil?

- [A] Michel Temer
- [B] Fernando Haddad
- [C] Jair Bolsonaro
- [D] Hamilton Mourao

Correct Answer: C [Jair Bolsonaro]

Notes:

On 1st January 2019, Jair Bolsonaro has been sworn-in as new president of Brazil for a four-year term. He is a member of the Social Liberal Party (PSL) and succeeded Michel Temer. Bolsonaro won the presidential election by a wide margin against Fernando Haddad of the left-wing Workers Party on 28 October 2018.

15. Which of the following countries have officially quit UNESCO?

- [A] Russia and Qatar
- [B] Japan and UK
- [C] United States and Israel
- [D] Iran and Qatar

Correct Answer: C [United States and Israel]

Notes:

The United States and Israel officially quit the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) with the close of 2018. The countries had announced their decisions in 2017 of withdrawing from the agency, accusing it of bias against Israel. America has demanded fundamental reform in UNESCO, which was co-founded by it after World War II to foster peace UNESCO also works to improve education for girls, promote understanding of the Holocaust's horrors, and to defend media freedom. The withdrawals will not greatly impact UNESCO financially since it has been dealing with a funding slash ever since 2011 when both Israel and the US stopped paying dues after Palestine was voted in as a member state. Israel joined the agency in 1949. It is best known for its World Heritage program, which designates cultural sites and aims to preserve traditions.

16. India has cut import tax on crude palm oil sourced from ASEAN nations from 44% to __?

- [A] 38%

[B] 40%

[C] 42%

[D] 36%

Correct Answer: B [40%]**Notes:**

India has slashed import taxes on crude and refined palm oil sourced from Southeast Asian (ASEAN) countries after a request from suppliers. According to the official notification, the duty on crude palm oil was lowered to 40% from 44%, while the tax on refined palm oil was cut to 45% from 54% if imported from Malaysia and to 50%, if purchased from Indonesia or other member-nations of ASEAN. India imports 60% — 15.5 million tonnes annually — of its edible oil requirements, largely from Malaysia, Indonesia, Argentina and Ukraine. The reduction will lead to higher imports of palm oil by the world's biggest edible oil buyer in coming months as it would narrow the difference between the tropical vegetable oil and competitors such as soyabean oil and sunflower oil.

17. Who is the recipient of the 2019 National Nritya Shiromani Award?

[A] Gudiseva Shyam Prasad

[B] Upmaka Durga Prasad Rao

[C] Talluri Sunil Chowdaryu

[D] Anindita Neogy Anaam

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Correct Answer: D [Anindita Neogy Anaam]**Notes:**

On January 2, US-based Kathak exponent Anindita Neogy Anaam has been honoured with the National Nritya Shiromani award for promoting the dance form across the world. The award was conferred on her in Cuttack at the 10th Cuttack Mahotsav : International Dance and Music festival in Odisha. The fest is organised by Utkal Yuva Sanskrutik Sangh (UYSS) in association with Cuttack district administration. Anindita Anaam is also recipient of prestigious national awards like Jayadev Rashtriya Puraskar and Bidagdha Nartaki Samman for her outstanding achievement in the preservation and promotion of Indian art in India and abroad.

18. The Union Government has launched Ujjwala sanitary napkin initiative in which of the following states?

[A] Uttar Pradesh

[B] Odisha

[C] Jharkhand

[D] Haryana

Correct Answer: B [Odisha]**Notes:**

Union Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan has recently launched the Ujjwala Sanitary Napkin initiative in Bhubaneswar to improve female hygiene and health and employability of rural women. Under the new initiative, 100 manufacturing units will be set up at Common Service Centres (CSCs) covering 93 blocks in the State at an estimated cost of Rs 2.94 crore. Each manufacturing unit will employ five or six Ujjwala beneficiaries with an aim to provide employment to nearly 600 women across all districts. The women will first receive training in manufacturing and sale of sanitary napkins. Each facility will have the capacity to produce 1200-2000 pads per day and will have a sterilisation room to ensure that the napkins are sterilised before they are packed for use. The sanitary napkins will be priced at Rs 42 per pack of eight pads. This initiative will provide women with an opportunity to earn between Rs 5,000 and Rs 15,000 per month. Thus, the Central scheme will be a counter to the Odisha government's Khushi scheme, in which sanitary napkins are provided free of cost to female students of government and government-aided schools in the state.

19. Fehmarn Belt Fixed Link, which is in news recently, is the proposed tunnel to connect islands of which of the following countries?

[A] Denmark and Germany

[B] France and Italy

[C] UK and Spain

[D] Brazil and Chile

Correct Answer: A [Denmark and Germany]

Notes:

Recently, German authorities approved an \$8 billion rail and road tunnel linking Denmark and Germany, despite environmental objections. The project comprises a four-lane motorway and a two-track railway. It is part-funded by the European Union (EU). The 19 km Fehmarn Belt Fixed Link is a planned immersed tunnel that is proposed to connect the Danish island of Lolland with the German island of Fehmarn. It was due to be completed in 2024, but has been delayed by environmental protests in Germany. The link would cross over the Fehmarn Belt in the Baltic Sea – 18 km wide – hence providing a direct link by railway and highway between northern Germany and Lolland, and thence to the Danish island of Zealand and Copenhagen. Once completed, it will become the world's longest road and rail tunnel, and will open new socio-economic opportunities on both sides of the border.

20. Who has been appointed as new Chairman of the Railway Board?

[A] Satish Jain

[B] Ashish Kumar

[C] Vinod Kumar Yadav

[D] Pooja Badola

Correct Answer: C [Vinod Kumar Yadav] bharath.kumar | bharathauto94@gmail.com |

Notes:

Vinod Kumar Yadav, the South Central Railway (SCR) general manager, has been appointed as Chairman of the Railway Board under the Ministry of Railways and ex-officio Principal Secretary to the Government of India. He succeeded Ashwani Lohani. Yadav led SCR to a creditable performance during his tenure as General Manager. The Zone recorded its best ever financial performance in the fiscal year 2017-18, grossing Rs 13,673 crore of originating earnings. SCR won the highest number of performance efficiency shields (six) among all Zones in 2017-18, thereby earning recognition with the highest honour, Pandit Gobind Vallabh Pant Shield for overall performance. Commencing his career on Indian Railways as Assistant Electrical Engineer in February 1982, he held several important executive and managerial positions in Indian Railways.

21. Which European country has recently introduced GAFA Tax on Global Internet, Technology Firm?

[A] Sweden

[B] France

[C] Italy

[D] Germany

Correct Answer: B [France]

Notes:

France has recently introduced a new "GAFA tax" – named after the large internet and technology companies viz. Google, Apple, Facebook and Amazon – to ensure the global giants pay a fair share of taxes on their massive businesses in Europe. The so-called GAFA tax targeting major digital firms comes into force on 1st January 2019. Some other EU member states such as Britain, Spain and Italy are also working on national versions of a digital tax, with Singapore and India also planning their own schemes.

22. Which Indian bowler has become the highest International Wicket-Taker in 2018?

[A] Mohammed Shami

[B] Kuldeep Yadav

[C] Jasprit Bumrah

[D] Ravichandran Ashwin

Correct Answer: C [Jasprit Bumrah]

Notes:

Indian pacer Jasprit Bumrah has become the highest international wicket-taker all formats in the calendar year 2018. He took 48 wickets in 9 Tests, 22 wickets in 13 ODIs and 8 wickets in 8 T20I matches. Hence, a total of 78 wickets in 2018 was taken by Bumrah. He surpassed South Africa's Kagiso Rabada's tally of 77 wickets to reach the milestone. While on the third position is Bumrah's countryman Kuldeep

Yadav who took 76 scalps.

23. What is the theme of the 106th edition of Indian Science Congress (ISC-2019)?

- [A] Reaching the Unreached through Science and Technology
- [B] Science and Technology for Human Development
- [C] Future India: Science & Technology
- [D] Innovations in Science & Technology

Correct Answer: C [Future India: Science & Technology]

Notes:

The 106th Indian Science Congress (ISC-2019) has been inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Lovely Professional University (LPU) in Jalandhar, Punjab from 3rd January 2019. The theme of the 5-day science congress is 'Future India: Science & Technology'. Approx 30,000 delegates, including 300 top scientists and Nobel Laureates from across world are attending the congress. In it, around 100 plus conferences and events of scientific and technology origin will also be held, where eminent personalities from DRDO, ISRO, DST, AIIMS, UGC, AICTE, and many elite universities of the USA, UK, India and other countries will participate. The event will play a pivotal role in stimulating scientific research effort and raising the scientific temperament in the country and the world. There will also be four parallel mega events, including the children's science conference; women's science conference; science communicators' meet; and, science exhibition. The exhibition will see participation from the national and international science companies, especially from the US, Australia, Germany and Switzerland.

24. Recently, the Union cabinet has approved merger of the Vijaya Bank and Dena Bank with Bank of Baroda (BoB). In terms of market value, what would be rank of the combined merger bank?

- [A] 1st
- [B] 3rd
- [C] 4th
- [D] 2nd

Correct Answer: B [3rd]

Notes:

On 2nd January 2019, the Union Cabinet approved the merger of Vijaya Bank and Dena Bank with Bank of Baroda (BoB). With the merger, BoB will become the third largest bank after State Bank of India and ICICI Bank. The move will help create a strong globally competitive bank with economies of scale and enable the realization of wide-ranging synergies, leveraging of networks and low-cost deposits and substantial rise in customer base and operational efficiency. The scheme will come into effect from 1st of April this year. The pay and allowances and services of the employees of all three banks will remain same as earlier. As per the Scheme of Amalgamation, the shareholders of Vijaya Bank will get 402 equity shares of BoB for every 1,000 shares held. In case of Dena Bank, its shareholders will get 110 shares for every 1,000 shares of BoB.

25. The Union Cabinet has approved amendment to which of the following acts to recognize trade unions?

- [A] Trade Unions Act of 1935
- [B] Trade Unions Act of 1947
- [C] Trade Unions Act of 1966
- [D] Trade Unions Act of 1926

Correct Answer: D [Trade Unions Act of 1926]

Notes:

The Union Cabinet has recently approved amendment to the Trade Unions Act of 1926 to make provisions regarding Recognition of Trade Unions. The amendment provides for insertion of section 10A in the principal Act to power centre and state governments to recognize trade unions and federation of Trade Unions at Central as well as State level. The proposed bill will also provides for insertion of clause (ba) in Section 29(2) of the Act, which empowers the centre and states to make regulations for manner of recognition of trade unions and deciding disputes in this regard. After the amendment Act is passed, the manner of recognition will be prescribed in the regulations. The present act provides for only registration of trade unions. Currently, there is no provision for recognition of unions in the Act.

26. The Veer Savarkar International Airport has recently declared as an authorized Immigration Check post. It is located in which of the following UTs / states?

- [A] Daman & Diu
- [B] Andaman and Nicobar Islands
- [C] Maharashtra
- [D] West Bengal

Correct Answer: B [Andaman and Nicobar Islands]

Notes:

The Veer Savarkar International Airport in Port Blair has been declared as an authorized Immigration Check post for entry into/exit from India with valid travel documents for all classes of passengers. It was declared under sub-rule (b) of rule 3 of the Passport (Entry into India) Rules of 1950. This decision of the Union Government will open up the Port Blair Airport for direct international flight and immigration facilities. For this purpose, the Superintendent of Police (CID), Andaman and Nicobar Police has been appointed as the 'Civil Authority' at Port Blair airport for the purpose of the immigration check post. The Andaman and Nicobar Islands is a union territory and comes under the administrative control of the home ministry. Recently, the three islands of the Andaman and Nicobar archipelago have been renamed as a tribute to Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. These are as follows: the Ross Island was renamed as Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Dweep, the Neil Island as Shaheed Dweep and the Havelock Island as Swaraj Dweep.

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27. Justice AK Sikri has become the new Executive Chairman of National Legal Services Authority (NALSA), which of the following is not a function of NALSA?

- [A] Speedy disposal of cases
- [B] Free legal services to the weaker sections
- [C] Organise Lok Adalats
- [D] Deals with grievances related to RTI requests

Correct Answer: D [Deals with grievances related to RTI requests]

Notes:

President Ram Nath Kovind nominated Justice AK Sikri as the Executive Chairman of National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) with effect from December 31, 2018. The post got vacant after the retirement of Justice Madan B Lokur. The NALSA was constituted on 5th December 1995 under the authority of the Legal Services Authorities Act 1987. Its purpose is to provide free legal services to the weaker sections of the society and to organise Lok Adalats for amicable settlement of disputes. The Chief Justice of India is the Patron-in-Chief, while second seniormost judge of Supreme Court of India (SCI) traditionally takes over as the Executive Chairman of the Authority. The prime objective of NALSA is speedy disposal of cases and reducing the burden of judiciary.

28. Who is the head of the RBI panel on MSME revival?

- [A] U K Sinha
- [B] Ram Mohan Mishra
- [C] Bindu Ananth
- [D] Abhiman Das

Correct Answer: A [U K Sinha]

Notes:

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has appointed an 8-member expert committee headed by former SEBI chairman U.K. Sinha to comprehensively review and propose long-term solutions for the economic and financial sustainability of the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector. The MSME sector has been facing stress due to the demonetisation exercise and implementation of GST. The panel would review the current institutional framework in place to support the MSME sector, and examine the factors affecting the timely and adequate availability of finance to the sector. The panel will also review existing MSME-focussed policies and their impact, and study the global best practices with respect to MSMEs and recommend their adoption in India. The committee will submit its report by the end of June 2019.

29. Who has been honoured with the Kabi Samrat Upendra Bhanja National Award for Lifetime

Achievement in Literature?

- [A] Nabaghana Parida
- [B] Suresh Chandra
- [C] Yashwardhan Sinha
- [D] Manoj Das

Correct Answer: D [Manoj Das]

Notes:

Prof. Manoj Das, an eminent English and Odia Litterateur, received the Kabi Samrat Upendra Bhanja National Award for Lifetime Achievement in Literature. This ceremony was instituted by the Berhampur University, Odisha. During the 53rd foundation day ceremony, the university also honoured noted folk dance guru Nabaghana Parida with Dakshin Odisha Loksanakruti Samman.

30. Which state government has launched Krishak Bandhu scheme to address farmers distress?

- [A] Odisha
- [B] Karnataka
- [C] Jharkhand
- [D] West Bengal

Correct Answer: D [West Bengal]

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Notes:

The West Bengal government has launched Krishak Bandhu scheme to provide financial assistance to farmers and landless labourers. The state government will give an annual financial assistance (cash dole) of Rs 5,000 per acre in two instalments – one during kharif and another during rabi – for a single crop. Farmers can take the financial assistance at one go too. Farmers can take the financial assistance at one go too. Under the scheme, the state government also announced a life insurance cover of Rs 2, 00,000 in case of death, irrespective of the cause, of an earning family member (farmer) aged between 18 and 60 years. Farmers need not pay any premium for availing this life insurance cover. The registration of farmers and share-croppers under this scheme will start February onwards. Benefits will accrue from January 1, 2019.

31. Who has been appointed as Chairman of Ordnance Factory Board (OFB)?

- [A] Ajay Jain
- [B] Kuldeep Saxena
- [C] Hemant Bhargava
- [D] Saurabh Kumar

Correct Answer: D [Saurabh Kumar]

Notes:

Saurabh Kumar, a 1982-batch Indian Ordnance Factory Service officer, has taken charge as new Director General of Ordnance Factories (DGOF) and chairman of the Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) in Kolkata. An expert in the manufacture of ordnance, Kumar was on deputation to the Ministry of Defense as the director of planning and coordination from 2002 to 2009. During this period, he was involved in drafting the Indian offset policy for defence purchases and the 'Make' procedure in the Defence Procurement Procedure of 2003-04. He was also instrumental in piloting the proposals and obtaining the approval of the government for setting up two new greenfield ordnance factories at Nalanda and Korwa in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh respectively.

32. The 3rd edition of the National Entrepreneurship Awards (NEA) hosted by which Union ministry?

- [A] Ministry of Corporate Affairs
- [B] Ministry of Information and Broadcasting
- [C] Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship
- [D] Ministry of Human Resource Development

Correct Answer: C [Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship]

Notes:

The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) hosted third edition of the National Entrepreneurship Awards (NEA) in New Delhi on January 4, 2019. The awards aim to recognize and honor outstanding young first-generation entrepreneurs and those who have contributed immensely in building the entrepreneurship ecosystem. Total of 43 awards will be presented this year. These include 39 awards for Young Entrepreneurs in different sectors and four awards for Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Builders. The winners will receive trophy, certificate and cash prizes ranging from Rs. 5 to 10 lakhs. There are special awards for women, persons with disability, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and entrepreneurs from areas with limited opportunities. The NEA is a platform focused on driving innovation, ushering in a positive change for youth in entrepreneurship across all the industries. The awards will inspire and promote growth of entrepreneurs in India.

33. On which date, the 2018 World Braille Day (WBD) was observed recently?

- [A] January 3
- [B] January 4
- [C] January 2
- [D] January 5

Correct Answer: B [January 4]

Notes:

The World Braille Day (WBD) is observed every year on January 4 to remember the birth anniversary of Louis Braille, the inventor of Braille – for the people with visual disabilities. Louis Braille was born on 4th January 1809 in the town of Coupvray in northern France. At the age of just 3, he lost his both eyes in an accident. This resulted into the invention of the 6 dots- which is popularly known as braille. The day is also observed to raise awareness on the importance of Braille for approximately 1.3 billion people living with some form of distance or near vision impairment. It is a means of realizing fully the human rights of visually-impaired and partially-sighted people, and bringing written language to the forefront as a critical prerequisite for promoting fundamental freedoms. Around the world, 39 million people are blind, and another 253 million have some sort of vision impairment.

34. The Union Cabinet has approved the introduction of a Bill to modify the list of Scheduled Tribes (STs) of Arunachal Pradesh. Which of the following tribes will be included in the list?

- [A] Mishmi-Kaman
- [B] Idu
- [C] Taraon
- [D] All of the above

Correct Answer: D [All of the above]

Notes:

The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the introduction of a Bill to modify the list of Scheduled Tribes (STs) of Arunachal Pradesh. Now, the bill – Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 2018 – will be introduced in the Parliament for certain amendments in the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950. The bill proposes deletion of the Abor tribe from the state's ST list "as it is the same as Adi" tribe. The bill seeks to include the Mishmi-Kaman (Miju Mishmi), Idu (Mishmi) and Taraon (Digaru Mishmi) tribes in the list. It also proposes inclusion of "Monpa, Memba, Sartang, Sajolong in lieu of the Momba" tribe. The Nocte, Tangsa, Tutusa and Wancho tribes would replace the words "any Naga tribe" in the state's ST list. As there is no tribe called "Khampti", the bill replaces it with "Tai Khamti" on the list.

35. Who has been conferred with ISRS National Geospatial Award for Excellence-2017 (LTA Award)?

- [A] Jayanta Kumar Ghosh
- [B] Manorhar Reddy
- [C] Hardeep Singh Puri
- [D] Pon Radhakrishnan

Correct Answer: A [Jayanta Kumar Ghosh]

Notes:

Prof. Jayanta Kumar Ghosh of IIT Roorkee was conferred with ISRS National Geospatial Award for Excellence-2017 (Life Time Achievement Award) at the Space Application Centre in Ahmedabad. He won

the award for his contribution towards the development of geospatial science and applications. The award comprised a citation, a medal and Rs 1 lakh. The Indian Society for Remote Sensing (ISRS) is an organization known in the area of space science, remote sensing and geo-spatial technology.

36. Which city is the venue of the 2019 Indian Panorama Film Festival (IPFF)?

- [A] Lucknow
- [B] Panaji
- [C] Pune
- [D] New Delhi

Correct Answer: D [New Delhi]

Notes:

The Indian Panorama Film Festival (IPFF) has started at Siri Fort Auditorium II, New Delhi from 4th January. The 10-day Festival is being organized by the Directorate of Film Festivals, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting (I&B). The directors of the opening feature film 'Olu' and of the opening non-feature film 'Kharvas' viz. Shri Shaji N Karun and Shri Aditya Suhas Jambhale were presented at the inauguration of the fest. All the films selected under the Indian Panorama section in the 49th International Film Festival of India (IFFI-2018) will be screened during the Festival. The entry for the Festival is free and seating is on the first-come-first-served basis.

37. Who has been appointed acting Chairman of LIC?

- [A] Sunita Sharma
- [B] B Venugopal
- [C] Hemant Bhargava
- [D] Usha Sangwan

Correct Answer: C [Hemant Bhargava]

Notes:

Hemant Bhargava, the senior-most MD at LIC, has been appointed acting Chairman of LIC. The move comes after VK Sharma retired from the top job at LIC on 31st December 2018. In order to select new chairman and one MD, selection process will be conducted by Banks Board Bureau (BBB) and 8 officials will be interviewed for both the posts on January 4 in Delhi. One MD post was vacant since Usha Sangwan retired on September 30. The top management of LIC consists of chairman and four MDs.

38. CH Lokanath, who passed away recently, was the veteran stage and cine artist of which language?

- [A] Tamil
- [B] Kannada
- [C] Telugu
- [D] Odia

Correct Answer: B [Kannada]

Notes:

C. H. Lokanath (91), a noted Indian Kannada language veteran stage and cine artist, has passed away in Bengaluru, Karnataka on 31st December 2018. He had acted in more than 1000 plays and 650 films. He is affectionately addressed as "Uncle Lokanath" or "Uppinakayi" by the industry people. Some of his noted characters he has played are: Galileo in "Galileo", Rajaram in "Aspota", Dr. Faustus in "Dr. Faustus", Dushtabudhi in "Chandrasahasa" and many such plays. His most famous films include "Bhootayyana Maga Ayyu", "Collegu Ranga", "Hosa Neeru" and Mane Mane Kathe. He has even acted in several episodes of Malgudi Days.

39. Which of the following structures has/have been declared as Monuments of national importance in 2018 by Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)?

- [A] Neemrana Baori in Rajasthan
- [B] Haveli of Agha Khan in Agra
- [C] Old High Court Building in Nagpur
- [D] All of the above

Correct Answer: D [All of the above]

Notes:

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) declared six structures to the list of monuments of national importance in 2018. These are – the 125-year-old Old High Court Building in Nagpur (Maharashtra), two Mughal-era monuments in Agra — Haveli of Agha Khan and Hathi Khana, the ancient Neemrana Baori in Rajasthan's Alwar district; the Group of Temples at Ranipur Jharail in Odisha's Bolangir district; and the Vishnu Temple in Kotali, Pithoragarh district, Uttarkhand. According to the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act of 1958, an "Ancient Monument means any structure, erection or monument, or any tumulus or place of interment, or any cave, rock-sculpture, inscription or monolith which is of historical, archaeological or artistic interest and which has been in existence for not less than 100 years". There were 3,686 centrally protected monuments/sites under the ASI in the country; the number has now increased to 3,693. Uttar Pradesh (745 monuments/sites), Karnataka (506) and Tamil Nadu (413) have the highest number of ASI-maintained sites.

40. Who has been appointed as the new Chief Justice of Pakistan?

- [A] Asif Saeed Khosa
- [B] Nasir-ul-Mulk
- [C] Jawwad S. Khawaja
- [D] Anwar Zaheer Jamali

Correct Answer: A [Asif Saeed Khosa]

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Notes:

On 2 January 2019, President Arif Alvi appointed Justice Asif Saeed Khosa as the new Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP). Khosa will succeed Mian Saqib Nisar on 18th January and will remain at seat till December 20, 2019. The Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) is the head of the court system of Pakistan (the judiciary branch of government) and the chief judge of the Supreme Court of Pakistan. He is responsible for supervising federal judicial policies, and conducting judicial business in the Supreme Court.

41. The tropical cyclone 'Pabuk' has recently occurred in which of the following countries?

- [A] Thailand
- [B] Indonesia
- [C] Japan
- [D] Mauritius

Correct Answer: A [Thailand]

Notes:

In Thailand, Tropical storm Pabuk caused floods and blackouts leaving nearly 30,000 people in evacuation shelters across the southern part of the country on January 5, 2019. Pabuk packed winds of up to 75km an hour and brought heavy rains and storm surges as it lashed the entire south of the kingdom. It is expected to be the worst storm to hit the region in 30 years. The storm was downgraded to a depression early today as it moved into the Andaman Sea. Meanwhile, 'yellow' alert has been issued for the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. As per the latest data, no warning has been issued for Odisha but due to cyclonic activities near the Andaman Islands, weather in the eastern Indian state will be cloudy and dry. IMD has predicted heavy rainfall over the Andaman Islands from the evening of January 5. People in the Andaman Islands have been advised to remain in safe places and IMD has advised fishermen to stay out of the sea.

42. The Central Government has given nod for Centre for Classical Language in which city of Kerala?

- [A] Aluva
- [B] Tirur
- [C] Munnar
- [D] Guruvayur

Correct Answer: B [Tirur]

Notes:

The Union Ministry of Human Resource Development (HRD) has recently approved the establishment of

a Centre for Classical Language at the Thunchath Ezhuthachan Malayalam University in Tirur, Kerala. The Ministry has communicated the decision to the Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysuru. In view of this, the State government would be required to prepare a detailed project report and sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Ministry. The aim of the proposed centre is to study and research and other aspects of Malayalam language & will prove beneficial in implementing various projects for Malayalam language development. The centre would also assist the Malayalam University in its various initiatives.

43. Under the Right to Education (RTE) amendment Bill 2018, which of the following measures is/are taken by the Parliament?

- [A] To abolish no-detention policy till class 8
- [B] Enable state governments to allow schools to fail students
- [C] Provides regular examination in classes V and VIII
- [D] All of the above

Correct Answer: D [All of the above]

Notes:

Parliament has passed the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (Amendment) Bill, 2018, with the Rajya Sabha approving it on 3rd January 2019. The bill seeks to amend a law to abolish the 'no detention policy' till Class VIII by enabling state governments to allow schools to fail students. The Lok Sabha had already passed the bill seeking to further amend the Right to Education (RTE) Act of 2009 to abolish the no-detention policy in schools on July 2018. Under the current provisions of the RTE Act, no student can be detained till class 8 and all students are promoted to the next grade. As per the amendment, it would be left to the States to decide whether to continue the no-detention policy. HRD Minister Prakash Javadekar assured the Rajya Sabha that no child will be excluded from school in case he or she fails. The Bill provides for a regular examination in classes V and VIII and if the child fails, he or she shall be given additional opportunity for re-examination in two months' time.

44. Which country has recently signed Asia Reassurance Initiative Act (ARIA) Into Law?

- [A] Russia
- [B] United States
- [C] China
- [D] France

Correct Answer: B [United States]

Notes:

U.S. President Donald J. Trump has recently signed the Asia Reassurance Initiative Act (ARIA) into law. The act seeks to establish a multifaceted U.S. strategy to increase U.S. security, economic interests, and values in the Indo-Pacific region. Specifically, the ARIA authorises a spending of US\$1.5 billion over a five year period to enhance cooperation with America's strategic regional allies in East and Southeast Asia. The act will pave the way to develop a long-term strategic vision and a comprehensive, multifaceted, and principled United States policy for the Indo-Pacific region, and for other purposes. Hence, the act is designed to counter the encroaching influence and growing threat from China, and to reinvigorate US leadership in the region.

45. Which Indian mountaineer has become the world's first female Amputee to scale Antarctica's Highest Peak?

- [A] Malavath Purna
- [B] Gurmayum Anita Devi
- [C] Arunima Sinha
- [D] Santosh Yadav

Correct Answer: C [Arunima Sinha]

Notes:

Indian mountaineer Dr. Arunima Sinha has become the world's first female Amputee to scale Antarctica's Highest Peak – Mount Vinson on 4th January 2019. Apart from this, she was also the world's first woman amputee to climb Mount Everest in 2013. Sinha was a national level volleyball player who was pushed from a running train by some robbers in 2011 while she was resisting them. As a result, one of her legs had to be amputated below the knee. Now, her aim is to climb all the continents' highest

peaks and hoist the National Flag of India. She has already scaled five peaks — Mt Everest, Mt Kilimanjaro, Mt Ebrus, Mt Kosciuszko and Mt Aconcagua.

46. Which of the following has become the India's largest Asset Management Company (AMC)?

- [A] Aditya Birla Sun Life Mutual Fund
- [B] SBI Mutual Fund
- [C] ICICI Prudential MF
- [D] HDFC Mutual Fund

Correct Answer: D [HDFC Mutual Fund]

Notes:

HDFC Mutual Fund has surpassed ICICI Prudential MF to become the India's largest Asset Management Company (AMC). As per the latest data available with Association of Mutual funds in India (Amfi), HDFC MF manages assets worth Rs 3.35 lakh crore, while ICICI Prudential MF stood at Rs 3.08 lakh crore as of December 2018. MFs are investment vehicles made up of a pool of funds collected from a large number of investors and invest in stocks, bonds and money market instruments, among others.

47. Which Indian organisation has allowed custodial services in commodity market?

- [A] RBI
- [B] SEBI
- [C] IRDA
- [D] SIDBI

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Correct Answer: B [SEBI]

Notes:

Markets regulator Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has recently allowed custodial services in the commodity derivatives market. Under the new framework, existing custodians will be permitted to add commodities as an asset class and provide physical delivery of both the securities and commodities. Currently, the regulation on the custodian of securities provides safekeeping of securities, gold or gold related instruments, title deeds of real estate and incidental services. However, it is not applicable for protection of goods, which are underlying assets of commodity derivatives. To enable participation of institutional investors in commodity derivatives market, the regulator has made necessary amendments in the custodian regulations so as to provide for requisite custodial services. The responsibility of custodians will not be limited to holding of securities but would also include holding of goods. The move is aimed at enabling the participation of institutional investors such as mutual funds and portfolio managers in the commodity derivatives market.

48. Dibyendu Palit, who passed away recently, was the renowned writer of which language?

- [A] Bengali
- [B] Urdu
- [C] Tamil
- [D] Malayalam

Correct Answer: A [Bengali]

Notes:

Dibyendu Palit (79), the renowned Bengali writer and Sahitya Akademi awardee, has passed away in Kolkata, West Bengal on 3rd January 2019. Born in Bhagalpur in Bihar in 1939, Palit had studied comparative literature in Jadavpur University and his first short story 'Chhandopatan' was published in 1955 in the Sunday edition of Anandabazar Patrika. It was followed by his first novel 'Sindhu Baroan' published in 1959. He was awarded the 'Bankim Purashkar' for 'Dheu' in 1990 and 'Ananda Purashkar' in 1984 for 'Sahojodha'. He was conferred the Sahitya Akademi for his novel 'Anubhab' in 1998.

49. The Global Healthcare Summit (GHS) 2019 will be held in which of the following cities?

- [A] New Delhi
- [B] Hyderabad
- [C] Cuttack
- [D] Indore

Correct Answer: B [Hyderabad]

Notes:

The 13th edition of Global Healthcare Summit (GHS-2019) will be held in Hyderabad, Telangana from July 21 to 24. The summit is being organized in partnership with the Global Association of Physicians of Indian Origin. It would have over a 100 speakers, who would share their expertise on clinical practice. The summit would have an international research competition for which the American Association of Physicians with Indian Origin (AAPI) would work in collaboration with a leading academic medical college in Hyderabad. The competition would be for medical students, residents, fellows and junior doctors. It would have five categories for abstract submission, including basic sciences, hospital administration, innovation, AYUSH and clinical science and patient-based research. A medical quiz competition for medical students would also be held during the summit. Winners would be given Rs. 5 lakh, Rs. 3 lakh and Rs. 1 lakh for first, second and third prizes respectively. More than 500 physicians are expected to attend the summit.

50. Which city is the venue of the 80th National Table Tennis Championship 2019?

- [A] New Delhi
- [B] Cuttack
- [C] Hyderabad
- [D] Kochi

Correct Answer: B [Cuttack]

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Notes:

The 80th National Table Tennis Championship began at Jawaharlal Nehru Indoor Stadium in Cuttack on January 4, 2019. As many as 35 teams, including 550 players from different parts of the country are participating in the mega championship. Medal winners at Commonwealth Games and Asian Games Manika Batra, Senior players like Sharath Kamal, Madhuriba Patkar, Olympian Ankita Das are some of the key players who will be in the limelight during the event. Odisha State Table Tennis Association (OSTTA) is hosting the championships after a gap of 18 years. The event will conclude on January 9.

51. Which of the following railway zones has launched mobile app to help people navigate through Prayagraj city during Kumbh Mela?

- [A] North Eastern Railway
- [B] Northeast Frontier Railway
- [C] North Western Railway
- [D] North Central Railway

Correct Answer: D [North Central Railway]

Notes:

The North Central Railway (NCR) has launched a 'Rail Kumbh Seva Mobile App' to help people navigate through Prayagraj city during Kumbh Mela starting from January 15. The app will also provide information regarding all the 'Mela special' trains that will be run during the period. Additionally, the app will provide a link to the user to buy both unreserved and reserved train tickets. Mr Malviya said, through this app, the users will not only get to know their current location, but will also be able to reach to all railway stations, the mela zone, major hotels, bus stations and other facilities within Prayagraj. A photo gallery, containing pictures of previous Kumbh Melas can also be accessed through the app.

52. Which state has topped ACI's Ease Of Doing Business (EDB) Index 2018?

- [A] Gujarat
- [B] Andhra Pradesh
- [C] Maharashtra
- [D] Delhi

Correct Answer: B [Andhra Pradesh]

Notes:

Andhra Pradesh has topped the 2018 Ease of Doing Business (EDB) Index of Asia Competitiveness Institute (ACI). The ACI team, led by Tan Khee Giap, mentioned that despite Andhra Pradesh's excellent performance in ACI's EDB Index, the government needs to bridge numerous institutional and infrastructural gaps in order to sustain its position in the future. The index ranked economies of 21 states of India. In it, Maharashtra acquired 2nd position, while Delhi came in third place, respectively.

The EDB index is based upon three parameters called ABC – Attractiveness to Investors, Business Friendliness and Competitiveness Policies.

53. Who has become the first Indian business tycoon to be named "Fugitive Economic Offender (FEO)"?

- [A] Mehul Choksi
- [B] Nirav Modi
- [C] Subrata Roy
- [D] Vijay Mallya

Correct Answer: D [Vijay Mallya]

Notes:

Former liquor baron Vijay Mallya has become the first Indian businessman to be declared a Fugitive Economic Offender (FEO) under the newly enacted Fugitive Economic Offenders Act of 2018 by the Special Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) court in Mumbai. The tag now allows the government to confiscate and sold his properties in alleged Rs. 9,000 crore loan default case in India. According to the new law, a FEO is a person against whom an arrest warrant has been issued for his or her involvement in economic offences involving at least Rs. 100 crore or more and has left India to avoid prosecution. Mallya has been accused of defaulting on loan repayments and money laundering and had left India in March 2016. Mallya currently facing extradition from the United Kingdom after a Westminster Magistrates Court in London ordered his return to India to face fraud charges resulting from the collapse of his defunct Kingfisher Airlines. However, the ruling has been challenged in the High Court in the UK.

54. Which African country has recently opened West Asia's largest cathedral in its New Administrative Capital?

- [A] Egypt
- [B] Nigeria
- [C] Ethiopia
- [D] Kenya

Correct Answer: A [Egypt]

Notes:

Egypt has recently opened West Asia's largest cathedral in its New Administrative Capital, 45km east of Cairo. President Abdul Fattah al-Sisi inaugurated the newly-built Cathedral of Nativity and a mosque on the eve of Coptic Christmas in a symbolic message of tolerance in the predominantly Muslim nation. The newly built Al-Fattah Al-Aleem Mosque will be able to accommodate almost twice that of the cathedral, both of which are located in the major development that is the new administrative capital.

55. Rani, who won gold in 78 kg category at Senior National Women's Judo Championship 2019, is the Lady Head constable of which state?

- [A] Jharkhand
- [B] Manipur
- [C] Himachal Pradesh
- [D] Rajasthan

Correct Answer: C [Himachal Pradesh]

Notes:

Lady Head constable Rani of 5th Indian Reserve Battalion (IRB) of Himachal Pradesh Police won a Gold medal in 78 kg category in the Senior National Women's Judo Championship at Visakhapatnam on January 7, 2019. Rani was also declared the best Judoka at the Championship.

56. What is the theme of the 27th New Delhi World Book Fair 2019?

- [A] Books opening the mind. Doors opening the future
- [B] Vivid Bharat – Diverse India
- [C] Readers with Special Needs
- [D] Kathasagara: Celebrating Children's Literature

Correct Answer: C [Readers with Special Needs]

Notes:

The 27th New Delhi World Book Fair has started at Pragati Maidan in New Delhi on January 5 with theme "Readers with Special Needs". The All India Radio (AIR) is the radio partner for book fair. Over 20 countries including Canada, China, Sri Lanka, and the US are participating in the book fair. More than 600 publishers from across the country are participating in the event. The book fair focuses on Readers with Special Needs, to promote the idea of inclusive learning through a series of exhibitions. The timing of the fair is from 11 am to 8 pm and tickets are available at 50 metro stations. The cost of the entry tickets is 30 rupees for adults and 20 rupees for children. There will be free entry for students in school uniform and senior citizens.

57. Which state government has announced interest-free loans of up to Rs 3 lakh for Women Self-Help Groups (WSHG)?

- [A] Odisha
- [B] Chattisgarh
- [C] Madhya Pradesh
- [D] Rajasthan

Correct Answer: A [Odisha]

Notes:

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As part of the Mission Shakti scheme, Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has recently announced interest-free loans of up to Rs 3 lakh for Women Self-Help Groups (WSHGs) in the state. The initiative would benefit around 70 lakh women associated with six lakh SHGs. He also distributed financial assistance of Rs 3,000 each to six lakh WSHGs as part the state government's efforts to digitally empower women. In a bid to strengthen the programme, the Odisha government has also decided to build 'Mission Shakti Home' in each gram panchayat across the state. Besides, the Odisha Chief Minister also announced incentives of Rs 500 per month for anganwadi workers and Rs. 200 for helpers.

58. Which of the following journalists has been conferred with lifetime achievement award by the Mantralaya and Vidhimandal Vartahar Sangh?

- [A] Prajakta Pol
- [B] Vishwas Waghmode
- [C] Dinu Randive
- [D] Mahesh Tiwari

Correct Answer: C [Dinu Randive]

Notes:

Veteran journalist Dinu Randive (93) has been conferred with the lifetime achievement award by the Mantralaya and Vidhimandal Vartahar Sangh, an association of journalists covering Maharashtra legislature and secretariat. Mr Randive started his journalistic career in 1956. He also participated in the freedom struggle, the Sanyukta Maharashtra movement and the Goa liberation movement. Award winners in other categories included Vishwas Waghmode, Mahesh Tiwari and Prajakta Pol.

59. Which state government has recently approved projects to revive mythical Saraswati river?

- [A] Punjab
- [B] Haryana
- [C] Jharkhand
- [D] Uttar Pradesh

Correct Answer: B [Haryana]

Notes:

On 2nd January 2019, the Haryana government approved 11 projects for the rejuvenation of the mythical Saraswati river. The purpose of the projects is to revive the ancient Saraswati river in the state and ensure regular flow of fresh water into it. These include the construction of Somb Saraswati barrage, Saraswati reservoir and Adi Badri dam on Somb river, a tributary of the Yamuna that originates in the Shivalik Hills. The projects were approved at a meeting of the Haryana Saraswati Heritage Development Board (HSHDB) chaired by the chief minister Manohar Lal Khattar. The board also approved construction of bridges at different locations and a Saraswati ghat. The construction of Somb Saraswati

barrage and Saraswati reservoir would enable the storage of 1,000 hectare metres of water. The Haryana plan also involves interlinking of the Markanda river with what is said to be the course of the Saraswati through the Kainthla supply channel.

60. Who is the head of the high-level committee to review the implementation of clause 6 of Assam Accord of 1985?

- [A] Satyendra Garg
- [B] Mukunda Rajbhangshi
- [C] MP Bezbaruah
- [D] Ramesh Borpatra Gohain

Correct Answer: C [MP Bezbaruah]

Notes:

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has set up a high-level committee to look into the successful implementation of Clause 6 of the Assam Accord of 1985. The committee is headed by a retired IAS officer MP Bezbaruah and includes eminent Assamese personalities from various fields. The Committee will suggest measures to be taken to protect Assamese and other indigenous languages of Assam. It will also recommend the appropriate level of reservations in employment under the Government of Assam for the Assamese people. The panel will submit its report within the six months to the Centre. The move comes at a time when the National Register of Citizens (NRC) is being updated and the Centre is trying to introduce a contentious Bill on citizenship. The Clause 6 of the Assam Accord envisages that appropriate constitutional, legislative and administrative safeguards should be provided to protect, preserve and promote the cultural, social, linguistic identity and heritage of the ethnic Assamese.

61. The Union Cabinet has recently approved a reservation at what percentage for 'economically backward' upper castes in government jobs?

- [A] 5%
- [B] 10%
- [C] 6%
- [D] 15%

Correct Answer: B [10%]

Notes:

The Union cabinet has recently approved a 10% reservation in educational institutions and government jobs for economically backward sections in the general category. The constitutional amendment bill will be tabled in Parliament on 8th January 2019, the last day of the Winter Session. The proposed reservation will be over and above the existing 50% reservation enjoyed by the Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and the Other Backward Classes (OBCs), taking the total reservation to 60%. For this, the government will amend Articles 15 and 16 – which are on discrimination and equal opportunity – of the Constitution to implement it. Among the major castes to benefit from the proposed law are Brahmins, Rajputs (Thakurs), Jats, Marathas, Bhumihars, several trading castes, Kapus and Kammas among other upper castes. It would also benefit the poor in other religions. The move is being seen as a step to consolidate upper caste votes just ahead of the general elections. Most Opposition parties called it an election gimmick but are not likely to oppose it.

62. Which Indian organization has recently signed MoU with SAMEER for research in Communication Navigation and Surveillance (CNS)?

- [A] DRDO
- [B] ISRO
- [C] AAI
- [D] BARC

Correct Answer: C [AAI]

Notes:

The Airports Authority of India (AAI) has signed MoU with Society for Applied Microwave Electronics Engineering and Research (SAMEER) for joint research programs in the field of Communication Navigation and Surveillance (CNS). The SAMEER is an autonomous Research and Development (R & D) institute under MeitY. The MoU will provide a platform for Collaborative Research for both the

Organizations to work together. Both the organizations will strive to arrive at a beneficial solution for CNS Systems related R and D activities in the country. The MoU will also provide for the transfer of skill by SAMEER experts in the areas of Radio Frequency, Millimetre Wave and Antenna-related solutions to AAI domain experts; while on the other hand, it will pave way for exposure for the SAMEER researchers to the challenging Aviation field.

63. Who is the head of task force to look into suicides of JNV students?

- [A] Jitendra Nagpal
- [B] Piyush Bindra
- [C] K S Jain
- [D] Preeti Juneza

Correct Answer: A [Jitendra Nagpal]

Notes:

The Union Human Resource Development (HRD) Ministry has constituted the Task Force to look into the issues of suicides of the students in Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas (JNU). Under the Chairmanship of Psychiatrist – Dr Jitendra Nagpal, the task force will look into the circumstances leading to the suicidal deaths of students residing in the hostels of Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas residential schools. It will also suggest ways and means to arrest the trend of suicides by students. Besides, the Ministry has sent a proposal to engage two full time counselors (one male and one female) in each of the 630 functional JNVs to the Department of Expenditure for approval.

64. Who is the recipient of the Ramnath Goenka Excellence in Journalism Award for Investigative Reporting (Print category)?

- [A] Sandhya Ravishankar
- [B] Anand Kumar Patel
- [C] S Vijay Kumar
- [D] Sushant Kumar Singh

Correct Answer: C [S Vijay Kumar]

Notes:

S. Vijay Kumar, Senior Deputy Editor with The Hindu in Chennai, was presented the Ramnath Goenka Excellence in Journalism Award for Investigative Reporting (Print category) for his reports on how taxmen alerted officials about payoffs in the Tamil Nadu gutka scam – but were ignored. The award was presented by Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh at a ceremony in New Delhi on January 7. The award for Investigative Reporting in the broadcast category was won by Anand Kumar Patel of India Today TV. The awards for Political Reporting went to Brajesh Rajput of ABP News Network and Sushant Kumar Singh of the Indian Express. The award in the Environmental Reporting category were presented to Sushil Chandra Bahuguna of NDTV and Sandhya Ravishankar of the online magazine The Wire.

65. Which country's team has clinched the 2019 Hopman Cup title?

- [A] German y
- [B] Switzerland
- [C] France
- [D] England

Correct Answer: B [Switzerland]

Notes:

The Swiss team of Roger Federer and Belinda Bencic has won the 31st edition of the Hopman Cup tournament 2019 in Perth, Australia. They defeated German team of Alexander Zverev and Angelique Kerber 4-0 1-4 4-3 (5-4) in the deciding mixed doubles final. Twenty-time Grand Slam champion Federer is the first player to win three Hopman Cups – twice with Bencic and once with Martina Hingis, in 2001. Beside this, Switzerland became the first team to defend the Hopman Cup. It has been reported that the Hopman Cup will be replaced by an ATP tournament from next year.

66. Which city is the venue of the 2nd edition of Khelo India Youth Games 2019?

- [A] New Delhi
- [B] Kolkata

- [C] Pune
- [D] Lucknow

Correct Answer: C [Pune]

Notes:

In Maharashtra, the 2nd edition of Khelo India Youth Games 2019 will be held in Pune, known as the city of students on January 9. It has already been announced that Youth Olympic Gold Medallist in shooting Manu Bhaker and Saurabh Chaudhari, as well as weight lifter Jeremy Lalrinnunga will be among the cream of India's youth sporting talent competing at these games. Three 10-year-old athletes including footballer Pratima Kumar from Jharkhand, hockey player Lalitlanchungi from Mizoram and West Bengal's 10m air rifle shooter Abhinav Shaw, will pick up their first experience of competing in a large-scale multi-discipline event.

67. The Union Government has amalgamated which of the following Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) into a single RRB?

- [A] Punjab Gramin Bank and Sarva UP Gramin Bank
- [B] Malwa Gramin Bank and Allahabad UP Gramin Bank
- [C] Sarva UP Gramin Bank and Gramin Bank of Aryavart
- [D] Punjab Gramin Bank, Malwa Gramin Bank and Sutlej Gramin Bank

Correct Answer: D [Punjab Gramin Bank, Malwa Gramin Bank and Sutlej Gramin Bank]

Notes:

The Government of India (GoI) has amalgamated three Regional Rural Banks (RRB) — Punjab Gramin Bank, Malwa Gramin Bank and Sutlej Gramin Bank — into a single RRB with effect from January 1. The sponsor banks of the RRBs are National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), the Government of Punjab and Punjab National Bank (PNB), State Bank of India (SBI) and Punjab and Sind Bank.

68. Which Indian origin personality has joined IMF as its first female Chief Economist?

- [A] K S Chithra
- [B] Shobhana Bhartia
- [C] Gita Gopinath
- [D] Padmasree Warrior

Correct Answer: C [Gita Gopinath]

Notes:

Prof. Gita Gopinath, the John Zwaanstra professor of International Studies and Economics at Harvard University, has joined International Monetary Fund (IMF) as its first female Chief Economist. The 11th chief economist of the IMF, Gopinath succeeded Maurice (Maury) Obstfeld as Economic Counsellor and Director of the IMF's Research Department. With this, Gopinath became the 2nd Indian after former RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan to be appointed to the position.

69. Which city is the venue of the All India Radio National Poets Conference 2019?

- [A] Chennai
- [B] Kolkata
- [C] New Delhi
- [D] Kochi

Correct Answer: A [Chennai]

Notes:

The All India Radio National Poets Conference will be held in Chennai on January 10, 2019. It will be inaugurated by the Tamil Nadu Governor Bunwarilal Purohit. This is the first time the city would be hosting the Sarva Basha Kavi Sammelan since its launch in 1956. In it, 22 poets representing as many languages included in the eighth schedule of the Constitution would be presenting their poems. Scholars in Hindi and Tamil will present the translated version of the poems in the Conference itself. The programme will be aired on the 25th of this month.

70. The Personal Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2018 has struck out which disease as a ground for

seeking a divorce?

- [A] HIV
- [B] Leprosy
- [C] Asthma
- [D] Cancer

Correct Answer: B [Leprosy]

Notes:

On January 7, the Lok Sabha passed 'The Personal Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2018', which seeks removal of leprosy as a ground for divorce from various Acts governing marriage in India. The Bill seeks to amend five Acts: the Divorce Act of 1869, the Dissolution of Muslim Marriage Act of 1939, the Special Marriage Act of 1954, the Hindu Marriage Act of 1955, and the Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act of 1956. Presently, leprosy is completely curable and can be treated with multi-drug therapy. However, old legislative provisions discriminating the persons affected by leprosy continued in various laws. If passed by Rajya Sabha and eventually made an Act, the Bill will go a long way in detaching the social stigma associated with the disease.

71. Which city is the venue of the 4th Edition Of Raisina Dialogue?

- [A] Chandigarh
- [B] New Delhi
- [C] Hyderabad
- [D] Dehradun

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Correct Answer: B [New Delhi]

Notes:

On 8th January 2019, the 4th edition of the Raisina Dialogue started in New Delhi with theme "A World Reorder: New Geometries; Fluid Partnerships; Uncertain Outcomes". The 3-day Raisina Dialogue is India's flagship annual geopolitical and geostrategic conference. The Dialogue brought together over 600 delegates from 93 countries, including influential political leaders, strategic thinkers, policy practitioners, technology innovators, business representatives and academics on a common platform where they will offer their vision and propose solutions that will serve all in the decades ahead. The discussions will seek to address issues arising from ongoing global transitions and changes to the world order, triggered by unique leaders, innovative partnerships and new technologies.

72. What is the theme of the first-ever Global Aviation Summit (GAS-2019)?

- [A] Flying for all
- [B] Flying for Peace
- [C] Flying for Harmony
- [D] Flying for Brotherhood

Correct Answer: A [Flying for all]

Notes:

The first-ever Global Aviation Summit (GAS-2019) with the theme "Flying for all" is scheduled to be held in Mumbai from January 15-16, 2019. Organised by the Ministry of Civil Aviation along with FICCI, the GAS-2019 will discuss how to ride this strong tailwind of growth and pave the way forward for the aviation sector. It will provide a platform to the aviation fraternity to showcase the challenges in newly developing growth spots and understand how technology-driver innovations will change air travel in future. The summit is supported by International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), Federal Aviation Administration of US (FAA), International Air Transport Association (IATA), Civil Air Navigation Services Organisation (CANSO), Airports Council International (ACI) and Association of Asia Pacific Airlines (AAPA).

73. Who has been appointed the new Director-General of Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB)?

- [A] Kumar Rajesh Chandra
- [B] Alok Verma
- [C] Vivek Tyagi
- [D] P S Mukherjee

Correct Answer: A [Kumar Rajesh Chandra]

Notes:

Kumar Rajesh Chandra, A 1985 batch IPS officer, has been appointed the new Director-General of Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) and will hold the post till 31st December 2021 i.e. date of his retirement on superannuation or until further orders. He succeeded S.S. Deswal. Prior to this post, Chandra was DG at Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS). The SSB is one of Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) of India and is currently under the administrative control of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). Its headquarters is located at New Delhi and its motto is 'Service, Security and Brotherhood'.

74. Who has become the first monarch of Malaysia to resign before completing tenure?

- [A] Abdul Halim
- [B] Ismail Petra
- [C] Nasiruddin Shah
- [D] Muhammad V

Correct Answer: D [Muhammad V]

Notes:

The Malaysian King, Sultan Muhammad V has become the Malaysia's first monarch to step down from the throne before completing his five-year tenure on 6th January 2019. No reason was given and palace officials did not respond to requests for comment. Malaysia is the only country in the world to have a rotational monarchy, in place since the country became independent from Britain in 1957. Here, the king assumes a largely ceremonial role, his assent is needed for the appointment of a prime minister and various other senior officials. The country has nine royal households, who typically take turns to sit on the throne. The selection of the next king can be decided by a vote in the Council of Rulers, made up of all nine royal households.

75. Which grading index has been introduced by HRD Ministry to assess quality of school education in states?

- [A] 60-point
- [B] 75-point
- [C] 70-point
- [D] 80-point

Correct Answer: C [70-point]

Notes:

The Ministry of Human Resource Development (HRD) has introduced a 70-point grading index to assess the quality of school education offered by states. Here, the states will be marked out of 1,000 scores on 70 parameters to assess quality of education. The move will reportedly provide a correct picture of each state's performance. The minister has also ensured that there will be fair competition to improve upon each other's performances. The school curriculum will also be reviewed to ensure holistic education in which there will be time for physical education, value education, life skill education and experiential learning

76. On which date, the 2019 Non-Resident Indian Day is observed recently?

- [A] January 8
- [B] January 9
- [C] January 6
- [D] January 7

Correct Answer: B [January 9]

Notes:

The Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD), also known as Non-Resident Indian Day, is observed every year on 9th of January to mark the contribution of the overseas Indian community towards the development of India. The day commemorates the return of Mahatma Gandhi from South Africa to Mumbai on 9 January 1915.

77. Who is the head of the RBI panel on digital payments?

- [A] Aruna Sharma

- [B] H R Khan
- [C] Nandan Nilekani
- [D] Kishore Sansi

Correct Answer: C [Nandan Nilekani]

Notes:

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has appointed a 5-member committee headed by Nandan Nilekani to suggest ways to improve digital payments. The committee will review the existing status of digitisation of payments in the country, identify the current gaps in the ecosystem and suggest ways to bridge them and assess the current levels of digital payments in financial inclusion. It will also suggest measures to strengthen the safety and security of digital payments and provide a road map for increasing customer confidence and trust while accessing financial services through digital modes. Further, it will suggest a medium-term strategy for deepening of digital payments and other related items. The committee will submit its report in 90 days from its first meeting.

78. Which Indian pavilion has won the 'Exhibitor of the Year Award' at 106th Indian Science Congress (ISC-2019)?

- [A] DRDO
- [B] ISRO
- [C] BARC
- [D] VSSC

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Correct Answer: A [DRDO]

Notes:

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) pavilion received 'Exhibitor of the Year Award' at 106th Indian Science Congress (ISC-2019) held at Lovely Professional University (LPU), Phagwara, Punjab. The pavilion narrated the saga of self-reliance & national pride with the 'Make in India' spirit, which gained a lot of attention from visitors who also got an opportunity to interact with DRDO's scientists. The DRDO also showcased various Life Sciences Products like Portable Chemical Agent Detector, Full body protector for women, underwater breathing apparatus for T-90 tank crew and Ready-to-Eat Packaged Foods. Further, the DRDO pavilion also provided information on the pan India online competition, 'Kalam's Vision; Dare to Dream'.

79. The Indian economy is expected to grow at how much percentage in FY19, as per latest estimate of Central Statistics Office (CSO)?

- [A] 7.5%
- [B] 7.4%
- [C] 7.6%
- [D] 7.2%

Correct Answer: D [7.2%]

Notes:

The Central Statistics Office (CSO) has recently released the First advance estimates of National Income for the current fiscal FY 19, under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation. In it, Indian economy is expected to grow at 7.2% in FY19, against 6.7% in FY18, due to improvement in the performance of agriculture and manufacturing sectors. However, the CSO estimate is a bit lower than 7.4% growth projected by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) for the current fiscal. According to the estimates, farm sector is set to grow at 3.8% against 3.4% last year, at constant or inflation-adjusted prices. At current prices, the sector expected to grow at an identical 3.8%, which could be emblematic of an agri-commodity price crash across wholesale mandis.

80. Which city is the venue of the 6th Women Of India Organic Festival 2019?

- [A] New Delhi
- [B] Bhopal
- [C] Hyderabad
- [D] Chandigarh

Correct Answer: D [Chandigarh]

Notes:

The 6th 'Women of India Organic Festival 2019 will be hosted by Ministry of Women and Child Development (WCD) at Leisure Valley in Chandigarh from 12th to 14th January to celebrate and promote women farmers and entrepreneurs in the organic sector from the remotest parts of India. The purpose of the festival is to encourage Indian women entrepreneurs and farmers to connect with more buyers and thus, empower them through financial inclusion, while promoting organic culture in India. Over 100 women are coming together at Leisure Valley, which will become the epicentre of an organic extravaganza. The Festival will showcase over 1,000 varied organic products, including fabric, wellness, grains, seeds, jewellery, bakery items and a lot more.

81. What is the India's GDP forecast for FY19, as per World Bank's 2019 Global Economic Prospects report?

- [A] 7.5%
- [B] 7.4%
- [C] 7.3%
- [D] 7.2%

Correct Answer: C [7.3%]

Notes:

The World Bank has recently released 2019 Global Economic Prospects report titled "Darkening Skies", which forecasted that India's GDP is expected to grow at 7.3% in the fiscal year 2018-19, and 7.5% in the following two years. While, China's economic growth is projected to slow down to 6.2% each in 2019 and 2020 and 6% in 2021. It said India will continue to be the fastest growing major economy in the world. The World Bank said in its latest report that in India, the growth has accelerated, driven by an upswing in consumption, and investment growth has firmed as the effects of temporary factors wane. Domestic demand has strengthened as the benefits of structural reforms such as the Goods and Services Tax (GST) harmonisation and bank recapitalisation take effect.

82. The controversial Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2019 seeks to provide Indian citizenship to non-Muslims from which of the following countries?

- [A] Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan
- [B] Myanmar, Bangladesh and Afghanistan
- [C] Afghanistan, Pakistan and Myanmar
- [D] Myanmar, Pakistan and Bangladesh

Correct Answer: A [Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan]

Notes:

On January 8, the Lok Sabha has passed the controversial Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2019 that seeks to provide Indian citizenship to non-Muslims from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan. It will pave way for the religious minorities –the Hindus, Jains, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and Parsis — from these countries to get Indian citizenship. According to Union Home Ministry, the purpose of the bill is to provide Indian citizenship to those who had been forced to seek shelter in India because of religious persecution or fear of persecution in their home countries. The Bill provides for Indian citizenship to such immigrants after six years of residence in India instead of 12 years currently. The bill will apply to all States and Union Territories of the country and the beneficiaries of Citizenship Amendment Bill will be able to reside in any state of the country. Hence, the Bill seeks to amend the Citizenship Act of 1955 to make illegal immigrants from these countries eligible for Indian citizenship. The bill will now be tabled in the Rajya Sabha for discussion.

83. Who has become first Indian to head Global Solar Council (GSC)?

- [A] Kirti Ranjan
- [B] Pranav R Mehta
- [C] Mayur A Seth
- [D] Naveen Kumar

Correct Answer: B [Pranav R Mehta]

Notes:

Pranav R Mehta has become the first Indian to head the Global Solar Council (GSC) on 01 January 2019. He is a visionary in the field of Solar Energy and the chairman of National Solar Energy Federation of

India (NSEFI). The GSC, founded in 2015, is an international non-profit association of the national, regional and international associations in solar energy and the world's leading corporations. It is headquartered at Washington D.C., USA. The NSEFI is an umbrella organization of all solar energy stakeholders of India. This apex solar organization works in the area of policy advocacy and is a national platform for addressing all issues connected with solar energy growth in India.

84. Which country has been named as the host of 2019 Africa Cup of Nations?

- [A] Cameroon
- [B] Egypt
- [C] Morocco
- [D] Ivory Coast

Correct Answer: B [Egypt]

Notes:

The 2019 Africa Cup of Nations will be hosted by Egypt between 15th June and 13th July, after original host nation Cameroon was stripped of due to delays in preparations and concerns over security. The Confederation of African Football (CAF) President Ahmad Ahmad has recently made the announcement in Senegalese capital Dakar. With this, the North African nation will host the competition for the fifth time and it will be the first time 24 teams will take part. It will use 8 stadiums during the tournament, hosting in five different cities: Alexandria, Ismailia, Port Said, Suez and the capital Cairo.

85. The Union Government has launched the Web- Wonder Women campaign in collaboration with which human rights organization?

- [A] Breakthrough India
- [B] OYSS Women
- [C] Nirbhaya Vahini
- [D] CARE India

Correct Answer: A [Breakthrough India]

Notes:

On 9th January, the Union Ministry of Women and Child Development (WCD) has launched an online campaign, '#www : Web- WonderWomen'. The purpose of the campaign is to discover and celebrate the exceptional achievements of women, who have been driving positive agenda of social change via social media. The Ministry in collaboration with Twitter India and Breakthrough India (a human rights organization) has started this campaign. It aims to recognize the fortitude of Indian women stalwarts from across the globe who have used the power of social media to run positive & niche campaigns to steer a change in society. This Campaign will recognize and acknowledge the efforts of these meritorious Women. The Campaign invites entries from across the world till 31st of January 2019. Indian-origin women, working or settled anywhere in the world, are eligible for nomination. The shortlisted entries will be open for public voting on Twitter and the finalists will be selected by a specialized panel of judges.

86. Gangajal Project, which is in news recently, is launched in which of the following cities?

- [A] Patna
- [B] Kanpur
- [C] Agra
- [D] Haridwar

Correct Answer: C [Agra]

Notes:

On 9th January 2019, Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched a series of development projects worth Rs. 2900 Crores for the Agra city and the adjoining areas during his second visit to the city. He launched Gangajal project, which will provide Agra with better and more assured water supply. The aim of the Gangajal project is to bring 140 cusecs of Ganga water to Agra. This will help meet the drinking water demands in the city. He also laid the foundation stone for an Integrated Command and Control Centre (ICCC) for the Agra Smart City project. In this project CCTVs will be installed throughout Agra City for monitoring and surveillance for the purpose of safety and security. The smart city project is meant to develop the tourism destination as a modern world-class city. Besides, the SN Medical College in Agra will be upgraded with a 100-bed maternity wing. During his first visit in November 2016, he had

launched a housing project, the PM Awas Yojana (Gramin). Under this scheme, 65 lakh houses have been constructed so far, including 9.2 lakh in Uttar Pradesh.

87. India's longest single-lane steel cable suspension bridge has opened in which of the following states?

- [A] Himachal Pradesh
- [B] Arunachal Pradesh
- [C] Odisha
- [D] Gujarat

Correct Answer: B [Arunachal Pradesh]

Notes:

Chief Minister Pema Khandu has recently inaugurated India's longest 300-meter single-lane steel cable suspension bridge over River Siang in Upper Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh, which borders China. The suspension bridge – also known as Byorong bridge – was built at a cost of Rs 4,843 crore and funded by the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) under Non Lapsable Central Pool of Resources (NLCPR) scheme. It will reduce the distance from Yingkiong to Tuting town by almost 40 km. The earlier road length was 192 km. The Byorong bridge will benefit about 20,000 people residing on both sides of the bank of Siang river and will also boost military preparedness.

88. Which of the following states is set to become the first Indian state to roll out Universal Basic Income (UBI)?

- [A] Maharashtra
- [B] Kerala
- [C] Sikkim
- [D] Tamil Nadu

Correct Answer: C [Sikkim]

Notes:

The Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) ruled government has recently decided to include UBI in its manifesto ahead of 2019 state assembly polls and aims to implement the scheme by 2022. If everything goes according to the plan, it will be the Indian first state to roll out UBI scheme aimed at providing a fixed monthly income to residents irrespective of their economic, social status. The Universal Basic Income (UBI) is a programme for providing all citizens of a country or other geographic area/state with a given sum of money, regardless of their income, resources or employment status. The main idea behind UBI is to prevent or reduce poverty and promote equality among citizens. As per Basic Income Earth Network (BIEN), the essential principle behind UBI is the idea that all citizens are entitled to a livable income, irrespective of the circumstances they're born in.

89. The first-ever India-Central Asia Dialogue at the level of Foreign Ministers is scheduled to be held in which of the following countries?

- [A] Turkmenistan
- [B] Tajikistan
- [C] Afghanistan
- [D] Uzbekistan

Correct Answer: D [Uzbekistan]

Notes:

The first-ever India-Central Asia Dialogue at the level of Foreign Ministers is scheduled to be held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan on January 12 and 13. will be co-chaired by External Affairs Minister (EAM) Sushma Swaraj and the Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan, Abdulaziz Kamilov. The foreign minister of Afghanistan will participate in the dialogue as a special invitee for the session dedicated to connectivity issues in the region. The foreign ministers of Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan and the first deputy foreign minister of Kazakhstan will represent their respective countries. The dialogue is expected to strengthen India's engagement, including political, economic, development partnership and cultural, with all the Central Asian countries and take it to a new level.

90. What is the India's rank at the EIU Democracy Index 2018?

- [A] 41st
- [B] 54th
- [C] 33rd
- [D] 62nd

Correct Answer: A [41st]

Notes:

India has been ranked at 41st at the 11th edition of EIU Democracy Index 2018, which provides a snapshot of the state of world democracy for 165 independent states and two territories. The report explaining the index titled 'Democracy 2018: Me too? Political Participation, Protest & Democracy' was particularly damning of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Despite the criticism, the report pointed that in India, the image of the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi resonates with an aspiring middle class, and he has also maintained the support of business. The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU)'s index rank nations on five parameters – electoral process and pluralism, functioning of government, political participation, political culture and civil liberties. Among all these parameters India fared the worst when it came to political culture. The index is topped by Norway, followed by Iceland, Sweden, New Zealand and Denmark.

91. Which of the following states have signed agreement for Renukaji multipurpose dam project?

- [A] Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh
- [B] Delhi, Rajasthan and Uttarakhand
- [C] Delhi, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh
- [D] All of the above

Correct Answer: D [All of the above]

Notes:

On January 11, an agreement for Renukaji Dam Multipurpose Project was signed in New Delhi among 6 States – Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Delhi, Rajasthan and Uttarakhand. Under the agreement, three storage projects are proposed to be constructed on the river Yamuna and two of its tributaries – Tons and Giri in the hilly regions of Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh. These include Lakhwar project on river Yamuna in Uttarakhand, Kishau on river Tons in Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh and Renukaji on river Giri in Himachal Pradesh. These three projects were identified as National Projects in 2008 under which 90% funding of the cost of irrigation & drinking water component will be provided by the Govt. of India (GoI) as central assistance and the rest 10% cost of the irrigation and drinking water component will be borne by the beneficiary states. In addition to this, a concession agreement was also signed for Namami Gange projects for the city of Prayagraj under Hybrid Annuity Mode and One City One Operator Concept.

92. Who has been appointed new Prime Minister of Taiwan?

- [A] Chen Shui-bian
- [B] Tsai Ing-wen
- [C] Su Tseng-chang
- [D] William Lai

Correct Answer: C [Su Tseng-chang]

Notes:

Taiwanese president Tsai Ing-wen has appointed Su Tseng-chang as the island's new Prime Minister, during a Cabinet reshuffle following the ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP)'s heavy losses in local elections. Su's appointment follows the widely-expected resignation of William Lai, the second premier to quit since Tsai took office in 2016, in line with a practice of leaders quitting when their party loses a major election. Su is a former premier appointed in 2006 by then-President Chen Shui-bian and was a chairman of Tsai's DPP for two terms.

93. Who has been named as India's Chef de Mission for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics?

- [A] Birendra Prasad Baishya
- [B] Brij Bhushan Saran Singh
- [C] Abhinav Bindra
- [D] Sukhdev Sharma

Correct Answer: A [Birendra Prasad Baishya]

Notes:

President of the Indian Weightlifting Federation (IWF), Birendra Prasad Baishya has been named as India's Chef de Mission for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. It is for the first time that the sport of Weightlifting has been accorded with the honour of Chef de Mission for the Olympics. Baishya is also one of the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) Vice Presidents. He is a former Union minister and a former Rajya Sabha Member from Assam. The Japanese capital –Tokyo – will host the Games for the second time in 2020 after having organised it 56 years back in 1964.

94. What is the India's position at the 2019 Henley and Partners Passport Index?

- [A] 81st
- [B] 62nd
- [C] 43rd
- [D] 79th

Correct Answer: D [79th]

Notes:

As per 2019 Henley and Partners Passport Index, the Indian passport has been ranked as the 79th most powerful in the world. The Henley index ranks world's passports based on how many countries they can get the holder access to without a prior visa. An Indian passport holder can visit 61 countries without a pre-travel visa. Japan tops the list and its passport gives holders access to 190 countries. Singapore and South Korea come 2nd with access to 189 countries each while France and Germany share the third spot with access to 188 countries each. The US passport gives its citizens access to 185 countries without the need for a prior visa and shares the sixth spot with UK, Austria, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Switzerland, Belgium and Canada. The Henley Passport Index is based on data provided by the International Air Transport Authority (IATA) and covers 199 passports and 227 travel destinations. It is updated in real time throughout the year, as and when visa policy changes come into effect.

95. Who has been ranked No.1 in the light fly (45-48kg) category by the International Boxing Association (AIBA)?

- [A] Laishram Sarita Devi
- [B] Sarjubala Devi
- [C] Nikhat Zareen
- [D] Mary Kom

Correct Answer: D [Mary Kom]

Notes:

Ace Indian pugilist Mary Kom from Manipur has been ranked No.1 in the Light Fly (45-48kg) category by the International Boxing Association (AIBA), after scoring 1700 points. Earlier, Kom won the historic sixth gold medal at the 2018 Women's World Boxing Championship by defeating Hanna Okhota of Ukraine in the 48kg category in New Delhi. She also won gold medals at the 2018 Commonwealth Games and the Silesian Open Boxing Tournament in Poland.

96. Which IIT has decided to launch 6-month Artificial Intelligence course?

- [A] IIT Bombay
- [B] IIT Kharagpur
- [C] IIT Bombay
- [D] IIT Kanpur

Correct Answer: B [IIT Kharagpur]

Notes:

IIT Kharagpur will launch a six-month course on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning for working professionals and engineering students. The aim of the certified programme is to strengthen India's talent pool in Machine Learning and AI. The course will begin from March 2019 & will be offered at institute units in Kharagpur, Bangalore and Kolkata and possibly in Hyderabad. The course will comprise 16 one-credit modules and one capstone project. The course modules have been carefully designed to cover mathematical and algorithmic foundations, artificial intelligence fundamentals and several modules on statistical and machine learning methods.

97. Which of the following is the base year for the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) ?

- [A] 2014
- [B] 2017
- [C] 2015
- [D] 2016

Correct Answer: B [2017]

Notes:

On January 10, Union Environment Minister Dr. Harsh Vardhan launched the much-awaited National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) to combat air pollution. The NCAP is a pollution control initiative that was launched with the intention to cut the concentration of coarse (PM10) and fine particles (PM2.5) by at least 20% in the next five years, with 2017 as the base year for comparison. The NCAP will be a mid-term, five year action plan with 2019 as the first year. The plan includes 102 most-polluting cities, across 23 states and Union territories, which were identified by Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) on the basis of their ambient air quality data between 2011 and 2015. Apart from experts from the industry and academia, the programme is expected to be a collaboration between the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, Ministry of Heavy Industry, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Health, NITI Aayog, and CPCB.

98. Who is the author of the book 'We are Displaced: My Journey and Stories from Refugee Girls Around the World'?

- [A] Nadia Murad
- [B] Kailash Satyarthi
- [C] Malala Yousafzai
- [D] Tawakkol Karman

Correct Answer: C [Malala Yousafzai]

Notes:

The book titled 'We are Displaced: My Journey and Stories from Refugee Girls Around the World' has been authored by Malala Yousafzai, the Nobel Peace Prize winner and Pakistani activist. In it, the author is charting her experiences travelling the world and visiting refugee camps. Here, Malala not only explores her own story of adjusting to a new life while longing for home, but she also shares the personal stories of some of the incredible girls she has met on her various journeys – girls who have lost their community, relatives and often the only world they've ever known.

99. Who is the head of the SEBI committee to link research to policy making?

- [A] Sankar De
- [B] U K Sinha
- [C] Pratap Mukherjee
- [D] K S Chauhan

Correct Answer: A [Sankar De]

Notes:

Security and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has recently constituted a Research Advisory Committee (RAC) to strengthen its research function and enhance its linkage to policy making. It will be headed by Dr. Sankar De. The RAC will assist in formulating policy to undertake research relevant for development and regulation of capital markets. Among the other functions of the committee will be defining objectives, scope and direction of research relevant for development and regulation of capital markets in the country with focus on "linkage of research to policy making".

100. Which of the following international organizations has recently released the report 'Future of Consumption in Fast-Growth Consumer Market – India'?

- [A] WEF
- [B] IMF
- [C] World Bank
- [D] UNESCO

Correct Answer: A [WEF]

Notes:

The World Economic Forum (WEF) has recently released its latest report titled 'Future of Consumption in Fast-Growth Consumer Market – India'. The report stated that India is set to become the world's third largest consumer market behind only USA and China by 2030. As per the report, consumer spending in India is expected to grow from \$1.5 trillion at present to \$6 trillion by 2030. With the annual GDP growth rate of 7.5%, India is currently the world's sixth largest economy. The report noted that growth of the middle class will lift nearly 25 million households out of poverty. As per the report, growth in income will transform India from a "bottom of the pyramid economy" to a middle class-led one. The report produced in collaboration with Bain & Company builds on consumer surveys conducted across 5,100 households in 30 cities and towns in India, and draws from more than 40 interviews with private and public-sector leaders.

101. Who is the head of the EC panel which submitted its report on digital media and campaigning during last 48 hours before polls?

- [A] Abhay Kapoor
- [B] U K Malhotra
- [C] Umesh Sinha
- [D] Sunil Arora

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Correct Answer: C [Umesh Sinha]

Notes:

The Election Commission (EC) appointed Committee has submitted its report on digital media and campaigning during last 48 hours before polls to the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sunil Arora. The Committee was constituted under the chairmanship of Sr. Deputy Election Commissioner Umesh Sinha. The panel was mandated to review and suggest modifications in the provisions of Section 126 of the Representation of the People Act dealing with campaigning in the last 48 hours and related provisions of the Model Code of Conduct. The report stated that apart from the regulation by law and ECI instructions, proactive support and sustained effort by all stakeholders including political parties, will be necessary to contain the evil impact. No campaigning is allowed in the last 48 hours so that voters can think independently. This period is also called silence period. The recommendations of Committee, will be considered by the Commission in detail for follow up action.

102. Which city is the venue of the 25th edition of Partnership Summit 2019?

- [A] New Delhi
- [B] Dehradun
- [C] Hyderabad
- [D] Mumbai

Correct Answer: D [Mumbai]

Notes:

On January 12, Vice President M. Venkaiah Naidu inaugurated the 25th edition of Partnership Summit 2019 in Mumbai. This edition of the Summit will showcase India in the present landscape of an emerging "New India", the "New Global Economic Address". The 2-day summit is expected to build new partnerships and explore investment opportunities in sectors like Artificial Intelligence, big data, food processing, defense, aeronautics, renewable energy and tourism. It will see New India in active engagement and collaboration within the country and with the world. The summit is a global platform for dialogue, debate, deliberation and engagement among Indian and global leaders on economic policy and growth trends in India.

103. Which of the following Indian players has recently received the honorary membership of the Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG)?

- [A] Cheteshwar Pujara
- [B] Shikhar Dhawan
- [C] Rohit Sharma
- [D] Virat Kohli

Correct Answer: D [Virat Kohli]

Notes:

Indian skipper Virat Kohli and coach Ravi Shastri has received the honorary membership of the Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG) for their contribution to the sport of cricket. Recently, The Indian team defeated Australia 2-1 in the four-match Test series, ending the country's 71-year-old wait for a rare series win Down Under. Apart from Kohli and Shastri, the only other international cricketers to be granted the honorary membership of the SCG are Sachin Tendulkar and Brain Lara of the West Indies.

104. Which Indian journalist has been appointed president of the Alliance for Media Freedom (AFMF)?

- [A] Vineet Jain
- [B] N Ram
- [C] Shaili Chopra
- [D] Shoma Chaudhury

Correct Answer: B [N Ram]

Notes:

Narasimhan Ram, chairman of THG Publishing Private Limited, has been appointed president of the Alliance for Media Freedom (AFMF), a cross-media advocacy and action group of media organisations, promoters and journalists. The Alliance is dedicated to work for the cause of media freedom, media independence and the safety of the last journalist. It has adopted a charter that underlines the importance of creating enabling conditions to safeguard free speech guaranteed by the Indian Constitution.

105. Ashutosh Aman, which is in news recently, is associated with which sports?

- [A] Hockey
- [B] Football
- [C] Cricket
- [D] Kabaddi

Correct Answer: C [Cricket]

Notes:

Bihar left-arm spinner Ashutosh Aman broke the 44-year old record of most wickets in a single Ranji Trophy season by finishing the 2018-19 tournament with 68 wickets. He break the previous record of 64 dismissals set by former India captain Bishan Singh Bedi in the 1974-75 tournament. Aman now holds the record for most wickets taken in a Ranji Trophy season by any bowler. He is employed with the Indian Air Force (IAR) and hails from Bihar's Gaya.

106. Who has been conferred the ICSI Lifetime Achievement Award?

- [A] Azim Premji
- [B] Adi Godrej
- [C] Rahul Bajaj
- [D] Indu Jain

Correct Answer: B [Adi Godrej]

Notes:

Industrialist and Godrej Group Chairman Adi Godrej for 'Translating Excellence in Corporate Governance into Reality'. The awards were instituted by The Institute of Company Secretaries of India (ICSI), which is celebrating its golden jubilee. The 18th ICSI National Awards for Excellence in Corporate Governance were bagged jointly by Cipla Ltd and Dabur India Ltd and five others: ACC Ltd, Hindustan Unilever Ltd, Indian Oil Corp, Tata Metaliks Ltd and Indian Hotels Co Ltd. The 3rd CSR Excellence Awards went to GMR Hyderabad International Airport Ltd, Tata Power Co Ltd and Ambuja Cements Ltd in Emerging, Medium and Large categories respectively.

107. In which year, the great Indian scholar Swami Vivekananda was born?

- [A] 1859
- [B] 1863
- [C] 1865

[D] 1856

Correct Answer: B [1863]**Notes:**

The 2019 National Youth Day (NYD) has recently celebrated in India on January 12 to mark the 156th birth anniversary of social reformer, philosopher and thinker Swami Vivekananda. Born in Kolkata on 12th January 1863 as Narendra Nath Datta, he was one of India's most revered spiritual leaders. He was considered a major force in the revival of Hinduism in India and bringing it to the status of a major world religion in the late 19th century. He became popular in the western world after his famous speech at the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893. He was the chief disciple of the 19th-century Indian mystic Ramakrishna and founder of the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission. In 1984, the Government of India (GoI) declared the day as the National Youth Day (NYD) and since 1985 the event is celebrated in India every year.

108. Which city is the venue of the 29th Indian Paint Conference 2019?

- [A] Agra
- [B] Delhi
- [C] Raipur
- [D] Udaipur

Correct Answer: A [Agra]

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Notes:

The 29th biennial Indian Paint Conference has started in Agra, Uttar Pradesh from 11th January 2019. It is organized by the Indian Paint Association (IPA), the apex body of the country's paint industry. This would be the largest trade show of the estimated Rs. 500 billion (50,000 Crore) Indian Paints & Coatings industry. The 3-day Conference will witness knowledge sharing sessions from leading paint industry stalwarts and subject matter experts from India and abroad.

109. Who has been sworn-in as the new President of Venezuela?

- [A] Henri Falcon
- [B] Juan Guaido
- [C] Nicolas Maduro
- [D] Hugo Chavez

Correct Answer: C [Nicolas Maduro]**Notes:**

Nicolas Maduro has been sworn-in for a second term as Venezuela's president on 10th January 2019, despite international criticism that his re-election was illegitimate. The result was denounced as fraudulent by many neighbouring countries, including Argentina, Mexico, Chile, Colombia, Brazil, Canada and the United States, as well as organizations such as the European Union, and the Organization of American States. This resulted in widespread condemnation, the National Assembly invoking a State of emergency, and nations removing their embassies from Venezuela. With their belief that his election was illegitimate, they claimed that by retaking power, Maduro was converting Venezuela into an illegal de facto dictatorship. At present, Venezuela is enduring a historic crisis following two decades of socialist rule, with residents struggling to afford basic goods as inflation soars, driving mass migration.

110. Which of the following is/are the features of the National Youth Parliament Festival 2019?

- [A] To hear the voice of youth between 18-25 years
- [B] To encourage the youth to engage with public issues
- [C] To obtain opinions on Vision of New India in 2022
- [D] All of the above

Correct Answer: D [All of the above]**Notes:**

On the occasion of National Youth Day (NYD- 2019), Union minister Col Rajyavardhan Rathore (Retd) launched the National Youth Parliament Festival 2019. It is organised on the theme of "Be The Voice of New India" and "Find solutions and contribute to policy". Youth in the age bracket of 18-25 years are invited to participate in the District Youth Parliaments. This is done in order to hear the voice of youth

in this age bracket who are allowed to vote but cannot contest in elections. The fest will be conducted at three levels: District, State and National. The best three speakers at the National Youth Parliament will be awarded Rs. 2 Lakhs, Rs. 1.50 Lakhs and Rs. 1 Lakh respectively by the Prime Minister. The festival will also encourage the youth to engage with public issues, understand the common man's point of view, form their opinion and express these in an articulate manner. Relevant and effective voices on Vision of New India in 2022 would be captured and documented to make these available to policy makers and implementers to take it forward.

111. Which state has become the India's 1st state to implement 10% quota to Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) of general category?

- [A] Punjab
- [B] Karnataka
- [C] Kerala
- [D] Gujarat

Correct Answer: D [Gujarat]

Notes:

The Gujarat Government has recently announced that the benefits of 10% quota for Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) of general category in educational institutions and government jobs will be applicable from 14th January 2019 midnight. It is clarified that the eligibility of the new quota will be applicable only for which the announcement for jobs and admissions have been made but the process has not yet begun. In such cases, the ongoing process will be suspended for time being and fresh process will begin after incorporating the 10% additional quota. However, it is pertinent to mention here that the benefits of the fresh quota will not be applicable for which the process had begun before January 14, 2019, like for which the process of written, oral, computer proficiency or preliminary tests have already been conducted. The Centre had taken the decision under Article 46 of Guiding Principles of Constitution of India after Amendment of the Articles 15 and 16, incorporating 10 per cent reservation for Economically Weaker Sections.

112. The Government of India (GoI) has drafted five-year action plan to address drug abuse in the country for which of the following periods?

- [A] 2019 to 2024
- [B] 2017 to 2022
- [C] 2018 to 2023
- [D] 2016 to 2021

Correct Answer: C [2018 to 2023]

Notes:

The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has drafted a five-year action plan to address the problem of drug and substance abuse in the country. The aim of the National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction (for 2018 to 2023) is to employ a multi-pronged strategy to address the issue. It involves education, de-addiction and rehabilitation of affected individuals and their families. The plan focuses on preventive education, awareness generation, counselling, treatment and rehabilitation of drug-dependent people, besides training and capacity-building of service providers through collaborative efforts of the Centre, state and NGOs. Plans are also afoot for awareness generation through social, print, digital and online media, and engagement of celebrities, besides strengthening the national tollfree helpline for drug prevention. The move comes after the Ministry withdrew the draft National Drug Demand Reduction Policy from the Cabinet. It had been pending for more than five-and-half years and was redrafted twice during the period.

113. Which country hold the first-ever Annual Disarmament and International Security Affairs Fellowship Programme?

- [A] Japan
- [B] India
- [C] Bhutan
- [D] South Korea

Correct Answer: B [India]

Notes:

On January 14, the first-ever Annual Disarmament and International Security Affairs Fellowship Programme has started at the Foreign Services Institute in New Delhi. It was inaugurated by the United Nations under-secretary-general and high representative for disarmament affairs Izumi Nakamitsu and foreign secretary Vijay Keshav Gokhale. Young Diplomats from 27 countries are participating in the Fellowship Programme, which will continue till 1st of Feb 2019. The purpose of the programme is to equip participants with knowledge and perspectives on various issues related to disarmament, non-proliferation, arms control and international security. The Programme covers a range of issues relevant to disarmament and international security such as global security environment, weapons of mass destruction, certain conventional weapons, space security, maritime cooperation, security of cyberspace, export controls, emerging technologies etc.

114. In which year, the 10th Sikh guru Govind Singh was born?

- [A] 1660
- [B] 1666
- [C] 1659
- [D] 1668

Correct Answer: B [1666]

Notes:

The 352nd birth anniversary of Guru Govind Singh has recently celebrated as Prakash Utsav with religious fervour and gaiety in various parts of the country. The main function is organised at Takhat Sri Harmandir Sahib Gurdwara, Patna Sahib, where thousands of pilgrims across the globe are offering prayers. Born at Patna Sahib in Bihar on 5th January 1666, Guru Govind Singh was the 10th Sikh guru. He succeeded his father Guru Tegh Bahadur Singh as leader of Sikhs at the age of just nine. The 10th Sikh Guru was a spiritual leader, philosopher, poet and master warrior. He is considered as the eternal guru by his followers because of his contribution to Sikhism. He founded the Sikh warrior community called 'Khalsa Panth' at Anandpur Sahib in 1699, and introduced the Five Ks, the five articles of faith that Khalsa Sikhs wear at all times.

115. Which of the following commands is the only Tri-service theater command of the Indian Armed Forces (IAF)?

- [A] Andaman and Nicobar Command
- [B] Southern Command
- [C] Northern Command
- [D] Eastern Command

Correct Answer: A [Andaman and Nicobar Command]

Notes:

The Andaman and Nicobar Command is the first and only Tri-service theater command of the Indian Armed Forces, based at Port Blair in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The archipelago is straddled strategically near the mouth of the Malacca Straits which is an important Sea Lane of Communication used by the navies of several countries. Recently, it is in news because Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman witnessed a joint military drill involving the Indian Army, the Indian Air Force, the Navy and the Indian Coast Guard in the A&N Islands on January 14. In her 2-day visit to Islands, she will also witness three exercises – general survival exercise, amphibious drill and a joint drill.

116. Who has been honoured with Lifetime Achievement Award by the West Bengal Film Journalists Association (WBFJA)?

- [A] Mithun Chakrabarty
- [B] Buddhadeb Dasgupta
- [C] Moushumi Chatterjee
- [D] Subhashish Mukherjee

Correct Answer: B [Buddhadeb Dasgupta]

Notes:

National award-winning filmmaker Buddhadeb Dasgupta has been honoured with the Lifetime Achievement Award by the West Bengal Film Journalists Association (WBFJA). The award is in the name of the late Satyajit Ray. He was awarded the award in the third edition of the 'Cinemar Samabartan'

ceremony on January 13, 2019. Dasgupta is a big name in the parallel cinema. He is known for his political films like "Dooratwa" (Distance) and "Grihajuddha" (Crossroads). As a director, he has won the National Film Award for Best Direction twice, for "Uttara" (2000) and "Swapner Din" (2005).

117. Who has won the newly-instituted Sushila Devi Literature Award?

- [A] Namita Gokhale
- [B] Keki N. Daruwalla
- [C] Pratibha Satpathy
- [D] Srinibash Udgata

Correct Answer: A [Namita Gokhale]

Notes:

The first edition of Bhopal Literature and Art Festival (BLF) was held at the Multi Art Centre of the Bharat Bhawan in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh from January 12 to 14, 2019. The festival is a brainchild of former bureaucrat Raghav Chandra. over 70 writers and artists participated in the literary event. In it, Namita Gokhale has won the Sushila Devi Literature Award for her novel "Things to Leave Behind". She was awarded in the 'Best Book of Fiction Written by a Woman Author' category. The newly-instituted award recognizes the best work of fiction by a woman author and comes with a cash prize of Rs 2 lakh.

118. Which state government has launched 'One Family, One Job' scheme?

- [A] Sikkim
- [B] Odisha
- [C] Jharkhand
- [D] Punjab

Correct Answer: A [Sikkim]

Notes:

Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Chamling has recently launched 'One Family, One Job' scheme which entitles one government job for every family in the state. Though, the employment will be awarded only to members of those families which do not have a government job at present. As per scheme, CM Chamling handed over appointment letters to over 12,000 unemployed youths at a "Rojgar Mela" (employment fair) at the Paljor stadium, Gangtok. The task of providing employment was entrusted to the Department of Personnel. He also declared that all loan debts in the farming and agriculture sector would be revoked. As of now, the state government has over 1 lakh regularised employees on its rolls from a population of just 6.4 lakh. Sikkim is the only state in the country that gives the highest salaries to state government employees.

119. Who is the head of Group of Ministers (GoM) on GST revenue shortfall faced by states?

- [A] Sushil Kumar Modi
- [B] Shivraj Chouhan
- [C] Raman Singh
- [D] Vasundhara Raje Scindia

Correct Answer: A [Sushil Kumar Modi]

Notes:

Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Sushil Kumar Modi will head the 7-member Group of Ministers (GoM) to look into the revenue shortfall being faced by states following the roll out of Goods and Services Tax (GST). The GST Council, headed by Finance Minister Arun Jaitley, had decided to set up the GoM at its meeting on 22nd December 2018. As per a GST Council notification, the committee will suggest steps for augmenting collections. It will undertake data analysis and suggest measures for course correction. Several states, including Bihar, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Jammu and Kashmir, Odisha and Gujarat are facing revenue shortfall. The states have faced revenue shortfall in the range of 14 to 37% in the April to November period. Among the Union Territories, Puducherry is facing maximum shortfall of 43%. Of the 29 states, only Andhra Pradesh and five north eastern states — Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Sikkim and Nagaland — have recorded revenue increase post the GST roll out.

120. Which Indian personality is the recipient of the first-ever Philip Kotler Presidential award?

- [A] Mukesh Ambani
- [B] Narendra Modi

- [C] Ratan Tata
- [D] Vijay Nahar

Correct Answer: B [Narendra Modi]

Notes:

The Prime Minister Narendra Modi received the first-ever Philip Kotler Presidential award in New Delhi for his outstanding leadership for the nation. According to the award citation, under his leadership, India is now identified as the centre for innovation and value added manufacturing (Make in India), as well as a global hub for professional services such as information technology, accounting and finance. The Award focuses on the triple bottom-line of People, Profit and Planet. It will be offered annually to the leader of a Nation. Prof. Philip Kotler is a world renowned Professor of Marketing at Northwestern University, Kellogg School of Management.

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Current Affairs [PDF] -January 16-31, 2019

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News Headlines: January 16-31, 2019

Current Affairs News Headlines: January 16, 2019

INDIA

- Kerala: PM officially declares open the 13-km two-lane Kollam bypass on National Highway-66 in Kollam
- Odisha (Balangir): PM inaugurates Multi-Modal Logistics Park (MMLP) Jharsuguda
- UP: First Shahi Snan of Kumbh at Prayagraj held on January 15
- MP Govt. launches Rs 50,000-crore farm debt-waiver scheme named 'Jai Kisan Rin Mukti Yojana'
- Assam: Senior AGP leader and one of the signatories of the Assam Accord, Biraj Kumar Sarma, dies in Guwahati
- Times Higher Education (THE) Emerging Economies University Rankings 2019: 14th ranked Indian Institute of Science- Bangalore (IISc) is the best-placed Indian institute
- 71st Army Day celebrated to mark the taking over of Kodandera M. Cariappa as the first Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army on January 15, 1949
- Department of Science & Technology and Doordarshan launch DD Science TV channel and India Science internet-based TV channel
- Swami Vivekananda Lifetime Achievement Award conferred on noted social worker and economist Bajrang Lal at an event organised by Vivekananda Institute of Professional Studies (VIPS) in New Delhi

ECONOMY & CORPORATE

- Merchandise trade deficit at USD 141.2 billion during April-December of current fiscal
- Services trade surplus at US\$ 51.78 billion in April-November of current fiscal
- 7-Member Group of Ministers (GoM) constituted for boosting the real estate sector under the GST regime; Gujarat deputy CM Nitin Patel appointed as convener of GoM
- Govt approves proposal to extend benefits of 7th Central Pay Commission for teachers of technical institutions
- Bengaluru tops list of world's most dynamic cities, Hyderabad at second place: Property Consultant JLL
- Veteran journalist Rajendra Prabhu dies in Greater Noida at 85

WORLD

- The International Criminal Court (ICC) at The Hague in Netherlands absolves former Ivory Coast President Laurent Gbagbo of crimes against humanity charges and orders immediate release

SPORTS

- India crash out of Asian Cup Football tournament with 0-1 defeat to Bahrain in their 3rd match in Sharjah; head coach Stephen Constantine resigns
- India (299/4) beat Australia (298/9) by 6 wickets in 2nd ODI at Adelaide to level 3-match series 1-1; Virat Kohli (104) is Player of the Match
- International Cricket Council (ICC) appoints Manu Sawhney as its new Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
- Gukesh of Tamil Nadu becomes 2nd youngest Grand Master in the world at 12 years, 7 months and 17 days;
- Ukraine's Sergey Karjakin remains world's youngest-ever Grand Master, having achieved the feat at the age of 12 years and 7 months in 2002

Current Affairs – News Headlines: January 17, 2019

INDIA

- appoints Delhi HC judge Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Karnataka HC Chief Justice Dinesh Maheshwari as judges in Supreme Court
- President appoints senior advocates Sanjay Jain & K. M. Nataraj as Additional Solicitor Generals of India for Supreme Court
- Centre announces winners of Gandhi Peace Prizes: 2015-Vivekananda Kendra, Kanyakumari, 2016: Akshaya Patra Foundation & Sulabh International, 2017: Ekal Abhiyan Trust & 2018: Yohei Sasakawa

- A total of 1,428 people died due to extreme weather events in 2018: India Meteorological Department (IMD)
- Haryana students to get 'Shaurya Award' for courageous deeds in the name of police martyrs
- Rajasthan govt to honour people who adopt and take care of stray cows on Jan 26, Aug 15
- Rajasthan: Former Union minister C. P. Joshi of Congress elected Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
- UP: Former International President of Vishwa Hindu Parishad Vishnu Hari Dalmia dies in Mathura at 91
- Tripura: CM Biplab Kumar Deb launches Rs 1,000-crore Sustainable Catchment Forest Management (SCATFORM) project

ECONOMY & CORPORATE

- Cabinet approves capital infusion of Rs 6,000 crore in state-owned Exim Bank in 2018-20
- Cabinet approves Rs. 22,594-crore expansion of Numaligarh refinery in Assam for increasing the capacity from 3 to 9 million tonnes per annum
- selects Infosys to develop next-generation income tax filing system for Rs 4,241.97 crore
- Delhi HC stays fine of Rs 383-crore on Hindustan Unilever for GST profiteering by not reducing MRPs of its products after GST rate cuts came into effect on November 15, 2017
- Petroleum Conservation Research Association (PCRA) flags off SAKSHAM (Sanrakshan Kshмата Mahotsav) Vans to promote oil & gas conservation
- Maruti Suzuki India (MSI) launches Nexa Music – a platform for aspiring Indian musicians to compose original lyrics
- Network18 to launch first weekly paper Firstpost on Jan 26

WORLD

- India's Satyarup Siddhanta (35 years, 262 days) becomes youngest person to climb the 7 highest peaks and volcanic summits across all continents
- Britain's House of Commons rejects by a margin of 202 to 432 the Brexit deal struck between PM Theresa May and the EU
- Palestine assumes the chairmanship of G77 for 2019
- G77 is UN's largest intergovernmental organisation of developing countries
- WEF warns of impact of geopolitical tensions on potential for international cooperation in its Global Risks Report
- YouTube bans videos that depict dangerous or emotionally distressing "pranks"

SPORTS

- Georgian Grandmaster Levan Pantsulaia wins Delhi International Chess tournament

Current Affairs – News Headlines: January 17, 2019

INDIA

- HAL-designed Light Combat Helicopter carries out air-to-air missile firing, marking a first for the country
- IAF's AN-32 transport aircraft lands in strategically important Pakyong airfield in Sikkim
- 'India's Ocean Neighborhood: Narendra Modi's Strategy Initiatives', book written by Prof. S.V. Seshagiri Rao, released
- curtails tenures of Special CBI Director Rakesh Asthana and 3 other officers from the agency with immediate effect
- Gujarat: PM Modi inaugurates Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Institute of Medical and Research in Ahmedabad
- Gujarat: PM inaugurates Vibrant Gujarat Global Trade Show in Gandhinagar
- 2 commemorative coins of Rs 100 and Rs 5 released on 102nd birth anniversary of late Tamil Nadu CM M. G. Ramachandran
- Kerala HC disqualifies Independent MLA Karat Razak for his defamatory campaign against rival in May 2016 Assembly polls

- Meghalaya: Navy divers detect body of one of 15 miners trapped in a rat-hole coal mine in East Jaintia Hills District
- Supreme Court allows re-opening of dance bars in Mumbai
- IIT Hyderabad launches India's first B. Tech course in Artificial Intelligence (AI)
- More than 25% of Class VIII students can't read a primary level text: Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2018 released by NGO Pratham

ECONOMY & CORPORATE

- Reliance Industries Ltd becomes India's 1st private sector company to earn quarterly net profit of over Rs 10,000 crore
- Larsen & Toubro Infotech acquires Ruletronics for \$7.48 mn
- Adani Group to partner BASF of Germany to foray into petrochemicals

WORLD

- Britain: PM Theresa May wins confidence vote 325-306 in House of Commons
- Japan: Mount Shindake volcano erupts on Kuchinoerabu Island

SPORTS

- Wrestler Vinesh Phogat becomes first Indian to receive nomination for Laureus World Sports Awards

Current Affairs – News Headlines: January 19, 2019

INDIA

- PM inaugurates 9th edition of Vibrant Gujarat Summit in Gandhinagar
- PM Modi meets Uzbekistan's resident Shavkat Mirziyoyev at the Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit (VGGS) 2019 in Gandhinagar
- India and Uzbekistan signed an agreement on importing uranium from the Central Asian nation
- PM Modi meets Czech Republic's PM Andrej Babis and Denmark's PM Lars Lokke Rasmussen at VGGS 2019
- ISRO to give students practical experience of satellite building under its Young Scientists programme
- Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs to organise 'Shehri Samridhi Utsav' from February 1 to 15 all over the country focusing on urban livelihoods
- Justices Dinesh Maheshwari, Sanjiv Khanna sworn in as Supreme Court Judges
- UP becomes 3rd state after Gujarat and Jharkhand to approve 10% reservation for economically backward in general category in jobs and educational institutions
- Arunachal Pradesh: Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman inaugurates 426.60 m long bridge over Difo river connecting Dibang valley and Lohit valley
- Women to be inducted in a graded manner to eventually comprise 20% of total Corps of Military Police
- Govt sanctions three new Naval Air Squadrons to be set up in Gujarat, Tamil Nadu
- Telangana: Pocharam Srinivas Reddy unanimously elected as Assembly Speaker
- Uttarakhand's 'Vriksha Manav' (tree man) Vishweshwar Dutt Saklani dies in Tehri district at 96

ECONOMY & CORPORATE

- India's foreign exchange reserves increased by USD 1.267 billion to USD 397.351 billion in the week to January 11
- RBI approves appointment of V. Vaidyanathan as MD and CEO of IDFC First Bank for a period of three years
- Number of telephone subscribers in India increased to 1193.72 million at the end of November 2018
- Foreign tourist arrivals (FTAs) to India increased 5.2% to 105.59 lakh in 2018
- HDFC Standard Life Insurance changes its name to HDFC Life Insurance
- CCI clears Amazon-Witzig bid to acquire Aditya Birla Retail Ltd which operates supermarket chain 'More'

WORLD

- 7th ASEAN-India Tourism Ministers meeting held at Ha Long City in Vietnam
- Sweden: Parliament elects PM Stefan Lofven for a 2nd term, ending a four-month political vacuum
- Pandemics may cause \$570 billion annual loss to global economy, says Geneva-based WEF in its 'Outbreak Readiness and Business Impact' report
- Japan launches Epsilon-4 rocket carrying 7 satellites from the Uchinoura Space Center in Kagoshima

SPORTS

- India (234/3 in 49.2) beat Australia (230/10 in 48.4) by 7 wickets in 3rd and final ODI at Melbourne to win series 2-1; Yuzvendra Chahal 6/42 is Man of the Match

Current Affairs – NEWS HEADLINES: January 20, 2019**INDIA**

- PM inaugurates the National Museum of Indian Cinema (NMIC) at Films Division of India premises in Mumbai
- PM visits Silvassa in Dadra & Nagar Haveli; inaugurates & lays foundation stones of projects worth Rs. 1400 crore
- Gujarat: PM inaugurates L&T's manufacturing facility for K9 Vajra self-propelled Howitzer guns in Hazira
- Gujarat: PM lays foundation stone of Nirali Cancer Hospital at Navsari
- Denmark's PM Lars Lokke Rasmussen inaugurates Danish Cultural Institute in New Delhi
- Haryana: INLD's Pehowa MLA Jasvinder Singh Sandhu dies at the age of 63
- Odisha: CM Naveen Patnaik announces hike of Rs 200 per month in the social security pension under Madhu Babu Pension Yojana (MBPY)
- Padma Bhushan winning neurologist Jagjit Singh Chopra dies in Chandigarh at the age of 84
- Sansad Ratna Awards conferred in Chennai by Prime Point Foundation to honour Parliamentarians for initiating debates
- Scientist C. N. R. Rao chosen for the first Sheikh Saud International Prize for Materials Research in UAE

ECONOMY & CORPORATE

- Hitachi Payment Services (HPY) agrees to pick up 26% stake in SBI Payment Services Private Limited (SPSPL)
- Ranjeet Pandey elected as President of the Institute of Company Secretaries of India (ICSI)
- Microsoft launches e-commerce platform in Hyderabad for handloom weavers under its Project ReWeave

WORLD

- UNESCO names Brazil's Rio de Janeiro as 'World Capital of Architecture' for 2020
- Microsoft ends support for Windows 10 Mobile, asks users to switch to an Android or iOS device
- 2 Russian SU-34 fighter jets collide over the Sea of Japan during a training flight, body of one pilot recovered
- Indian-American Gurinder Singh Khalsa wins Rosa Park Trailblazer award for convincing US authorities to change their policy towards headgear of the Sikh community

SPORTS

- Punjab Government will give Government Job to all Medal winners from the state in Khelo India Youth Games in Pune

Current Affairs – News Headlines: January 21, 2019**INDIA**

- Aadhaar cards are now valid travel documents for Indians under 15 and over 65 travelling to Nepal and Bhutan: Home Ministry
- National Conference on 'Self Reliance in Defence Manufacturing' organised in Hyderabad
- Tripura Govt. unveils state tea's official logo featuring its iconic landmark 'Neermahal'

ECONOMY & CORPORATE

- Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman inaugurates Tamil Nadu Defence Industrial Corridor in Tiruchirapalli district
- 2nd World Integrated Medicine Forum 2019 to be organised in Goa on Jan 23-25 by AYUSH Ministry's Central Council for Research in Homeopathy
- 'Kulhads' (terracotta cups) at railway stations to make comeback 15 years after they were first introduced
- Delhi HC allows release of movie '72 Hours – Martyr who never died' on 1962 Sino-Indian war hero Jaswant Singh Rawat
- Kerala: Annual pilgrimage season at the Lord Ayyappa temple in Sabarimala ends

WORLD

- Masazo Nonaka, world's oldest man, dies in Japan at the age of 113
- USA: National Reconnaissance Office satellite (spy satellite) launched from Vandenberg Air Force Base in California
- India and France are likely to surpass the UK in the 2019 rankings of world's largest economies: PwC
- Google Maps rolls out its speed limit feature for Android and iOS users in many countries
- Facebook to set up an Institute for Ethics in Artificial Intelligence (AI) in collaboration with the Technical University of Munich (TUM) in Germany
- Lebanon: Arab Economic and Social Development Summit organised in capital Beirut

SPORTS

- Malaysia Masters Badminton tournament: South Korea's Son Wan Ho (Men's) and Thailand's Ratchanok Intanon (Women's) win Singles titles
- Tata Mumbai Marathon: Kenya's Cosmas Lagat (Men's) and Ethiopia's Worknesh Alemu (Women's) win races
- Khelo India Youth Games in Pune: Hosts Maharashtra win Overall Trophy with 228 medals — 85 gold, 62 silver and 81 bronze

Current Affairs – News Headlines: January 22, 2019**INDIA**

- Tripura, Manipur and Meghalaya celebrate 47th Statehood Day on January 21
- US-based Indian poet Ranjani Murali receives 'Woman's Voice Award' at the Apeejay Kolkata Literary Festival (AKLF)
- Lingayat Seer Shivakumara Swamiji, the head of the Siddaganga Math in Karnataka, dies in Bengaluru at the age of 111
- 07 crore devotees take a dip in the Ganga river in Allahabad on Paush Purnima — the 2nd auspicious bathing day of the Kumbh Mela
- Youth Pravasi Bharatiya Divas began at Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh

ECONOMY & CORPORATE

- LIC completes acquisition of 51% stake in IDBI Bank
- RBI starts two quarterly surveys — Industrial Outlook Survey (IOS) and Services & Infrastructure Outlook Survey (SIOS)
- IOS will be conducted by Hansa Research Group while SIOS will be carried out by Spectrum Planning India
- IMF projects 7.5% growth rate for Indian economy in 2019 and 7.7% in 2020 in its January World Economy Outlook update
- PNB defaulter Mehul Choksi surrenders his Indian citizenship in favour of Antigua & Barbuda Isles in the West Indies
- India is among the most trusted nations globally when it comes to government, business, NGOs and media: 2019 Edelman Trust Barometer report
- Powergrid Corporation of India Ltd (PGCIL) CMD Indu Shekhar Jha leaves his post, appointed Member of Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (CERC)

WORLD

- India 80th, Switzerland first on Global Talent Competitive Index launched by INSEAD business school
- IMF reduces global growth forecast for 2019 to 3.5% and for 2020 to 3.6% in its World Economic Outlook (WEO)
- WHO lists out 10 global health threats for 2019 including dengue, antimicrobial resistance and influenza pandemic
- 26 richest billionaires own as many assets as the poorest 50% of the planet's population: Oxfam
- Nepal's Central bank announces ban on use of Indian notes above Rs 100 in the country
- WhatsApp rolls out 5-chat message forwarding limit globally

SPORTS

- ODI series between New Zealand, India to begin in Napier on Jan 23

Current Affairs – News Headlines: January 23, 2019**INDIA**

- President presents Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar to 26 children in New Delhi for their outstanding contribution in various fields
- Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar given under 2 categories — Bal Shakti Puraskar (to children) and Bal Kalyan Puraskar (to individuals and institutions for welfare of children)
- 15th edition of Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas in Varanasi on January 21-23; PM of Mauritius Pravind Jugnauth is Chief Guest
- PM launches Pravasi Teerth Darshan Yojana for diaspora to go on govt.-sponsored tour of religious places in India
- J&K: 1210 metre long Keerian Gandial Bridge over river Ravi inaugurated in Kathua district by Union Minister Nitin Gadkari
- Home Minister Rajnath Singh lays foundation stone for security force residential complex at Attari border in Punjab
- Indian Navy conducts Sea Vigil coastal defence exercise covering country's entire coastline
- India shares with Pakistan coordinates of the crossing point of the proposed Kartarpur Corridor
- The Corridor will link Baba Nanak village in Punjab to Gurdwara Darbar Sahib in Narowal in Pakistan
- Telangana Govt. to set up 'State Tiger Protection Force' to protect tiger population in Amarabad and Kawal Tiger Reserves
- Odisha: Sundargarh MLA Jogesh Singh resigns from Congress
- J&K: Former IAS officer S. Krishnan to be appointed fourth advisor to Governor
- Noted Gujarati poet Sitanshu Yashaschandra awarded Saraswati Samman 2017
- ITBP's Aparna Kumar becomes first woman IPS Officer to reach South Pole

ECONOMY & CORPORATE

- Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation (GCMMF) launches 'Amul Camel Milk' in select markets in the state
- Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (JNPT) is India's only port listed among top 30 global container ports: Lloyds Report
- Nissan Motor Co to launch its electric car Leaf in India
- Unconditional cash transfer to farmers better option than Universal Basic Income (UBI) scheme: SBI Report

WORLD

- Global growth is expected to remain at 3% in 2019 and 2020: World Economic Situation And Prospects 2019 report of UN
- European anti-trust authorities fine MasterCard 570 million euros (\$648 million) for obstructing merchants' access to cross-border card-payment services

SPORTS

- Virat Kohli wins Sir Garfield Sobers Trophy for ICC Cricketer of the Year
- Former India hockey player Raghbir Singh Bhola, a two-time Olympic medallist, dies at 92 in New Delhi
- First ever Chinese winner of Grand Slam events, Li Na, to be inducted into International Tennis Hall of Fame
- Spain: Footballer Cristiano Ronaldo agrees to pay fine of 18.8 million euros to settle tax evasion charges

Current Affairs – News Headlines: January 24, 2019**INDIA**

- PM inaugurates Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose museum at Red Fort in Delhi on his 122nd birth anniversary
- PM inaugurates Yaad-e-Jallian Museum (museum on the Jallianwala Bagh and World War I), the Museum on 1857- India's first war of Independence, and Drishyakala-Museum on Indian Art within the Red Fort complex
- Indian Africa Field Training Exercise (IAFTX)-2019 being conducted at Pune on Jan 23-24
- World Integrated Medicine Forum on the regulation of Homoeopathic Medicinal Products in Goa on Jan 23-25; theme: 'Advancing Global Collaboration'
- Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman launches Tamil Nadu Aerospace and Defence Industrial Policy in Chennai
- Teji Grover awarded Vani Foundation Distinguished Translator Award in Jaipur
- Union Cabinet approves increase in powers of Autonomous Councils in Sixth Schedule areas of North East
- Union Cabinet approves signing of MoU with Kuwait for increased safeguards for Indian domestic workers
- 30 NRIs, Indian-origin people and their organisations given Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award
- Railway Minister Piyush Goyal given additional charge of the Finance and Corporate Affairs ministries

ECONOMY & CORPORATE

- India's GDP growth expected to accelerate to 7.6% in 2019-20 from an estimated 7.4% in 2018-19: UN's World Economic Situation and Prospects (WESP) 2019
- Union Cabinet approves creation of National Bench of the Goods and Services Tax Appellate Tribunal (GSTAT)
- Union Cabinet approves USD 400 mn currency swap arrangement for SAARC nations
- International Centre for Automotive Technology (ICAT) signs agreement with Korea Intelligent Automotive Parts and Promotion Institute (KIAPI) to increase cooperation in certification issues
- BSNL partners with French company Be-Bound to offer data connectivity through SMS
- Sweden's Saab, AAI sign MoU over air traffic management solutions for airports operating under the regional connectivity scheme
- Tata Motors launches Harrier SUV in diesel at Rs 12.69 lakh

WORLD

- Coast guards of India, Japan undertake disaster control exercise in Yokohama
- South Korea first, India 54th on Bloomberg 2019 Innovative Index

SPORTS

- India (156/2 in 34.5) beat NZ (157/10 in 38) by 8 wickets in 1st ODI at McLean Park, Napier
- Mohammed Shami becomes fastest Indian to take 100 wickets in ODIs; reaching the mark in his 56th match
- International Weightlifting Federation revokes doping ban imposed on 2018 Commonwealth Games gold medallist Khumukcham Sanjita Chanu of India

Current Affairs – News Headlines: January 25, 2019**INDIA**

- Lance Naik Nazir Ahmad Wani will be conferred with the Ashoka Chakra, India's highest peacetime gallantry award. Was martyred during an anti-terror operation at Shopian in Kashmir in November 2018
- Former Union minister and ex-Goa Governor Bhanu Prakash Singh dies in Indore at the age of 90
- unveils new guidelines for Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS) aligning them to the National Skills Qualification Framework with an aim to providing standardised training across sectors
- Naval airbase INS Kohassa commissioned into the Indian Navy at the Shibpur Naval Air Station in North Andaman Island
- Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman holds talks with her Maldivian counterpart Mariya Ahmed Didi in New Delhi
- Long-range surface-to-air missile — LRSAM — “successfully” test-fired from a warship off the coast of Odisha
- J&K Governor gives assent to the J&K Reservation (Amendment) bill, 2014 providing reservation in jobs to Pahari community
- Gujarat: Those who have settled in the state after 1978 won't get the benefit of 10% reservation for the economically weaker sections (EWS) in the general category
- National Girl Child Day observed on January 24 with its theme as 'Empowering Girls for a Brighter Tomorrow'
- 12th edition of Jaipur Literature Festival inaugurated
- Uttar Pradesh Diwas celebrated on January 24 to mark the renaming of state from United Province in 1950

ECONOMY & CORPORATE

- Aviation veteran Ronojoy Dutta appointed as CEO of IndiGo; former SEBI Chairman M. Damodaran appointed Chairman
- Head of Deutsche Bank India Ravneet Gill appointed CEO of Yes Bank
- Former CEO of ICICI Bank Chanda Kochhar and her husband Deepak Kochhar booked by the CBI for alleged corruption in clearing loans worth Rs 1,875 crore to the Videocon group during her tenure
- Tamil Nadu signs agreements worth over Rs 3 trillion at the Global Investors Meet (GIM) in Chennai on Jan 23-24

WORLD

- Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro breaks off diplomatic ties with the US after Donald Trump recognises opposition leader Juan Guaido as the country's "interim president"
- Sultan Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah elected new King of Malaysia
- Carlos Ghosn resigns his position as chief executive and chairman of Renault

SPORTS

- Australian Open Tennis: Japan's Naomi Osaka to face Czech Republic's Petra Kvitova in women's singles final

Current Affairs – News Headlines: January 26, 2019**INDIA**

- Country's highest civilian award Bharat Ratna awarded to former President Pranab Mukherjee, Bharatiya Jana Sangh leader Nanaji Deshmukh and singer Bhupen Hazarika
- President approves 411 Gallantry Awards including 1 Ashoka Chakra, 4 Kirti Chakras and 11 Shaurya Chakras
- 855 Police Officers get Republic Day Police Medals
- Home Ministry selects 48 people for Jeevan Raksha awards
- Kannada author Jayant Kaikini named winner of the DSC Prize for South Asian Literature 2018 for his translated work "No Presents Please"
- Tamil translation of "La vie d'un homme inconnu" (The Life of an Unknown Man) by Andrei Makine

awarded Romain Rolland Prize for literary translation at the Jaipur Literature Festival

- SC constitutes new five-judge Constitution Bench for hearing Ram Janambhoomi-Babri Masjid land title dispute in Ayodhya
- PM Modi meets South African PM President Cyril Ramaphosa in New Delhi
- First IBSA (India, Brazil, South Africa) Gandhi-Mandela Memorial Freedom Lecture held in New Delhi
- Railways to launch tourist train 'Samantha Express' covering prominent places associated with Dr B R Ambedkar and Gautam Buddha on February 14 from Nagpur
- 47th Statehood Day of Himachal Pradesh celebrated on January 25
- National Voters' Day celebrated on January 25 to mark the foundation of Election Commission of India in 1950
- Union Minister Harsh Vardhan launches 3 DST Technology Mission Centres in Chennai
- Kerala govt. to launch 'Pravasi Dividend Pension Scheme' to provide regular pension to Non-Resident Keralites on a one-time payment of Rs 5 lakh
- PSLV-C44 puts communication satellite Kalamsat and military satellite Microsat-R into orbit after launch from Sriharikota (AP)
- Hindi author Krishna Sobti, winner of Sahitya Akademi and Jnanpith awards, passes away at 93 in New Delhi

ECONOMY & CORPORATE

- Supreme Court upholds constitutional validity of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC).
- Govt awards 235 routes under regional air connectivity scheme UDAN

WORLD

- 5-day World Economic Forum Annual Meeting 2019 concludes in Davos, Switzerland
- Pakistan govt. declares sugarcane juice as the "national drink" of the country

SPORTS

- Georgian Grandmaster Levan Pantsulaia wins 11th Chennai Open International chess tournament

Current Affairs – News Headlines: January 27, 2019

INDIA

- Bharat Ratna awarded to late Nanaji Deshmukh (RSS), Bhupen Hazarika (late Assamese singer) & Pranab Mukherjee (former President)
- Padma Awards 2019 announced: Padma Vibhushan – 4, Padma Bhushan – 14 and Padma Shri – 94
- Padma Vibhushan awardees: Teejan Bai (folk music), Ismail Omar Guelleh (President of Djibouti), Anil Manibhai Naik (L&T Chairman), Balwant Moreshwar Purandare (theatre)
- Padma Bhushan awardees include Budhaditya Mukherjee (sitarist), Kuldip Nayar (late journalist), Bachendri Pal (women's mountaineer) and V K Shunglu (former CAG)
- Padma Shri awardees include Manoj Bajpayee (actor), Gautam Gambhir (ex-cricketer), Harika Dronavalli (women's chess player), Shankar Mahadevan (music composer)
- Widow of Lance Naik Nazir Ahmad Wani, who was martyred in J&K in Nov 2018, receives Ashoka Chakra from President
- 'Nari Shakti' announced as Oxford Dictionaries' Hindi Word of the Year
- 'Every Vote Counts: The Story Of Elections in India', book written by former CEC Navin Chawla, released
- Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik's sister, writer Gita Mehta turns down Padma Shri
- South African President Cyril Ramaphosa attends India's Republic Day celebrations as Chief Guest
- Five day long 'Bharat Parv' begins at Red Fort, New Delhi

ECONOMY & CORPORATE

- MP Govt. to launch 'Yuva Swabhiman Yojana' to provide 100 days of employment every year to urban youth from economically weaker sections (EWS)

WORLD

- India gifts 30 ambulances and 6 buses to Nepal on its Republic Day

- French Oscar-winning composer Michel Legrand dies aged 86 in Paris

SPORTS

- Australian Open Tennis: Japan's Naomi Osaka beats Petra Kvitova of Czech Republic in final 7-6 (7-2), 5-7, 6-4 to win Women's Singles title
- Naomi Osaka becomes first Japanese player to attain World's No: 1 ranking in Women's Singles tennis
- India (324/4 in 50) beat NZ (234/10 in 40.2) by 90 runs in 2nd ODI at Mount Maunganui to take 2-0 lead in 5-match series

Current Affairs – News Headlines: January 28, 2019

INDIA

- Tamil Nadu: PM lays foundation stone for All India Institutes of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) at Madurai
- Goa: A 5.1-km long cable-stayed bridge "Atal Setu" on the Mandovi river inaugurated
- Uttarakhand: India's 2nd tulip garden after Srinagar being developed in Pithoragarh district
- Odisha govt. launches "Jiban Sampark" project for Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups in the state

ECONOMY & CORPORATE

- India's first indigenous semi-high-speed train 'Train 18' renamed as 'Vande Bharat Express'; will run between Delhi and Varanasi
- Kerala: PM inaugurates BPCL refinery expansion complex built at a cost of Rs 16,504-crore in Kochi
- CPSEs to implement 10% reservation quota for economically weaker sections (EWSs) from February 1

WORLD

- Sri Lanka: 13-coach passenger train, funded by India, inaugurated between Colombo and Kankesanthurai
- Australia Day celebrated on Jan 26 to mark arrival of first British settlers in 1788
- International Day of Education observed on January 24
- Brazil: 34 confirmed dead after a dam collapsed at a mine in Minas Gerais state
- Russia marks 75th anniversary of the end of World War II siege of Leningrad on Jan 27
- China: Ambassadors of Pakistan, Maldives and Sri Lanka conferred with Silk Road Super Ambassador Awards in Beijing

SPORTS

- Australian Open Tennis: Serbia's Novak Djokovic wins his 7th Men's Singles title by beating Spain's Rafael Nadal in final 6-3, 6-2, 6-3
- Indonesia Masters Badminton: India's Saina Nehwal wins Women's Singles title after Spain's Carolina Marin leaves final due to injury
- Anders Antonsen of Denmark defeats Japan's Kento Momota in final to win Men's Singles title
- Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) beats Indian Army in final to win National Ice Hockey tournament in Ladakh
- Pakistan captain Sarfaraz Ahmed suspended for four matches by ICC for breaching its Anti-Racism Code

Current Affairs – News Headlines: January 29, 2019

INDIA

- India to participate in the International Student Assessment (PISA) conducted by OECD in 2021
- PISA tests the learning levels of 15-year-old students
- Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI) Chairman S. P. Gupta resigns
- Sunjay Sudhir appointed India's new Ambassador to the Maldives
- International Stock Taking Conference on Tiger Conservation being held in New Delhi on January 28-29
- UP: A Jaguar aircraft of IAF crashes in Kushinagar district, with the pilot ejecting safely
- Delhi government to give minimum support price (MSP) to farmers as per Swaminathan Committee report

- FSSAI names Tamil Nadu as the Best State for its active participation in the national campaign 'Swasth Bharat Yatra'
- West Bengal: Congress Lok Sabha MP Mausam Noor joins the Trinamool Congress
- Voting concludes peacefully for Ramgarh assembly seat in Rajasthan; Jind assembly bypoll in Haryana
- Tableaux of Tripura, CISF and ICAR win first prize for the Republic Day Parade at the Rajpath

ECONOMY & CORPORATE

- PSBs to step up credit support to economy while consolidating gains of 4Rs (recognition, resolution, recapitalisation and reforms): Finance Ministry
- India (106.5 million tonnes) was world's 2nd largest producer of crude steel in 2018 after China (928.3 MT)
- India and OECD sign agreement to enable India's participation in Programme for International Students Assessment (PISA) to be held in 2021
- India and China sign protocol for exports of Indian tobacco leaves to China
- At \$19.5 bn, Tata ranks 86th among 100 most valuable global brands: London-based consultancy Brand Finance

WORLD

- Australia and USA recognize Venezuela's National Assembly President Juan Guaido as the country's interim President
- 2019 Screen Actors Guild Awards presented in Hollywood: Rami Malek is Best Actor for 'Bohemian Rhapsody', Glenn Close is Best Actress for 'The Wife'
- International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust observed on January 27

SPORTS

- Magnus Carlsen of Norway wins Tata Steel Masters chess tournament in Wijk Aan Zee (The Netherlands)
- India (245/3 in 43) beat NZ (243/10 in 49) by 7 wickets in 3rd ODI at Mount Maunganui to take 3-0 lead in 5-match series
- Ambati Rayudu suspended from bowling in international cricket by the ICC for opting against getting his suspect action tested
- Nagaland gets its first Astro Turf Football Pitch at Indira Gandhi Stadium in Kohima

Current Affairs – News Headlines: January 30, 2019

INDIA

- Former Railways (1989-90) and Defence (1998-2004) Minister George Fernandes dies at 88 in New Delhi
- PM interacts with students, teachers and parents, as part of Pariksha Pe Charcha 2.0 at Talkatora Stadium, New Delhi
- Chhattisgarh govt. to put on hold from February pension given to those detained under MISA (Maintenance of Internal Security Act) during Emergency (1975-77)
- India ranked 78th (81st in 2017) on Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) for 2018
- FSSAI-led 'Swasth Bharat Yatra', a pan-India cyclothon to sensitise people about eating safe food which began on Oct 16, concludes in New Delhi
- EAM Sushma Swaraj and her Kyrgyz counterpart Chingiz Azamatovich Aidarbekov meet in New Delhi
- 2 members of the National Statistical Commission (NSC), P. C. Mohanan and J. V. Meenakshi, resign; Chief Statistician Pravin Srivastava and NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant are the only remaining members in NSC
- Maharashtra: Chief Minister's office brought under the ambit of Lokayukta
- Beating the Retreat ceremony, marking the end of 4-day Republic Day celebrations held at Vijay

Chowk in New Delhi

ECONOMY & CORPORATE

- Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation signs a MoU with National Council of Applied Economic Research for improving the official statistical system in the country
- MD and CEO of Zee Entertainment Enterprises Ltd. Punit Goenka elected Chairman of Broadcast Audience Research Council of India (BARC)
- Civil Aviation Secretary Rajiv Nayan Choubey to join UPSC as Member after retirement on February 1
- India wins Award of Excellence for 'Best in Show' at the New York Times Travel Show on January 25-27

WORLD

- Denmark and New Zealand are top 2 countries on Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) for 2018
- Italy and UN launch Africa Centre for Climate and Sustainable Development in Rome
- Trump Administration accuses Chinese telecom company Huawei of stealing trade secrets and violating US sanctions on Iran
- Suman Kumari becomes 1st Hindu woman in Pakistan to be appointed as a civil judge
- Central banks of the UAE and Saudi Arabia launch common digital currency called "Aber"
- Aber will be used in financial settlements between UAE and Saudi Arabia through Blockchains and Distributed Ledgers technologies

SPORTS

- Women's cricket: India (166/2 in 35.2 overs) beat NZ (161 all out in 44.2 overs) by 8 wickets in 2nd ODI at Mount Maunganui to take 2-0 lead in 3-match series

Current Affairs – News Headlines: January 31, 2019

India

- PM inaugurates National Salt Satyagraha Memorial at Dandi in Navsari district of Gujarat on 71st death anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi
- PM inaugurates super speciality Rasilaben Sevantil Shah Venus hospital in Surat, Gujarat
- New Campus of National Museum Institute inaugurated in Noida by Union HRD Minister Prakash Javadekar
- J&K: Pakistani experts inspect 1000 MW Pakal Dul hydroelectric power project being built on the Chenab river basin under the provisions of the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT)
- Vice Admiral G. Ashok Kumar assumed charge as Vice Chief of the Naval Staff
- Human Space Flight Centre (HSFC) inaugurated at ISRO Headquarter campus in Bengaluru
- ISRO selects 10 companies for transfer of its Lithium-ion cell technology
- 2008 Assam bombing: Special CBI Court awards life imprisonment to 10 accused, including NDFB chief Ranjan Daimary
- International conference on 8th century Himalayan sage Guru Padmasambhava held in New Delhi on January 29-30
- Union Tourism Minister K. J. Alphons inaugurates the First Swadesh Darshan project in Sikkim at Gangtok
- Centre enhances fellowship of PhD students and other research personnel enrolled in science & technology

Republic Day Parade Awards

- Gorkha Brigade selected as the Best Marching Contingent among the three services
- CRPF awarded best marching contingent prize among the para-military and other auxiliary forces
- CISF and ICAR win best tableau award jointly in the category of tableaux representing Union ministries and departments
- Among states, Tripura's Republic Day tableau wins first prize

Economy & Corporate

- India's horticulture production rises 1% to record 314.67 million tonnes in 2018-19
- Postal department plans to spin off the life insurance operations into a separate business unit (SBU)
- renames Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP) as the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)
- Govt embarks on ambitious programme to ensure 100% electrification of Railways grid in next 5 years
- Justice (Retd) B N Srikrishna panel indicts former ICICI Bank CEO Chanda Kochhar for violating various regulations
- ICICI Bank to stop all unpaid retirement benefits to Chanda Kochhar and also recover bonuses paid to her since 2009

World

- US: Kleinman Center for Energy Policy at the University of Pennsylvania awards Carnot Prize to Union Minister Piyush Goyal

Sports

- Haryana Hammers to face Punjab Royals in the Pro Wrestling League (PWL) final in Greater Noida
- Former umpire Dara Dotiwalla, who officiated in 6 Test matches from 1982 to 1987, dies in Mumbai at 85
- World Table Tennis rankings: G. Sathyan (28th) in Men's Singles and Mainka Batra (47th) in Women's Singles are best ranked Indian players.

January 16, 2019

Supreme Court issues notice to Centre on PIL against notification under IT Act

The Supreme Court has issued a notice to the Central government on PIL which questioned the notification authorising 10 central agencies to intercept, monitor and decrypt any computer system.

What was the notification?

Under the notification, the central government had empowered 10 agencies, Intelligence Bureau, Narcotics Control Bureau, Enforcement Directorate, the Central Board of Direct Taxes (for Income Tax Department), Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, Central Bureau of Investigation, National Investigation Agency, the Research and Analysis Wing, Directorate of Signal Intelligence (in service areas of J-K, North East and Assam) and Delhi Police commissioner to intercept, monitor and decrypt any computer system.

PIL challenges the Notification

The notification is challenged on the following grounds:

- The notification was illegal, unconstitutional and ultra vires to the law.
- The notification gives State the right to access every communication, computer and mobile and to use it to protect the political interest and object of the present executive political party.
- The notification was an attempt to create a surveillance state.

The PIL also sought to prohibit the agencies from initiating any criminal proceedings, enquiry or investigation against anybody under the provisions of the IT Act based on the notification. The Supreme Court issuing a notice to the central government and has asked to respond in six weeks.

Relaxation of Norms under PCA Framework

It is said that the finance ministry and the Reserve Bank of India are working on providing some relaxation on the prompt corrective action (PCA) framework for stressed banks.

Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) Framework

Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) framework has been issued by the RBI to maintain the sound financial health of banks. The RBI will initiate certain structured and discretionary actions for the bank under the PCA. The PCA framework kicks in when the Banks breach any of the three key regulatory trigger points

- Capital to risk-weighted assets ratio
- Net non-performing assets
- Return on assets.

The PCA framework is aimed at nudging the banks to take corrective measures in a timely manner, in order to restore their financial health.

Eleven Banks which are under PCA framework are Dena Bank, Central Bank of India, Bank of Maharashtra, UCO Bank, IDBI Bank, Oriental Bank of Commerce, Indian Overseas Bank, Corporation Bank, Bank of India, Allahabad Bank and United Bank of India.

Why there is a proposal for providing relaxation now?

After several measures taken for capital infusion in the Public Sector Banks, the Banks are well-capitalised. Even though the banks have not only shown improvement on recoveries but have further de-risked their portfolios. The relaxation would aid banks in exiting the PCA framework.

The Parliamentary Committee on Finance had observed that "It is not clear as to how these banks will turn around their operations with the existing curbs on lending and even deposit-taking in the case of some. This could trigger a vicious cycle in the banking sector and the economy at large". The committee had recommended reviewing the PCA framework.

SpaceX-CRS-16 Dragon craft departed from the International Space Station

The SpaceX cargo craft departed from the International Space Station after its successful mission to deliver scientific equipment and other supplies.

The SpaceX-CRS-16 Dragon successfully delivered more than 2,500 kilograms (5,600 pounds) of cargo to the space station and orbited Earth for five weeks. The SpaceX-CRS-16 Dragon craft is expected to splash down just west of Baja, California.

SpaceX-CRS-16 Dragon

The SpaceX-CRS-16 Dragon is a Commercial Resupply Service mission to the International Space Station launched by NASA. The NASA had contracted this mission to SpaceX for launch.

International Space Station

The International Space Station is a habitable artificial satellite, in low Earth orbit. The ISS maintains an orbit with an altitude of between 330 and 435 km (205 and 270 mi) by means of reboost manoeuvres and circles the Earth in roughly 92 minutes and completes 15.5 orbits per day

The ISS programme is a joint project between five participating space agencies: NASA (United States), Roscosmos (Russia), JAXA (Japan), ESA (Europe), and CSA (Canada).

PSU banks to bring down govt equity to 52%

The Finance Ministry has asked the public sector banks to gradually reduce the government's equity to 52 per cent. Currently, some of the public sector banks have government's holding beyond 75 per cent.

Why the disinvestment?

The decision to bring down the government's equity to 52 per cent was taken due to the following reasons:

- Dilution of the government's stake will help banks to meet 25 per cent public float norms set by the SEBI.
- To align with the best corporate practices.
- Encourage the banks to follow the prudential lending norms.

The Ministry of Finance has authorised the Public Sector Banks to take necessary steps in bringing down the government equity based on the marketing conditions.

Rules of SEBI

A notification under the Securities Contracts Regulations (Amendment) Rules makes it mandatory for all listed entities to have a minimum public float of 25%.

SEBI

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) was established under the provisions of the Securities and Exchange Board of India Act, 1992 on April 12, 1992. SEBI aims to protect the interests of investors in securities and to promote the development and regulate the securities market in the country.

PM Inaugurates developmental Works in Kerala

PM Modi inaugurated the various developmental works in Kerala, which include:

- Kollam Bypass
- Unveiled a plaque launching the completion of several developmental projects under the Swadesh Darshan scheme.

Kollam Bypass

Kollam Bypass lies on the National Highway-66. The opening of the Kollam Bypass would considerably reduce travel time between Alappuzha and Thiruvananthapuram, together with avoiding traffic

congestion in Kollam town.

The Bypass is 13 Km long and has two lanes. It comprises three major bridges over the Ashtamudi lake, having a total length of 1540 metres and an underpass. It is the first National Highway project in the country taken up on a 50:50 Centre-State partnership.

Swadesh Darshan scheme

PM Modi also unveiled a plaque launching the completion of several developmental projects undertaken in the Sree Padmanabhaswamy temple circuit in Thiruvananthapuram under the Swadesh Darshan scheme. The developmental projects comprised of various infrastructure facilities in Sree Padmanabhaswamy Temple, Sree Parthasarthy Temple, Aranmula, and the Sabarimala Ayyappa temple.

The Swadesh Darshan scheme of the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India aims at integrated development of theme-based tourist circuits in the country.

The 13 thematic circuits under the Swadesh Darshan scheme are North East India Circuit, Buddhist Circuit, Himalayan Circuit, Coastal Circuit, Krishna Circuit, Desert Circuit, Tribal Circuit, Eco Circuit, Rural Circuit, Spiritual Circuit, Ramayana Circuit, Heritage Circuit and Wildlife Circuit.

ASER Report 2018

The Annual Status of Education, ASER report by the NGO Pratham which measures the learning outcomes has been released. The report was based on an annual household survey which covered 5.46 lakh children in 596 rural districts across the country.

Findings of the ASER 2018 Survey

The important findings from the ASER 2018 survey are:

- For the first time since the introduction of the Right to Education Act, India witnessed tangible improvements in the quality aspects. The study shows that more than half (50.5%) of all children in Class 5 can read a Class 2 textbook, up from 46.9% in 2012.
- The proportion of children in Class 5 who can do simple division has gone up from 24.9% in 2012 to 27.9% in 2018.
- The reading levels of class 3, which was assessed by the ability to read Class 2 textbooks was inching up since the low of 2010 (19.5%) and now stands at 27.2%.
- Government schools in eight states of Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Kerala, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh have recorded a growth in basic reading levels of more than 5 percentage points over 2016.
- Government schools in 10 states of Punjab, UP, Assam, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Nagaland, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh have recorded a growth of more than 5 percentage points in basic arithmetic levels 2016.
- Kerala tops in Class 5 reading levels with 77.5%, up from 69.4% in 2016. This growth is driven by state-run schools i.e.10% rise in reading levels in government schools compared to 7.3% in private schools.
- The government schools in Uttar Pradesh have registered an 11.9% jump in reading skills for Class 5 students while private schools saw only a 7.6% rise.
- Wide-disparities among states in learning levels. In Uttar Pradesh, over 60% of Class 3 children cannot recognise letters or read words whereas in Himachal Pradesh over 70% of children are either at grade-level or only close behind.
- 1 out of 4 children in rural India leaves Class 8 without basic reading skills and over half of them (55.9%) without basic numerical literacy or without the ability to do a simple division sum.
- 1% of children in the 15-16 age group are not in school.
- Only a quarter of all children in Class 3 are at their grade-level, only 27.2% of these children can read a Class 2 textbook and only 28.1% can do Class 2-level subtraction.

These sobering realities demand policy interventions. The government must devise a policy direction to address these critical gaps in learning while it formulates the National Education Policy.

Recommendations of Committee to revisit the Section 126 of the Representation of the People Act

The Committee headed Deputy Election Commissioner Umesh Sinha has submitted the report on revisiting the section 126 of the Representation of the People Act. The committee had nine officers from

the Election Commission and one nominated member each from I&B Ministry, Law Ministry, IT Ministry, National Broadcasters Association and Press Council of India.

Recommendations of the Committee

The committee has made the following recommendations:

- Amendment to the Model Code of Conduct to ensure that political parties release their manifesto at least 72 hours before voting ends in the first phase of polls.
- The provision of election silence, which prohibits any form of poll campaign in the last 48 hours leading up to voting to be extended to cover print and social media, internet, cable channels and online version of print media.
- Social media platforms should work with the EC to evolve a mechanism by which the latter can flag content violating electoral law and social media sites can take it down as soon as possible.
- EC should issue directions to private cable TV channels to follow NBSA guidelines for election broadcasts during the poll period.

The recommendations when implemented will help in minimizing the possible interference of activities which aim at indirectly influencing voters during the valuable silence period of 48 hours provided to them.

Section 126 of the Representation of the People Act

Section 126 of the Representation of the People Act Prohibits public meetings during period of forty-eight hours ending with hour fixed for conclusion of the poll.

Vision 2040 document: Aviation

The Union Minister for Civil Aviation Suresh Prabhu released the Vision 2040 document in the Global Aviation Summit 2019. The Global Aviation Summit 2019 is organized in Mumbai with the theme 'Flying for All'.

Forecasts of the Vision Document

The forecasts of the Vision 2040 document are:

- The document estimates that India will need 200 airports and an investment of \$40-50 billion to handle at least 1.1 billion passengers flying to, from and within the country.
- It is estimated that passenger traffic (to, from and within India) for FY 2040 would be 1.1 billion, which is six times the 187 million traffic recorded in FY 2018.
- Most of the airports' passenger capacity will saturate in the next 15 years and India will have to nearly double the count from 99 to 200.
- Even the second airports in regions like Delhi and Mumbai would be saturated by 2040 and will require a third airport.
- In order to cater to this huge passenger traffic, India will have to holistically develop airports having all stakeholders on board. This has to be coupled with providing quality service to flyers.
- The scheduled airline fleet will rise from 622, at the end of March 2018, to 2,360 till March 2040.
- Even though India is a "price sensitive" market, gradual rise in per capita incomes, increased (perceived) value of 'time', propensity for leisure and tourism will lead to more and more Indians using airways as a medium to travel.

Recommendations made in the Vision Document

The Vision Document makes the following recommendations:

- Ushering in amendments to Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Restructuring Act, 2013 and adopting "land-pooling" techniques to develop newer airports.
- Lower Goods and Services Tax (GST) since taxes add pressure on the airline's bottom line.
- Aviation turbine fuel (ATF) to be brought under GST.

The Vision document for 2040 also addresses areas of concerns for maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO), human resource development, aviation safety and security, ground handling mechanism, air navigation and remotely piloted aircraft (drones).

GoM to address GST issues related of the Real Estate Sector

The Union government has set up a seven-member Group of Ministers (GoM) to examine and suggest ways to resolve the issues plaguing the real estate sector after the implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST).

Terms of Reference

The Terms of reference of the panel are:

- Suggest a plan of action to address the problems facing both developers and buyers.
- Examine the various aspects of levying GST on the transfer of development rights and development rights in a joint development agreement and suitable model.
- Look at the legality of inclusion or exclusion of land or any other ingredient in the scheme and suggest a valuation mechanism.
- Examine GST levy on Transfer of Development Rights and development rights in a joint development agreement and suitable model.

The GoM headed Gujarat deputy chief minister Nitin Patel has finance ministers of Kerala, Punjab, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh and Goa's Minister of Panchayat as members.

World Dynamic City 2019

The City Momentum Index of JLL which identifies World Dynamic Cities has been released by the property consultant JLL.

About the Index

The City Momentum Index of JLL measures momentum for 131 of the world's most commercially active cities by tracking a range of socio-economic and commercial real estate indicators over a three-year period to identify the urban economies and real estate markets undergoing the most rapid expansion.

The Index measures short-term momentum over a three-year horizon and identifies urban economies and real estate markets which are currently undergoing significant rapid growth.

World Dynamic Cities 2019

The standings of the various cities under the 2019 survey are listed below:

Rank	2019
1	Bengaluru IN
2	Hyderabad IN
3	Hanoi
4	Delhi IN
5	Pune IN
6	Nairobi
7	Chennai IN
8	Ho Chi Minh City
9	Xi'an
10	Guangzhou

Top 10 Cities

- Silicon Valley of India, Bengaluru has emerged as the world's most dynamic city among 131 major established and emerging business hubs globally.
- The Second place is occupied by Hyderabad.
- Other Indian cities which featured in the top 20 list are Delhi (4th), Pune (5th), Chennai (7th) and Kolkata (20th).
- 19 of the top 20 cities from are from the Asia Pacific. This showcases the region's rapid urbanisation and strong economic growth.

The Index notes that implementation of reforms such as RERA and GST with a focus on improving infrastructure and improving ease of doing business has brought in more transparency in the real estate sector and has given a strong impetus to the sector. As a result, India is receiving greater interest from foreign real estate investors who are seeking to tap into the countries favourable growth dynamics.

DD Science and India Science launched

The Minister of Science and Technology Harsh Vardhan launched the initiatives DD Science and India

Science to popularise science in India. The initiatives aim to develop the scientific temper in Indian society.

DD Science

DD Science is a one-hour slot on Doordarshan National channel which will be telecast Monday to Saturday from 5 pm to 6 pm. DD Science may be scaled up to a full-fledged channel in the future.

India Science

India Science is an Internet-based channel which will be available on any internet-enabled device and will offer live, scheduled play and video-on-demand services. India Science will have a 24*7 presence through www.indiascience.in.

Implementation of DD Science and India Science

DD Science and India Science have been conceived and supported by the Department of Science and Technology and are being implemented and managed by Vigyan Prasar. An agreement has been signed between Vigyan Prasar and Doordarshan in this regard.

Vigyan Prasar

Vigyan Prasar (VP) is an autonomous organisation under the Department of Science and Technology. Vigyan Prasar aims to popularise science in India through several strategically important approaches.

Times Higher Education Emerging Economies University Rankings 2019

The London-based Times Higher Education (THE), a global organisation that produces data, analysis and expertise on higher education has released the Emerging Economies University Rankings 2019. The 2019 ranking comprises of 450 universities from 43 countries, across four continents.

Performance Indicators

The rankings use 13 performance indicators to provide comprehensive and balanced comparisons to reflect the characteristics of the emerging economy universities.

These 13 performance indicators are grouped under 5 categories: Teaching (the learning environment); Research (volume, income and reputation); citations (research influence); International outlook (staff, students and research); and industry income (knowledge transfer).

Findings in the Rankings

The standings of Indian universities in the rankings are as outlined below:

- The Indian Institute of Science has topped the rankings among Indian institutes with 14th rank; the second spot among Indian Institutes was occupied by the Indian Institute of Technology Bombay with 27th rank.
- IIT Roorkee has moved up by 21 places to 35th rank due to improvements in its research (volume, income and reputation) and industry income (knowledge transfer).
- IIT Indore (61st) and the JSS Academy of Higher Education and Research are at joint 64th position.
- Savitribai Phule Pune University has moved up by 87 positions to joint 93rd, alongside the National Autonomous University of Mexico. The increase in the rankings of Savitribai Phule Pune University is attributed to its research score and a significant rise to its citations score.
- Banaras Hindu University, Amrita University, Indian Institute of Science Education and Research, Pune and IIT Hyderabad also features among the top 150 in the rankings.

The Universities of Mainland China are most represented in the rankings with 72 institutions in total.

First human rights TV channel Launched

The world's first television channel dedicated to human rights was launched in London by the International Observatory of Human Rights (IOHR).

It would be a web-based channel and would deliver human rights issues to audiences in over 20 countries across Europe, Latin America and the Middle East. The broadcasts of the channel can be viewed via the netgem.tv interactive platform. The programmes are currently broadcasted in English and eventually hopes to broadcast in other languages including Farsi, Turkish, Arabic and Russian.

What the Channel aims to achieve?

The Human Rights Channel aims to deliver hidden stories ignored by mainstream media into people's living rooms.

The Channel would focus on issues like refugees, press freedom and the incarceration of journalists, extremism, women's rights, LGBT+ issues and the plight of the world's stateless people.

The channel has the following programmes in the pipeline, China 30 years after the crackdown on the Tiananmen Square pro-democracy protests, the positive and negative impacts of technology on women, and the human rights implications of Brexit, Britain's departure from the European Union.

International Observatory of Human Rights (IOHR)

The International Observatory of Human Rights is an independent non-profit and non-governmental organisation. IOHR partners with local and international human rights group to drive and promote positive changes and push for justice and the respect of human rights worldwide.

IOHR aims to defend the dignity of people stripped of their rights including unjustly jailed journalists, human rights defenders, refugees and victims of oppression.

January 17, 2019

SC Dismisses pleas on Appointment of DGPs

The Supreme Court has dismissed the pleas of the states of Punjab, Kerala, West Bengal, Haryana and Bihar which sought implementation of their local laws regarding the selection and appointment of DGPs.

Dismissing the petition the Supreme Court held that the directions of the court on selection and appointment of DGPs were issued in larger public interest and to protect the police officials from political interference.

Directions issued by the Supreme Court in appointing DGPs

The Supreme Court had issued following directions to the states on appointing DGPs:

- The states and Union Territories are required to send names of senior police officers to the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) for being considered as probable candidates for the post of DGPs or police commissioners (as per applicability)
- The UPSC would then prepare a list of three most suitable candidates out of the list of names sent by states and Union Territories.
- The states are free to appoint any one of them as the police chief.
- It is mandatory for the states to send the list of senior police officers to the UPSC at least three months prior to the retirement of the incumbent.
- The UPSC would then form a committee and intimate the state concerned, which in turn will immediately appoint one of the persons from among that list.

However, the Supreme Court had granted some relaxation to the states which already had laws related to appointment of DGPs. The Supreme Court had asked those states to move a plea before it, seeking modification of the order.

States of Punjab, Kerala, West Bengal, Haryana and Bihar had sought the modifications of the Supreme Court order citing their local laws.

Krushak Assistance for Livelihood and Income Augmentation, KALIA

Krushak Assistance for Livelihood and Income Augmentation (KALIA) is a support scheme of Odisha whose primary targets are small farmers, cultivators and landless agricultural labourers. The scheme involves payments to encourage cultivation and associated activities.

Features of the Scheme

The important features of the scheme are:

- Under the Scheme, Odisha would spend Rs 10,180 crore over three years until 2020-21 in providing financial assistance to cultivators and landless agricultural labourers benefitting 92% of the cultivators in the state and including every category from big farmers to landless cultivators.
- The government would provide Rs 10,000 per family as assistance for cultivation, Rs 5,000 each in the Kharif and Rabi seasons, for five cropping seasons between 2018-19 and 2021-22.
- The financial assistance under the scheme is not linked to the quantum of land owned.
- The scheme also targets landless households, specifically SC and ST families; They will be supported with a unit cost of Rs 12,500 for activities like goat rearing, mushroom cultivation, beekeeping, poultry farming and fishery.
- The Scheme also provides a life insurance cover of Rs 2 lakh and additional personal accident

coverage of the same amount for 57 lakh households.

- The Scheme also proposes interest-free crop loans up to Rs 50,000.

The scheme is proposed as an alternative to the demand of farm loan waiver. The scheme strives to target rural activities as a whole by supporting farming on a small scale, sharecropping, fishing and animal herding which doesn't get covered under loan waiver schemes.

GST ministerial panel on lotteries

The Central government has constituted GST ministerial panel on lotteries. The ministerial panel will study the current GST provisions related to lotteries.

The panel will look into the current system under GST wherein a state-organised lottery attracts 12 per cent GST while a state-authorized lottery attracts 28 per cent tax.

Terms of Reference

The inter-ministerial panel will look into the following issues:

- Whether the disparity in tax structure on lottery be continued or a uniform rate be prescribed for both.
- Whether private persons authorised by the states are misusing the lower rate and getting enriched themselves at the cost of the state and suggest measures to curb it.
- Examine issues related to enforcement including the legal framework to prevent evasion of tax on the lottery and suggest appropriate tax rate to address the problem.

The inter-ministerial panel is headed by Maharashtra finance minister Sudhir Mungantiwar and has West Bengal finance minister Amit Mitra, Kerala finance minister Thomas Isaac, Assam finance minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, Punjab finance minister Manpreet Singh Badal, Goa panchayat minister Mauvin Godinho, Karnataka panchayat minister Krishna Byre Gowda and Arunachal tax and excise Minister Jarkar Gamlin as members.

What is Collegium System of Appointment of Judges?

The Supreme Court Collegium is the panel of judges vested with the responsibility of appointments and elevations of Chief Justices and judges of the Supreme Court and high courts of the country.

The Collegium for the appointment of Judges of Supreme Court is headed by the Chief Justice of India and comprises of the four other senior-most judges of the Supreme Court. The decisions of the collegium are made through voting and the majority view prevails in case of difference of opinion.

Constitutional Provisions for the Appointment of Judges

The constitution of India provides for the following provisions for the appointment of judges:

- Article 124(2) of the Indian Constitution provides that the Judges of the Supreme Court are appointed by the President after consultation with such number of the Judges of the Supreme Court and of the High Courts in the States as the President may deem necessary for the purpose.
- Article 217 of the Indian Constitution states that the Judge of a High Court shall be appointed by the President consultation with the Chief Justice of India, the Governor of the State, and, in the case of appointment of a Judge other than the Chief Justice, the Chief Justice of the High Court.

How Collegium came into existence?

The system of appointment and transfer of judges by collegium has evolved through judgments of the Supreme Court, and not by an act of the Parliament or by a provision of the Constitution, which are famously referred as Three-Judge Case.

- In the First Judges Case of 1980, the Supreme Court had declared that there was no need to provide primacy for the opinion of the Chief Justice of India while recommending a candidate to the President.
- This judgment was over-ruled in 1993 when the nine-judge bench ruled in favour of granting primacy to the Chief Justice of India in appointing the key members of the top judicial brass. This is referred to as second judge case.
- Things were clarified in the third judge case which was the Presidential reference to the Supreme Court on what the term "consultation", implies which the President was required to do with judges before selecting a judge, referred to in the Constitution. In reply, SC laid down nine guidelines for the functioning of the

As a result in the process of appointment of Judges to the High Courts and Supreme Courts, the role of the President is reduced to the ceremonial participant. The attempt by the central government to constitute the National Judicial Appointments Commission through constitutional amendment act as per the recommendations of the Justice MN Venkatachaliah Commission was also quashed by the Supreme Court as unconstitutional.

Global Risks Report – 2019

The Global Risks Report 2019 of the World Economic Forum (WEF) describes changes occurring in the global risks landscape from year to year and identifies global catastrophic risks. The report also examines the interconnectedness of risks and considers how the strategies for the mitigation of global risks might be structured.

Findings of the Report

The Global Risks Report 2019 was prepared based on the survey of nearly 1,000 experts and decision-makers from across the world. The findings of the Global Risks Report 2019 are:

- The top-five risk trends identified by the Survey are changing climate; rising cyber dependency; increasing polarisation of societies; rising income and wealth disparity; and increasing national sentiment.
- The list of biggest risks to likelihood is topped by extreme weather events such as floods and storms, followed by failure of climate-change mitigation and adaptation, major natural disasters like earthquake, tsunami, volcanic eruption and geomagnetic storms; the massive incident of data fraud/theft; and large-scale cyber attacks.
- The top-five risks by impact, facing the world are weapons of mass destruction; failure of climate-change mitigation and adaptation; extreme weather events; water crises; and major natural disasters.
- Rising geopolitical and geo-economic tensions are the most urgent risk in 2019.
- A darkening economic outlook partly due to geopolitical tensions would further reduce the potential for international cooperation in 2019.
- Environmental degradation is the long-term risk that defines the present age and four of the top five most impactful global risks in 2019 being related to climate.
- Rapidly evolving cyber and technological threats are the most significant potential blind spots. The world is still not fully appreciating the vulnerability of networked societies.
- The report warns about growth in 2019 getting held back by continuing geo-economic tensions, with 88 per cent of respondents expecting further erosion of multilateral trading rules and agreements.

The report calls to renew the architecture of international cooperation for tackling the global trade and economic growth risks. The report presses on the need of coordinated, concerted action to sustain growth and to tackle the grave threats facing the world today.

Know Your Budget Series

The Union Finance Ministry has started the Know Your Budget series on Twitter to educate the general public about the budgetary process. It is a fortnight series which explains the importance of Union Budget and its making.

With the government set to present the interim Budget for 2019-20, the Know Your Budget series of the Finance Ministry in Twitter aims to increase the general awareness of the public regarding the budgetary process.

Explains Union Budget and Vote on Account

In the first series of tweets under the Know Your Budget fort-night series, the Ministry has made tweets to explain the Union Budget and Vote on Account as:

- Budget is the most comprehensive report of the government's finances in which revenues from all sources and outlays for all activities are consolidated. The Budget also contains estimates of the government's accounts for the next fiscal year called Budget estimates.
- Vote on Account is explained as a grant made in advance by Parliament for expenditure for a part of the next financial year.

Since the Parliament elections are due, the government would be presenting interim Budget. The Budget for the financial year 2019-20 would be presented by the new government.

Government approves Capital Infusion to the Exim Bank

The Union Cabinet headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved a capital infusion of Rs 6,000 crore in state-owned Export-Import Bank of India (Exim) to expand its business.

How the capital infusion would be made?

Key facts about the capital infusion proposal are:

- The government would issue recapitalisation bonds to the tune of Rs 6,000 crore for capital infusion of Exim Bank.
- The capital infusion would take place in two tranches of Rs 4,500 crore in 2018-19 and Rs 1,500 crore in 2019-20 respectively.
- The government has also approved an increase in the bank's authorised capital from Rs 10,000 crore to Rs 20,000 crore.

Authorised capital refers to the maximum amount of capital for which shares can be issued by a company. The Authorised capital would be mentioned in the Memorandum of Association of the Company and can be increased at any time in future.

The capital infusion and increase in authorised capital give an impetus to new initiatives such as supporting Indian textile industries, likely changes in the Concessional Finance Scheme, likelihood of new letters of credit in future in view of the country's active foreign policy and strategic intent. This will have a positive impact on increasing the exports of India.

Export-Import Bank of India (Exim Bank)

Exim Bank is a premier export finance institution of India. It was established in 1982 under the Export-Import Bank of India Act to promote the Indian exports. Exim Bank assists the Industries across wide avenues like import of technology, export product development, export production, export marketing, pre-shipment and post-shipment and overseas investment.

January 18, 2019

Sanjay Jain, K M Nataraj appointed as Additional Solicitor Generals

President Ram Nath Kovind has appointed senior advocates Sanjay Jain and K M Nataraj as Additional Solicitor Generals of India. The appointments were made by the President as per the recommendations of the Appointments Committee of the cabinet.

Appointments Committee of the Cabinet

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet is headed by Prime Minister and the Home Minister is the member of the committee. The Appointments Committee of the cabinet is responsible for making recommendations for the several important positions under the Government of India.

Additional Solicitor General

Additional Solicitor General, ASG is the third important law office of the country in the hierarchy. The post of ASG is neither constitutional nor statutory. The post of ASG is governed by Law Officers (Conditions of Service) Rules, 1987.

International Gandhi Peace Prize Announced

The Union government has announced the winners for International Gandhi Peace Prize. The awards were announced for the years 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018 after the gap of four years.

Winners of Gandhi Peace Prize

The government has announced the names of Vivekananda Kendra in Kanyakumari (2015), AkshayaPatra Foundation and Sulabh International (2016), EkalAbhiyan Trust (2017) and Yohei Sasakawa (2018) for the International Gandhi Peace Prize.

The Vivekananda Kendra in Kanyakumari was awarded for its contribution to rural development, education, and development of natural resources.

The Akshaya Patra Foundation was awarded for its work towards providing midday meals to children across India.

The Sulabh International was awarded for its contribution towards the improvement of sanitation facilities in India and the emancipation of manual scavengers.

The EkalAbhiyan Trust was awarded for its work in the field of education for rural and tribal children, rural empowerment and gender and social equality.

Yohei Sasakawa, chairperson of Nippon Foundation and World Health Organization goodwill ambassador was awarded for his contribution towards eradicating leprosy.

About International Gandhi Peace Prize

International Gandhi Peace Prize was constituted by the government of India in 1995 as a tribute to the ideals espoused by Mahatma Gandhiji, father of the Nation.

The winners are selected by a jury headed by Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition in the [Lok Sabha](#), the Chief Justice of India and two other eminent persons. The winners would receive a cash prize of Rs 1 crore, a citation in a scroll, a plaque and a traditional handicraft/handloom item.

IMD Bulletin about the Average Temperatures in 2018: Key Facts

The Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) has released a bulletin highlighting the important features about the climatic conditions of 2018:

- India's average mean monthly temperatures were "warmer than the normal" during all the months of the year except December.
- This more than normal mean monthly temperature is attributed to global warming.
- The annual mean surface air temperature averaged over the country in 2018 was +0.41 degree Celsius above (1981-2010 period) average.
- The year 2018 was the sixth warmest year on record since nationwide records commenced in 1901.

The other warmest years on record are 016 (+0.72 degree Celsius), 2009 (+0.56 degree Celsius), 2017 (+0.55 degree Celsius), 2010 (+0.54 degree Celsius) and 2015 (+0.42 degree Celsius), which are all recent years.

- The worrying factor is, 11 out of 15 warmest years were during the recent past 15 years (2004-2018) and overall 2018 was the sixth warmest year on record since nationwide records commenced in 1901.
- India recorded 1,428 deaths in 2018 due to extreme weather events and heavy rains and subsequent flooding, dust storms, thunderstorms and lightning claimed half the lives.
- Cyclones Titli and Gaja killed almost 122 people.

India Meteorological Department (IMD)

India Meteorological Department (IMD) is the chief government agency for meteorological services in the country. Formed in 1875, IMD functions under Ministry of Earth Sciences and is headquartered in New Delhi. It deals with everything related to meteorology, seismology and associated subjects like

- Undertaking meteorological observations and provide current information and forecasting information for most favourable operation of weather-dependent activities such as irrigation, agriculture, aviation, shipping etc.
- Offering warnings against severe weather phenomenon such as tropical cyclones, norwesters, dust storms, heat waves, cold waves, heavy rains, heavy snow, etc.
- Providing met-related statistics needed for agriculture, industries, water resources management, oil exploration, and any other strategically important activities for the country.
- Engaging in research in meteorology and allied subjects.
- Detecting and locating earthquakes and evaluate seismicity in various parts of the country for developmental projects.

From a modest beginning in 1875, IMD has progressively expanded its infrastructure for meteorological observations, forecasting and weather services. IMD was the first organisation in India to adopt a message switching computer to support its global data exchange.

Haryana announces Shaurya Award for Students

The Chief Minister of Haryana Manohar Lal Khattar has announced the Shaurya awards for students in the name of 71 state police martyrs.

About the Shaurya Awards

The Shaurya Awards with prize money of Rs 11,000 will be awarded to students in the name of 71 personnel of the state police forces who laid down their lives while protecting society and maintaining law

and order in the state.

The award would be given to a student for courageous deeds every year in a village block where the school is located and where a martyr studied during his childhood.

The announcements were made by the Chief Minister while addressing the family members of Haryana Police martyrs at while addressing the National Police Memorial in New Delhi. The Chief Minister also announced the construction of a state-level police memorial in the state of Haryana and released the book titled 'Martyrs of Haryana police'.

National Police Memorial

Renovated and refurbished Police Memorial was inaugurated by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 21 October 2018. National Police Memorial commemorates the 34,844 police personnel from all of the central and state police forces in India who have died in the line of duty since the nation's Independence in 1947.

The National Police Memorial commemorates the police personnel whose lives were lost in the fight against terrorism, militancy and insurgency in states such as Punjab, Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Jammu and Kashmir and red corridor-affected regions in India.

The National Police Memorial also hosts the Wall of Valour with names of police personnel engraved on the granite, who died in the line of duty from 1947 to the present day.

Sustainable Catchment Forest Management launched in Tripura

Tripura Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb launched the Sustainable Catchment Forest Management (SCATFORM) project which is undertaken with the assistance of JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency).

Sustainable Catchment Forest Management (SCATFORM) project

The SCATFORM project aims to address issues such as forest cover loss and forest degradation have been mainly caused by shifting cultivation, which increases soil erosion risks on hill slopes especially in upper catchment areas.

The SCATFORM project being would be implemented mainly in upper catchments where forest degradation and soil erosion are severe and livelihood improvement needs are high. The project aims to the improve quality of forest in the catchment area by sustainable forest management, soil and moisture conservation and livelihood development.

The activities undertaken under the project involves promotion of bamboo plantation, agroforestry based livelihood, eco-tourism development, development of value addition for bamboo and other Non-Timber Forest Product (NTFP) in order to create alternate livelihood opportunities for local communities.

The 80 per cent of the cost is contributed by JICA and the rest would be funded by the state and central governments.

Japan International Cooperation Agency

Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) aims to promote international cooperation as the Japanese governmental agency in charge of official development assistance implementation. JICA which is an incorporated administrative institution under the Government of Japan is the world's largest bilateral donor agency.

Union Cabinet approves expansion of Numaligarh refinery in Assam

The [Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs](#) has given its approval for the capacity expansion project of Numaligarh Refinery from 3 MMTPA (Million Metric Tonne Per Annum) to 9 MMTPA.

The expansion project involves setting up a crude oil pipeline from Paradip in Odisha to Numaligarh and product pipeline from Numaligarh to Siliguri in West Bengal. The expansion is expected to be completed by within a period of 48 months, after approval and receipt of statutory clearances.

Funding the Project

The estimated cost of the project is Rs. 22,594 crore. The Numaligarh Refinery will raise a debt of Rs.15,102 crore and would contribute Rs.2,307 crore from its internal accrual. The promoters of NRL, Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd, Oil India Ltd & Government of Assam (GoA) will contribute to equity and the government of India would provide a Viability Gap Funding of Rs.1,020 crore.

Numaligarh Refinery Limited (NRL)

Numaligarh Refinery Limited (NRL) was set up at Numaligarh in the district of Golaghat (Assam) in accordance with the provisions made in the historic Assam Accord. The NRL was conceived as a vehicle for speedy industrial and economic development of the region.

The promoters of the NRL are Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd, Oil India Ltd & Government of Assam (GoA).

The expansion of the NRL will aid in meeting the deficit of petroleum products in the North East and also sustain the operations of all North East refineries by augmenting their crude availability. Together with generating direct and indirect employment in Assam and it is the driver of Government's Hydrocarbon Vision 2030 for the North East.

Infosys to develop advance Tax filing System

The Union government has approved Integrated E-filing and Centralised Processing Center 2.0 Project of the Income Tax Department to enhance the efficiency of income tax administration system in the country.

Integrated E-filing and Centralised Processing Center 2.0 Project

The objectives of the Integrated E-filing and Centralised Processing Center 2.0 Project are:

- Faster and accurate outcomes for taxpayer.
- First time right approach.
- Enhancing user experience at all stages.
- Improving taxpayer awareness and education through continuous engagement.
- Promoting voluntary tax compliance.
- Managing outstanding demand.

The project would aid in reducing the time it takes the department for processing returns to just 24 hours from 63 days. The project is also expected to reduce the rectification requests from the current 2% to 0.1% together with reducing the time taken to process rectification requests.

The decision to implement the advance tax filing system was taken to bring transparency and accountability besides faster processing of returns and issue of refunds to the taxpayers' bank account directly without any interface with the Income Tax Department. As an added advantage the system can aid in promoting voluntary tax compliance and managing outstanding demand due to automation.

Sanrakshan Kshмата Mahotsav

Sanrakshan Kshмата Mahotsav (SAKSHAM) Vans was flagged off by Union Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas Dharmendra Pradhan to promote and create awareness among people on the need of oil and gas conservation for the future and the methods to do it.

To spread the awareness about energy conservation for better future these vans will travel to 30 districts. As part of the awareness drive, Petroleum Conservation Research Association (PCRA) will also run people-centric drives throughout the country between January 16 to February 15 under SAKSHAM.

Sanrakshan Kshмата Mahotsav (SAKSHAM)

Sanrakshan Kshмата Mahotsav (SAKSHAM) is an annual flagship event of Petroleum Conservation Research Association (PCRA) under the aegis of Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas, Govt. of India.

PCRA undertakes this awareness programme in collaboration with Oil & Gas PSUs along with other stakeholders like State Governments, for creating focused attention on fuel conservation through people-centric activities and to sensitize the masses about the conservation and efficient use of petroleum products leading to better health and environment.

Petroleum Conservation Research Association (PCRA)

Petroleum Conservation Research Association (PCRA) is a non-profit organization registered society set up under the aegis of Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas, Government of India.

PCRA is the principal national government agency engaged in promoting energy efficiency in various sectors of the economy. It undertakes studies to identify the potential and to make recommendations for achieving conservation of petroleum products in various sectors of the economy and sponsors R&D activities for the development of fuel-efficient equipment/devices.

As part of its effort to increase awareness about energy conservation, it undertakes multi-media campaigns through All India Radio, Doordarshan, TV channels, Private FM channels, Digital Cinema Theaters etc.

Delhi HC stays fine on HUL for GST profiteering

On the plea by Hindustan Unilever Ltd (HUL) against the [order given by the National Anti-profiteering Authority](#) (NAA), the Delhi High Court has stayed the fine imposed on HUL.

Why the HUL has sought a review?

The HUL has sought the review of the order of NAA before the Delhi High Court based on the following reasons:

- NAA has made a narrow interpretation of the law and did not take into account the well-established industry practice backed by law.
- NAA order is arbitrary since no methodology has been determined by the NAA as required under law to determine if the benefit has been passed or not.
- Absence of any prescribed method in the GST law to calculate the undue profit earned.

HUL case is one among the others

The various decisions of the NAA are now questioned in the various High Courts. Even the real estate firm Pyramid Infratech has moved the high court against the order of NAA.

Why the issue has become complicated?

Section 171 of the CGST act deals with profiteering. It aims to ensure that reductions in the rate of tax on any supply of goods or services or the benefit of the input tax credit are passed on to consumers and empowers the central government to constitute authority for that purpose. The National Anti-profiteering Authority (NAA) was established by the central government under this provision.

But the absence of a clearly defined method to calculate the undue profit earned has become the bone of contention. The absence of rules has created a vacuum and resulting in ambiguity in dealing with anti-profiteering measures.

Satyarup Siddhanta becomes world's youngest to climb 7 highest volcanoes, 7 highest mountains in 7 continents

Satyarup Siddhanta, 35-year-old Kolkata mountaineer has set the world record of youngest to climb 7 highest volcanoes, 7 highest mountains in 7 continents in 7 years. He is also the first Indian to conquer the seven mountain peaks and seven volcanic summits.

Highest Mountains scaled by Satyarup Siddhanta

- Mount Everest (8,848 m) – Nepal
- Mt Aconcagua (6,961 m) – Argentina
- Mt McKinley/Mt Denali (6,194 m) – USA
- Mt Kilimanjaro (5,895 m) – Tanzania
- Mt Elbrus (5,642 m) – Russia
- Mt Blanc (4,808.7 m) – France
- Mt Vinson Massif (4,892 m) – Antarctica
- Puncak Jaya/ Carstensz Pyramid (4,884 m) – Indonesia
- Mt Kosciuszko (2,228 m) – Australia

Seven volcanic peaks scaled by Satyarup Siddhanta

- Ojos del Salado (6,893 m) – Chile
- Mt Kilimanjaro (5,895 m) – Tanzania
- Mount Elbrus (5,642 m) – Russia
- Mount Pico de Orizaba (5,636 m) – Mexico
- Mt Damavand (5,610 m) – Iran
- Mt Giluwe (4,368 m) – Papua New Guinea
- Mt Sidley (4,285 m) – Antarctica

Satyarup Siddhanta who is 35 years and 262 days broke the record of Australia's Daniel Bull who was 36 years 157 days when he achieved the feat.

Software engineer by profession, Satyarup Siddhanta hails from Haridevpur in South Kolkata and is based at the Silicon Valley of India, Bengaluru. Reports suggest that had to work different shifts in two companies to raise funds for his mountaineering trips.

U.K. lawmakers reject Brexit deal

The British Parliament has rejected the Brexit deal proposed by the Prime Minister Theresa May. The

British House of Commons voted 432 -202 against the deal struck between Britain's government and the EU in November.

Backstop provisions

The conservative objectors who were supporters of Brexit have also voted against the deal fearful of the "backstop" provisions. As per the Backstop provisions, Britain would leave the EU in March 2019, single market in December 2020, but stay in the customs union for longer.

The Backstop provisions would keep trade rules between the world's fifth-biggest economy and its largest export market almost unchanged for a transition period running to the end of 2020. The conservatives fear that these provisions would keep the UK too closely bound by EU regulations.

What's next?

The UK has now three options to choose from since UK is bound to leave EU by March. The options are:

- UK can now reach to EU to further modify the agreement. But this doesn't seem likely because EU leaders have made it clear that it was the best compromise available.
- The other option is the exit without any deal. This would be a doomsday scenario which would trigger a massive recession in Britain and markedly slow the European Union's economic growth. This doomsday scenario would become inevitable if British parliament votes against the deal
- There could be another referendum on Brexit deal in Britain. Demands for another referendum is also gaining momentum since the previous one favoured the Brexit with a narrow 52 to 48 per cent

The best possible practical option which is now doing rounds in Britain is to extend Britain's departure date. But the EU diplomats warn that extension would only be for a few months.

Palestine takes over chairmanship of G77

Palestine has taken over the chairmanship of G77 from Egypt. Palestine will be formally elected chair at the annual G77 ministerial meeting, scheduled to take place in mid-September.

The chairmanship of the G77 is based on the system of geographical rotation. 2019 was Asia's turn and the Asian group had unanimously endorsed Palestine. Egypt was representing the African Group of countries. Palestine's chairmanship of G77 which is the biggest UN block assumes great significance at a time it is being increasingly blacklisted by the Trump administration of US. Even though Palestine is not the member-state of UN, Palestine has been recognised by 136 UN members and has the status of non-member observer state similar to Holy city of Vatican.

G77

G77 is a coalition of 134 developing nations (including China) at the United Nations. Traditionally G77 speaks with a single voice before the 193-member General Assembly and also at all UN committee meetings and at international conferences.

G77 was formed on 15 June 1964 by the "Joint Declaration of the Seventy-Seven Countries" issued at the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). The group was credited with a common stance against apartheid and for supporting global disarmament.

G77 and China

The G77 grouping considers China as the member state. China is providing consistent political support to the G77 and even makes financial contributions. But it doesn't consider itself as the member of the group. Hence official statements of the G77 are delivered in the name of the Group of 77 and China.

Coins to commemorate MGR's 102nd birth anniversary

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami released two commemorative coins in the denominations of Rs 100 and Rs 5 to mark the 102nd birth anniversary of DR M G Ramachandran. The first sets of coins were received by Deputy Chief Minister O Panneerselvam at an event organised at the Tamil Nadu MGR Medical University.

The commemorative coins bear the portrait of Ramachandran at the centre along with the inscription 'DR M G Ramachandran Birth Centenary' on the lower periphery.

Commemorative coins in India

Commemorative coins are issued to celebrate some special occasion or to mark a special event or as a mark of respect towards some distinguished individuals or monument.

The first Commemorative coin in Independent India was issued in 1964 to commemorate the birth

anniversary of India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. Thereafter many Commemorative coins have been issued.

The lower denomination commemorative coins are usually for general circulation and their metal composition is usually in line with the regular coins, whereas the higher denomination commemorative coins usually contain some silver and are meant for collection purposes only.

DR M G Ramachandran

DR M G Ramachandran popularly known as M. G. R is an actor, filmmaker and politician who served as the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu for ten years between 1977 and 1987.

Kerala High Court disqualifies MLA Karat Razack for Defaming Rival Leader

The High Court of Kerala had disqualified an independent MLA Karat Razack from the Koduvally Assembly constituency for his defamatory campaign against the rival candidate during the 2016 Assembly polls.

Why the disqualification?

The election of the independent MLA Karat Razack was declared void by the Kerala High Court since it found that he was involved in corrupt practices.

The High Court found that Razack and his agents had screened a 20-minute video across Koduvally Assembly constituency during the 2016 election campaign to tarnish the image of the rival candidate.

The disqualification has been stayed by the High Court to provide an opportunity to appeal against the verdict.

Legal Provisions for the disqualification

The disqualification was as per the provisions of the Representation of the Peoples Act 1951. The Representation of the Peoples act defines the corrupt practices for the disqualification of the elected representative.

Under the section 125 (4) of the Representation of the Peoples Act 1951, The publication by a candidate or his agent or by any other person with the consent of a candidate or his election agent, of any statement of fact which is false, and which they either believes to be false or does not believe to be true, in relation to the personal character or conduct of any candidate or in relation to the candidature, or withdrawal, of any candidate, would be reasonably calculated to prejudice the prospects of that candidate's election and it constitutes corrupt practice.

Volcano erupts on Kuchinoerabu island of Japan

A volcano has erupted on Kuchinoerabu Island of Japan. The eruption occurred on Mount Shindake. Mount Shindake had experienced explosive eruption in 2015. Japan's Meteorological Agency has alerted people for volcanic rocks and pyroclastic flows.

Kuchinoerabu Island

Kuchinoerabu Island belongs to Kagoshima Prefecture, Japan. The entire island lies within the borders of the Kirishima-Yaku National Park and the islanders are mainly dependent on fishing, agriculture and seasonal tourism.

The island is of volcanic origin and has an area of approximately 38 square kilometres. The Island has an active volcano.

Increased seismic activity in 2015 and an eruption resulted in an ash cloud. Eruptions in December 2018 and January 2019 led to pyroclastic flows.

Kagoshima Prefecture

Kagoshima Prefecture (Prefecture is the first level of jurisdiction and administrative division in Japan) located on the island of Kyushu in Japan. This prefecture includes a chain of islands stretching further to the southwest of Kyushu for a few hundred kilometres.

IIT Hyderabad launches B.Tech course in Artificial Intelligence

IIT Hyderabad has announced the launch of a full-fledged bachelor's programme in Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology. IIT Hyderabad has become the first institute in the country to launch full-fledged Bachelor's programme in AI technology. IIT Hyderabad will be the third institute to globally to offer the B.Tech course in AI.

Other institutes providing similar courses in AI are US-based Carnegie Mellon University and Massachusetts Institute

of Technology (MIT).

Artificial Intelligence

Artificial Intelligence refers to the process of making a computer, a computer-controlled robot or a software think intelligently, in a similar manner the intelligent humans think.

Artificial Intelligence is designed by studying how human brain thinks, and how humans learn, decide, and work while trying to solve a problem, and then using the outcomes of this study as a basis of developing intelligent software and systems.

About the Course

The Bachelor's course in AI would fill the demand gap which far exceeds the current supply. The Bachelor's course in AI will train students in the fundamentals of computer science, AI and Machine Learning, in addition to sensitising them to the ethical issues in deploying AI-based solutions. The course would focus on application verticals such as healthcare, agriculture, smart mobility, among many others.

IAF AN-32 lands in Pakyong Airport of Sikkim

For the first time, Antonov-32 AN-32 transport aircraft of the Indian Air Force (IAF) carried out a successful landing at Sikkim's Pakyong, one of the highest airfields in the country.

The successful landing has assumed great importance due to its strategic location of 60 km from the India-China border and it is located 4,500 feet above sea level. The successful landing is a booster for the Indian efforts which is aggressively overhauling the infrastructure, particularly in the North-Eastern region, following the Doklam standoff in 2017.

Pakyong Airport

Pakyong Airport is a Greenfield airport near Gangtok, the capital of the state of Sikkim. It is the first greenfield airport to be constructed in the Northeastern Region of India.

The airport is strategically important and the Indian Air Force is also building on the ability to land certain military aircraft at the Pakyong Airport. Prior to the inauguration of the Pakyong Airport by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 24th September 2018, Sikkim was the sole state in India without a functional airport and Sikkim was dependent on the airport at Bagdogra in the neighbouring state of West Bengal, and Paro Airport in Bhutan.

January 19, 2019

Light Combat Helicopter Completes Weapon Trials

The indigenously designed and developed Light Combat Helicopter (LCH) of India has successfully carried out air-to-air missile firing. It was for the first time in India that a helicopter had carried out air to air missile engagement.

The LCH developed by HAL has completed all weapon integration tests and is ready for operational induction. The operational trails of LCH with 20 mm Turret gun and 70 mm rockets had been completed last year itself.

Features of the LCH

The LCH is the only attack helicopter in the world which is capable of operating at altitudes as high as the location of Siachen glacier. The LCH is mounted with a helmet mounted sight and a forward-looking infrared sighting system. This enables the pilots to detect and destroy any target on the ground or in the air.

This advance sighting system will enable the pilot to launch a missile onto any target without having to turn the helicopter. The trails showed that the fire and forget missile was effective against all types of aerial threat, including unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and microlight aircraft.

The LCH is capable of operating from dispersed locations and flying at ultra-low levels. This provides for a protective umbrella from all aerial threats.

Diffo Bridge of Arunachal Pradesh Inaugurated

The Union Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman inaugurated the 426.60 m long Pre Stressed Concrete Box Girder type Diffo bridge over Diffo river on Roing – Koronu- Paya road in Arunachal Pradesh.

The Diffo bridge will provide for uninterrupted access between Dibang Valley and Lohit valley region of Eastern Arunachal Pradesh together with providing an all-weather road to our troops deployed on the China border.

The construction of the Bridge was undertaken by the Project Udayank of the Border Roads Organisation.

Project Udayank

Project Udayank of the Border Roads Organisation was raised on June 1990 at Doomdooma Assam. The name of the project Udayank is synonymous to the land of rising sun which fits appropriately to the area it operates. It consists of two border road taskforces undertaking construction activities in the northeastern region.

Border Roads Organisation

Border Roads Organisation (BRO) develops and maintains road networks in India's border areas and friendly neighbouring countries. Border Road Organisation has also undertaken the infrastructure development activities in neighbouring countries such as Afghanistan, Bhutan, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka.

During the peacetime, the BRO is vested with responsibilities to

- Develop & Maintain the Operational Road Infrastructure of General Staff (GS) in the Border Areas.
- Contribute to the Socio-Economic Development of the Border States.

During Wartime, BRO is responsible for

- Developing & Maintaining Roads to Keep Line of Control through in Original Sectors and Re-deployed Sectors.
- Executing Additional Tasks as laid down by the Govt Contributing to the War Effort.

The Border Roads Organisation works under the Ministry of Defence.

Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit 2019

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the 9th edition of Vibrant Gujarat Summit. On the occasion, the Prime Minister also set the target for breaching into top 50 rankings of the ease of doing business.

The three-day Vibrant Gujarat Summit will witness the participation of the heads of five countries Uzbekistan, Rwanda, Denmark, Czech Republic and Malta – and over 30,000 national and international delegates. A round-table interaction with the heads of global funds, 'Africa Day' and an MSME convention would also be held during the convention.

Vibrant Gujarat Summit

Vibrant Gujarat Summit conceptualized in 2003 by then Chief Minister of Gujarat Narendra Modi, to establish Gujarat as a preferred investment destination within India.

The objectives of the Vibrant Gujarat Summit are:

- Strengthen the foundation for Gujarat to become economically and socially the most developed state in India by 2030, at par with the best in the developed world.
- Leveraging Gujarat's manufacturing leadership in the country and its economic strength, to connect the global investor with India and the state.
- Attract the brightest minds from across the world to ideate, showcase innovation and best practices, and discuss their application to the state and the nation.
- Empower India to compete with the best global economies.
- Provide a platform for global business networking.

Over the time the Summit has evolved into a platform for brainstorming on agendas of global socio-economic development, in addition to being a facilitator for knowledge sharing and forging effective partnerships.

India-Uzbekistan bilateral Meeting

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev held a bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit 2019.

Important Outcomes of the Bilateral Meet

- An agreement for importing uranium from Uzbekistan was signed.
- An agreement for a line of credit of \$200 million from India for financing housing and social infrastructure projects in Uzbekistan.

The agreement for the supply of Uranium was signed between the Department of Atomic Energy of India and the Novoi Minerals and Metallurgical Company of the Republic of Uzbekistan on the long-term supply of uranium ore concentrate for India's energy requirements.

The bilateral meet also expressed satisfaction over the memorandum of understanding (MoU) on cooperation between Gujarat and the Andijan region of Uzbekistan signed during the state visit of President Mirziyoyev to India in 2018.

Trade relations between India and Uzbekistan

India's major exports to Uzbekistan include Pharmaceutical products, mechanical equipment, vehicles, services, optical instruments and equipment.

India imports include fruit and vegetable products, services, fertilisers, juice products, extracts and lubricants from the Central Asian nation.

An Uzbek-Indian Free Pharmaceutical Zone is being developed in the Andijan region, which is on the southeastern side of Uzbekistan, near its border with Kyrgyzstan to attract investments in the pharmaceutical sector.

During the Bilateral meet, India thanked Uzbekistan for the support in organising the [first-ever India-Central Asia Dialogue](#) held at the level of foreign ministers in Samarkand, Uzbekistan.

Young Scientist Programme

Indian Space Research Organisation (Isro) has announced Young Scientist Programme to inculcate and nurture space research fervour in young minds. Young Scientist programme is part of Isro's efforts to reach out to the student community. On the New Year day, Isro had organised [Samwad with Students](#) and an announcement was made about the student outreach programme.

About Young Scientist Programme

The modalities of the Young Scientist Programme are:

- It would be a one month programme.
- Mostly 8th standard passed out students will be given lectures and access to research laboratories.
- 3 students from each of the 29 States and 7 Union Territories will be selected for the Young Scientist program
- The students will be exposed to the practical experience of building small satellites.

Isro also announced about setting up of an incubation centre in Tripura, Trichy, Nagpur, Rourkela, and Indore.

Shehri Samridhi Utsav

The Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs is organising a fortnight of events named Shehri Samridhi Utsav all over the country with an aim to extend the outreach of Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NULM) to the poorest of poor and the most vulnerable.

Dayal Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana

Deen Dayal Antyodaya Yojana (DAY) aims to uplift the poor folks by enhancing sustainable livelihood opportunities through skill development. Deen Dayal Antyodaya Yojana integrates:

- National Urban Livelihoods Mission(NULM): It is the urban component of the mission and is being implemented by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation.
- National Rural Livelihoods Mission(NRLM): It is the rural component of the mission and is being implemented by the Ministry of Rural Development.

Implementation of (DAY-NULM)

The DAY-NULM has taken following initiatives during the tenure of present government:

- 34 lakh urban poor women were organised into self-help groups.
- Subsidised loans have been provided to over 8.5 lakh individuals and
- Over 8.9 lakh candidates have been skill trained and certified and over 4.6 lakh have been placed.
- 16 lakh street vendors have been identified through a survey and half of them have been given identity cards.
- More than 1,000 permanent shelters have been set up, creating space for more than 60,000 urban homeless

Other Initiatives announced

The Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs has also announced the following new initiatives

Safety net survey

For identify eligible SHG members who are not covered by government programmes.

Shehri Sahabhagita Manch

For regular meetings of the officials of urban local bodies with SHG federations for easy resolution of local issues and identifying gaps in extending basic services in urban poor settlements.

Women to get 20% jobs in Military Police

The Union Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has announced the decision to induct women in Personnel Below Officer Rank, PBOR, role in Corps of Military Police.

The women will be inducted in a graded manner to eventually comprise 20% of total Corps of Military Police. Accordingly, the Army chalked out induction of approximately 800 women in military police with a yearly intake of 52 personnel per year.

Military Police

Military Police are the corps responsible for the enforcing discipline and the maintenance of law and order in the military environment and for military purposes.

The functions of the Military Police includes policing cantonments and Army establishments, preventing a breach of rules and regulations by soldiers, maintaining movement of soldiers as well as logistics during peace and war, handling prisoners of war and extending aid to civil police whenever required.

Role of Women in Military Police

For the following roles:

- Investigation of offences such as rape, molestation, thefts etc.
- Military operations of nature where Army needs assistance from police organisations
- Assisting civil police/administration for evacuation in forward villages during hostilities.
- Crowd control of refugees comprising women and children.
- Searching/Frisking of women during cordon & search operations/check posts.
- Ceremonial and Policing Duties: Maintaining military discipline.
- Manning the Prisoner of War Camps.

The announcement is seen as a precursor for allowing the women in combat roles. Army Chief Gen Bipin Rawat had earlier said that the process to allow women in a combat role, currently, an exclusive domain of men was moving fast and initially, women will be recruited for positions in the military police.

TRAI releases Tele-density data of India: Key Facts

The TRAI has released the Tele-density data of India. Important observations from the TRAI data are listed below:

- The total number of mobile phone subscribers in India by the end of November was 117.18 crore with a net addition of 17.39 lakh customers during the month.
- The private access service providers held 89.99 per cent market share of the wireless subscribers whereas BSNL and MTNL, the two PSU access service providers, had a market share of only 10.01 per cent as on November 2018.
- Reliance Jio led the subscription race in November 2018 adding around 88.01 lakh subscribers across the country.
- State-run Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd (BSNL) added around 3.78 lakh subscribers in November,

taking its total tally to 11.38 crore.

- Airtel added around 1.02 lakh new customers in November, taking its total tally to 34.18 crores.
- On the other hand, Vodafone Idea lost around 65.26 lakh subscribers.

Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI)

Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) is a statutory body set up by the Government of India under section 3 of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India Act, 1997. TRAI is the watchdog of the telecommunications sector in India.

The main objective of TRAI is to provide a fair and transparent policy environment which promotes a level playing field and facilitates fair competition and to create and nurture conditions for growth of telecommunications in the country in a manner and at a pace which will enable India to play a leading role in the emerging global information society.

Through an amendment to the TRAI Act, a Telecommunications Dispute Settlement and Appellate Tribunal (TDSAT) was established to take over the adjudicatory and disputes functions from TRAI.

Amazon-Witzig bid to acquire Birla's retail store chain gets CCI nod

The Competition Commission of India has approved the deal wherein Samara Capital-backed Witzig Advisory Services and Amazon will acquire Aditya Birla Retail Ltd, which operates a supermarket store chain 'more'.

As per the deal, 99.99 per cent of the equity share capital of Aditya Birla Retail would be acquired by Witzig and 49 per cent stake buys in Witzig by Amazon's subsidiary Amazon NV Investment Holdings LLC.

Competition Commission of India

Competition Commission of India is a statutory body established under The Competition Act, 2002. The objectives of the competition commission of are:

- To prevent practices having an adverse effect on competition.
- To promote and sustain competition in markets.
- To protect the interests of consumers.
- To ensure freedom of trade carried on by other participants in markets, in India.

The Competition Act has bestowed following responsibilities on the CCI:

- To prohibit anti-competitive agreements
- To prohibit abuse of dominant position
- To regulate combinations
- Competition advocacy.

The Competition Commission of India comprises of a Chairperson and six members appointed by the Central Government.

Outbreak Readiness and Business Impact – White Paper: Key Facts

The Outbreak Readiness and Business Impact white paper has been released by the World Economic Forum. The white paper was released by the WEF in collaboration with the Harvard Global Health Institute.

Highlights of the White Paper

The important findings of the report are:

- The number and kind of infectious disease outbreaks have increased significantly over the past 30 years.
- The world has witnessed 200 epidemic events per year since 2011.
- Pandemics will be the cause of average annual economic losses of 0.7 per cent of global GDP i.e. \$ 570 billion. This is a threat similar in scale to that estimated for climate change in the coming decades.
- The business risk posed by a new era of epidemic risk can no longer be thought of exclusively and the companies operating globally should take action to mitigate threats posed by epidemics.

Even the WEF's [Global Risks Report 2019](#) had also flagged concerns over naturally emerging infectious disease threats and risks posed by revolutionary new biotechnologies.

Startup and Innovation policy of Tamil Nadu

The government of Tamil Nadu has released Startup and Innovation policy 2018-2023 with a mission of

providing an enabling and innovative ecosystem for startups registered in the State and to make Tamil Nadu a 'Global Innovation hub for startups' by 2023.

Objectives of the Policy

The core objectives of the Startup and Innovation policy 2018-2023 are:

- Creation of at least 5000 technology startups of which at least 10 global high growth startups in social impact sectors.
- Infrastructure support to strengthen existing mechanism in areas like the Internet of Things (IoT), Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning (ML) and Software as a Service (SAAS)

Components of the Policy

The important components of the Startup and Innovation policy 2018-2023 are:

- The policy aims to collaborate with educational institutions to promote entrepreneurial spirit, reduce existing regulatory and tax burden on startups in the field of labour, pollution and building norms.
- The policy aims to partner with reputed investors across the globe to bring investment to the Tamil Nadu startups.
- The policy envisages nurturing aspiring entity or individuals (defined as 'Start Steps') who develops a potentially scalable business model that can generate wealth and employment.
- Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India (EDII) will act as a nodal agency to promote and facilitate startups.
- Tamil Nadu Startup and InnovaTN Mission (TANSIM) headed by a full-time officer will advocate and oversee policies and programmes for promoting startups.
- Tamil Nadu Startup Seed Grant Fund (TNSSGF) of Rs 50 crore with an allotment of Rs 5 crore in the first year in partnership with financial institutions and universities for supporting early-stage financing requirements of the startups in the form of grants to fill the gap in fund requirement for research & innovations.

Implementation of the Policy

The government of Tamil Nadu has set a 5-point action plan for implementing the policies. It includes:

- Creating ecosystems for encouraging innovations.
- Ensuring resources availability to Startup ecosystem.
- Enabling skill development and job creation.
- Supporting social entrepreneurship.
- Establishing global accessibility and partnerships.

Definition of the Start-up

The policy lists the following criteria to be recognised as the start-up in Tamil Nadu:

- Registration under Tamil Nadu Startup and InnovaTN Mission (TANSIM).
- Date of incorporation less than 7 years (less than 10 years in case of biotechnology, AI and ML startups).
- Registration and turnover less than Rs 25 crore in any of the financial years.

The policy aims for a minimum of 1,00,000 high skilled job creation, direct and indirect, in the Startup Ecosystem.

Methanol Blending to cut Carbon-di-oxide Emissions

Biofuels are being considered an alternative to reduce the country's crude oil imports worth Rs7 lakh crore. They can also be a potential weapon to fight increasing pollution. The findings of the research by the Pune-based Automotive Research Association of India (ARAI) have substantiated the potential reduction in the emissions of the carbon-di-oxide by the adoption of methanol blending.

Research by the Pune-based Automotive Research Association of India (ARAI)

Pune-based Automotive Research Association of India (ARAI) conducted a study using 15% M-15 methanol blend in vehicles and tested them for 3,000km to evaluate emissions in real-world conditions as well as check the performance of the vehicles.

The outcomes of the study showed that methanol blending with petrol in the existing BS-IV standard cars resulted in the reduction of the carbon-di-oxide emissions substantially.

The study also found that hydrocarbon emission reduced marginally, with a slight increase in the levels of nitrogen oxides.

The findings of the research were submitted to Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways, Nitin Gadkari. The Minister assured full support for ARAI in furthering the methanol blending programme, reiterating the government's commitment to increase the methanol blending to 20% by the year 2030.

Centre asks states to step-up spending under District Mineral Fund

The Central government has asked the states to step-up the spending under District Mineral Fund as just 24 per cent of the Rs 23,606-crore mopped up under the Pradhan Mantri Khanij Kshetra Kalyan Yojana (PMKKKY) was actually spent. The central government has also issued directions to ensure that there is no fund diversion or leakage.

Pradhan Mantri Khanij Kshetra Kalyan Yojana (PMKKKY)

Pradhan Mantri Khanij Kshetra Kalyan Yojana (PMKKKY) is aimed at the welfare of areas and people affected by mining-related operations, using the funds generated by District Mineral Foundations (DMFs). The objectives of the PMKKKY are:

- To implement various developmental and welfare projects/programs in mining-affected areas that complement the existing ongoing schemes/projects of State and Central Government.
- To minimize/mitigate the adverse impacts, during and after mining, on the environment, health and socio-economics of people in mining districts.
- To ensure long-term sustainable livelihoods for the affected people in mining areas. Care has been taken to include all aspects of living, to ensure substantial improvement in the quality of life.

Further, the scheme mandates that 60 % share of the funds be spent on high priority areas like drinking water supply, health care, sanitation, education, skill development, women and child care, the welfare of aged and disabled people, skill development and environmental conservation.

Balance funds can be used for creating a supportive and conducive living environment by making roads, bridges, railways, waterways projects, irrigation and alternative energy sources.

The Mines and Minerals (Development & Regulation) Amendment Act, 2015 makes it mandatory for the miners to contribute to the District Mineral Funds a percentage of the royalty payable to the government. The funds accumulated in the District Mineral Funds would be used for implementing PMKKKY.

Exclusive Satellite to help in securing Pakistan and Bangladesh borders

Indian Space Research Organisation (Isro) will launch a satellite exclusively for the Union Home Ministry to help it in strengthening its frontiers with Pakistan and Bangladesh among others.

Features of the exclusive satellite for Border Management

The important features of the exclusive satellite for Border Management are:

- The exclusive satellite will be utilised for the purpose of using space resources for security, operational planning and border infrastructure development.
- It would strengthen island and border security and facilitate the development of infrastructure in border and island areas.
- A short, medium and long-term plan have been proposed for implementation in five years in close coordination with the ISRO and the Union Defence Ministry for the implementation in a time-bound manner.
- Under short term plan, immediate needs of border guarding forces will be met by procurement of high-resolution imagery and the hiring of bandwidth for communications.
- Under the mid-term plan, one satellite is being launched by the ISRO for the exclusive use of the MHA.
- Under long term plan, the MHA will develop ground segment and network infrastructure to share satellite resources by user agencies, develop a central archival facility for storing various imagery resources and dissemination of the same to user agencies.

The plan for an exclusive satellite has been formulated based on the recommendations made by a task force on the use of space technology in improving border management.

January 20-21, 2019

National Museum of Indian Cinema Inaugurated

The Prime Minister Narendra Modi has inaugurated the National Museum of Indian Cinema (NMIC) at Films Division of India premises in Mumbai.

National Museum of Indian Cinema (NMIC)

The National Museum of Indian Cinema (NMIC) aims to conserve the film heritage of India. The important aspects of NMIC are:

- NMIC is housed in two buildings, the New Museum Building and the 19th-century historic palace Gulshan Mahal – in the Films Division campus in Mumbai.
- The museum provides a glimpse of the evolution of Indian cinema in a storytelling mode with the help of visuals, graphics, artifacts, interactive exhibits, and multimedia expositions.
- Posters have been on display at NMIC to map the journey of Indian cinema over the last century.
- The museum also hosts scenes from landmark films like Dadasaheb Phalke's Raja Harishchandra and Kaliya Mardan, replicas of old cameras and long-missing shooting equipment, and rare photographs.
- The verandah of Gulshan Mahal takes visitors through the multiple eras of Hindi and regional cinema, with the showcasing of posters, booklets, lobby cards and other exhibits.

The Museum was refurbished by Navratna public sector undertaking NBCC (India) Limited under the guidance of the Museum Advisory Committee headed by Shyam Benegal, and an innovation committee headed by Prasoon Joshi.

PM inaugurates and Lays Foundation stones of Development Projects in Dadra & Nagar Haveli

The Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated and laid the Foundation Stone for several development projects at Silvassa in Dadra and Nagar Haveli. The projects include:

- Foundation Stone of Medical College in Sayli, Dadra and Nagar Haveli.
- Unveiling of IT policy for Dadra and Nagar Haveli.
- Launching of M-Aarogya mobile app.
- Launching of the door to door waste collection, segregation and processing of Solid Waste in Dadra & Nagar Haveli.
- Distribution of Gold cards to beneficiaries of Ayushman Bharat.
- Distribution Van Adhikar Patra to the beneficiaries.

M-Aarogya mobile app

M-Aarogya mobile app is introduced by the Directorate of Medical and Health Services, Dadra and Nagar Haveli to cater a better healthcare experience to citizens. The app intends to improve and enhance patient engagement through the new mobile app.

The M-Aarogya mobile app is a one-stop centre to avail various services like Booking appointments, Accessing past health records, Program & schemes, Upcoming camp and event, Feedback & Grievance, Government health facilities details, Add your family members, IEC, Get Emergency Help etc.

Dadra and Nagar Haveli

Dadra and Nagar Haveli is a union territory wedged between the states of Maharashtra and Gujarat. The two regions Dadra and Nagar Haveli lie on the West coast, at the mouth of the Daman Ganga River. Both are separated from each other by a few kilometers.



After prolonged skirmishes, the Maratha Government had assigned few villages to the Portuguese as compensation to ensure their friendship. Portuguese ruled this region till their liberation in 1954. After the liberation, Dadra and Nagar Haveli by people, between 1954-1961 the territory functioned almost independently as "Free Dadra and Nagar Haveli Administration".

It was merged with Union of India in 1961. Since then it is administered as Union Territory to preserve its distinct rich culture and heritage.

PM inaugurates manufacturing facility for K9 Vajra self-propelled Howitzer guns in Hazira

The Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Armoured Systems Complex (ASC), developed by Larsen & Toubro (L&T) at Hazira near Surat in Gujarat. This Armoured Systems Complex (ASC) is the country's first private facility where the K9 Vajra self-propelled Howitzer guns will be manufactured.

K9 Vajra self-propelled Howitzer guns

The features of the K9 Vajra self-propelled Howitzer guns

- The gun weighs 50 tonnes and can fire 47kg bombs at a 43-kilometre distance target.
- It can turn around at zero radii.
- K9 Vajra is a variant of K9 specially designed for operation in the desert areas bordering Pakistan.

Make in India – Defence

The Armoured Systems Complex (ASC) at Hazira is a striking example of Make in India Defence. The L&T is executing the production of the K9 Vajra self-propelled Howitzer guns and has signed a transfer of technology contract for guns with South Korean company Hanwha Corporation.

Around 400 SMEs are involved in developing 13,000 parts and steps are being taken to make a totally indigenous battle tank without having to depend on external help.

The Army now doesn't have to depend on foreign nations for spare parts during its 40-year life cycle. The Army's life cycle cost will be drastically reduced.

Madhu Babu Pension Yojana

The government of Odisha announced a hike of Rs 200 per month in the social security pension under Madhu Babu Pension Yojana (MBPY).

The Madhu Babu Pension Yojana (MBPY) is a pension scheme under the Department of Social Security and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities for the disabled, old age persons in the state of Odisha. The Scheme was instituted by merging the two pension schemes i.e. namely, Revised Old Age Pension Rules, 1989 and Disability Pension Rules, 1985.

Beneficiaries of the Scheme

The Beneficiaries of the Madhu Babu Pension Yojana are:

- Person of 60 years of age and above.
- A widow (irrespective of age).
- A leprosy patient with visible signs of deformity (irrespective of age).
- A person of 5 years of age or above and unable to do normal work due to his/her deformity or disability being blind or orthopedically handicapped or hearing and speech impaired or mentally retarded or with Cerebral Palsy or with Autism or with mental illness or with multiple disabilities.
- A widow of AIDS patient (irrespective of age and income criteria)
- An AIDS patient identified by the State/District AIDS Control Society or district AIDS prevention control Unit.
- An unmarried woman above 30 years belonging to a BPL Family

Conditions for the Beneficiaries

The beneficiaries have to fulfil the following conditions in the absence of specific exemptions:

- Individual income from all sources not exceeding Rs.24,000/- per annum irrespective of the family income.
- Has family income from all sources not exceeding Rs. 24,000- per annum or included on the BPL list (Tahsildar concerned to certify).
- Is a permanent resident/domicile of Odisha.
- Has not been convicted of any criminal offence involving moral turpitude.
- Is not in receipt of any other pension from the Union Government or the State Government or any

organisation aided by either Government.

The enhanced pension will come into effect from February 15, 2019, and would benefit 48 lakh elderly, disabled, widows and destitute women.

Sansad Ratna Awards

The Governor of Tamil Nadu Banwarilal Purohit presented the Sansad Ratna Awards in Chennai. The recipients under various categories include:

- MP from Cuttack, Odisha, Bhartruhari Mahtab was honoured for his performance in initiating debates.
- MP from Hamirpur, Himachal Pradesh, Anurag Singh Thakur received Jury Committee Special award in the [Lok Sabha](#) for his distinguished performance.
- Standing committee on finance headed by M Veerappa Moily was selected for outstanding performance among the Parliamentary Standing Committees.
- MP from Kollam, Kerala, N K Premachandran, was selected for his performance in initiating debates.
- MP from Baramati (Maharashtra) Supriya Sule was honoured in overall tally, questions and women MPs categories.
- MP from Godda, Jharkhand, Nishikant Dubey was awarded for his outstanding performance in private member bills.
- MP, Rajeev Shankarrao Satav was chosen for his outstanding performance among the first-time parliamentarians.
- MP from Maval, Maharashtra, Shrirang Appa Barne was selected for his outstanding performance.
- MP from Kolhapur, Dhananjay Bhimrao Mahadik was selected for his performance under questions and overall tally category.
- Heena Vijaykumar Gavit who raised 1,059 questions in the [Lok Sabha](#) and holds an attendance of 82 per cent was selected for her outstanding performance.
- Rajani Patil was selected as the topper in overall tally among the retirees of Rajya Sabha.
- Ananda Bhaskar Rapolu, MP from Telangana was selected for debates among the retirees of the upper House.

Sansad Ratna Award

Sansad Ratna Award ("Gem of Parliament") was established in 2010 by the Prime Point Foundation and e-magazine PreSense to honour "top performing" Members of the Indian Parliament, based on the suggestions given by Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, Former President of India.

The awards are given on behalf of "civil society" through a transparent selection process by a Jury committee of eminent Parliamentarians, based on the data on various performance parameters.

Sheikh Saud International Prize for Materials Research awarded to C N R Rao

The first Sheikh Saud International Prize for Materials Research has been awarded to C N R Rao. The award will be presented to Rao by Sheikh Saud bin Saqr Al Qasimi ruler of Ras Al Khaimah emirate during the International Workshop on Advanced Materials at Ras Al Khaimah on February 25.

C N R Rao

Chintamani Nagesa Ramachandra Rao popularly known as C N R Rao is an Indian scientist who has made significant contributions in material research.

He has authored over 1,600 research papers and 50 books. His areas of research include transition metal oxides and other extended inorganic solids, metal-insulator transitions, nano-materials including nanotubes and graphene, artificial photosynthesis and hydrogen generation by photocatalysis and thermal means.

He has been honoured several national and international awards which include honorary fellowship of the 'Royal Society of Chemistry', London in 1989 and 'Chevalier de la Légion d'honneur' from France in 2005. He has also been conferred with 'Padma Shri' (1974), 'Padma Vibhushan' (1985) and 'Karnataka Ratna' (2001), Bharat Ratna(2014) among others.

Microsoft launches e-platform under Project ReWeave to help Handloom weavers

Microsoft India launched a new e-commerce platform 're-weave.in' under project ReWeave to aid handloom weavers.

Benefits of e-commerce platform

The e-commerce platform would provide the following benefits:

- The e-commerce platform would connect artisans to the buyers directly enabling them to expand to newer customers and markets.
- Provide a platform to showcase signature collections created by the weaver communities, showcase traditional designs and products created from natural dyes to a broad set of customers.
- The e-commerce platform would aid in weavers in increasing their income and earning a sustainable livelihood while also reviving traditional forgotten Indian art.

Project ReWeave

Project ReWeave was initiated by Microsoft India (R&D) Pvt. Limited in 2016 as part of its Philanthropies efforts, with the aim to revive the handloom weaving ecosystem in India. Under the initiative, Microsoft is working closely with NGO partner, Chaitanya Bharathi to provide infrastructure, financing and marketing support to help weaver families keep their weaving traditions alive by sustaining livelihoods.

Rio de Janeiro recognised as World Capital of Architecture 2020

Rio de Janeiro has been recognised as 'World Capital of Architecture' for 2020 by The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO).

Rio de Janeiro will be hosting the World Congress of the International Union of Architects (UIA) in July 2020. The theme of the 2020 World Congress of the International Union of Architects is "All the worlds. Just one world,"

UNESCO in the release said that "Through the range and quality of its activities, the World Capital of Architecture in Rio de Janeiro will demonstrate the crucial role of architecture and culture in sustainable urban development."

World Capital of Architecture

The World Capital of Architecture initiative underscores the common commitment of UNESCO and the UIA to preserve architectural heritage in the urban context.

UNESCO designates the World Capital of Architecture as per the partnership agreement with the UIA. The World Capital of Architecture also hosts the UIA's World Congress, an event that takes place every three years.

The World Capital of Architecture aims to become an international forum for debates about pressing global challenges from the perspectives of culture, cultural heritage, urban planning and architecture.

Indian-American Gurinder Singh Khalsa Presented with Rosa Park Trailblazer award

Indian-American Entrepreneur Gurinder Singh Khalsa has been honoured with Rosa Park Trailblazer award for his campaign to persuade US authorities to change policy towards Sikh headgear.

Fight for Justice and Faith

Gurinder Singh Khalsa was not allowed to board an aeroplane in 2007 due to his refusal to remove the turban. Determined to stand up for his faith and fight for justice, Gurinder Singh Khalsa took the issue all the way to the US Congress, compelling Transportation and Security Administration (TSA) to change its headgear policy towards the Sikh community. As a result, Sikhs can now wear their turban through airport security in the US.

Turbans

The precise origin of Turban is unknown but there are references to Turban dating back almost 4,000 years from Mesopotamia and ancient India.

Turban is a type of headgear based on cloth winding and wearing turbans is most common among the Sikh Community.

Guru Gobind Singh, the 10th and last human guru of the faith initiated [Khalsa](#) and asked the members of Khalsa to maintain five articles of faith, referred to as the five Ks. The Turban (kesh: Uncut hair in Turban) is a part of five K.

Indians can visit Nepal and Bhutan producing Aadhaar as Id Proof

The Union Home Ministry has tweaked the travel document norms for visiting Nepal and Bhutan. As per new norms, Indian can travel to Nepal and Bhutan by producing Aadhaar as Identity proof but this is only for those Indians aged under 15 and over 65 years.

Indians other than in those age brackets will not be able to use Aadhaar to travel for Nepal and Bhutan.

Open Door Policy

India has an open door policy with Nepal and Bhutan. Indians don't require a passport to travel to either of these countries. Indians can enter these countries by showing any of the acceptable photo identity documents like Passport, Voter Id etc.

Why the Open Door Policy?

India's open door policy with Nepal and Bhutan is in recognition with the shared history, culture and deep-rooted interpersonal ties of Indians with the citizens of these countries.

Article 7 the 1950 Indo-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship allows free movement of people between the two nations on a reciprocal basis.

The 1949 Treaty of Friendship between India and Bhutan allows for free movement of people between the two nations on a reciprocal basis.

Hence as a result of these two treaties mentioned above Indians doesn't need a visa to enter Nepal or Bhutan.

National conference on Self Reliance in Defence Manufacturing

National Conference on Self Reliance in Defence Manufacturing is organised at Hyderabad. The National Conference is being held by Forum for Integrated National Security in association with Indigenous Defence Entrepreneurs Association.

Self Reliance in Defence Manufacturing

Self-Reliance in defence manufacturing in India is a matter of great importance to achieve multidimensional credible deterrence and to safeguard national interests in fast-changing international relations with respect to geopolitical as well as geo-economic influence on our nation's rightful place in the world order.

Under Make in India initiative various initiatives taken towards achieving self-reliance in defence manufacturing, which include:

- Preference for procurement from Indian vendors under the Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP).
- Simplification of Make procedure.
- Introduction of a simplified procedure for Make II sub-category.
- Liberalization of the licensing regime.
- Changes in FDI policy by raising the cap on FDI in the defence sector,
- Simplification of the export procedure.
- Streamlining of defence offset guidelines etc.
- Strategic Partnership Model which envisages the establishment of long-term strategic partnerships with Indian entities through a transparent and competitive process, wherein they would tie up with global Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) to seek technology transfers to set up domestic manufacturing infrastructure and supply chains.

This is the second edition of the conference. The first National Conference on Self Reliance in Defence Manufacturing was held in 2015 at Hyderabad.

Tamil Nadu Defence Industrial Corridor Inaugurated

The Union Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman inaugurated the Tamil Nadu Defence Industrial Corridor. During the inauguration, investments worth over Rs 3,038 crore in this defence corridor were announced. Lockheed Martin, a global security giant, also announced its intention to invest in the corridor.

About the Corridor

The important features about the Tamil Nadu Defence Industrial Corridor are:

- It is also called as Tamil Nadu Defence Production Quad as the nodal cities of Chennai, Hosur, Salem, Coimbatore and Tiruchirappalli form a quadrilateral with one of them at the centre.
- The five nodal cities already have existing defence ecosystem in the form of ordnance factory boards, vendors working with defence PSUs, and other allied industries.
- Together with helping in accelerated growth and regional industry agglomeration, the defence corridor will also facilitate a well-planned and efficient industrial base which will lead to increased defence production in the country and the region.

- The corridor will help the industry to integrate with the global supply chain of Defence manufacturing.
- Tamil Nadu Defence Industrial Corridor would be a specialised facility of aero component manufacturing.
- Tamil Nadu Defence Industrial Corridor is the country's second defence industrial corridor after the first one was launched in Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh August last year.

Tamil Nadu currently ranks 4th in exports with 9.8% of India's total exports. The corridor will further expand the exporting opportunities from the state.

Logo for Tripura tea unveiled

The Chief Minister of Tripura Biplab Kumar Deb unveiled the official logo of Tripura Tea. The Tripura Tea logo features Neermahal, the iconic landmark of Tripura.

About Neermahal

Neermahal was built by then Tripura King Bir Bikram Kishore Debbarman Manikya in the middle of Rudrasagar Lake, as his summer residence. It is located in Melaghar, around 53 km west of Agartala.

This is the largest water palace in India and one of two water palaces in India. The other water palace of India is located at Jal Mahal in Rajasthan.

Climatic Conditions favourable for Tea Cultivation

The following factors are favourable for Tea cultivation:

- A temperature of 21-29 deg c.
- Annual Rainfall of 150-200 cm.
- The soil must be rich in humus as tea shrubs require fertile mountain soil mixed with lime and iron.
- Well drained land to prevent stagnation of water.

Tripura and Tea cultivation

The tea cultivation in Tripura began at Hiracherra estate in Unakoti district in 1916. At present, Tripura is the second largest tea producing state in the northeast and produces 10 million kg of tea annually with an area of 6,430 hectares under cultivation.

January 22, 2019

World Integrated Medicine Forum 2019 on Homeopathy

Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for AYUSH Shri Shripad Yesso Naik, will inaugurate the 2nd World Integrated Medicine Forum 2019 on the 'Regulation of Homeopathic Medical Products; Advancing global collaboration' organised on 23-25 January 2019 at Goa.

Themes for the Forum 2019

The forum is organised by Central Council for Research in Homeopathy, under the Ministry of AYUSH. The themes of the forum are:

- Regulatory collaborations.
- Converging on minimum regulatory & legal standards.
- Advancing safety and quality standards.
- Regulatory trend towards standardization and minimizing complexity.
- Recognizing homeopathy as a distinct holistic medical system and Veterinary homoeopathy.

The World Integrated Medicine Forum 2019 will explore and illustrate the potential benefits and pitfalls of bi-lateral/multilateral collaboration and advance global cooperation on a synergistic basis.

Vision of the Forum 2019

The increasing demand for homeopathic products by patients and health care providers worldwide needs to be underpinned by appropriate regulatory frameworks which respect the national context as well as benefit from experiences and collaboration at an international level.

World Integrated Medicine Forum

World Integrated Medicine Forum aims to develop an evidence-based Traditional and Integrated Systems of Medicine by promoting public-private co-operation.

Kulhads to be reintroduced in the Railway Stations

The Union Minister for Railways Piyush Goyal has instructed the caterers at Varanasi and Rae Bareilly stations to use terracotta-made kulhads, glasses and plates. The Kulhads are all set to make a comeback after they were first introduced during UPA 1, later to be brushed aside by plastic and paper cups.

Why there is a proposal to reintroduce Kulhads?

The Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) had recommended the Railway Minister to re-introduce Kulhads in Varanasi and Rae Bareli to aid in generating employment.

Under the Kumhar Sashaktikaran Yojana of KVIC, electric wheels were issued to potters in Varanasi and Rae Bareli. As a result, the productivity of potters was increased from 100 cups to around 600 cups a day. This generated a necessity to find a market for enhanced productivity.

This proposal to reintroduce Kulhads lakhs will result in a readymade market of potters.

Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC)

The Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) is a statutory body established under the Khadi and Village Industries Commission Act of 1956. KVIC works under the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises with an aim to plan, promote, facilitate, organise and assist in the establishment and development of khadi and village industries in the rural areas in coordination with other agencies engaged in rural development.

Delhi HC allows release of Movie '72 Hours – Martyr who never died'

The Delhi High Court has allowed the release of the movie '72 Hours – Martyr who never died'. The film was based on the life of the 1962 war hero Rifleman Jaswant Singh Rawat. Jaswant Singh Rawat was posthumously awarded the Maha Vir Chakra for gallantry during the 1962 war.

The family members of the Rifleman Jaswant Singh Rawat had sought a stay on the release citing it intrudes their privacy.

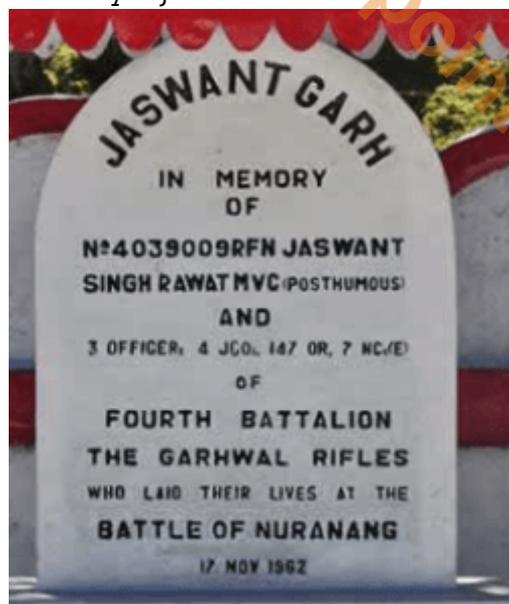
Rifleman Jaswant Singh Rawat

Rifleman Jaswant Singh Rawat was serving as an Indian Army soldier serving in the Garhwal Rifles. He was serving in the 4th battalion of Garhwal Rifles during the battle of Nuranang of the North-East Frontier Agency (now Arunachal Pradesh) in the war of 1962.

On 17 November 1962 Garhwal Rifles had beaten back two enemy attacks. During the third attack Rifleman Jaswant Singh Rawat along with Lance Naik Trilok Singh Negi and Rifleman Gopal Singh Gusain, volunteered to silence the Chinese medium machine gun (MMG) which had come close to the Indian defences.

Rifleman Jaswant Singh Rawat along with Rifleman Gopal Singh Gusain with covering fire from with Lance Naik Trilok Singh destroyed the Chinese detachment of five men, seizing the MMG in the process.

While returning Rifleman Jaswant Singh Rawat along with Lance Naik Trilok Singh were killed and Rifleman Gopal Singh Gusain was seriously injured.



Rifleman Jaswant Singh Rawat was honoured by building a memorial at the post where he fought the Chinese People's Liberation Army and it was named as "Jaswant Garh". He is also bestowed with another honour as per which he continues to serve even after death. He has been awarded

promotions as if he is still serving.

PwC Global Economy Watch: Key Facts

The Global Economy Watch Report of PwC monitors trends and issues affecting the global economy and details its latest projections for the leading nations. The important facts from the 2019 report are listed below:

- India and France are likely to surpass the UK in the world's largest economy rankings in 2019, pushing it down to seventh place from fifth in the global table.
- The report mentions that UK and France have regularly switched places owing to similar levels of development and roughly equal populations.
- The report mentions that India is the fastest growing large economy in the world, with an enormous population, favourable demographics and high catch-up potential due to low initial GDP per head. It is therefore certain for India to continue to rise in the global GDP league table in the coming decades. Hence India's rise in the rankings is likely to be permanent.
- The report projects real GDP growth of 1.6 per cent for the UK, 1.7 per cent for France and 7.6 per cent for India in 2019.
- India would return to a healthy growth rate of 7.6 per cent in 2019-20 if there are no major headwinds in the global economy such as enhanced trade tensions or supply-side shocks in oil.
- India's growth will be supported through a further realisation of efficiency gains from the newly adopted GST and policy impetus expected in the first year of a new government
- The global economy as a whole is expected to slow in 2019 as G7 countries return to long-run average growth rates after a mini-boom witnessed between the end of 2016 and early 2018.
- The global trade conflicts will deepen in 2019. The main focus of tensions is likely to remain US-China trade and there will always be the risk of this escalating into a wider trade conflict and businesses.

The report calls to plan accordingly to address the scenarios. This may result in uncertainty for policymakers and businesses.

Arab Economic and Social Development Summit

The leaders from the Arab World met in Beirut, Lebanon to discuss economic and social development. The leaders of the Arab World agreed on a 29-item economic agenda in addition to encouraging the safe return of Syrian refugees to their homeland at the conclusion.

Beirut Declaration

A joint statement called the Beirut Declaration was issued in the summit. The important aspects of the Declaration are:

- The declaration calls for the establishment of an Arab free trade zone.
- The declaration urged the international community to support countries hosting refugees and displaced people.
- The declaration notes that the refugee crisis in Arab countries is the worst humanitarian problem since World War II and points out that the crisis leads to an economic slowdown, increases the expenditure and deficit, imposes burdens on public sectors and infrastructure and poses risks to the society.
- Full commitment to implement the decisions that were taken and the projects adopted by previous Arab Development Summits in their successive sessions.

Arab Economic and Social Development Summit

The Arab Economic and Social Development summits are held at the level of head of state to address issues of economic and social development among member-states. Previous summits:

- 2009: Kuwait
- 2011: Egypt
- 2013: Riyadh
- 2019: Beirut

The fifth Arab Economic and Social Development Summit would be held after four years later in the year

2023 in Mauritania.

Facebook to set up an Institute for Ethics in Artificial Intelligence

Facebook grants \$7.5 million to set up an Institute for Ethics in Artificial Intelligence (AI) in collaboration with the Technical University of Munich (TUM) in Germany.

About the Proposed Institute

The Institute will work in the following avenues:

- The Institute will help to advance the growing field of ethical research on new technology and will explore fundamental issues affecting the use and impact of AI.
- The Institute will explore the ethical issues of AI and develop ethical guidelines for the responsible use of technology in society and the economy.
- The institute will conduct independent, evidence-based research to provide insight and guidance for society, industry, legislators and decision-makers across the private and public sectors.
- The institute will look into issues that affect the use and impact of AI, such as safety, privacy, fairness and transparency.

Technical University of Munich (TUM)

Technical University of Munich (TUM) is one of Europe's top universities committed to excellence in research and teaching, interdisciplinary education and the active promotion of promising young scientists. It has forged strong links with companies and scientific institutions across the world.

The university has campuses in Munich, Garching and Freising-Weihenstephan. The alumni of the university include 17 Nobel laureates, 18 Leibniz Prize winners and 22 IEEE Fellow Members.

Tripura, Manipur and Meghalaya celebrate 47th Statehood Day

The states of Tripura, Manipur and Meghalaya celebrated their 47th Statehood Day on 21st January. The states of Tripura, Manipur and Meghalaya became full-fledged states on January 21, 1972.

State Reorganisation of North-East

At the time of Independence, India's North-East region composed of three kinds of entities mentioned below:

- Assam Province of British India.



- Princely states of Manipur and Tripura.
- North East Frontier Province (NEFA).

Manipur and Tripura were granted the status Union Territories in 1949. On 1 December 1963 statehood was granted for Nagaland. Meghalaya was made an autonomous state within Assam via the Assam Reorganisation (Meghalaya) Act of 1969 as per the sixth schedule of the constitution. In 1972, Manipur, Meghalaya and Tripura were granted full statehood via the North East Reorganization Act 1972 and the Mizo Hills region of Assam and NEFA were converted into a Union Territory. As a result of the Mizo Accord of 1986, Mizoram emerged as a full-fledged state of India in 1987. Even the NEFA (Arunachal Pradesh) was granted full-fledged statehood in 1987.

Meghalaya has organised a week-long programme on the theme, 'Celebrating Meghalaya-India', on the occasion of the 47th Statehood Day and the 70th Republic Day.

Ranjani Murali receives Woman's Voice Award

US-based Indian poet Ranjani Murali received the 'Woman's Voice Award' at the Apeejay Kolkata Literary Festival (AKLF). The award carries a cash prize of Rs 1 lakh apart from a citation.

Woman's Voice Award

Prabha Khaitan Woman's Voice Award popularly known as Woman's Voice Award aims to recognize and encourage creative writing by women in India, to help build a network of women writers across India by creating a forum for their work, and to support the publication of new creative writing by women in India. It is a joint initiative between Oxford Bookstore and Prabha Khaitan Foundation.

Apeejay Kolkata Literary Festival (AKLF)

Apeejay Kolkata Literary Festival (AKLF) was the first literary festival of India. It is also the only literary Festival to be driven by a bookstore and it celebrates books, music, art, film. AKLF explores literature as part of our tangible and intangible heritage.

2019 Edelman Trust Barometer report: Key Facts

The 2019 Edelman Trust Barometer report by the Edelman Intelligence has been released.

Edelman Trust Barometer report: Global Trust Index

The Edelman Trust Barometer report is an international study based on the opinions of elites that focuses on the principles of trust in business, government, media and NGOs. Based on the findings the report calculates the Global Trust Index. The key findings from the report are:

- The Global Trust Index witnessed a marginal increase of 3 points to 52.
- India is among the most trusted nations globally when it comes to government, business, NGOs and media but the country's brands are among the least-trusted.
- India stood at the second place in the informed public category and third place in the general population category.
- The index has been topped by China in both the informed public and the general population segments, with scores of 79 and 88 respectively.
- Companies headquartered in Switzerland, Germany and Canada were the most trusted ones.
- Also, the brands from Switzerland, Germany and Canada have a trust score of 70 each while that of Japan is 69 per cent.
- Companies headquartered in India, Mexico and Brazil are the least trusted, followed by China and South Korea.
- There is a growing feeling of pessimism about the future, with only one-in-three mass population respondents in the developed world believing his or her family would be better off in the next five years.
- Just one-in-five believe the system is working for them and 70 per cent desire change.
- Despite a full-employment economy, fear of job loss remains high among the general population.
- Search and traditional media have a score of 66 each, while the score of social media is 44 per cent when it comes to reliable sources for news.

These findings are based on an online survey in 27 markets covering over 33,000 respondents.

WHO list of 10 global health threats

The World Health Organisation (WHO) list of 10 global health threats lists 10 issues which demand immediate attention from WHO and health partners in 2019 has been released. They are:

Air pollution and climate change

Nine out of ten people breathe polluted air every day. In 2019, air pollution is considered by WHO as the greatest environmental risk to health. Burning fossil fuels which are a major contributor to climate change also impacts people's health in different ways.

Noncommunicable diseases

Noncommunicable diseases, such as diabetes, cancer and heart disease, are collectively responsible for over 70% of all deaths world and are responsible for over 85% of these premature deaths are in low- and middle-income countries.

Global influenza pandemic

WHO warns of impending influenza pandemic. WHO states that Global defences are only as effective as the weakest link in any country's health emergency preparedness and response system.

Fragile and vulnerable settings

WHO notes that fragile settings exist in almost all regions of the world, and half of the key targets in the sustainable development goals, including on child and maternal health, remains unmet.

Antimicrobial resistance

Time with antibiotics, antivirals and antimalarials is running out. Antimicrobial resistance which is the ability of bacteria, parasites, viruses and fungi to resist these medicines is threatening to send the world back to a time when the world was unable to easily treat infections such as pneumonia, tuberculosis, gonorrhoea, and salmonellosis.

Ebola and other high-threat pathogens

2018 witnessed two separate Ebola outbreaks in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Both outbreaks spread to cities of more than 1 million people and One of the affected provinces was also in an active conflict zone. Similar outbreaks can be witnessed in 2019.

Weak Primary Health Care

Primary health care is the first point of contact people have with their health care system, and Primary Health Care centres should provide comprehensive, affordable, community-based care throughout life. Yet many countries do not have adequate primary health care facilities.

Vaccine hesitancy

The reluctance or refusal to vaccinate despite the availability of vaccines threatens to reverse progress made in tackling vaccine-preventable diseases. WHO notes that complacency, inconvenience in accessing vaccines, and lack of confidence are key reasons underlying hesitancy.

Dengue

Dengue is a mosquito-borne disease that causes flu-like symptoms which can be lethal and kill up to 20% of those with severe dengue. A high number of cases occur in the rainy seasons of countries such as Bangladesh and India, with rainy seasons lengthening significantly and the disease is spreading to less tropical and more temperate countries such as Nepal which have not traditionally seen the disease, Dengue needs to be fought with urgency.

HIV

Even though enormous progress has been made in terms of getting people tested, providing them with antiretrovirals and providing access to preventive measures such as pre-exposure prophylaxis, the epidemic continues to rage with nearly a million people every year dying of HIV/AIDS.

Oxfam Annual Wealth Check report 2019: Key Facts

The Annual Wealth Check report 2019 of Oxfam has been released. The release of the report marked the start of the World Economic Forum in Davos. The important features of the report are:

- 26 richest billionaires own as many assets as the 3.8 billion people who make up the poorest half of the world.
- The rich had grown richer and the poor poorer in 2018.
- The widening gap is hindering the fight against poverty.
- The report estimates that a wealth tax of 1% would raise an estimated \$418bn (£325bn) a year. This would be enough to educate every child not in school and provide healthcare that would prevent 3 million deaths.
- The wealth of more than 2,200 billionaires across the globe had increased by \$900 billion in 2018 i.e \$2.5 billion a day.
- The 12 per cent increase in the wealth of the very richest contrasted with a fall of 11 per cent in the wealth of the poorest half of the world's population.
- The wealth of the world's richest man, Jeff Bezos, the owner of Amazon, saw an increase to \$112 billion. Just 1 per cent of his fortune is equivalent to the whole health budget for Ethiopia
- The number of billionaires has doubled during the last 10 years. A new billionaire was being created every two days in 2017-2018.

Facts about India

- The top 1% of India's richest lot got richer by 39% as against just 3% increase in the wealth for the bottom half of the population.
- The wealth of the Indian billionaires witnessed an increase by Rs 2,200 crore a day last year.
- 6 Crore Indians who make up the poorest 10 per cent of the country, continued to remain in debt since 2004.
- Top 10% of the richest population in India holds 77.4% of the total national wealth.
- The combined revenue and capital expenditure of the centre and states for medical, public health, sanitation and water supply is 2,08,166 crore, is less than the country's richest man Mukesh Ambani's wealth of Rs. 2.8 lakh crore.
- In many countries including India, a decent education or quality healthcare has become a luxury only the rich can afford.
- Children from poor families in India are three times more likely to die before their first birthday than children from rich families

The calculations and interpolations in the report were based on the data from the latest comprehensive data sources available publicly, including from the Credit Suisse Wealth Databook and the annual Forbes Billionaires.

World Economic Outlook Report: Key Facts

The International Monetary Fund has released the global wealth forecasts for 2019 in its World Economic Outlook report. The important findings of the IMF forecast are:

- IMF cut its estimate for global growth in 2019. World Economic Outlook (WEO) projecting global growth at 3.5% in 2019 and 3.6% in 2020 is 0.2 and 0.1 percentage point below last October's projections.
- The global forecasts decline in the October report was attributed to the negative effects of tariff increases enacted in the United States and China.
- The further downward revision in the current report reflects carry over from softer momentum in the second half of 2018.
- The impact introduction of new automobile fuel emission standards in Germany is expected to adversely impact on the growth.
- In Italy, the concerns about sovereign and financial risks have weighed on domestic demand but also weakening financial market sentiment as well as a contraction in Turkey now projected to be deeper than anticipated.
- The report notes that the range of triggers beyond escalating trade tensions could spark a further deterioration in risk sentiment with adverse growth implications, especially given the high levels of public and private debt.
- These potential triggers include a no-deal withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union and a greater-than- envisaged slowdown in
- The forecasts for advanced economies has been revised downwards mainly due to downward revisions for the euro area and within the euro area, there was a downward revision for Germany and Italy due to the reasons mentioned above.
- The US expansion may witness a reverse trend with the unwinding of fiscal stimulus.
- The IMF forecast foresees a growth slowdown from 2.3% in 2018 to 2% in 2019 and 1.7% in 2020 for advanced economies.
- The forecast foresees a growth tick down to 4.5% in 2019, with a rebound to 4.9% in 2020 for emerging and developing economies.
- The projections for the emerging and developing economies have been lowered (0.2 percentage point) from October mainly because of a largely projected contraction in Turkey, downgrade to growth in Mexico in 2019-20.
- The rebound in 2020 is attributed to an expected recovery in Argentina and
- The headwinds due to weaker capital flows following higher US policy rates and exchange rate depreciations are reflected in the outlook for emerging markets and developing economies.

The cyclical forces which propelled broad-based global growth since the second half of 2017 are weakening faster than the IMF expected in October. Hence the downward revisions in the projections.

Policy Priorities proposed in World Economic Outlook to arrest the Downward Growth Trend

The International Monetary Fund in its World Economic Outlook has suggested various policy measures to arrest the downward growth trend. They are:

- Resolving cooperatively and quickly the trade disagreements which may derail the global trade and addressing the resulting policy uncertainty, rather than further creating harmful barriers and destabilizing an already slowing global economy.
- Accomplishing the call of G20 leaders to reform the World Trade Organization.
- Adjusting the fiscal space where it is low in a growth-friendly manner to ensure public debt is on a sustainable path, while protecting the most vulnerable.
- The monetary policies of advanced economies should continue to normalize carefully by taking necessary steps to address the slowing growth momentum.
- The IMF also advocates for measures to boost potential output growth and enhance inclusiveness across all economies to broaden the growth.

The World Economic Outlook notes that policy space for countries is more limited than in 2008. As a result, multilateral cooperation will be even more important in the event of a sharper decline in global growth. The IMF notes that it is here the multilateral institutions must be equipped with adequate resources to deal with the rising risks.

January 23, 2019

RBI initiates Industrial Outlook Survey (IOS) and Services and Infrastructure Outlook Survey (SIOS)

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has initiated two surveys namely, Industrial Outlook Survey (IOS), and Services and Infrastructure Outlook Survey (SIOS). The two quarterly surveys aim to examine the current situation including the job scenario in India's manufacturing, services and infrastructure sectors.

Industrial Outlook Survey (IOS)

The Industrial Outlook Survey (IOS) is based on qualitative responses on a set of indicators pertaining to demand conditions, financial conditions, employment conditions and the price situation. The IOS would provide useful insight into the performance of the manufacturing sector. The IOS would be undertaken by Hansa Research Group Pvt Ltd.

Services and Infrastructure Outlook Survey (SIOS)

The Services and Infrastructure Outlook Survey (SIOS) seeks an assessment of the business situation for the current quarter (January-March 2019) from selected companies in the services and infrastructure sectors in India, and their outlook for the ensuing quarter (April-June 2019). The SIOS would be undertaken by Spectrum Planning India Ltd.

IMF growth Prospects for India: Key Facts

The World Economic Outlook of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has given the following prospects about the growth trends for India:

- IMF has retained its growth projection for the country at 7.5 per cent for 2019-20 and said it is likely to accelerate to 7.7 per cent in 2020-21. This brings cheers for India as the world growth rates have been revised downwards.
- India will remain the fastest-growing economy in the world, at least for the next two years.
- India's growth rate is poised to pick up in 2019, benefiting from low oil prices and a slower pace of monetary tightening than previously expected as inflation pressures ease.

The projection by IMF is higher than the Central Statistics Office's (CSO) estimate of 7.2 per cent and lower than the RBI's estimate of 7.4 per cent. IMF's estimates are in line with the World Bank's estimate of 7.3 per cent.

China's GDP growth on the decline

The GDP figures from China shows that it recorded its lowest growth rate in 28 years at 6.6 per cent in 2018. IMF had estimated growth rate of 6.6 per cent in 2018 and 6.2 per cent in 2019 and 2020. As a result, India is poised to be the fastest-growing economy in the world, at least for the next two years.

Global Talent Competitive Index: Key Facts

The Global Talent Competitive Index prepared by the INSEAD business school in partnership with Tata Communications and Adecco Group was released on the first day of the World Economic Forum (WEF) Annual Meeting 2019.

The Global Talent Competitive Index measures how countries and cities grow, attract and retain talent, ranking 125 countries and 114 cities across all groups of income and levels of development.

Where does India stand?

The findings of the 2019 Global Talent Index for India are:

- Even though India has moved up one position to rank 80th on the global talent competitive index, India remains a laggard among the BRICS nations.
- India's performance was better than its lower-income peers when it comes to growing talent (48th) and access to growth opportunities (41st).
- In spite of the scope for improvement across the board, India's biggest challenge is to improve its ability to attract (95th) and retain (96th) talent.
- India needs to address its poor level of Internal Openness (116th) in particular with respect to weak gender equality and low tolerance towards minorities and immigrants and its disappointing showing in lifestyle (112th) indicators.

Global Findings

The global findings of the Index are:

- Switzerland is followed by Singapore, the US, Norway and Denmark in the top five on the list.
- The talent gap between higher and lower-income countries has widened over the last five years.
- Countries in Asia, Latin America and Africa are seeing a progressive erosion of their talent base.
- China's ranking fell by two places to 45. Even then China is the best performer among BRICS countries.
- The report cities rather than countries are developing stronger roles as talent hubs and will be crucial in reshaping the global talent scene.
- The top-ranked city in the index is Washington DC, followed by Copenhagen, Oslo, Vienna and Zurich.

The study found that entrepreneurial talent has become a key differentiator in relative talent competitiveness.

SC to take 'in-chamber' decision on listing of plea challenging Article 35-A

The Supreme Court has announced that it would take 'in-chamber' decision on listing of plea challenging Article 35-A.

'In-chamber' decision refers to a process of decision making where the orders are issued from the Justice's chambers without a formal court proceeding.

Article 35A of the Indian Constitution

Article 35A empowers the Jammu and Kashmir Legislature to decide who all are 'permanent residents' of the State and confer on them special rights and privileges in public sector jobs, acquisition of property in the State, scholarships and other public aid and welfare.

Genesis of the Article 35A

Article 35A was incorporated into the Constitution in 1954 by an order of the then President Rajendra Prasad on the advice of the Jawaharlal Nehru Cabinet.

The Article 35A was incorporated based on the 1952 Delhi Agreement entered between then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and the then Prime Minister of Jammu and Kashmir Sheikh Abdullah. The agreement extended Indian citizenship to the 'State subjects' of Jammu and Kashmir.

The Presidential order was issued under Article 370 (1) (d) of the Constitution which allows the President to make certain "exceptions and modifications" to the Constitution for the benefit of 'State subjects' of Jammu and Kashmir.

What is the matter before the Supreme Court?

A petition has been filed by NGO 'We The Citizens' challenging the constitutional validity of both Article 35A and Article 370. The arguments made are:

- Four representatives from Kashmir were part of the Constituent Assembly involved in the drafting of the Constitution and the State of Jammu and Kashmir was never accorded any special status in the Constitution.
- Article 370 was only a 'temporary provision' to help bring normality in Jammu and Kashmir and strengthen democracy in that State.
- Constitution-makers did not intend Article 370 to be a tool to bring permanent amendments, like Article 35A, in the Constitution
- Article 35 A is against the very spirit of oneness of India as it creates a class within a class of Indian citizens.
- Restricting citizens from other States from getting employment or buying property within Jammu and Kashmir is a violation of fundamental rights under Articles 14, 19 and 21 of the Constitution.

Petitions have also been filed by NGO, 'Ikkjut Jammu' and Jammu and Kashmir native Charu Wali Khanna questioning the constitutional validity of Article 35A.

The State government is defending the Article 35A citing two verdicts of the constitution benches of the Supreme Court in 1961 and 1969, which had upheld the powers of the President under Article 370(1)(d) of the Constitution to pass constitutional orders.

Study on impact of unplanned development on Ecology of Central Western Ghats

An Indian Research team comprising of T V Ramachandra and S Bharath (Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore); S Vinay and A. Shashishankar (Visvesvaraya Technological University, Belgaum, India) undertook a study to examine the possible impact of unplanned development on Ecology of Central Western Ghats.

The study focussed on River Kali that originates in Uttara Kannada district in Karnataka and joins the Arabian Sea. The river has six major dams, 325 species of flora, and 190 species of fauna and the river is as old as the Western Ghats.

Findings of the Study

The important findings highlighted in the study are:

- Unplanned developmental activities and land use patterns are reducing the evergreen forest cover and perennial streams in the central region of the Western Ghats in India.
- Researchers by studying the remote sensing data found that between the years 1973 and 2016, the forest cover has reduced from 85% to 55%.
- The land use pattern in the region has changed during 1980–2000 period due to developmental projects such as dams built on the river Kali, Kaiga nuclear plant and Dandeli paper mill which has led to large scale destruction of forests.
- As a result, the evergreen forests have shrunk by from 62% to 38.5% during 1980–2000 period and large water reservoirs have been constructed at the expense of forest cover.
- Even though River Kali has sufficient water supply and perennial streams in the Ghats and coastal areas, Regions that lie in plain lands with a higher degree of agriculture and cultivation have an intermittent and seasonal flow that has led to water scarcity for 4 to 9 months in a year.
- The study citing Perennial streams were found in regions that have greater than 70% of forest cover links ecology and hydrology with land use.
- Researchers propose that Forests with native species of vegetation play a pivotal role in enhancing the water retention capability of the catchment.
- The findings of the study show that Villagers in the vicinity of native forests earn Rs 1.54 lakh per acre per year compared to Rs 32,000 in villages with stream catchments experiencing deforestation. This confirms the vital role of native forests in sustaining water and people's livelihood.

The study concludes that management practices adopted by engineers were contributing to the erosion of water retention capability in the river catchment with severe water scarcity. The study recommends government agencies to establish better management and conservation strategies to maintain forest cover for food and water security.

Godavari-Cauvery link project

The Union Minister for Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation Nitin Gadkari announced that the Centre would soon take up a major project to Link Rivers Godavari and Cauvery. The detailed project report for linking rivers Godavari-Krishna-Pennar-Cauvery has been finalised and will be presented before the cabinet soon for approval.

Objectives of the Project

The objectives of the project are:

- The project aims to make good use of about 1100 tmc ft of Godavari water that is currently getting drained into the Bay of Bengal.
- The project would take the water from river Godavari to the tail end of Tamil Nadu.
- The government aims to raise finances for the project either from the World Bank or the Asian Development Bank as the project cost is about Rs 50,000 crore to Rs 60,000 crore.
- The government aims to address the water deficit being faced and the resulting water dispute among the riparian states of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Union Territory of Puducherry over sharing of the water from river Cauvery.

The project would use low thickness steel pipes with a special treatment for linking Godavari and Cauvery rather than canals as it results in water loss due to evaporation losses. The use of use low thickness steel pipes would also aid in reducing the project costs.

India Ratings report on state's finances: Key Facts

A Fitch Group company, India Ratings has released its report on states finances. The important findings of the report are:

- Loan waiver and other support measures for farmers are expected to raise the aggregate fiscal deficit of states to 3.2 per cent in 2018-19.
- Further, the fiscal deficit would increase by 40 basis points (100 basis points or bps equal to 1 per cent) in the financial year 2019-20.
- The competitive populism in the nature of farm loan waivers and other financial support schemes is expected to take centre stage in the run-up to the next general elections and this would have a larger impact on fiscal and revenue deficit to gross state domestic product ratios for Madhya Pradesh, Kerala and Rajasthan, among non-special category states, in the financial year 2019-20.
- The states revenue account on aggregate is expected to clock a deficit of 0.5 per cent of GDP in the financial year 2019-20 due to higher growth in revenue expenditure than in revenue receipts.
- The aggregate revenue expenditure is expected to grow by 18.9 per cent in 2018-19 from 11.2 per cent during the financial year 2017-18.
- It is expected that efforts to provide for the funds to support measures for the farm sector would adversely impact capital expenditure.
- The capital expenditure as a percentage of GDP would come in marginally lower at 3.0 per cent during the current fiscal, from the Budget estimate of 3.07 per cent in the financial year 2018-19.
- The agency expects a below 3 per cent capital expenditure ratio for Tamil Nadu, Haryana, West Bengal and Kerala in the financial year 2019-20.
- The higher expenditure would push the aggregate debt to GDP ratio 1 per cent during 2018-19 against a Budget estimate of 24.3 per cent.
- Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Kerala are most susceptible to stage an increase in the debt burden in the financial year 2019-20. The agency estimates the gross market borrowings of states to be Rs 5.7 trillion in FY 2019-2020.

The India Ratings does not view the increase of the debt to be detrimental to the states' debt sustainability position, even though states would channelise some part of the borrowings towards meeting revenue expenditure.

World Economic Forum Survey on Public Opinion: Key Findings

The World Economic Forum (WEF) has released its findings from the public opinion survey. The survey covered a sample size of over 10,000 people from every region of the world.

Findings of the Survey

The outcome of the survey proposes the following findings:

- At a time the world is facing huge economic risks from growing trade disputes and inward-looking policies, the public opinion is overwhelmingly against populism and favours openness.
- The survey proposes that global public overwhelmingly favours multilateral cooperation, is open to immigration and rejects the notion that countries' best interests are achieved at the expense of others.
- Majority of the people across the globe believe immigrants are mostly good for their adopted country.
- The respondents believe upward mobility is too elusive and that governments are not doing enough to provide people with opportunity.
- North Americans have the least trust in climate science.
- Western Europeans are least likely to regard technology companies as altruistic.

The Survey concludes that while the international communities capacity for concerted action appears constrained, the overwhelming desire of the global public is for leaders to find new ways to work together that will allow them to cooperate on these critical shared challenges we all face.

Regional variations in the World Economic Forum's Public Opinion Survey

The findings from the World Economic Forum's public opinion survey register regional variations on the various issues. Few of them are listed below:

- When asked how important it is for countries to work together towards a common goal, a global average of 76 per cent said they believe it is either extremely important or very important.
- The favourable sentiments were strongly felt in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, where 88 per cent share the same view. On the other hand, 61 per cent of Western Europeans and 70 per cent of North Americans said they consider cooperation to be extremely or very important.
- When asked whether their country has a responsibility to help other countries in the world, South Asia had the highest levels of concurrence with 94 per cent answering positively compared to a global average of 72 per cent. While the North Americans and Western Europeans were the least effusive, with only 61 per cent and 63 per cent respectively answering in the affirmative.
- At a global level, 57 per cent, said they believe that immigrants are "mostly good" for their new country. But only 40 per cent of those living in Eastern Europe and Central Asia and 46 per cent of respondents in Western Europe subscribe to the same opinion, whereas the South Asians and North Americans exclusively agreed to this.
- Most people still believe in the power of international cooperation but they share a much less positive view of their own country when it comes to social progress. Only 20 per cent of respondents in Western Europe feel it is either extremely common or somewhat common for someone to be born poor and become rich through hard work.

These variations are attributed to the socio-economic and political reasons.

Study indicates that even Non-obese and lean Indians are also prone to type 2 diabetes

A new study has revealed that contrary to popular belief, not only obese and overweight but also non-obese and lean persons may be prone to type 2 diabetes. The study indicates that nearly 20 to 30 per cent suffering from diabetes are non-obese and even some are lean.

Type 2 diabetes is a chronic condition that affects the way body metabolizes sugar (glucose). With Type 2 diabetes body either resists the effects of insulin, a hormone that regulates the movement of sugar into your cells or doesn't produce enough insulin to maintain normal glucose levels.

The popular belief was that obesity and sedentary lifestyle are considered to be the main pivotal factors for insulin resistance and consequent diabetes. The new study has busted this myth that increasing obesity alone is the main causative factor.

Why the Non-obese and lean Indians are prone to diabetes?

The study notes that non-obese (BMI below 25) and even lean (BMI below 19) Indians have high body fat,

excess fat in the liver and skeletal muscles and lesser skeletal muscle mass.

More importantly, a large number of non-obese and lean Indians has ectopic fat in liver and pancreas which may contribute to insulin resistance leading to diabetes even in young age.

SBI Ecowrap Report recommends Unconditional Cash Transfer to Farmers

The SBI Ecowrap report recommends the government to opt for the unconditional cash transfer to farmers to alleviate agrarian distress rather than Universal Basic Income (UBI) scheme.

Why does the SBI report recommend unconditional cash transfer?

The report has recommended the unconditional cash transfer based on the following reasons:

- Currently, it is not feasible to implement [Rythu Bandhu Scheme](#) at the national level because the land data is yet to be digitized in several states including Jharkhand, Bihar, Gujarat, and Tamil Nadu.
- Hence the unconditional cash transfer scheme is a best available option as it will be more equitable (on a per farmer basis) with a meaningful impact and once the problems are ironed out in terms of proper tenancy laws, then it can be made conditional.
- The report mentions that many countries have found that UBI does not address the structural problems and is at best a solution in interregnum.
- The report estimates various subsidy benefits the farmers are availing and suggests if a farmer is availing one or all the three modes of subsidy/supports (Crop Insurance, Interest Subsidy and Fertilizer Subsidy) then he/she will receive a minimum of Rs 5,335 to maximum Rs 10,162 per annum as cash support.
- The report predicts that government would be required to provide cash support in the range of Rs 10,000-12,000 per annum to make it completely cash neutral and the annual cost of such a scheme is Rs 1.2 lakh crore per annum.
- The challenge of providing cash transfer to tenant transfer would be left unaddressed under this scheme.

The study notes that there have been reports saying that the government is planning to provide direct cash support to the farmers in lieu of various farm level subsidies/support.

Pravasi Teerth Darshan Yojana

Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the Pravasi Teerth Darshan Yojana. The features of the Pravasi Teerth Darshan Yojana are:

- Under the scheme, a group of Indian diaspora will be taken on a government-sponsored tour of religious places in India twice a year.
- The first batch of 40 people participated in the [Pravasi Bharatiya Divas 2019](#) held in Varanasi.
- Those selected would be taken to religious places of all major religions in India.
- The government will bear all the expenses including the airfare from their country of residence.
- People of Indian-origin aged 45 to 65 can apply can avail the benefits under the scheme.
- The Scheme accords first preference to people from Girmitya countries such as Mauritius, Fiji, Suriname, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, and Jamaica.

Girmitya countries

Girmitya's are the descendants of indentured Indian labourers brought to Fiji, Mauritius, South Africa, East Africa, the Malay Peninsula, Caribbean and South America (Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana and Suriname) to work on sugarcane plantations for the prosperity of the European settlers.

The term Girmitya was coined by the father of the nation, Mahatma Gandhi who referred to himself as first Girmitya. The countries where these indentured Indian labourers settled are known as Girmitya countries.

How JNPT surged into top 30 of Lloyds Report?

India's premier container port Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (JNPT) has become India's only port to get listed among the top 30 global container ports in Top 100 Container Ports report. JNPT has notched up five spots, to be 28th on the list, compared to its previous ranking.

What made this jump possible?

The Union Ministry of Shipping has outlined the various initiatives at JNPT which has made the jump possible:

- New processes activated under the 'ease of doing business' initiative have helped in the overall growth of the port business.
- The new processes also aided the Export-Import trade to save time and cost which in turn have accentuated the growth story.
- JNPT has also launched the app services to facilitate better tracking of consignment and ease the trade process for their EXIM partners.
- The app launched by the JNPT allows traders to access all the relevant information about their consignment and port-related updates regarding traffic and weather on their fingertips.

Top 100 Container Ports Report

Top 100 Container Ports report from Lloyd's List Containers provides an exclusive analysis of with detailed information on each port and sets out the winners and losers each year.

The report also provides in-depth profiles, analysis, and insight of all 100 facilities, detailing terminals operators, box volumes, recent developments, and pipeline projects.

January 24, 2019

Rashtriya Bal Puraskar

The Rashtriya Bal Puraskar was presented by President Ram Nath Kovind.

President conferred awards to 26 awardees including one joint award for National Child Award (now renamed as Bal Shakti Puraskar) under the category of innovation, scholastic, sports, arts & culture, social service and bravery. 2 individuals and 3 institutions will also be awarded under National Child Welfare Awards category (now renamed as BalKalyanPuraskar).

The awardees were chosen by the National Selection Committee under the Chairpersonship of Smt Maneka Sanjay Gandhi, Minister of Women and Child Development.

Pradhan Mantri National Children Awards

The earlier national awards for children have been revamped as Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar. An additional component of bravery has also been added. The categories under the Pradhan Mantri National Children Awards are:

- Bal Shakti Puraskar (erstwhile known as National Child Award).
- Bal Kalyan Puraskar (erstwhile known as National Child Welfare Award).

Bal Shakti Puraskar carries a medal, a cash prize of Rs. 1,00,000/-, book vouchers worth Rs. 10,000/-, a certificate and a citation. It is awarded in the categories of Innovation, Social Service, Scholastic, Sports, Art & Culture and Bravery.

Bal Kalyan Puraskar is awarded for both individuals and institutions working towards the welfare of children. The award for an individual consists of a cash prize of Rs. 1, 00,000/- (one lakh), a medal, a citation and a certificate to each awardee. The award for institution consists of a prize of Rs. 5,00,000/- each and a medal, a citation and a certificate.

Bridge over River Ravi inaugurated in J and K

Union Minister for Road Transport & Highways, Shipping Shri Nitin Gadkari inaugurated a 1210-meter span-bridge over the river Ravi in Kathua district of Jammu and Kashmir.

About the Bridge

The bridge over river Ravi at Keerian – Gandial is a lifesaver for the people in the region. The bridge constructed at a cost of Rs 158.84 crore is a step forward in improving inter-state connectivity.

The bridge will be of great help to 2,20,000 people living on the two sides Kathua in Jammu, and Pathankot in Punjab. This will save both time and cost by reducing the distance between two places Keerian – Gandial from 45 kms to 8.6 kms.

River Ravi

The River Ravi originates near the Rohtang Pass in Himachal Pradesh and drains the area between the Pir Panjal and the Dhaola Dhar ranges. The river Ravi enters plains of Punjab near Madhopur and enters Pakistan downstream of Amritsar. It merges into the river Chenab a little above Rangpur in Pakistani Punjab.

World Economic Situation and Prospects 2019: Key Facts

The United Nations report World Economic Situation and Prospects 2019 has been released. The

important findings of the report are:

- The report estimates that Global growth is expected to remain steady at 3% in 2019 and 2020, after an expansion of 3.1% in 2018.
- As the impulse from fiscal stimulus in 2018 wanes, Growth in the United States is projected to decelerate to 2.5% in 2019 and 2% in 2020.
- The European Union would witness a steady growth of 2%, even though risks are tilted to the downside, including a potential fallout from Brexit.
- China's growth is expected to moderate from 6.6% in 2018 to 6.3% in 2019 since policy support would partly offset the negative impact of trade tensions.
- Large commodity-exporting countries, such as Brazil, Nigeria and the Russian Federation, are projected to see a moderate pickup in growth in 2019–2020, albeit from a low base.

The World Economic Situation and Prospects 2019 predicts that a worrisome combination of development challenges could further undermine growth. The report expresses concerns over the sustainability of global economic growth in the face of rising financial, social and environmental challenges.

January 24: National Girl Child Day

National Girl Child Day (NGCD) is celebrated in India on January 24th with an aim to raise awareness about Child Sex Ratio (CSR) levels and promote the empowerment of girls.

Objectives

The key objectives of National Girl Child Day are as follows:

- To spread awareness about the declining Child Sex Ratio (CSR) in the country and carry out campaigns to improve the same.
- To empower the girl children with new opportunities via schemes and campaigns.
- To create a positive environment around valuing the girl child.

Theme of NGCD-2019

The theme of National Girl Child Day-2019 is "Empowering Girls for a Brighter Tomorrow"

International Day of Girl Child versus National Girl Child Day

The International Day of the Girl Child is observed every year across world on October 11 to recognize girls' rights and unique challenges faced by girls around the world. Observance of the day seeks to increase awareness of gender inequality faced by girls worldwide based upon their gender and supports more opportunity for girls.

World Economic Situation and Prospects 2019: Challenges in attaining SDG

The United Nations report World Economic Situation and Prospects 2019 discusses various challenges in attaining the sustainable development goals. The challenges listed are:

- Economic growth is uneven and is failing to reach where it is most needed. Per capita incomes would stagnate or grow only marginally in 2019 in several parts of Africa, Western Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean.
- Even where the per capita growth is strong, economic activity is driven by core industrial and urban regions, leaving peripheral and rural areas behind.
- The report notes that eradicating poverty by 2030 will require both double-digit growth in Africa and steep reductions in income inequality. This seems a distant possibility in the current scenario.
- The confluence of risks is clouding and it may severely disrupt economic activity and inflict significant damage on longer-term development prospects.
- The various risks include escalation of trade policy disputes; financial instabilities linked to elevated levels of debt; and rising climate risks, as the world experiences an increasing number of extreme weather events.

The report notes that the simultaneous appearance of several important risks endangers efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development containing 17 specific goals to promote prosperity and social well-being while protecting the environment.

World Economic Situation and Prospects 2019: Key Facts about India

The World Economic Situation and Prospects 2019 report make the following projections for India:

- India's GDP growth is expected to accelerate to 7.6 per cent in 2019-20 from an estimated 7.4 per

cent in the current fiscal ending March 2019 and growth rate may come down to 7.4 per cent a year later.

- India will march ahead as world's fastest-growing large economy in 2019 as well as in 2020, much ahead of China.
- India's growth is driven by robust private consumption, a more expansionary fiscal stance and benefits from previous reforms and robust and sustained recovery of private investment remain crucial for lifting the medium-term growth.

While the report suggests a growth rate of around 3 per cent in 2019 and 2020 amid signs that growth has peaked and cautions that a worrisome combination of development challenges could further undermine growth.

Challenges to Global Economy : World Economic Situation and Prospects 2019

The World Economic Situation and Prospects 2019 discusses various challenges before the global economy. The important of them are:

Trade Tensions

The global trade growth moderated at 3.8 per cent in 2018 against the growth rate of 5.3 per cent in 2017. The stimulus measures and direct subsidies have offset much of the direct economic impacts on China and the United States.

But if these trade tensions continue for a prolonged period of time it may severely disrupt the global economy. The spillover effects of this trade tensions would spread through global value chains, particularly in East Asia.

Tightening fiscal conditions

Tightening fiscal conditions would result in a rapid rise in interest rates. On the other hand, the strengthening of the US dollar could exacerbate emerging market fragilities, leading to a heightened risk of debt distress.

These risks can be further aggravated by global trade tensions, monetary policy adjustment in developed economies, commodity price shocks, or domestic political or economic disruptions.

The countries with a substantial amount of dollar-denominated debt, high current account or fiscal deficits, large external financing needs and limited policy buffers are more vulnerable to stress due to tightening fiscal conditions.

Climate risks

The climate change risks necessitate a fundamental shift in the way the world powers economic strategies. Integrating the economic decision making with negative climate risks associated with emissions would be imperative.

The tools for achieving the integration would be carbon pricing measures, energy efficiency regulations such as minimum performance standards and building codes, and reduction of socially inefficient fossil fuel subsidy regimes.

ICC awards 2018

The ICC awards recognise and honour the best international cricket players of the previous 12 months. The ICC awards 2018 list:

- Sir Garfield Sobers Trophy for ICC Cricketer of the Year: Virat Kohli
- ICC Men's Test Player of the Year: Virat Kohli
- ICC ODI Player of the Year: Virat Kohli
- ICC Emerging Player of the Year: Rishabh Pant
- ICC Associate Player of the Year: Calum MacLeod
- T20I Performance of the Year: Aaron Finch
- ICC Spirit of Cricket award: Williamson
- Umpire of the Year: Kumar Dharmasena
- Fans' Moment of the Year: India's victory in the Under-19 World Cup

Selection Process

The awardees are selected by a process wherein ICC Selection committee comprises eminent former players selects the finalists for the various awards. Then the awardees are selected through votes by an

electoral college comprising of current national team captains of Test playing nations, members of the Elite Panel of ICC umpires and referees, prominent former players and cricket correspondents. The awards are shared in case of a tie.

January 25, 2019

National Voters Day 2019

India is celebrating 9th National Voters Day on 25th January 2019 for enhanced participation of citizens in the electoral process. The main purpose of celebrating National Voters Day is to encourage, facilitate and maximize the enrollment, especially for the new voters.

Genesis of the National Voters Day

As per the proposal mooted by the Ministry of Law and Justice, the Union Cabinet headed by then Prime Minister approved the proposal to celebrate National Voters Day on 25th January. The National Voters Day was first celebrated on 25th January 2011.

January 25th is celebrated as the National Voter's Day vowing to the fact that it was on this day the Election Commission of India was constituted on 25th January 1950.

National Voters Day 2019

India would be witnessing the parliamentary elections in 2019, in order to ensure an inclusive election process the theme of the National Voters Day is No Voter to be Left Behind.

President Ram Nath Kovind would be the Chief Guest at the main function being organized by Election Commission in New Delhi. The event is also graced by Chief Election Commissioners and senior officials from Bangladesh, Bhutan, Kazakhstan, Maldives, Russia and Sri Lanka.

Amul Camel Milk launched in Gujarat

The Gujarat Co-operative Milk Marketing Federation Limited (GCMMF) has launched Amul Camel Milk in selected markets of Gandhinagar, Ahmedabad and Kutch in Gujarat.

Benefits of Camel Milk

The camel milk offers a wide range of benefits such as:

- Camel milk assists healthy bacteria growth in the gut making it easy to digest and it also improves gastrointestinal health and systemic immunity.
- Rich in Vitamin B1 (Thiamin) Camel Milk can provide 70% of the recommended daily value per serving.
- Camel Milk is rich in calcium which helps to build stronger bones.
- Being a good source of potassium and phosphorus calcium milk helps in maintaining a healthy blood pressure level, in combination with a low-sodium diet, which reduces the risk of a stroke.
- Camel Milk has low levels of saturated fat.

This initiative of Amul will give camel farmers better prices and will benefit consumers by giving them hygienically-processed, superior quality camel milk.

Sea-Vigil Navy Exercise

Indian Navy undertook a first of its kind multi-agency drill, covering the entire 7,516 km-long Indian coastline and exclusive economic zone and involving 13 coastal states and Union Territories to check the efficacy of maritime security and surveillance- Sea Vigil.

Why Sea Vigil exercise is an Unprecedented One?

The two-day exercise, Sea Vigil has a deployment of 150 ships, 40 aircraft and a number of other strategic assets of the Navy and Coast Guard. Navy had undertaken biannual coastal security exercises at the level of states previously but it is for the first time an exercise involving all coastal states, island territories and all central and state agencies has been undertaken. This large geographical extent, a number of stakeholders involved, number of units participating and the objectives to be met make the exercise an unprecedented one.

Objectives of the Sea Vigil exercise

The objectives of the Sea Vigil exercise:

- Simultaneously activate the coastal security mechanism across all states and Union Territories.
- Evaluate critical areas and processes, including inter-agency coordination, information sharing and technical surveillance.

- Comprehensively and holistically validate the efficacy of the measures taken since '26/11' Mumbai attacks.

The 26/11 Mumbai attacks brought out serious gaps in India. Post 26/11, Navy has taken many steps in filling these critical security gaps.

The Sea Vigil exercise was facilitated by the ministries of Defence, Home Affairs, Shipping, Petroleum and Natural Gas, Fisheries, Customs and state governments.

IPS officer Aparna Kumar completes South Pole expedition

Indian Police Service (IPS) officer Aparna Kumar who is on deputation to Indo Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) become the first woman Indian Police Service (IPS) and ITBP officer to successfully conquer the South Pole.

South Pole

The South Pole is the southernmost point on the surface of the Earth and is at the centre of the Southern Hemisphere. It is situated on the continent of Antarctica.

The South Pole is the coldest and driest place on Earth. The temperature there ranges from minus 37 degrees to minus 48 degrees. As a result of this harsh climate, there are no native resident plants or animals at the South Pole. South polar skuas and snow petrels are occasionally seen there.

About the Expedition

The expedition began from Chile. IPS officer Aparna Kumar began her journey with a team of seven members and two guides. The team walked for 111 miles.

Aparna Kumar

Aparna Kumar is an IPS officer of Uttar Pradesh cadre and hails from Karnataka. The officer is serving ITBP on deputation as Deputy Inspector General (DIG).

ISRO puts 'lightest satellite' Kalamsat V2 into orbit

Indian Space Research Organisation (Isro) has launched the Kalamsat-V2 from Sriharikota space centre.

Kalamsat-V2

The satellite is named after former president and Indian scientist Dr Abdul Kalam. The features of the Kalamsat V2 satellite are:

- It is the lightest satellite to be ever built and launched into orbit and it is also Isro's first launch of a satellite built by a private firm.
- It is a communications satellite for ham radio transmission, a form of wireless communication used by amateurs for non-commercial activities.
- The satellite is being built by students belonging to Space Kidz India, a Chennai-based space education firm. The satellite cost 1.2m Indian rupees and was built during the span of six days.
- The Satellite was launched using Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) – a four-stage rocket.

Isro reclaims the dead rocket stage

Isro made an attempt to recover the dead rocket stage in this launch. With PSLV rockets the first three stages usually drop back to Earth; its fourth and final stage using liquid propellants is stopped and restarted several times to get a spacecraft into just the right orbit.

Isro converted this fourth stage into an experimental orbital platform to conduct small experiments in space. This experimental orbital platform will aid in carrying out experiments in a near zero-gravity environment. For the first time, Isro is conducting such an experiment to reclaim a dead rocket stage and to keep it alive.

SC to Examine 10 per cent Quota for Economically Weaker Sections

The Supreme Court has decided to examine the constitutional validity of [103rd constitutional amendment act](#) which provides for 10 per cent quota for economically weaker sections.

Hearing the petitions filed by parties including organisations like Janhit Abhiyan, [Youth for Equality](#) and businessman Tehseen Poonawalla, the Supreme Court said that it would examine the matter and issued a notice returnable within four weeks.

The Supreme Court has not stayed the operation of the Centre's decision granting quota to the poor in the general category.

Returnable notice

The Supreme court has issued notice returnable within four weeks which means the case is put in to motion and before the completion of four weeks the service should be complete i.e. service means the summon should reach the respondent against whom the case has been filed, in this case it is central government.

The 10 per cent reservation for the economically weaker section is questioned on various grounds like it violates the basic structure of constitution; economic criterion cannot be the sole basis for reservation etc.

AIIMS paper on Neonatal sepsis: Important Facts

The Doctors from All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) have published a paper 'Neonatal Sepsis in South Asia: Huge burden and spiralling antimicrobial resistance', in the British Medical Journal.

Neonatal sepsis is a type of neonatal infection that occurs in an infant younger than 90 days old. It is an invasive infection usually bacterial.

Key findings in the research paper

The important findings in the research paper are:

- India has a high instance of neonatal sepsis within the first month of birth than anywhere else in the world and several of those infected dies due to the failure of antibiotics against lethal bugs.
- 16 per thousand live births in India are infected with confirmed neonatal sepsis and one-third of them die due to unavailability of drugs to fight the infections.
- About 62 per cent of infections in South Asia occurs within the first 72 hours when compared to an incidence rate of 9.8 per thousand live births which are 10-fold higher than in the US.
- The cause of worry is the babies acquire these infections from mothers who have been subjected to unhygienic practices in the labour rooms and neonatal intensive units of the hospitals.
- This high instance of Neonatal sepsis is attributed to antibiotic overuse.
- The research paper also notes that poor lab support coupled with the difficulty in obtaining adequate blood from babies results in difficulty in confirming the presence of infection, as a result of which they fall off the radar.
- The study highlights that South Asia has majority occurrence of gram-negative organisms such as Klebsiella, e.coli and Acinetobacter isolated from hospital settings, which are known to cause more deaths than gram-positive organisms found in Western countries.
- Drugs of last resort carbapenem and colistin are also failing to deliver due to the rise in resistant bugs.

The study notes that since the choice of drugs for treating babies has increasingly narrowed over the last ten years, it is posing a challenge for health care professionals.

Goods and Services Tax Appellate Tribunal

The Union Cabinet headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the setting up of National Bench of Goods and Services Tax Appellate Tribunal.

Features of the National Bench of Goods and Services Tax Appellate Tribunal

The features of the Goods and Services Tax Appellate Tribunal (GSTAT) are:

- The National Bench of the Goods and Services Tax Appellate Tribunal will be situated in New Delhi.
- The National Bench of GSTAT would consist of President and comprise of one technical member from the centre and one technical member from the state.
- The National Bench of GSTAT will serve as a forum for the second appeal in GST laws and the first common forum for dispute resolution between Centre and States.
- The first appeal against the decisions of the Appellate Authorities under the Central and State GST Acts lie before the National Bench.
- National Bench of GSTAT will ensure uniformity in redressal of disputes arising under GST, and therefore, in the implementation of GST across the country.

Provisions for the National Bench of the Goods and Services Tax Appellate Tribunal

Chapter XVIII of the CGST Act provides for the Appeal and Review Mechanism for dispute resolution under the GST.

Section 109 of Chapter XVIII Chapter of CGST Act empowers the Central Government to constitute an Appellate Tribunal known as the Goods and Services Tax Appellate Tribunal for hearing on the

recommendation of Council, by notification, with effect from such date as may be specified therein on the recommendation of GST Council.

Constitutional Amendment to increase the powers of the Autonomous Councils

The Union Cabinet headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the constitutional amendment which seeks to increase the powers of the autonomous councils in the [Sixth Schedule areas](#) of the Northeast.

What are the amendments proposed?

The Sixth Schedule of the Constitution provides for decentralised self-governance and dispute resolution through local customary laws in parts of the North East, mainly tribal areas. The amendments proposed are:

- Amendments to Article 280 to provide greater financial resources to the councils that administer the tribal areas of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura and enable them to undertake development works.
- The existing autonomous district councils would be renamed as autonomous territorial councils since the jurisdiction of the councils extends to more than one district.
- The devolution of the financial resources to these councils would be based on the recommendations of the finance commission.
- The amendments provide for the transfer of additional 30 subjects to Karbi Anglong Autonomous Territorial Council and Dima Hasao Autonomous Territorial Council in Assam.
- The amendments also provide for elected village municipal councils to ensure democracy at the grassroots level.
- The amendments empower village councils to prepare plans for economic development and social justice, including those related to agriculture, land improvement, implementation of land reforms, minor irrigation, water management, animal husbandry, rural electrification, small scale industries and social forestry.

The amendments are in direction of fulfilling the commitments made under tripartite Memorandum of Settlements signed by Government of India, governments of Assam and Meghalaya, United People's Democratic Solidarity (UPDS), Dima Halam Daogah (DHD) and Achik National Volunteers' Council (ANVC).

Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awards 2019

President Ram Nath Kovind conferred Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awards 2019 to 30 awardees. The awards were conferred during the [Pravasi Bharatiya Divas](#) being held at Varanasi.

The winner of this prestigious award includes [Gita Gopinath](#) chief economist of IMF, Nihal Singh Agar, founding president of VHP in Australia and Ramesh Chotai, former president of Hindu Mandir and Cultural Centre in Canada.

Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awards

Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awards is the highest honour conferred on overseas Indians. The awards are conferred on a Non-Resident Indian, Person of Indian Origin or an organization or institution established and run by the Non-Resident Indians or Persons of Indian Origin, who has made a significant contribution in any one of the following fields:

- Better understanding about India abroad;
- Support to India's causes and concerns in a tangible way;
- Building closer links between India, the overseas Indian community and their country of residence;
- Social and humanitarian causes in India or abroad;
- Welfare of the local Indian community;
- Philanthropic and charitable work;
- Eminence in one's field or outstanding work, which has enhanced India's prestige in the country of residence; or
- Eminence in skills which has enhanced India's prestige in that country (for non-professional workers).

Usually, the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awards are conferred by President during the Pravasi Bharatiya

Samman Awards.

Cabinet approves amendments to Currency Swap arrangement for SAARC nations

The Union Cabinet headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the amendments to the framework on currency swap arrangement for SAARC member countries.

The amendments incorporate a standby facility of USD 400 million. This stand-by facility enables India to provide a prompt response to the current request from SAARC member countries for availing the swap amount exceeding the present limit prescribed under the SAARC Swap Framework.

SAARC Swap Framework

The Framework on Currency Swap Arrangement for SAARC Member Countries was formulated with the intention to provide a line of funding for short term foreign exchange requirements or to meet the balance of payments crises till longer-term arrangements are made or the issue is resolved in the short-term itself. It was approved by the Government of India on March 1st, 2012.

Under the framework RBI offers swaps of varying sizes to each SAARC Member countries depending on their two months import requirement, not exceeding US\$ 2 billion in total, in USD, Euro or INR.

Benefits to SAARC and India

The agreement has enabled India to strengthen its ties with the SAARC countries together with improving financial stability in the region. This agreement also bolsters the credibility of India among the SAARC countries.

Together with enhancing India's economic influence in the region, the agreement strengthen regional integration and inter-dependence.

BSNL to Offer Data Connectivity Services via SMS in India

BSNL has signed a partnership agreement with the French company Be-Bound to offer data connectivity through SMS in areas where there is no Internet connectivity or signal breaks.

How it will work?

The working of technology is explained below:

- The SMS based data connectivity will work with the help of a technology embedded in a mobile App.
- The app will detect if the user's area has poor network connectivity. If yes, then the app will send commands to the Be-Bound server.
- This commands would be sent send SMS from the user's account.
- Be-Bound server will facilitate SMS based data connectivity after getting a command from the app.
- The connectivity is based on SMS sent to and fro between the app and the Be-Bound server.

This technology was first introduced in France and it is also being tested in some of the African countries. In India, BSNL is in talks with some apps to implement the technology.

Bloomberg Innovation Index 2019: Key Facts

The Bloomberg Innovation Index analyses each country in a range of areas including education, research and development, and manufacturing before coming up with a list of the 60 most innovative countries.

The countries are ranked on the basis of their overall ability to innovate considering seven-equal weighted metrics such as research & development intensity, manufacturing value-added, productivity, high-tech density, tertiary efficiency, researcher concentration, patent activity.

How the Countries are ranked?

The ranking of the various countries under the index are:

- The index is topped by South Korea for the sixth time in a row with a total score of 87.38.
- South Korea is closely followed by Germany, Finland, Switzerland, Israel, Singapore, Sweden, U.S., Japan and France in the top 10.
- The United States has surged back into top 10 this year after it was left behind from the top 10 in 2018 Bloomberg Innovation index.
- China has jumped three places to 16th rank largely due to the surge in patent activity.
- India stands at 54th spot in the Bloomberg Innovation Index with a score of 47.93 out of 100.

India's ranking under different matrices

India stood at 47th place in research & development intensity, 54th place in manufacturing value-added, 58th place in productivity, 29th place in high-tech density, 51st in tertiary efficiency, 59th in researcher concentration and 36th in patent activity.

Bloomberg Innovation Index published top 60 economies out of 95 economies analysed for the ranking process for the year 2019 based on a score from 0-100 on the basis of seven equal-weighted metrics.

January 26, 2019

India, Japan undertake Disaster Control Exercise

The coast guards of India and Japan undertook disaster control, search and rescue exercises off the coast of Yokohama in Japan. India had hosted the Japanese ships for the exercise last year and this time Japan is hosting the exercise. ICGS Shaunak is the main Indian ship taking part in the drills.

ICGS Shaunak is an Offshore Patrol Vessel of Indian coast guards. This 105-meter vessel is capable of carrying a twin-engine light helicopter and five high-speed boats including two quick reaction inflatable boats for swift boarding operations, search and rescue, law enforcement and maritime patrol.

ICGS Shaunak is fitted with navigation and communication equipment, sensors and machinery including 30 mm CRN 91 naval gun, integrated bridge system, integrated machinery control system, power management system (PMS) and high power external fire fighting system.

This exercise aims to share their expertise in disaster management as both the nations have huge experience in disaster management as Japan regularly faces earthquakes and sea storms while the Indian Coast Guard round the year manages the over 7,000-kilometre coastline of the country.

Indian Africa Field Training Exercise

Indian Africa Field Training Exercise (IAFTX) will be held at Aundh Military Station and College of Military Engineering, Pune from 18 March to 27 March 2019.

The modalities for the IAFTEX were discussed in the conference held between 23-24 January 2019. The conference saw attendance from delegates of Egypt, Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal, Sudan, South Africa, Tanzania, Namibia, Mozambique, Uganda, Niger and Zambia.

Features of the IAFTX

The important features of the IAFTX are:

- IAFTX joint exercise is being conducted between India and a dozen African Countries.
- The joint exercise aims at synergising humanitarian mine action and joint peace operations.
- The joint exercise is a step forward towards growing political and military ties with the member nations of the African continent and will boost the already strong strategic cooperation between the countries.
- The joint exercise will see participation from Nigeria, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, South Africa, Senegal, Sudan, Tanzania, Zambia, Namibia, Mozambique and Uganda.
- The exercise is being conducted with an aim to synergise United Nations peacekeeping operations.
- The exercise will aid in forging better military ties and extending India's outreach in Africa.

Also, it is expected that Army Chief General Bipin Rawat along with senior officers from participating nations would attend the validation ceremony once the exercise is concluded.

Saab, AAI sign MoU under UDAN

The Swedish aerospace and defence company (Saab) and Airports Authority of India (AAI) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to explore air traffic management (ATM) solutions for airports operating under the [regional connectivity scheme, UDAN](#).

Air traffic management is an aviation term comprising of all systems which aid the aircraft to depart from an aerodrome, transit airspace, and land at a destination aerodrome, including Air Traffic Services (ATS), Airspace Management (ASM), and Air Traffic Flow and Capacity Management (ATFCM).

The AAI looks to benefit from the portfolio of Saab ranging from Advanced-Surface Movement Guidance & Control System (A-SMGCS) and Surface Movement Radar (SR- 3) to Remote Towers which can be deployed at all types of airports.

About the agreement

The Saab and AAI will look to:

- Develop a pan-Indian ATM Automation System for airports under the UDAN Regional Connectivity Scheme.

• Both will jointly explore potential avenues for co-operation for ATM solutions in India. Saab ATM solutions have already been deployed at 11 airports in India and they can support single and multiple runway airfields, as well as remote operations and deployable systems.

MoU between India and Kuwait on recruitment of Domestic Workers

The Union Cabinet headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the signing of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and Kuwait for cooperation on the recruitment of domestic workers.

Features of the MoU

The important aspects of the MoU are:

- The MoU will provide a structured framework for cooperation on domestic workers related matters.
- It provides for strengthened safeguards for Indian domestic workers including female workers deployed in Kuwait.
- Initially valid for five years, it has a provision for automatic renewal.
- The MoU also proposes setting up of a joint committee will also be set up to follow up the implementation.

The MoU will benefit around 3 lakh Indian workers deployed in Kuwait, including about 90,000 female domestic workers and promotes bilateral cooperation in domestic workers-related matters between the two countries.

Padma Awards 2019

The government of India has announced the Padma Awards 2019. The 112 prominent personalities honoured with the Padma Awards include comprises 4 Padma Vibhushan, 14 Padma Bhushan and 94 Padma Shri Awards.

Padma Awards

Padma Awards are given in various disciplines or fields of activities: social work, public affairs, science and engineering, trade and industry, medicine, literature and education, sports, civil service, etc. The three categories of awards:

- Padma Vibhushan is awarded for exceptional and distinguished service.
- Padma Bhushan is awarded for distinguished service of high order.
- Padma Shri is awarded for distinguished service in any field.

Padma Awards were instituted by the government of India in 1954 to be awarded to citizens of India in recognition of distinguished contribution in the sphere of activities such as industry, literature, science, sports, medicine, social service, education and public affairs. The awards are announced on the eve of Republic Day. The recipients of these awards can also include foreigners who have contributed in various ways to India.

The recommendations for Padma Awards are submitted to the Padma Awards Committee, constituted by the Prime Minister of India. The committee submits their recommendations to the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister further forwards the list to the President of India for further approval.

Bharat Ratna Awards 2019

The 2019 Bharat Ratna award has been bestowed upon former President Pranab Mukherjee, Nanaji Deshmukh and singer Bhupen Hazarika. Nanaji Deshmukh and singer Bhupen Hazarika were awarded Bharat Ratna posthumously.

Pranab Mukherjee

Pranab Mukherjee served as the 13th President of India from 2012 until 2017. A veteran congressman, Pranab Mukherjee had held various key portfolios like Finance, Defence and External Affairs as Union Minister. He is the outstanding statesman of the present time.

Pranab Mukherjee was born in a Bengali family. Pranab Mukherjee earned an MA degree in Political Science and History and LL.B. from the University of Calcutta. He has also served as a professor of Political Science at Vidyanagar College in West Bengal. Before entering Politics, he was working as a journalist with 'Deshar Dak'.

Nanaji Deshmukh

Nanaji Deshmukh laid great emphasis on education as a social worker. The first Saraswati Shishu

Mandir was established by him at Gorakhpur in 1950. He was a member of RSS and also served as general secretary of Bharatiya Jana Sangh.

Nanaji Deshmukh took part in Jai Prakash Narayan movement during the Emergency. He got elected as a member of [Lok Sabha](#) from Balrampur in 1977. He has also served as a nominated member of Rajya Sabha. Nanaji was awarded Padma Vibhushan in 1999.

Bhupen Hazarika

Bhupen Hazarika was a playback singer, lyricist, musician, singer, poet and film-maker from Assam, widely known as Sudhakantha. He mainly wrote and sang in the Assamese language. His works were marked by humanity and universal brotherhood and have been translated and sung in many languages. He also served as a channel to introduce the culture and folk music of Assam and Northeast India to Hindi cinema at the national level.

PM inaugurates Four museums in Red Fort Complex

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Museum, Yaad-e-Jallian Museum (museum on the Jallianwala Bagh and World War I), the Museum on 1857- India's first war of Independence, and Drishyakala-Museum on Indian Art within the Red Fort complex.

Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Museum

The Subhash Chandra Bose museum at Red Fort was inaugurated to mark the Netaji's 122nd birth anniversary. This Museum on Subhash Chandra Bose and the Indian National Army showcases different artifacts related to Netaji and Indian National Army which includes a wooden chair and sword used by the Netaji, medals, badges and uniforms. The museum in the Red Fort complex is also important for the fact that INA trails were held within the Red Fort complex.

Yaad-e-Jallian Museum

The Yaad-e-Jallian Museum provides an authentic account of Jallianwala Bagh massacre happened on April 13, 1919. The Yaad-e-Jallian Museum will also showcase the heroism, valor and sacrifices made by Indian soldiers during World War-1.

Museum on 1857- India's first war of Independence

The Museum on 1857- India's first war of Independence portrays the historical narrative of 1857 war of independence, showcasing the valor and sacrifices made by Indians during the period.

Drishyakala-Museum on Indian Art

The Drishyakala-Museum on Indian Art showcases Indian art works from 16th century till India's independence.

UP Divas: 24th January

The government of Uttar Pradesh celebrated UP Divas for the first time on 24th January 2019. The proposal was floated by Governor Ram Naik to celebrate the UP Divas on the lines of Maharashtra Day so that people know the history and culture of the state.

History of Uttar Pradesh: Biggest State of India

The state of Uttar Pradesh was called the Brahmrisi Desh or the Madhya Desh during the Vedic period. During the Mughal period, its territory was divided under governors.

The state was under the Bengal Presidency till 1834. After the Agra Presidency was created under a Governor, the state was brought under its control. In 1858, the North Western Province was created and the seat of power was transferred from Agra to Allahabad.

In 1877 the Awadh was merged with North Western Province. In 1902 the entire province was named as 'United Provinces of Agra and Oudh'.

The legislative council was constituted in Lucknow in 1921 and the seat of power again was transferred from Allahabad to Lucknow. In 1935 Lucknow was designated as the capital of the United Province.

On January 24, 1950, the governor-general of India passed the United Provinces (Alteration of Name) Order 1950, renaming United Provinces as Uttar Pradesh.

President confers Ashoka Chakra on Lance Naik Nazir Wani

India's highest peacetime gallantry honour, Ashoka Chakra was awarded to Lance Naik Nazir Wani posthumously. The award was presented by President Ram Nath Kovind was received by Wani's wife and mother at the Republic Day celebrations held at Rajpath. Lance Naik Nazir Wani also holds the distinction of being the first Kashmiri to be conferred the Ashoka Chakra.

Lance Naik Nazir Wani sacrificed his life fighting the terrorists

Lance Naik Nazir Wani single-handedly killed two terrorists during the Shopian operation and injured a third one despite receiving serious injuries.

Lance Naik Nazir Wani prevented the escape of the terrorists from the target house. He made a huge contribution in neutralising six hardcore terrorists. In the process, he sacrificed his life.

Ashoka Chakra

Ashoka Chakra is India's highest peacetime military decoration awarded for valour, courageous action or self-sacrifice away from the battlefield and it is peacetime equivalent of Param Vir Chakra which is awarded for the most conspicuous bravery or some daring or pre-eminent valour or self-sacrifice in the battlefield.

Navy Commissions INS Kohassa

Naval Air Station (NAS) Shibpur has been commissioned as INS Kohassa. It is a step forward in enhancing the operational capability of Andaman and Nicobar Command. NAS Shibpur was commissioned as INS Kohassa by Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Sunil Lanba.

INS Kohassa will be India's fourth air base and the third naval air facility in the Andaman and Nicobar region that overlooks key sea lanes of communication and strategic points with more than 60,000 commercial vessels passing through each year.

The other two Naval Air Bases in the Andaman and Nicobar region are INS Utkrosh at Port Blair and INS Baaz at Campbell Bay. INS Kohassa is named after White-Bellied Sea Eagle, which is a large bird of prey endemic to Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

INS Kohassa will also function as a base for joint operation of both military and civil aircraft in keeping with the UDAN scheme of the government. The airbase will be able to handle Helicopter and Dornier Aircraft at present and after expansion the facility would enable the operation of bigger civil and defence aircraft.

Jammu and Kashmir Governor gives assent to Jammu and Kashmir Reservation (Amendment) Bill, 2014

Governor of Jammu and Kashmir Satya Pal Malik has given his assent to the Jammu and Kashmir Reservation (Amendment) Bill, 2014, providing reservation in government jobs for Pahari community.

Features of the Amendment Bill

The features of the Jammu and Kashmir Reservation (Amendment) Bill, 2014 are:

- The amendment provides for reservation in government jobs for the persons belonging to the Pahari community, clan or tribe having a distinct cultural, ethnic and linguistic identity.
- The amendment creates a separate category for the persons belonging to Pahari community, clan or tribe having distinct, cultural, ethnic and linguistic identity among the Socially and Educationally Backward classes (other than Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes).
- The bill empowers the government of Jammu and Kashmir to notify method and authority for identification of Pahari Community.

Pahari Community

The Pahari Community also called as Pahadi and Parbati belongs to Indo-Aryan ethnic group inhabiting Himalayan regions of Nepal and India.

Pahari community has historically faced economic distress resulting in an overall socio-economic backwardness of the community due to the remoteness and inaccessibility of the areas that they have been living in.

As a result of this socio-economic backwardness, Paharis were not able to compete with other sections of the society in terms of access to education and health care due to these disadvantages. Hence to address these gaps the government of Jammu and Kashmir has extended the reservation in Jobs.

LRSAM Successfully Tested from coast of Odisha

India has successfully flight tested Long Range Surface-to-Air Missile (LRSAM) from a warship off Odisha coast. The LRSAM successfully destroyed a low flying aerial target. This paves way for its deployment in the armed forces.

Features of the LRSAM

The important features of the LRSAM are:

- LRSAM has been jointly developed by Defence Research and Development Organisation

(DRDO), India and M/s Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) for the Indian Navy.

- The LRSAM was test fired in operational configuration on board INS Chennai positioned in the Arabian Sea.
- The missile was first tested from INS Kolkata on western seaboard in 2015. It had achieved all objectives.
- LRSAM has an operational range of 75 km and it can destroy airborne threats like jets, aircraft, anti-ship missiles, unmanned aerial vehicles and rockets including projectiles launched simultaneously.
- The LRSAM has a length of about 4.5 meters, a diameter of 0.54 metre, a wingspan of 0.94 meters and weighs around 275 kg including a 60 kg warhead which detonates at proximity.

LRSAM would be inducted in both Army and Navy after completion of its developmental trials.

New norms for Jan Shikshan Sansthan

The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) has issued new guidelines for Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS). The new guidelines are issued as part of an attempt by the MSDE to re-energize and reinvigorate the Jan Shikshan Sansthan. The highlights of these guidelines are:

- Alignment of JSS course and curriculum with National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF) to standardize training.
- Decentralization of powers for JSSs by providing accountability and independence to district administration.
- To identify and promote traditional skills in the district through skilling / upskilling.
- Evidence-based assessment system.
- Easy Online certification.
- Linking JSS to Public Finance Management system to maintain transparency and accountability of the ecosystem.
- Creating livelihood linkages.
- Training of Trainers to develop the capacity through National Skills Training Institutes.

Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS)

Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS) were established to provide vocational training to non-literate, neo-literate, as well as school dropouts by identifying skills as would have a market in the region of their establishment. The scope of the JSS includes:

- Developing an appropriate curriculum and training modules covering vocational elements of general awareness and life enrichment components.
- Training equivalent to courses designed by the Directorate of Adult education, National Institute of Open Schooling and Director General Employment & Training.
- Provide training to a pool of resource persons and master trainers for conducting training and also the availability of infrastructure and training – specific equipment.
- Administer simple tests and award certificates
- Network with employers and industries for trainees to get suitable placements.

Previously under the Ministry of Human Resources Development, the JSS's are now working under Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE).

The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) has also launched a new portal www.jss.gov.in which will furnish information on action plans, database of beneficiaries and stakeholders, details of finance and expenditure and other ongoing developments along with public log-in access.

January 27, 2019

Pravasi Dividend Pension Scheme

The government of Kerala has launched 'Pravasi Dividend Pension Scheme. The governor of Kerala P. Sathasivam made this announcement in the address to the state assembly.

About the Scheme

The scheme has been introduced by the government of Kerala as part of welfare measures towards Pravasi Malayalis. Under the scheme, a regular pension would be provided to Non-Resident Keralites on a one-time payment of Rs 5 lakh. This onetime payment would be deposited with KIIFB (Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board) for financing infrastructure projects.

On the occasion, Governor also announced an international a Toll-Free Line to provide information, register complaints and details about the action taken on various issues faced by the Non-Resident Indians from Kerala and an interactive portal to provide information on job opportunities in various countries, online attestation and recruitment processes.

NRIs of Kerala

The NRI Kerala, God's own country makes a significant contribution towards the welfare of the state. The inflow of NRI deposits to Kerala stood at Rs 1,52,348 crore at March 2017. Kerala has 2.1 million migrants across the world. and almost 90 per cent of the migrant Keralites are in the Middle East.

The government had initiated Loka Kerala Sabha (LKS) with the aim of using the expertise, talent and resources of NRIs from Kerala for the overall growth and development of the state. The LKS provides a platform for offering meaningful say by the NRI community in implementing schemes for building a new Kerala.

Supreme Court Upholds Constitutional Validity of Insolvency & Bankruptcy Code

The Supreme Court has upheld the constitutional validity of the Insolvency & Bankruptcy Code. The petitioners had questioned the Insolvency & Bankruptcy Code based on the following grounds:

- The constitutional validity of IBC was questioned as a violation of Article 14 of the Constitution.
- The petitioners argued that IBC doesn't make an intelligible differentiation in the classification of a financial creditor and operational creditor, and hence violates Article 14.
- Petitioners claimed that Operational creditors provide services to companies and have the right to initiate insolvency proceedings if their payments are defaulted upon. But the code bars them for participating in the resolution process through the committee of creditors.
- As per IBC, the committee can only consist of financial creditors who assess and vote on resolution plans submitted by interested bidders.
- Petitioners also argued against barring promoters from bidding for their own companies forces them to undertake the sale of the company to new bidders. This violates the fundamental rights of promoters of a company.

The Supreme Court dismissed both the arguments of petitioners while upholding the bar on promoters to come in as resolution applicants Supreme Court noted that the Section 12A route is open for them.

Section 12A of IBC allows for a withdrawal of an insolvency application if 90 per cent of the creditors' committee by voting share approves it.

Samantha Express

Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) will launch a new train Samantha Express on February 14 from Nagpur. The Samantha Express will cover prominent places associated with Gautam Buddha and chief architect of the Constitution Dr B R Ambedkar.

Journey of Samantha Express

The Samantha express will run through the following places:

- Chaityabhoomi (Mumbai): Dr Ambedkar was cremated here after his death on 6 December 1956 and it hosts a memorial for Dr Ambedkar.
- Mhow (Indore): Dr Ambedkar was born at Mhow.
- Bodhgaya (Gaya): Bodhgaya is a place where Buddha is said to have obtained Enlightenment under Bodhi Tree.
- Sarnath (Varanasi): Gautama Buddha first taught the Dharma here.
- Lumbini (Nautanwa): It was here Gautama Buddha was born.
- Kushinagar (Gorakhpur): It was here Gautama Buddha attained Parinirvana after his death.
- Deekshabhoomi (Nagpur): It was here Dr Ambedkar converted to Buddhism.

Dr B R Ambedkar and Buddhism

About two months prior to his demise, Dr Ambedkar converted to Buddhism. Speaking about conversion Dr Ambedkar had said that everybody has to admit that conversion is necessary to the Untouchables as self-government is to India. The ultimate object of both is the same and there is no difference in ultimate goal. The ultimate aim is to attain freedom. Freedom is necessary for the life of mankind. Conversion of Untouchables would provide them with complete freedom. The conversion cannot be called worthless by

any stretch of the imagination.

IBSA Gandhi-Mandela Memorial Freedom Lecture

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa delivered the first IBSA Gandhi-Mandela Memorial Freedom Lecture. Highlights from the Speech are:

- Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela wanted to see the elimination of poverty and a world where nations respect one another and multilateralism was upheld and respected and there was tolerance for each other's religion, race, caste and regional affiliation.
- India and South Africa are separated by an ocean but bound together by the collective energies of people. The legacies of Gandhi and Mandela have never been more important than they are today. Both India and South Africa have a collective role in addressing the global economy which is facing a number of challenges right now.
- President Ramaphosa India and South Africa recalled the words of Jawaharlal Nehru's who called Asia and Africa sister continents in 1955.
- President Ramaphosa remembered Ahmed Kathrada and Ismail Mohammad for their contribution to South Africa's democracy and Mahatma Gandhi's granddaughter Ela Gandhi for playing a leading role in the women's movement in South Africa.
- President Ramaphosa thanked people of India for their courage, encouragement, inspiration they have sent during our struggle for liberation. He noted that India's consistent solidarity towards liberation struggles of not just South Africa but of other countries as well
- The legacies of Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela go far beyond their stature as the founding fathers of our two great countries India and South Africa.
- President Ramaphosa lauded efforts of Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela on justice and liberty, for human dignity and human rights and non-violent resistance.

IBSA

IBSA is an international tripartite grouping for promoting international cooperation among India, Brazil and South Africa. IBSA symbolises three important poles for galvanizing South-South cooperation and greater understanding between three important continents of the developing world namely, Africa, Asia and South America.

IBSA provides with a platform for the three countries to engage in discussions for cooperation in the field of agriculture, trade, culture, and defence among others.

No Presents Please wins DSC Prize for South Asian Literature 2018

No Presents Please is an English Novel translated from Kannada Work of Jayant Kaikini. The novel was translated to English by Tejaswini Niranjana. The award was announced during the Tata Steel Kolkata Literary Meet.

The award was presented by eminent writer Ruskin Bond to Jayant Kaikini and translator Tejaswini Niranjana. For the first time the award was being given to a translated work and the jury wanted to recognise the outstanding contribution of Tejaswini Niranjana, the translator.

The novel presents illustrate life in Mumbai with the Mumbai City presented as a protagonist of a coherent narrative.

DSC Prize for South Asian Literature

Instituted in 2010, the DSC Prize for South Asian Literature awards the best work in South Asian fiction writing each year. The Prize is awarded to writers of any ethnicity or nationality writing about South Asia themes such as culture, politics, history, or people.

The DSC Prize for South Asian Literature was instituted by Surina Narula and Manhad Narula in 2010 for an original full-length novel written in English, or translated into English.

Three Mission Centres Inaugurated at the Indian Institute of Technology Madras

The Union Minister for Science and Technology inaugurated the three Department of Science and Technology (DST) mission centres at the Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IIT-M) at the collective cost of Rs 50 crore.

DST Mission Centres

The three DST mission centres inaugurated were:

- DST -IITM Solar Energy Harnessing Centre: This will focus on a wide range of research and technology development activities such as silicon solar cells that promise high efficiency and are suited for Indian conditions.
- DST- IITM Centre for Sustainable Treatment, Reuse and Management for Efficient, Affordable and Synergistic Solutions for Water (Water-IC for SUTRAM of EASY WATER): It focuses on synchronized research and training programs on various issues related to wastewater management, water treatment, sensor development, stormwater management and distribution and collection systems.
- DST-IITM-KGDS Test-bed on Solar Thermal Desalination Solutions in Narippaiyur: It has been established with an aim to deliver customised technology solutions to address prevalent water challenges in the arid coastal village located on the shores of the Bay of Bengal.

These centres are focused on critical technologies for sustainability like harnessing of solar energy in myriad ways, and scientific recycling and conservation of water.

Bharat Parv Begins at Red Fort

Bharat Parv is a five day event hosted as part of Republic Day celebrations. Bharat Parv organised at Red Fort, Delhi aims to generate a patriotic fervour and promote the rich cultural diversity of the country.

Attractions of Bharat Parv

Bharat Parv showcases the spirit of [Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat](#). The important attractions of Bharat Parv are:

- Replica of the Statue of Unity.
- Gandhi Gram in which 10 painting artists will create paintings on the theme of Ideology of Mahatma Gandhi.
- Display of Republic Day parade tableaux
- Performances by the Armed Forces bands.
- Theme based State Pavilions where each state showcases its strength along with its tourism products.
- Daily cultural performances by North Zone Cultural Centre.

Bharat Parv has been organised by Ministry of Tourism in collaboration with other Central Ministries and State Governments.

Australian Open 2019

Australian Open which is the first of the four Grand Slam tennis event concluded at Melbourne in Australia. Nicknamed as the happy slam, the Australian Open has grown to become the largest annual sporting event in the Southern Hemisphere.

Grand Slam tennis events

Apart from Australian Open, Other Grand Slam tennis events are French Open, Wimbledon, and the US Open.

Winners of the Australian Open 2019

The Winners of the Australian Open 2019 are:

- Women's Singles: Naomi Osaka of Japan.
- Men's Singles: Novak Djokovic of Serbia.
- Women's Doubles: Samantha Stosur of Australia and Zhang Shuai of China.
- Men's Doubles: Pierre-Hugues Herbert and Nicolas Mahut of France.
- Mixed Doubles: Czech Republic's Barbora Krejckova and Rajeev Ram of the US.

Novak Djokovic of Serbia become the first man to win seven titles at Australian Open. The victory of Naomi Osaka of Japan cements her place as number one women singles player of the world.

Nari Shakti: Hindi Word of the Year 2018

The word Nari Shakti is chosen as the word of the Year 2018 by the Oxford dictionaries. The announcement regarding this was made in the Jaipur Literature Festival (JLF).

Why Nari Shakti was chosen as word of the year?

The Oxford dictionaries have cited following reasons for choosing Nari Shakti as word of the year:

- There was a large spike in the use of word Nari Shakti in March 2018 around the Government of India's Nari Shakti Puraskar (Women Power Award) held on the International Women's Day.

- Two major decisions of the Supreme Court contributed to Nari Shakti's prominence in 2018. One was a ban on 'triple-talaq' and second, the taking down of a rule that disallowed menstrual women entry to the Sabarimala temple in Kerala.

The Word Nari Shakti derived from Sanskrit symbolises women who are capable to take charge of their lives. The word Nari Shakti encapsulates the spirit of our times, with all its struggles, challenges, and triumphs.

2017 Word of the Year

In 2017 Oxford dictionaries for the first time had announced the Hindi word of the year. Aadhaar was declared as the word of the year in 2018.

Jaipur Literature Festival (JLF)

Jaipur Literature Festival is described as the greatest literary show on Earth. JLF brings together a diverse mix of the world's greatest writers, thinkers, humanitarians, politicians, business leaders, sports people and entertainers on one stage to champion the freedom to express and engage in thoughtful debate and dialogue.

The Jaipur Literature Festival set against the backdrop of Rajasthan's stunning cultural heritage and the Digg Palace in Jaipur is a flagship event of Teamwork Arts.

Yuva Swabhiman Yojana

The government of Madhya Pradesh has announced the Yuva Swabhiman Yojana to provide employment for the unemployed youth from the economically weaker sections of the society.

About the Scheme

The features of the Yuva Swabhiman Yojana scheme are:

- It aims to provide employment to the youth belonging to the weaker section of the society mainly in urban areas of the state.
- The scheme aims to provide 100 days of employment to youngsters from economically weaker sections of the society in urban areas.
- The youths would also be given skill training by the government.

The component of skill training has been added to enable the youth to explore the available opportunities. To enhance the job opportunities the government of Madhya Pradesh has also announced changes in industrial policy with a clause under which industries would be eligible to get the state government incentives only if they hire 70 per cent staff from Madhya Pradesh.

With this scheme, the government aims to cover those from urban centres who are left out from the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA). Since those in rural areas are covered under MNREGA, the scheme focuses on urban areas.

South Asian Nitrogen Hub

The British government has announced a research project, South Asian Nitrogen Hub to study nitrogen pollution in India and South Asia. The project led by UK's Centre for Ecology and Hydrology will partner with 50 organisations from the UK and South Asia. The Indian Institutions partnering the study are:

- National Institute of Oceanography
- Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University
- Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology
- Jawaharlal Nehru University
- Aligarh Muslim University
- National Physical Laboratory
- TERI University

The project aims to study the impact of different forms of nitrogen pollution, particularly looking at nitrogen in agriculture in eight countries of South Asia which includes India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Maldives.

Nitrogen Pollution

Pollutant Gases like ammonia (NH₃) and nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) are produced from chemical fertilizers, livestock manure, and burning fossil fuels and is connected to air pollution, biodiversity loss, the pollution

of rivers and seas, ozone depletion, health, economy and livelihoods.

Gases like Ammonia and nitrogen dioxide can aggravate respiratory and heart conditions. Nitrous oxide is a greenhouse gas that depletes the ozone layer. Nitrate from chemical fertilisers, manure and industry pollutes rivers and seas, poses a health risk for humans, fish, coral and plant life.

January 28, 2019

Supreme Court refuses to stay amendments to SC/ST Act

The Supreme Court has refused to stay the amendments to Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Amendment Bill, 2018. These amendments were brought in to nullify the safeguards instituted by the Supreme Court to prevent its misuse.

Safeguards proposed by Supreme Court

Expressing concerns over the misuse of the various provisions under the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, the Supreme Court had proposed following safety mechanisms:

- Provision of anticipatory bail.
- Approval of Senior Superintendent of Police to arrest those accused under this act.
- Deputy Superintendent of Police (DySP) to conduct a preliminary enquiry to find out whether there is a prima facie case under Act.

Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Amendment Act, 2018

The 2018 amendment act was proposed to nullify the safeguards proposed by the Supreme Court. The amendments proposed were:

- Investigating officer will not require the approval of any authority for the arrest of an accused.
- Preliminary enquiry will not be required for the registration of a First Information Report against a person accused under the Act.
- Persons accused of committing an offence under the Act cannot apply for anticipatory bail.

To avoid any ambiguity the act proposes that these provisions apply despite any judgments or orders of a court that provide otherwise. These amendments to the prevention of atrocities act were questioned in the Supreme Court as ultra vires.

India Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises Report 2018: Key Facts

The India Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises Report 2018 has been released Kochi based Institute of Small Enterprises and Development at the South India MSME Summit 2019 in Bengaluru.

Findings of the Report

The important findings of the report include:

- MSMEs need radical reforms to solve its pressing problems and to utilize its potential.
- Several studies on India's MSMEs have brought out emerging challenges of the sector especially against the phenomenon of jobless growth. The government must act on the findings of these studies.
- There is a need to address the issues relating to finance and taxation which the MSME associations have brought before the government. The report notes that RBI has set up a committee to identify causes and propose long term solutions.
- The [new definition of MSMEs](#) brought about by union government is considered as an inroad into their constituency by large players.
- The mainstream debates on MSME problems are confined to the limited areas of technology, finance, and start-up support etc. The impact of more crucial external influences such as policy failures demonetization and GST implementation has remained unanswered. As a result, piece-meal solutions to MSME problems may not be effective.
- The report quotes RBI study which noted the share of credit extended to MSMEs in overall bank credit, declined steadily to around 14 per cent from about 17 per cent and within credit to the industrial sector and the share of medium enterprises has dropped significantly as compared to micro and small enterprises.

Recommendations of the Report

The report recommends an entitlement approach that can have the potential of compelling all related

stakeholders to work on a common national agenda and solutions under a scientifically structured framework. This approach demands the identification and analysis of major security threats to the MSMEs, and entrepreneurship at the grass root level.

Study on Greenland Ice: Key Facts

The study of Technical University of Denmark (DTU) Space Lab published in the US journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences on changes to Greenland's ice sheet lists the following findings:

- Greenland's melting ice caused sea levels to rise and resulted in the disappearance of glaciers four times faster in 2013 than in 2003 and is noticeable across the Arctic island.
- 111 cubic kilometres of ice disappeared per year in 2003 whereas 10 years later this figure had almost quadrupled to 428 cubic kilometres.
- Most of Greenland's ice melt was observed on the ice cap, predominantly on the glaciers in the island's northwest and southeast till 2003. But from 2003 to 2013 most of the ice loss was from Greenland's southwest region, which is largely devoid of large glaciers.
- The ice is now melting from the surface mass and melting inland from the coastline. As a result, growing rivers of water are streaming into the ocean.
- The melting ice is attributed to rising land temperatures and in part to the fact that the ice comes into contact with waters that are increasingly warmer.
- As the atmosphere's temperature gradually rises there would be an acceleration in the ice melt.

The study notes that while the amount of sea level increase varies from region to region, there was a worldwide increase by an average of 20 centimetres (about eight inches) in the 20th century and the sea level is currently rising by about 3.3 millimetres per year.

Atal Setu of Goa

Chief Minister of Goa Manohar Parrikar inaugurated the "Atal Setu" on the Mandovi river in Goa.

Key features of the Bridge

The important features of the bridge are:

- It is a four-lane 5.1-km long cable-stayed bridge connects state capital Panaji with north Goa.
- This four-lane bridge weighs at 2.5 lakh tonnes is equivalent to the weight of 570 Boeing aircraft.
- The bridge has been built by 1 lakh cubic metres of high strength, high performance concrete enough to fill 40 Olympic size swimming pools.
- 13,000 tonnes of corrosion resistant reinforcement steel, 32,000 square metres of structural steel plates and 1,800 kilometres of high tensile pre-stressing strands have gone into making the bridge.
- The bridge utilizes 88 high tensile strength cables in the state-of-art single place harp type cable stay system and a real-time force monitoring mechanism.

The bridge is constructed by the GIDC (Goa Infrastructure Development Corporation) in collaboration with construction major Larsen and Toubro.

River Mandovi

River Mandovi, also known as Mahadayi or Mhadei river is regarded as the lifeline of Goa. The river originates from a cluster of 30 springs at Bhimgad in the Western Ghats in the Belagavi district of Karnataka and has a total 2,032 km² catchment area of which 1,580 km², 375 km² and 77 km² catchment area are in Goa, Karnataka and Maharashtra respectively. Owing to the differences over the sharing of the river water among the states of Goa, Karnataka and Maharashtra, the union government has constituted Mahadayi Water Disputes Tribunal to examine the claims made by the states.

India's Second Tulip Garden to Come up in Uttarakhand

The government of Uttarakhand has obtained the permission to develop the tulip garden over 50 hectares of forest land in Pithoragarh district at a cost of Rs 50 crore. It will be the second Tulip garden in the country after the one located in Srinagar of Jammu and Kashmir.

The Tulip Garden will be developed by ONGC, under its corporate social responsibility programme in over 50 hectares of forest land near Chandak hilltop. The site was selected under the 13 districts, 13 new destinations' scheme, to attract more tourists to the Pithoragarh district of Uttarakhand.

13 districts 13 new destinations' scheme

The government of Uttarakhand has launched 13 districts 13 new destinations scheme to develop 13 new

destinations based on particular themes in the 13 districts of the state. The counters finalised under the scheme are shown below

DISTRICT	DESTINATION	THEME
PITHORAGARH	MUNSIYARI/CHAUKORI	LEISURE TOURISM
BAGESHWAR	KAUSANI	TEA TOURISM
ALMORA	KASAR DEVI/KATARMAL	MEDITATION
NAINITAL	MUKTESHWAR	LEISURE TOURISM
CHAMPAWAT	LOHAGHAT	HILL STATION
UDHAM SINGH NAGAR	PARAG FARMS	AMUSEMENT PARK
RUDRAPRAYAG	CHOPTA	ECO TOURISM
TEHRI	TEHRI LAKE	WATER SPORTS
PAURI	KHIRSU	HILL STATION / WILDLIFE
UTTARKASHI	CHINYALISAUR	MULTIPURPOSE
CHAMOLI	GAIRSAIN/AULI-GORSON	WINTER SPORTS / KNOWLEDGE TOWN
DEHRADUN	CHAKRATA	MAHABHARATA CIRCUIT / HERITAGE TOURISM
HARIDWAR	PIRAN KALIYAR/SHAKTIPEETH	PILGRIMAGE

Jiban Sampark Project of Odisha

The Chief Minister of Odisha announced the Jiban Sampark project of Odisha for the welfare of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups at the annual Adivasi Mela-2019.

The annual Adivasi Mela showcases the art, artefacts, culture, tradition, and music of the tribal community. The Adivasi Mela strengthen the livelihood of the tribal communities by creating a sustainable market and business opportunities for tribal artisans.

Jiban Sampark Project

The Jiban Sampark Project undertaken in association with UNICEF aims to generate awareness among Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG) in Odisha on various development and welfare initiatives of State Government, especially on women and child welfare.

The focus areas of Jiban Sampark Project are skill development, empowering communities, cooperation and innovation among the groups.

Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)

The category of the PVTGs was created with the purpose of enabling improvement in the conditions of certain communities with particularly low development indices. A separate category of PVTGs was constituted based on the recommendations of the Dhebar Commission in 1975.

PVTGs are identified by the Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs based on the recommendations from the state governments or Union territories. The highest numbers of PVTGs are found in Odisha.

Vande Bharat Express

India's fastest indigenous train, Train 18 named as Vande Bharat Express will ply between Delhi and Varanasi. Train 18 is an indigenously developed world-class train under Make in India. The 16-coach train has been built completely in India by Indian engineers in a span of 18 months at the Integral Coach Factory, Chennai.

Features of the Vande Bharat Express

Vande Bharat Express is the energy efficient and the first locomotive-less train in the country and will be fully air-conditioned. These trains run on electric traction like Metro trains and will start replacing the Shatabdi Express fleet from next year.

The fares in these world-class trains are 40-50 per cent higher than the Shatabdi Express. The train will cover 755 km distance in eight hours with stoppages at Kanpur and Prayagraj. It would be the fastest train on the route.

The new train provides number of features to enhance passenger comfort which include inter-connected fully sealed gangways, automatic doors with retractable footsteps, onboard Wi-Fi and infotainment, GPS-based passenger information system, modular toilets with bio-vacuum systems, rotational seats which can be aligned in the direction of travel (available only in the executive class), roller blinds and diffused LED lighting and disabled-friendly toilet.

International Day of Education – 24 January

The first-ever International Day of Education was celebrated on 24 January 2019 as per the resolution passed by the United Nations General Assembly on December 3rd 2018 to celebrate the role of education in development.

International Day of Education

The International Day of Education demonstrates the world's political will towards providing quality education to all and achieving sustainable development by 2030.

The celebration reiterates the importance of education for the world's social and economic development and will nudge the member countries of UN to improve the quality of education and protect the rights of the student community. This will aid in the attainment of sustainable development goals by 2030.

The International Day of Education is aimed at underscoring the fact that not only a fundamental right but also a necessity to achieve sustainable development.

Indonesia Masters Badminton Tournament 2019: Winner's List

The Indonesian Masters Badminton Tournament 2019 is organized by the Badminton Association of Indonesia. It was the third tournament of the 2019 BWF World Tour. The winners under the various categories are listed below:

- Women's Singles: Saina Nehwal (India).
- Men's Singles: Anders Antonsen (Denmark).
- Women's Doubles: Misaki Matsutomo and Ayaka Takahashi (Japan).
- Men's Doubles: Marcus Fernaldi Gideon and Kevin Sanjaya Sukamuljo (Indonesia).
- Mixed Doubles: Zheng Siwei and Huang Yaqiong (China).

The tournament was held at the Istora Gelora Bung Karno in Jakarta, Indonesia. from 22 to 27 January 2019 offered a total purse of \$350,000.

75 years since WWII siege of Leningrad

Russian marked the 75th anniversary of the end of the devastating World War II siege by Nazi forces with a large military parade at ST. Petersburg which was then called as Leningrad.

Siege of Leningrad

After the invasion of Soviet Union by Nazi Germany in June 1941, the German Army approached Leningrad from the west and their ally Finish Army approached the city from the south, down the Karelian Isthmus.

Leningrad's population joined hands to build antitank fortifications along the city's perimeter in the support of the Red Army defenders. Even though the defence mechanisms soon stabilised, the city was almost completely encircled, with all the vital rail and other supply lines cut off by early November.

This blockade and siege claimed more than 650,000 lives in 1942 alone. The minimal supplies which were coming kept the city's arms factories operating and its two million inhabitants barely alive in 1942.

Soviet launched an offensive in early 1943 and ruptured the German encirclement and allowed more copious supplies to reach Leningrad along the shores of Lake Ladoga. By January 1944 a successful Soviet offensive drove the Germans westward from the city's outskirts, ending the siege.

The government of the erstwhile Soviet Union awarded the Order of Lenin to Leningrad in 1945 and bestowed the title Hero City of the Soviet Union in 1965. A monument to commemorate the victims and heroism of the siege was unveiled in 1975.

Australia Day: January 26

Australia celebrates 26th January as Australia Day which marks the landing of the First Fleet, a convoy of 11 ships carrying convicts, at Port Jackson in 1788. It also marks the founding of the colony New South Wales.

How the Australia Day came into being?

On the 30th anniversary of the founding of the colony in 1818, the Governor of New South Wales celebrated the day with a 30-gun salute and a holiday for all government employees.

Initially, the celebrations were confined to New South Wales. The first founding day was celebrated on 1838, 50 years after the First Fleet arrived in New South Wales. By 1926, almost all states of Australia were celebrating the Australia Day and it was being referred to as Anniversary Day in New South Wales.

From 1946, January 26 was celebrated as Australia Day all over the country with the public holiday.

January 26 is also a day of Mourning

It is said that there are two Australia's, one is the land occupied for more than 50,000 years by Indigenous people before the arrival of the First Fleet, and second is the Australia that was colonised in 1788.

The colonisation of Australia led to disastrous consequences for the indigenous population. On 26th January 1938 Aboriginal people gathered in Sydney to mark a 'Day of Mourning' to protest against the callous treatment of our people by the white men during the past 150 years.

In 2008 then-prime minister Kevin Rudd formally apologised to Australia's Indigenous communities over historic government policies of forced child removal and Indigenous assimilation. There are now demands to change the date since the Australia Day should bring the country together not divide Australia.

Iran Trade Promotion Plan

Three European Powers U.K., France and Germany are set to announce a plan to help companies trading to Iran to defy the sanctions on Iran.

US sanctions on Iran

US President Trump had unilaterally walked out of the Joint comprehensive plan of action (JCPOA) agreement and reimposed the sanctions on Iran. Under the JCPOA agreement, Iran had agreed to curb its nuclear activities in return for the lifting of sanctions that had been imposed by the UN, US and EU.

This unilateral action of US created a lot of resentment and other parties to agreement China, Russia, U.K., France and Germany reiterated their commitment to the deal. The sanctions would bar the companies with a presence in Iran to use the dollar as a medium of exchange.

Iran trade promotion plan

Iran trade promotion plan has been proposed by the U.K., France and Germany as part of their commitment to save the nuclear deal with Iran.

This plan proposes a special purpose vehicle to accept payments from companies that want to trade with Iran, either by receiving waivers for oil imports or permissible trade in goods like food and medicine. With no direct transfer of funds between Iran and European companies, it would theoretically insulate firms from U.S. penalties.

This plan would shield European companies keen to do business with Iran from U.S. sanctions that could result from dollar-based transactions.

World Steel Association Report: Key Facts

The World Steel Association has released a Report highlighting various trends related to the Industry, they are:

- China is the largest producer of crude steel and it accounts for more than 51 per cent of global production. China's share has been increased from 50.3 per cent in 2017 to 51.3 per cent in 2018.
- The production in China increased by 6.6 per cent from 870.9 MT in 2017 to 928.3 million tonnes (MT) in 2018.
- India has replaced Japan as the world's second-largest steel producing country.
- The Steel production in India increased by 4.9 per cent from 101.5 MT in 2017 to 106.5 MT in 2018.
- The global crude steel production increased by 4.6 per cent from 1,729.8 MT in 2017 to 1,808.6 MT in 2018.
- Other countries in the Top 10 list of steel producing nations include US at United States, at the 4th position as the country produced 86.7 MT of crude steel in 2018, South Korea (72.5 MT, 5th place), Russia (71.7 MT, 6th), Germany (42.4 MT, 7th), Turkey (37.3 MT, 8th), Brazil (34.7 MT, 9th) and Iran (25 MT, 10th).
- Among other countries, Italy produced 24.5 MT of crude steel in 2018, France (15.4 MT), Spain (14.3 MT), and Ukraine (21.1 MT).

World Steel Association

The World Steel Association (worldsteel) is a non-profit organisation with headquarters in Brussels, Belgium. Founded as International Iron and Steel Institute on 10 July 1967, it changed its name to the World Steel Association on 6 October 2008.

It represents over 160 steel producers (including 9 of the world's 10 largest steel companies), national and

regional steel industry associations, and steel research institutes and the members cover around 85% of world steel production.

January 29, 2019

India to participate in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2021

The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is a triennial international survey which aims to evaluate education systems worldwide by testing the skills and knowledge of 15-year-old students. India would be participating in the PISA assessment in 2021.

What is PISA?

PISA coordinated by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) is a two-hour long test. PISA measures the 15-year-old students reading, mathematics, and science literacy. PISA does not test a student's memory and curriculum-based knowledge rather PISA emphasizes functional skills that students have acquired as they near the end of compulsory schooling. PISA measures the student's ability to use their ability to tackle the real-life challenge.

Students who are 15-year-old and have completed or are near the end of their compulsory education and those have completed at least six years of formal schooling would be assessed.

PISA is criticised for the fact that it is obsessed with standardised testing relying heavily on quantitative measures.

India and PISA

India had participated in PISA 2009. The performance of Indian students was abysmally poor and India was ranked 72nd rank among 74 participating countries. Then government of India boycotted PISA, blaming "out of context" questions for India's dismal performance.

India would be taking part in the 2021 test. Kendriya Vidyalayas, Navodaya Vidyalayas, and all schools, private and government, in Chandigarh will participate in the 2021 test. OECD would also be conducting PISA-like assessment for students of Kendriya Vidyalayas (KVs) and Navodaya Vidyalayas (NVs) annually from 2019 to familiarise themselves with their testing pattern in the run-up to the grand assessment in 2021.

Also to address the socio-cultural disconnect between the test questions and students, OECD would add an Indian touch to the questions like replacing the word avocado with more popular Indian fruit such as mango.

Delhi to award MSP as per Swaminathan Committee Report

The Delhi government has decided to introduce the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for farmers based on the recommendations of the National Commission on Farmers (NCF) headed by MS Swaminathan.

Swaminathan Committee recommendations on MSP

The National Commission on Farmers (NCF) was constituted on November 18, 2004 under the chairmanship of Professor M.S. Swaminathan. The committee made some key recommendations on land reforms, irrigation, credit and insurance, food security, employment, the productivity of agriculture and farmer competitiveness.

On the issue of MSP, the committee recommended providing farmers with a minimum support price at 50 per cent profit above the cost of production classified as C2 by the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP).

Production costs in Agriculture

The Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) proposes three definitions of production costs in agriculture. They are:

- A2: It is the actual paid-out expenses incurred by farmers — in cash and kind on seeds, fertilisers, pesticides, hired labour, fuel, irrigation and other inputs from outside.
- A2+FL: It includes A2 cost plus an imputed value of unpaid family labour.
- C2: It accounts for the rentals or interest loans, owned land and fixed capital assets over and above A2+FL.

The Swaminathan Committee recommended the MSP to be basic cost and prescribed MSP 50 per cent above C2.

Capacity Augmentation to Successfully Deliver the G20 Presidency

India will preside and host the G20, or Group of 20 nations meeting in 2022. G20 provides a unique opportunity for India to transform from rule-taker to rule-maker. Being a host India would set an annual agenda, wielding vast direct and indirect influence on the G20 nations' economies.

To exploit this opportunity to the full extent, India must address organisational challenges, where the country has an infrastructure, management and intellectual gap.

Organisational Challenges

The organisational challenges before India are:

- G20 summit brings together several global leaders with their attending delegations and independent experts. Since it is a small powerful group it demands good airports, accommodation, conference facilities, and communications infrastructure all year round.
- G20 is tasked with leading and managing the global economic agenda for the year. It cannot be a task of a single ministry or agency. Various ministries and regulators must come together in contributing to the formulation of global financial regulations.
- The logistical requirement for G20 is monumental and unprecedented for India. G20 demands an energetic secretariat to organise over 150 high-level ministerial, sub-ministerial and sub-forum meetings through the year; at least 50 task forces lead scores of meetings including those by sub-forums for think tanks and business, content management, negotiation and feedback processes and developing and executing the year-long agenda.
- India needs to augment its intellectual capacity to be able to deliver inter-disciplinary research on the international monetary system, global financial architecture, global trading system, global climate, energy and sustainability issues.

The global economic framework is largely driven by the West, and increasingly by China neither of which are suitable for an India. G20 presidency has given an opportunity for India to take the lead and give direction to global economic policy framework. If India doesn't augment its capacity to set the agenda, India would again be reduced to passive rule-taker, not rule-maker or designer of global economic rules.

Mohammed Shami: Fastest Indian to reach 100 ODI wickets

Fast Bowler Mohammed Shami has become the fastest Indian to claim 100 wickets in One-day Internationals. Mohammed Shami achieved this feat in his 56th ODI game. Mohammed Shami's wicket number 100 was New Zealand opener, Martin Guptill.

Before Mohammed Shami, the record was held by Iran Pathan who had reached the 100-wicket mark in 59 ODIs. Other Indians in the list of fastest Indians to reach 100 ODI wickets are Zaheer Khan (65 matches), Ajit Agarkar (67) and Javagal Srinath (68).

Mohammed Shami

Mohammed Shami, a reverse swing specialist made his first-class debut in 2010 against Assam. He was selected for the West Indies tour of India A squad in 2012

Mohammed Shami made his ODI debut against Pakistan in January 2013 and Test debut against West Indies in November 2013.

Stock Taking Conference on Tiger Conservation

The third Stock Taking Conference on Tiger Conservation is being held at New Delhi. In the conference, wide-ranging discussions shall be held on the status of the Global Tiger Recovery Program (GTRP) by all tiger range countries besides deliberations on combating wildlife trafficking.

This conference is organised by the Global Tiger Forum which is an implementing arm of the Global Tiger Initiative Council (GTIC), in collaboration with the National Tiger Conservation Authority (Government of India), WWF, Wildlife Conservation Trust (WCT) and Wildlife Trust of India (WTI).

Global Tiger Recovery Program

The Global Tiger Recovery Program seeks to empower Tiger Range Countries (TRCs) to address the entire spectrum of threats, domestic as well as those that are transboundary in nature, and work toward increased financial sustainability through the integration of conservation objectives into development.

To address the crisis haunting the Tiger Survival especially the Asian biodiversity crisis, the TRCs, international organizations, and civil society have come together on a collaborative platform within the framework of the Global Tiger Initiative (GTI) at St. Petersburg, Russia.

Through the GTI, a GTRP has been developed with the shared goal of doubling the number of wild tigers globally by 2022 for:

- To effectively manage, preserve, protect, and enhance tiger habitats.
- To eradicate poaching, smuggling, and illegal trade of tigers, their parts, and derivatives.
- To cooperate in transboundary landscape management and in combating illegal trade.
- To engage with indigenous and local communities.
- To increase the effectiveness of tiger and habitat management.
- Restore tigers to their former range.

This is the second stock-taking conference to be held in India. India will also hold a meeting with its neighbouring tiger range countries of Bangladesh, Bhutan & Nepal to discuss a sub-continent level tiger estimation report as a follow-up of deliberations held earlier on the sidelines of the conference.

Awards under Swasth Bharat Yatra

The [Food Safety and Standards Authority of India \(FSSAI\)](#) had launched [Swasth Bharat Yatra](#) to amplify its [Eat Right India initiative](#). Swasth Bharat Yatra was a 100-day consumer outreach programme.

The Yatra saw the participation of around 2.5 crore people across various States and UTs. It also led to the creation of 21,000 local 'Eat Right Champions' who would sustain this movement in the future.

Awards for Exemplary participation

The following states were awarded for their Exemplary participation:

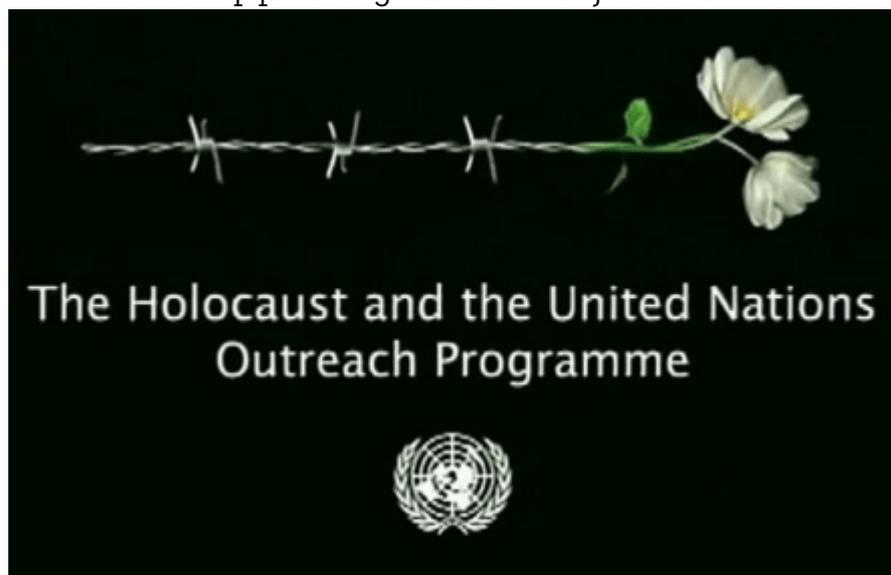
- Best State Overall: Tamil Nadu
- Best States with a population above 3 crore: Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra.
- Best States having a population less than 3 crore: Punjab, Goa and Delhi
- Special awards: Meghalaya, Jammu and Kashmir and Uttrakhand were given special awards for their participation despite their hilly and difficult terrain.

Eat Right Start-Up Awards were also be given for innovative food products, food services, food testing and community outreach and engagement at the ceremony.

International Holocaust Remembrance Day: January 27

The International Holocaust Remembrance Day is celebrated every year on January 27. January 27 marks the anniversary of the Allied liberation of the Auschwitz death camp in Nazi-occupied Poland, where an estimated 1.1 million people died, including 1 million Jews.

The day is part of the efforts to educate about the dark phase of humanity and to deny any efforts to reject Holocaust denial. The UN resolution which designated January 27 as the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust calls for education programs on the Holocaust to help prevent genocide and rejected denials that the Holocaust occurred.



Symbol of the Holocaust and the United Nations Outreach Programme

The International Holocaust Remembrance Day is celebrated every year since 2006. Jewish groups, particularly in Israel observe Yom HaShoah, which is a day of mourning for Holocaust victims on the 27th day of the Hebrew month of Nisan, which falls in April or May of the Gregorian calendar.

Pariksha Pe Charcha 2.0

The second edition Pariksha Pe Charcha 2.0 was held on January 29. On this occasion, Prime Minister Narendra Modi interacted with several students, parents and teachers from across the country and shared his personal experiences with the young audience.

During the interaction, Prime Minister interacted with students, parents and teachers and responded to their queries on a host of subjects related to examinations particularly, dealing with exam-centric anxiety. The event was held at Talkatora Stadium in Delhi where 2000 students, teachers and parents will gathered to interact with the Prime Minister. They were selected through the competitive route out of 1 lakh applicants.

Not just students from India, Indian students residing in Russia, Nigeria, Iran, Nepal, Doha, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Singapore also participated in the event.

Amendments to Representation of People's Act 1951

The Election Commission of India has sought an amendment to the Representation of People Act 1951 to prevent print media, social media and other digital platforms from carrying political advertisements in the last 48 hours before the polling begins.

Why the amendment is necessary?

Section 126 of the Representation of People Act 1951 prevents electronic media from airing any political advertisements in the silent period (48 hours before polling begins),

The Election Commission has also made it mandatory to seek pre-certification of the campaign material to be published in newspapers during the 48 hours.

But the Social media platforms which are have gained huge prominence for their ability to influence election outcomes, are completely out of the purview of the pre-screening and prohibition rules.

The [committee headed Deputy Election Commissioner Umesh Sinha](#) had noted that an anomalous situation exists in Section 126 of having differential treatment to print media as compared to other media platforms.

The committee noted that while Section 126 explicitly bans television channels from broadcasting political matter during the silent period, lack of backing by law has led to Print media carrying political advertisements during the silent period despite the curbs imposed by the EC

What are the amendments sought?

The Election Commission of India has written to the Union Ministry of Law suggesting to extend the provisions under Section 126 to digital and print media as well. The Commission has sought inclusion of 'print media' and 'other entities' within the ambit of Section 126 (1) (b). The other entities would refer to all social media formats.

World's longest expressway to come up in Uttar Pradesh

The government of Uttar Pradesh has approved the construction of the Ganga Expressway. The government has said that it would be the longest expressway in the world. The expressway will provide for better connectivity of the Prayagraj (Allahabad) to Western Pradesh.

Expressway

Expressways are the highest class of roads in the road network in India. National Expressways Authority of India under the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways is responsible for the construction and maintenance of expressways.

Expressways are controlled-access highway, the highest-grade type of highway with access ramps, lane dividers, etc., for high-speed traffic.

This 600km Ganga Expressway would be constructed at an approximate cost of Rs 36,000 crores over 6,556 hectares of land. The expressway starting from Meerut will pass through Amroha, Bulandshahr, Badaun, Shahjahanpur, Farrukhabad, Hardoi, Kannauj, Unnao, Rae Bareli, Pratapgarh before reaching Prayagraj.

January 30, 2019

NGT asks for Performance guarantee to ensure conservation efforts of River Yamuna

The [National Green Tribunal \(NGT\)](#) has asked for a performance guarantee of Rs 10 crore each from the governments of Delhi, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh expressing dissatisfaction over the cleaning of river Yamuna.

The order comes after the interim report filed by the monitoring committee comprising of expert member B S Sajwan and former Delhi chief secretary Shailaja Chandra.

Recommendations of the Monitoring Committee

The committee tasked with developing an action plan and a detailed report had made the following recommendations in its interim report:

- A study to assess the environmental flow of the river Yamuna for the stretch between Hathankund and Okhla and notes that it would not be possible to rejuvenate it unless minimum environmental flow was provided.
- Creating ponds and pits in various localities to facilitate idol immersion.
- Building awareness about why the flood plains are sacrosanct and why they need conservation.
- Involvement of citizens by dissipating knowledge about why the river is important and why it is worth preserving and restoring.
- River Yamuna is a unique birding destination and there is a need for the Delhi Development Authority to preserve the birding hot spots.

Other observations made by the National Green Tribunal

The other observations include:

- The performance guarantee would be forfeited if the work was not carried out as per the recommendations of the monitoring committee.
- The monitoring committee was asked to expeditiously submit its final report.
- Steps to be taken by the three states at the earliest for disposal of municipal solid waste, cleaning of drains and ensuring cleaning of garbage.
- Haryana pollution control board to conduct a study of water quality and the flow of Yamuna at the point it enters Haryana, and submit the list of industries located in the catchment area.

NGT also noted that almost 67 per cent of the pollutants that enter the Yamuna would be treated by two sewage treatment plants at Delhi Gate and Najafgarh under the first phase of the Maili se Nirmal Yamuna Revitalisation project.

Lokpal Search Committee holds its First Meeting

The Lokpal Search Committee headed by former Supreme Court judge Ranjana Prakash Desai held its first meeting and discussed modalities related to the appointments of the chief and members of Lokpal.

The other members of the committee include former chief of State Bank of India (SBI) Arundhati Bhattacharya, Prasar Bharati chairperson Surya Prakash, former Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) head A S Kiran Kumar, former Allahabad High Court judge Sakha Ram Singh Yadav, former Gujarat Police head Shabbirhusein S Khandwawala, retired IAS officer of Rajasthan cadre Lalit K Panwar and Ranjit Kumar

Supreme Court Sets a Deadline

The Supreme Court has set a February-end deadline for the search committee to send a panel of names who could be considered for the appointment as chairman and members of Lokpal by Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led selection committee.

Selection of Lokpal

The names proposed by the search committee would be scrutinised by the selection committee headed by Prime Minister and comprising of Speaker of [Lok Sabha](#), leader of opposition in [Lok Sabha](#), Chief Justice of India or a sitting Supreme Court judge nominated by CJI and an Eminent jurist to be nominated by President of India on basis of recommendations of the first four members of the selection committee through consensus.

Upon the recommendation of the selection committee, President has nominated Mukul Rohatgi, former Attorney General of India as 'eminent jurist' member of the panel against the vacancy arising following

the death of senior advocate P P Rao.

Implementation Models under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana

The Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM JAY) proposes three models through which the states can implement the scheme. They are

Insurance Model

Under this Model, the premiums are paid to the insurance company, which administers and pays the claim.

Trust-based model

Under this Model, each State forms its own trust to manage the scheme and claims will be disbursed from a corpus created from central and State government contributions.

Hybrid model

Under this Model, a part of the claim comes under the insurance model while the balance gets processed under the trust.

Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM JAY)

Pradhan Mantri – Jan Arogya Yojana (PM JAY) is a scheme of the government under Ayushman Bharat which aims to reduce the financial burden on poor and vulnerable groups arising out of catastrophic hospital episodes and ensure their access to quality health services was conceived.

Under the PM-JAY scheme about 10.74 crore poor, deprived rural families and identified occupational categories of urban workers' families as per the latest Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) data (approx. 50 crore beneficiaries) will have health benefit cover of Rs Five Lakhs per family per year at free of cost. The health benefit cover includes more than 1,350 medical packages covering surgery, medical and daycare treatments, cost of medicines and diagnostics.

PM-JAY seeks to accelerate India's progress towards the achievement of Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and Sustainable Development Goal 3 which calls for ensuring healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.

Survey of Elephants in Captivity

The Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change has submitted the affidavit with the findings of the first Survey of Elephants in Captivity to the Supreme Court.

Findings of the Survey

The Survey was undertaken after the order of the Supreme Court which had asked the Union Government to identify elephants in captivity and whether their owners have an ownership certificate while hearing a writ petition filed by Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation Centre. The findings of the Survey are:

- There are 2,454 elephants in captivity across the country of which 560 are in possession with forest departments and 1,687 with private individuals.
- 664 of the total captive elephants in the country are without ownership certificate while there are 85 in zoos, 26 in circuses and 96 in temples.
- 58 per cent of all captive elephants is concentrated in two states: 905 in Assam and 518 in Kerala.
- The affidavit also points at some discrepancies in data especially from the State of Bihar.

The Survey was ordered after the Animal Welfare Board of India failed to produce data on the number of elephants held captive.

Animal Welfare Board of India

The Animal Welfare Board of India was established under the Provisions of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960 to oversee the implementation of the animal welfare laws in the country.

The Board consists of 28 Members including 6 MPs (4 from [Lok Sabha](#) and 2 from Rajya Sabha). Previously based in Chennai, it is now headquartered at Ballabgarh in Haryana.

Corruption Perceptions Index 2018: Facts about India

Corruption Perceptions Index of Transparency International ranks countries and territories based on how corrupt a country's public sector and judiciary are perceived to be by experts and business executives.

It is the most widely used indicator of corruption worldwide and it does not consider corruption in the business sector. The corruption perception index draws on 13 surveys and expert assessments to measure public sector corruption in 180 countries and territories.

The scores indicate the perceived level of public sector corruption on a scale of 0-100. A score of 0 points that a country is perceived as highly corrupt and a 100 points that a country has sound integrity systems.

Where does India stand?

The Corruption perception index makes the following observations about India:

- India's score has been marginally improved 41 from 40 in 2017.
- India's ranking increased from 81st in 2017 to 78 in 2018.
- India had slid from 79th rank in 2016.
- The report cites countries like India along with Malaysia, Maldives and Pakistan will be important to watch moving forward.
- The report notes that all these countries mentioned above have witnessed massive public mobilisation against corruption coupled with significant political participation and voter turnout resulting in new governments that promised extensive anti-corruption reforms.
- The report mentions that these encouraging developments are yet to show some tangible solid action, especially when it comes to combating elusive forms of grand corruption.
- The report noted that since India gears up for general elections, there was a little significant movement in its CPI score, which moved from 40 in 2017 to 41 in 2018.
- The report notes that in spite of spectacular public mobilisation in 2011, where citizens demanded the government to take action against corruption and advocated for the passage of the comprehensive Jan Lokpal bill, the efforts ultimately fizzled and fell flat, with little to no movement on the ground to build the specialist anti-corruption infrastructure required.

These findings gain importance at the time Supreme Court has set the ball rolling for the appointment of Lokpal by [setting a deadline for](#) the search committee to recommend names for selection committee headed by Prime Minister.

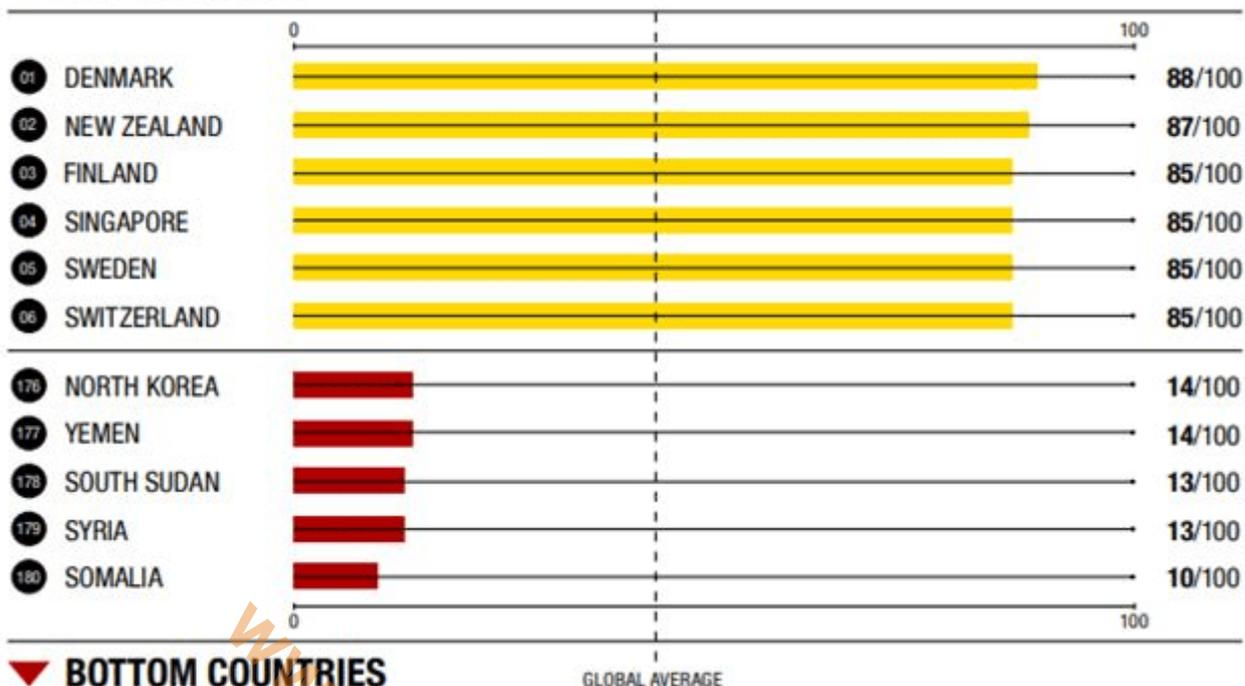
Corruption Perception Index 2018

The Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index make the following observations:

- Denmark is the world least corrupt country scoring 88 out of 100 points. Denmark is followed by New Zealand and Finland.
- Somalia has been ranked last with a score of 10 behind South Sudan and Syria.
- More than two-thirds of evaluated countries scored below 50 points, while the average score remained at last year's level of only 43 points.
- Estonia, Cote d'Ivoire, Senegal and Guyana demonstrated most improvements since 2012.
- The 2018 rankings showed an increase in the perceived corruption in Australia, Chile and Malta.
- For the first time since the United States dropped out of the top 20 and it was ranked at 22nd rank.
- Along with Brazil, US was placed in the watch list by Transparency International.

Top and Bottom Countries

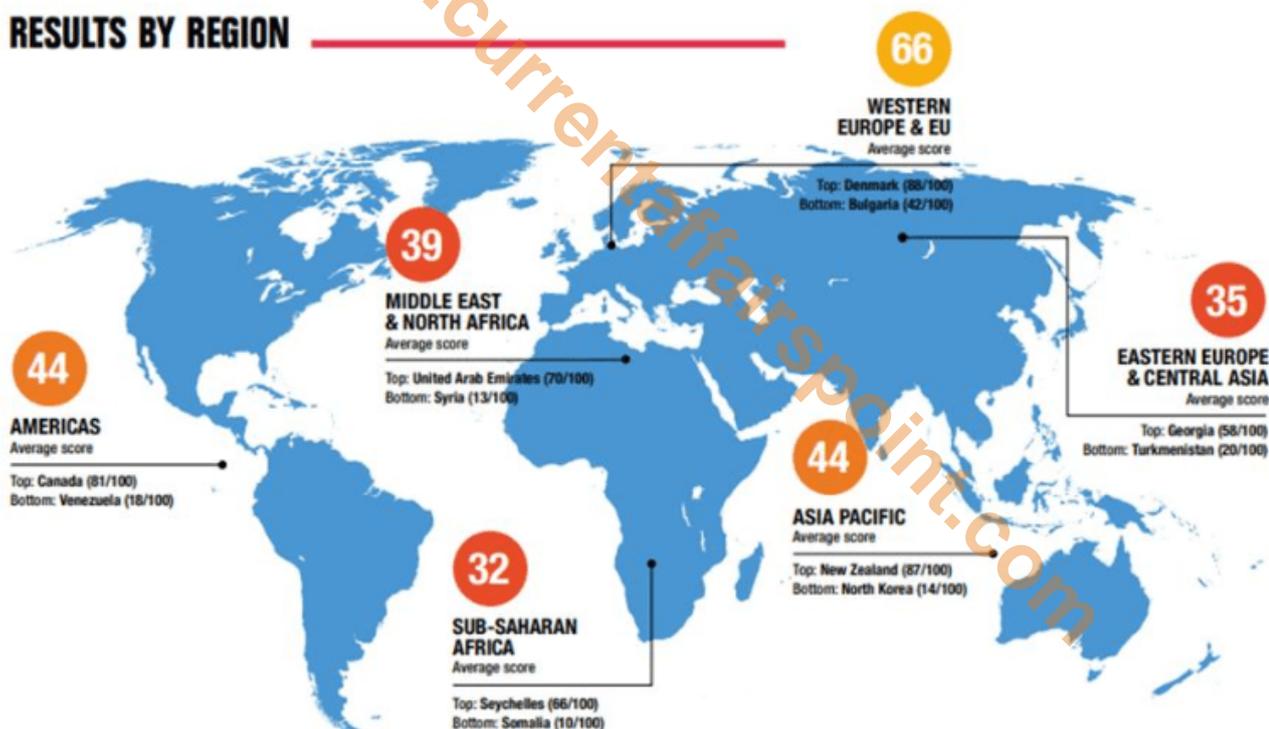
▲ TOP COUNTRIES



▼ BOTTOM COUNTRIES

Region Wise Performance

RESULTS BY REGION



The report highlights a connection between healthy democracies and successfully fighting corruption in the public sector and notes that corruption is much more likely to flourish where democratic foundations are weak.

Africa Centre for Climate and Sustainable Development

The Africa Centre for Climate and Sustainable Development was inaugurated by the Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte at Rome. The centre has been opened by the Italian government in association with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO).

About the Centre

The important aspects of the Africa Centre for Climate and Sustainable Development are:

- The centre's origin can be traced to a declaration endorsed by the G7 meeting of the Environment Ministers in 2017. The centre would facilitate coordination among the G7 and African countries on common initiatives in Africa to achieve the goals set by the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda.
- The Centre would contribute towards addressing the needs of Africa by providing a platform for G7 countries to steer their cooperation to contrast environmental degradation and promote sustainable economic growth in the region.
- The centre will provide a fast-track, demand-driven mechanism for African countries to access grant resources that support policies, initiatives, and best practices on climate change, food security, access to water, clean energy, and accelerating progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Africa.

The centre would be hosted by UNDP which would utilise its extensive country office network and programmatic hubs, and global expertise and knowledge, to enable the African countries to access the resources available through it.

Attaining the Sustainable Development Goals

Africa referred to as Dark Continent still has up to 330 million of its population living in poverty and up to 60% of unemployed Africans are young people. The centre will help to speed up progress and quickly resource national development priorities in the African countries to address these challenges and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Beating Retreat Ceremony

The Beating Retreat Ceremony marks the conclusion of Republic Day celebrations. Through this ceremony, the defence forces which had come to the national capital to be a part of Republic Day celebrations are sent back to their barracks by the President.

The Beating Retreat Ceremony is held every year on January 29th at Vijay Chowk. Traditionally the bands of the three wings of the military, the Indian Army, Indian Navy and Indian Air Force, and pipe bands from the Army participated in the Beating retreat ceremony. From 2016 bands of the Central Armed Police Forces and the Delhi Police are also participating in the event.

The bands play traditional Indian tunes like 'Herana Heran', "Mushkoh Valley", "Tejas", "The Great Marshal", "Namaste India". A popular western tune "Abide with me" would also be played by the bands. The ceremony comes to a conclusion with the popular tune "Sare Jahan se Acha". Once the bands conclude "Sare Jahan se Acha", the Raisina Hill complex would be lit up in the riot of colours.

Genesis in India

Beating Retreat is a centuries-old military tradition, at the sounding of retreat, the troops ceased fighting, sheathed their arms and withdrew from the battlefield, returning to their camps at sunset.

The Beating Retreat Ceremony was started in the early 1950s when the government had asked Indian army to design a ceremony for the display by the massed bands.

Digital currency: Aber

The central banks of the UAE and Saudi Arabia will launch a common digital currency called Aber. Aber will be used for financial settlements between the two countries through Blockchains and Distributed Ledgers technologies.

Benefits of the Digital Currency

The digital currency would be launched to explore the following benefits:

- The digital currency would aid in studying the impact on the improvement and reduction of remittance costs and the assessments of risks.
- Aber will establish an additional means for the central financial transfer systems of the two countries and enable banks to directly deal with each other in conducting financial remittances.

Initially, the use of the digital currency will be restricted to a limited number of banks. By studying the various technical, economic and legal requirements, the use of the digital currency would be expanded.

Digital Currency Aber relies on the use of a distributed database between the central banks and the participating banks from both sides. Digital Currency is part of the efforts to adopt new technologies like Blockchain, Artificial Intelligence, Internet of Things, etc., in line with the Fourth Industrial Revolution

that is reshaping governments and corporates around the world.

National Statistical Commission

National Statistical Commission was established in 2005 based on the recommendations of the Rangarajan Commission. The commission was established through an executive order and it works under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.

The Rangarajan Commission recommended the establishment of a permanent National Commission on Statistics to serve as a nodal and empowered body for all core statistical activities of the country, evolve, monitor and enforce statistical priorities and standards and to ensure statistical co-ordination among the different agencies involved.

Composition of the Commission

The Commission consists of a part-time Chairperson, four part-time Members, an ex-officio Member and a secretary. The Chief Statistician of India who is the Head of the National Statistical Office is the Secretary of the Commission and the Chief Executive Officer of the NITI Aayog is the ex-officio Member of the commission.

Mandate of the Commission

The mandate of the National Statistical commission include:

- To identify the core statistics, which are of national importance and are critical to the development of the economy.
- To constitute professional committees or working groups to assist the Commission on various technical issues.
- To evolve national policies and priorities relating to the statistical system.
- To evolve standard statistical concepts, definitions, classifications and methodologies in different areas in statistics and lay down national quality standards on core statistics.
- To evolve national strategies for the collection, tabulation and dissemination of core statistics, including the release calendar for various datasets.
- To evolve national strategies for human resource development on official statistics including information technology and communication needs of the statistical system.
- To evolve measures for improving public trust in official statistics.
- To evolve measures for effective coordination with State Governments and Union Territory Administrations on statistical activities including the strengthening of existing institutional mechanisms.
- To exercise statistical co-ordination between Ministries, Departments and other agencies of the Central Government.
- To exercise statistical audit over the statistical activities to ensure quality and integrity of the statistical products.
- To recommend to the Central Government, or any State Government, as the case may be, measures to effectively implement the standards, strategies and other measures related to statistics.
- To advise the Government on the requirement of legislative measures on statistical matters including the statute for the National Statistical Commission
- To monitor and review the functioning of the statistical system in the light of the laid down policies, standards and methodology.

The commission has also been entrusted with the functions of the Governing Council of the National Sample Survey Office which include overseeing the conduct of National Sample Surveys (NSS) on various socioeconomic subjects through the NSSO and the State Directorate of Economics and Statistics.

January 31, 2019

Punit Goenka named as new chairman of BARC India

The Broadcast Audience Research Council of India (BARC India) has elected Punit Goenka MD and CEO of Zee Entertainment Enterprises Limited (ZEEL) as the Chairman. Punit Goenka as a founder Chairman of BARC had played a key role in institutionalizing BARC.

Broadcast Audience Research Council of India (BARC India)

Broadcast Audience Research Council of India (BARC India) is a collaborative Industry Company founded

in 2010 by stakeholder bodies that represent Broadcasters, Advertisers, and Advertising and Media Agencies.

The promoters of BARC India are Indian Broadcasting Foundation, Indian Society of Advertisers and Advertising Agencies Association of India. BARC India was set up as per guidelines of the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, Government of India.

BARC India has evolved a transparent, accurate, and inclusive TV audience measurement system on the foundation of robust and future-ready technology backbone. Together with the audience measurement system, BARC India provides a suite of Insight products designed for Broadcasters, Advertisers and Agencies.

The data generated and the insights provided by BARC India aids in making efficient decision making by the stakeholders.

BARC India analyses the viewership habits of over 197 million TV households (accounting for 836 million TV viewing individuals). This makes it the world's largest television audience measurement service. BARC India's measurement system is based on the sample of 44000-panel homes.

Impact of global warming on El-Nino

[El-Nino](#) disturbs the atmospheric conditions across the world. [El-Nino](#) occurs every two-to-seven years with very strong El Niño's occurring about every 15 years results in droughts, floods, wildfires, dust and snow storms, fish kill, and even elevated risks of civil conflicts.

The El-Nino is measured by studying the averages sea surface temperature anomalies over the central-eastern tropical Pacific. A study which analyses the impact of global warming on El-Nino has been published in the journal Nature in December 2018.

Findings of the Study

The important findings of the study are:

- The study serves a warning to the countries on all continents that suffer from these extreme weather events during strong El Niño events such as the ones during 1982-83, 1997-98 and 2015-16.
- The study notes that eagerly-awaited winter rain and snow storms over California did not occur during the latest extreme El Nino. Hence it is unclear whether global warming is already affecting El Nino and its remote impacts.
- The study argues that it is unclear if the impact of global warming on El Nino can easily be extracted considering its intrinsic tendencies and its dependency on so many factors that are not easily predictable.

The study concludes that various models to study El-Nino deliver a slightly different rendition of El Niño compared to nature. Hence it is imperative that models be held to very stringent standards on their performance of El Niño behaviour during historic periods, especially the 20th century, as a test of their reliability for future projections. As a result it is difficult to conclude how reliably the models can project El Niño response to global warming in addition to how the models perform in reproducing floods and droughts of 20th century.

International Year of the Period Table of Chemical Elements

UNESCO has declared 2019 as the International Year of the Period Table of Chemical Elements to commemorate the 150th birthday of the periodic table of chemical elements. The Periodic table of the Chemical elements was first published by Russian scientist Dmitry Mendeleev in the year 1869.

What is this Periodic Table of Chemical Elements?

The Periodic Table of Chemical Elements is the tabular arrangement of the chemical elements, arranged by atomic number, electron configuration, and recurring chemical properties. The important features of the periodic table are:

- The seven rows of the table are called as periods and generally accommodate metals on the left and non-metals on the right.
- The columns of the table are called groups and contain elements with similar chemical behaviours.
- The elements from atomic numbers 1 (hydrogen) to 118 (oganesson) have been discovered in nature or synthesized in laboratories.
- The first 98 elements listed in the periodic table occur naturally, though some are found only in

trace amounts and a few were discovered in nature only after having first been synthesized.

- Elements from 99 to 118 have only been synthesized in laboratories or nuclear reactors.
- Efforts are on to elements having higher atomic numbers these elements would begin the eighth row, and theoretical work has been done to suggest possible candidates for this extension.

To celebrate the International Year of the Period Table of Chemical Elements the UNESCO would be organising events like online competition to test high school students' knowledge of the table, and scientific experiments brought to schools around the world.

January 30: Martyrs Day

January 30 is celebrated as Martyrs Day to honour the brave martyrs of India who have sacrificed their lives for the country.

Why January 30 is celebrated as Martyrs Day?

January 30 marks the death anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. On January 30, 1948, at the age of 78, Mahatma Gandhiji, Father of the Nation was assassinated by Nathuram Godse. Godse held that Gandhiji favoured the political demands of India's Muslims during the partition of India.

There were warnings about life threats to Gandhiji, Gandhiji refused to toe the government's stand that he required security. Gandhiji threatened to leave Delhi if protection was thrust upon him. His associates cite that had he accepted security his assassination could have been averted.

How it is celebrated?

On the occasion of Martyrs Day, the President, the Vice President, the Prime Minister, the Defence Minister, and the three Service Chiefs gather at the Gandhiji's samadhi at Raj Ghat memorial and lay wreaths. Bugles are blown sounding the Last Post. A two-minute silence in memory of Indian martyrs is observed across the country at 11 AM and participants hold all-religion prayers and sing tributes in the honour of Martyrs.

March 23

March 23 which is the death anniversary of Bhagat Singh, Shivaram Rajguru and Sukhdev Thapar is also celebrated as Martyrs Day in the State of Punjab.

National Salt Satyagraha Memorial

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the National Salt Satyagraha Memorial at Dandi in Navsari district, Gujarat. The memorial is conceived as an experiential journey recreating the spirit and the energy of the 1930 Dandi March led by Mahatma Gandhi and 80 of his fellow Satyagrahis.

The memorial takes the visitors step by step through visualisation of events to aid them in understanding the methodology of Satyagraha, which finally led to India's Independence from the British colonial rule.

The Memorial is the project of the Ministry of Culture, Government of India and is advised by a High-Level Dandi Memorial Committee (HLDMC) with IIT Bombay as a Design Coordination Agency.

Historical Background of the Salt Satyagraha

From the very beginning of British Rule in India, the salt tax was considered to be a good source of income. The beginning was made in the form of 'land rent' and 'transit charges', and in 1762, it was consolidated into duty.

As a result of the duty, India and in particular Bengal and its surrounding provinces were rendered dependent upon imported salt from Liverpool and elsewhere. The indigenous industry oppressed with the burden of extravagant charges was unable to compete with its English rival.

The salt tax/duties on the annual requirement of a family amounted at one time up to nearly two months' wages of a labourer. The Indian National Congress from the very inception opposed the salt tax. Nationalist leaders such as Dadabhai Naoroji and GK Gokhale had particularly raised their voice against it. Gandhiji had begun raising opposition to oppressive duties on common salt right from his student days in London. All these culminated in Gandhiji selecting Satyagraha against salt taxes as the key issue in 1930 while leading the civil disobedience movement for India's freedom from the British colonial rule.

The Salt tax was chosen by Gandhi during the civil disobedience movement because it not only appeared to be basically unjust in themselves but also because it symbolised an unpopular, unrepresentative alien government.

State of Talent Acquisition 2019 Report: Key Facts

The State of Talent Acquisition Report by the Mercer-Mettl's highlights the following important facts:

- India Companies are expected to raise their hiring budgets by 34 per cent and volumes by 31 per cent in 2019.
- Due to this increase in hiring the companies are expected to raise their hiring budgets by at least 34 per cent compared to 20 per cent of companies in 2018.
- Technology will be a critical driver for achieving better outcomes, as well as for adapting to the growing changes in the job market and the hiring landscape.
- The better outcomes are not just confined to recruiting an adequate number of professionals and retaining them but also managing their human capital efficiently.
- The report notes that technology is employed extensively in sourcing (88 per cent) candidates, while it is used the least when-boarding (49 per cent), candidates.
- The report cites that lack of budget (about 33 per cent) as the biggest obstacle to implementing technology in the talent acquisition process.
- The respondents have cited that Human capital acquisition remained a critical issue in the country with employers indicating that 'finding quality talent' is a problem.
- The human capital acquisition was cited as a critical issue by 84 per cent the in the Northern region of the country, followed by Southern Region (81 per cent), East (71 per cent) and West 58 per cent.
- The Situation was comparatively better for larger organisations, as 67 per cent of respondents from the category said they face the least resistance in talent acquisition, although the challenge still persists in certain aspects of the process.
- The report notes that finding talented employees for specific roles has become a major stumbling block for organisations even when they are ready to offer remunerations that are considerably higher than the market standards.

The State of Talent Acquisition Report was based on a survey of over 900 recruitment decision-makers including VPs, SVPs, EVPs, C-suite executives, directors, managers and HR executives from across the country.

Damper for India's entry into NSG

In the backdrop of the meeting of the P5 (UK, US, France, Russia and People's Republic of China) to discuss issues related to nuclear disarmament, China has again reiterated its previous stand that India's accession to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) is pre-requisite for its membership to the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) or else there should be a common guidelines for the membership of the non-NPT states.

India has refused to sign the NPT citing the discriminatory provisions which provide undue advantages to the nuclear weapon designated states.

Reasons cited by China for opposing India's Bid

China justifies its stand by citing the following justifications:

- There should be no double standards in enforcing the NPT.
- NPT is the cornerstone for the international nuclear non-proliferation, nuclear disarmament and post-war international security system.
- China has played important role in all the three aspects and China is committed to all three important goals of the treaty.
- The international community should stick to multilateralism and promote progress the three pillars namely non-proliferation, disarmament and peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Hence China opposes double standards in enforcing the treaty.

Is there a hidden agenda?

All the members of P5 except China have endorsed India's membership of NSG e based on India's non-proliferation record.

After India's application to the NSG, Pakistan also applied for the same. Pakistan is also a non-signatory to the NPT. Pakistan dubious record and its alleged role in technology transfer to North Korea have put a black mark in its track record.

Pakistan is a close ally of China and China is demanding a two-step approach which states that NSG

members first need to arrive at a set of principles for the admission of non-NPT states into the group and then move forward discussions of specific cases.

This insistence of China has become a roadblock in attaining the membership of the NSG.

Minister of Railways Piyush Goyal awarded Carnot Prize

The Union Minister of Railways and Coal, Piyush Goyal has been awarded the Carnot Prize 2018 for the transformational changes brought by him during his tenure as Union Minister of Power.

Piyush Goyal during his tenure as Union Minister of Power, coal, new and renewable energy, and mines brought in transformational changes in the Power Sector which includes fast-track electrification of nearly 18,000 villages in some of the most remote and inaccessible parts of the country, rolling out a comprehensive power sector reform plan [UDAY](#), the world's largest LED bulb distribution program, and the world's largest renewable energy expansion program. The award honours his exceptional service towards reforming the power sector in the country.

Accepting the award Piyush Goyal announced that government has embarked on an ambitious programme to ensure 100 per cent electrification of Railway's grid in the next five years.

About Carnot Prize

The Carnot Prize is the annual recognition by the US-based Kleinman Center for Energy Policy for distinguished contributions to energy policy through scholarship or practice.

The prize has been named after French scientist Sadi Carnot, who in 1824 published Reflections on the Motive Power of Fire, which became the basis for the second law of thermodynamics. Carnot recognized that the power of the steam engine would "produce a great revolution" in human development.

The Carnot Prize is awarded to honour those who have revolutionized our understanding of energy policy.

Renaming of Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP)

The Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP) has been renamed as the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade.

Mandate for the Newly Named Department

The newly named department will work under the Union Ministry of Commerce. The order issued by the President states that the department would deal with matters related to start-ups, facilitating ease of doing business among others.

The subject matter of internal trade which was under the ambit of the Ministry of Consumer Affairs has been transferred to the newly named department.

With this new mandate, both internal and external trade has been brought under a single Ministry (Ministry of commerce and industry). This will ensure better coordination and help in promoting the growth of both segments of the trade.

Why the new mandate?

For a long time Confederation of All India Traders Association (CAIT) was demanding for a separate Ministry of Internal Trade. CAIT sees the creation of a separate department by merging Internal and external trade is a step forward in the creation of a separate Ministry.

Horticulture Production in India

The Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare has released the final estimates for 2017-18 and the first estimates for 2018-19 of area and production of horticulture crops.

Findings from the Estimates

The important findings from the estimates are:

- India's horticulture production is estimated to rise by 1 per cent to record 314.67 million tonnes in 2018-19 on the higher area.
- The final estimates of the 2017-18, horticulture production stood at record 311.7 MT, which is 3.7 per cent higher than the previous year and 10 per cent higher than the past five years.
- The estimates put forward that area under coverage increased to 25.87 million hectares from 25.43 million hectares.
- The Production of Onion in 2018-19 is likely to be around 23.62 million tonnes (MT) as against 23.26 MT in 2017-18.
- The Production of Potato in 2018-19 is likely to be around 52.58 MT as against 51.31 MT in 2017-18.

- The Production of Tomato in 2018-19 is likely to be around 20.51 MT as against 19.76 MT in 2017-18.
- The production of fruits is estimated to be at 97.35 MT and that of vegetables at about 187.5 MT.

The estimates are based on the information received from different states and Union territories.

Multiple Choice Questions

1. Who was the first Commander-in-Chief of Indian Army post Independence?

- [A] K M Carriappa
- [B] Sam Manekshaw
- [C] K S Thimayya
- [D] P P Kumaramangalam

Correct Answer: A [K M Carriappa]

Notes:

The 71st Army Day is celebrated across the country on 15th January 2019 to commemorate the day when Lieutenant General (later Field Marshal) Kodandera M. Cariappa (C-in-C) took over the command of Army from General Sir FRR Bucher, the last British Commander-in-Chief in 1949 and became the first Commander-in-Chief of Indian Army post Independence. KM Cariappa is one of only two Indian Army officers to hold the five-star rank of field marshal; the other being Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw. The day also remembers the glory of Indian Army and to salute the valiant soldiers, who have sacrificed their lives for the Nation.

2. Which country has launched 'Fair Value for Innovation' at Raisina Dialogue in New Delhi?

- [A] United States
- [B] Germany
- [C] France
- [D] Japan

Correct Answer: A [United States]

Notes:

The United States has launched a new innovation initiative titled 'Fair Value for Innovation' at the 4th edition of the Raisina Dialogue in New Delhi. The initiative was launched by the Global Innovation Policy Center (GIPC) of United States Chamber of Commerce. It will examine economic underpinnings that would enable breakthrough innovation, and explore how policymakers can harness innovation capital in India and around the globe through research, advocacy, partnerships, and programs.

3. Which of the following franchise teams has won the 5th season of Premier Badminton League (PBL) title?

- [A] Hyderabad Hunters
- [B] Chennai Smashers
- [C] Bengaluru Raptors
- [D] Mumbai Rockets

Correct Answer: C [Bengaluru Raptors]

Notes:

Bengaluru Raptors have won their first-ever Premier Badminton League (PBL) title at Bengaluru on 13th January 2019. In the title clash played, Bengaluru edged out Mumbai Rockets, with a 4-3 win. Star player Kidambi Srikanth, Vu Ji Trang and the Men's Doubles pair of Mohammad Ahsan and Hendra Satiawan won their matches for Bengaluru guiding them to victory.

4. Shakil Ahmed, who is in news recently, is associated with which sports?

- [A] Swimming
- [B] Indoor rowing
- [C] Judo
- [D] Chess

Correct Answer: B [Indoor rowing]

Notes:

Shakil Ahmed, who is Asian Cup gold medallist and noted oarsman, has set up a world record in indoor rowing by completing one lakh metres in above-40 years category in Kolkata. A FISA level one coach, Shakil began his record-setting indoor rowing feat in Salt Lake stadium complex at 8 am on 13 January 2019 and achieved the milestone of covering 1,00,000 metres of simulated distance in 10 hours. He also has the record of completing 50,000 metres of simulated rowing in four hours and 13 minutes which is already in the Limca Record Book.

5. Which city is the venue of the 9th International Conference on Micro Irrigation?

- [A] Raipur
- [B] Ahmedabad
- [C] Jaisalmer
- [D] Aurangabad

Correct Answer: D [Aurangabad]

Notes:

In Maharashtra, the 9th International Micro Irrigation Conference (IMIC) will be held at Aurangabad on 16th January 2019 with theme "Micro Irrigation in Modern Agriculture". The 3-day event will be a multi-disciplinary dialogue in the form of a conference discussing issues related to micro irrigation for modern agriculture and various related issues like new techniques in micro irrigation for increased crop productivity, micro irrigation in cluster level farming etc. The conference is being organized by the Union Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation in association with International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage (ICID), Indian National Committee on Surface Water (INCSW) and WAPCOS Limited, a CPSE under the Union Ministry. The event will aim to address problems of developing as well as developed nations in the context of present-day challenges.

6. Kollam Bypass, which is in news recently, touches which of the following National Highways?

- [A] NH 44, NH 19 and NH 701
- [B] NH 27, NH 109 and NH 907
- [C] NH 48, NH 311 and NH 208
- [D] NH 66, NH 183 and NH 744

Correct Answer: D [NH 66, NH 183 and NH 744]

Notes:

On 15th January 2019, Prime Minister Narendra Modi dedicated to the nation the 13 km, 2 lane Kollam bypass on NH-66 in Kerala. Constructed at a cost of Rs 352 core, this highway has three major bridges over Ashtamudi Lake. The Kollam bypass project will ease traffic congestion around Kollam town and reduce the travel time between Alappuzha and Thiruvananthapuram. The importance of the Kollam bypass is, it touches 3 major National Highways – NH 66, NH 183 and NH 744 – passing through the state of Kerala. Some of the landmark ongoing National Highways projects in the state include the Thiruvananthapuram Bypass, Thalassery-Mahe Bypass, Kuthiran Tunnel along Wadakkanchery –Thrissur section of NH-544, Alappuzha bypass on NH66. These projects, on completion, will create new socio- economic opportunities for the people and boost trade and tourism in this region.

7. India's largest start up ecosystem has launched in which of the following states?

- [A] Tamil Nadu
- [B] Rajasthan
- [C] Kerala
- [D] Punjab

Correct Answer: C [Kerala]

Notes:

On 13th January, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan launched the India's largest startup ecosystem - named as 'Integrated Startup Complex (ISC)' – with a 1,000-seat capacity in Kalamassery, Kochi. The 8-floor facility, which is spread across 1.82 lakh sqft area, is set up by Kerala Startup Mission (KSUM). The ISC houses ultra modern facilities of Maker Village that promotes hardware startups, Bionest that promotes medical technologies, BRINC which is the country's first international accelerator for hardware startups, BRIC which is country's first cancer technology incubator developing solutions for cancer diagnosis and care, and a Centre of Excellence set up by industry majors. The Kochi facility has beaten the status of Jaipur-based Bhamashah Techno Hub, as South Asia's largest startup hub. In future,

it will beat Station-F of Paris to emerge as the world's biggest technology hub after its full expansion in 13 acres. It is built to provide top quality infrastructure for incubation and acceleration for the state's startups.

8. Which UT/state government has decided to impose a ban on single-use plastic products from 1st March 2019?

- [A] Tamil Nadu
- [B] Puducherry
- [C] Delhi
- [D] Karnataka

Correct Answer: B [Puducherry]

Notes:

Puducherry government has decided to impose a ban on the production, sale, and use of single-use plastic products in the Union Territory from 1st March 2019. The massive drive would also be launched to create awareness among the merchants and the public on the necessity of the ban. The decision has been taken to keep the environment clean. The ban on non-biodegradable bags will open up a new market for canvas/cotton, denim and jute bags. Earlier, the Tamil Nadu government had announced ban on manufacture, sales, storage and usage of disposable plastic on 2018 World Environment Day (WED), with effect from 1st January 2019. Beside this, in March 2018, the Maharashtra Government also issued a notification imposing a ban on manufacture, use, sale, and distribution of all plastic materials like bags, spoons, Disposable utensils.

9. Which city is the venue of the first-ever Global Aviation Summit (GAS-2019)?

- [A] Mumbai
- [B] Varanasi
- [C] Chennai
- [D] Hyderabad

Correct Answer: A [Mumbai]

Notes:

Civil Aviation Minister Suresh Prabhu inaugurated the first-ever Global Aviation Summit (GAS-2019) in Mumbai on January 15. The two-day summit, with a theme 'Flying for all-especially the next 6 Billion', is being organised by Ministry of Civil Aviation in association with FICCI. It offers stakeholders an opportunity to explore, deliberate and understand how technology-driven innovations will change air travel in the decades to come. The event will host experts and CEOs from Global Aviation Fraternity emphasizing upon the latest trends, futuristic aircraft and cutting-edge technologies. It also gives the opportunity to highlight latest concepts like drones, air taxis, volocopters, new jets and ultra-light aerial electric vehicles etc. It will also entail discussions on airports of future, innovations, safety & security, financing & leasing, sustainability and growth drivers – cargo, logistics.

10. Lenin Rajendran, who passed away recently, was the renowned personality of which field?

- [A] Politics
- [B] Journalism
- [C] Sports
- [D] Film Making

Correct Answer: D [Film Making]

Notes:

Lenin Rajendran (67), an eminent Malayalam filmmaker and chairman of the Kerala Film Development Corporation (KFDC), has passed away in Chennai, Tamil Nadu on 14th of January 2019. Known for his unique style of filmmaking, Rajendran had entered tinsel town by directing the movie 'Venal' during the early 1980s. A multiple state award winner, Rajendran helmed a number of critically acclaimed movies including "Swathi Thirunal", "Daivathinte Vikrithikal", "Mazha", "Kulam" and "Idavapathi".

11. Who has become the youngest gold medallist in shooting at the Khelo India Youth Games 2019?

- [A] Mehuli Ghosh
- [B] Devanshi Rana

[C] Abhinav Shaw

[D] Pratap Singh Tomar

Correct Answer: C [Abhinav Shaw]

Notes:

Abhinav Shaw (10) has become the youngest gold medallist in shooting at the Khelo India Youth Games 2019 in Pune. He teamed up with Mehuli Ghosh to help West Bengal win the 10m air rifle mixed team event. Delhi's Devanshi Rana bagged gold in Under-21 girls 25m pistol event. In overall medals tally, Home state Maharashtra is leading in Medal tally of the event with 177 Medals including 64 Gold. Delhi is on No. 2 with 121 medals including 47 Gold and Haryana is on No.3 with 110 Medals including 37 Gold.

12. Who is the head of the Group of Ministers (GoM) for GST issues in real estate?

[A] Kamleshwar Sharma

[B] Prabhuram Chowdhary

[C] Govind Singh

[D] Nitin Patel

Correct Answer: D [Nitin Patel]

Notes:

The Government of India (GoI) has constituted a 7-member Group of Ministers (GoM) to boost the real estate sector under the GST regime. Deputy Chief Minister of Gujarat Nitin Patel will be the convener of the GoM. The panel will analyse tax rate of GST and suggest a composition scheme for residential construction units. It will also look into the issue of the legality of inclusion or exclusion of land or any other ingredient in the composition scheme and suggest valuation mechanism. It will also examine various aspects of the GST levy on Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) and Development Rights in a joint Development Agreement and suitable model. Currently, GST on the under-construction flats and houses is 12% whereas ready-to-move-in flats with a completion certificate attract no GST. There are also complaints about the builders not passing on the benefit of input tax credit to the consumers. The Council's law and fitment committee will assist the panel. The officers from the Centre and states can also be invited in the committee for inputs, if required.

13. Which state government has launched the farm debt-waiver scheme 'Jai Kisan Rin Mukti Yojana'?

[A] Madhya Pradesh

[B] Odisha

[C] Jharkhand

[D] Punjab

Correct Answer: A [Madhya Pradesh]

Notes:

In Madhya Pradesh, Chief Minister Kamal Nath launched the Rs 50,000-crore farm debt-waiver scheme named 'Jai Kisan Rin Mukti Yojana' on January 16, 2019. It would benefit 55 lakh small and marginal farmers. Under this scheme, Farmers who have registered themselves to pay GST and are paying income tax cannot avail benefits.

14. Trishna gas project, which is in news recently, is located in which of the following states?

[A] Nagaland

[B] Tripura

[C] Manipur

[D] Assam

Correct Answer: B [Tripura]

Notes:

The National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) has recently given its approval for the Trishna Gas project of ONGC to extract Natural Gas from Trishna Wildlife Sanctuary (TWS) in Belonia subdivision of Gomati district of Tripura. ONGC has discovered 10-12 gas bearing wells in the sanctuary. The gas extracted from the Sanctuary would be transported to the North Eastern Electric Power Corporation (NEEPCO) owned 100 MW gas-based thermal power project at Monarchak in Sonamura subdivision of Sipahijala district. The Tripura unit of ONGC would provide Rs 25 crore to the state government for carrying out

Swacch Bharat Abhiyan. The NBWL is a statutory organization constituted under the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972, and is chaired by the Prime Minister. It is an apex body to review all wildlife-related matters and approves projects in and around national parks and sanctuaries. It is chaired by the Prime Minister.

15. Who of the following has become the wicket-keeper captain with the most number of catches in a match?

- [A] Kamran Akmal
- [B] Rashid Latif
- [C] MS Dhoni
- [D] Sarfaraz Ahmed

Correct Answer: D [Sarfaraz Ahmed]

Notes:

Sarfaraz Ahmed, the current captain of the Pakistan cricket team, has set a new wicket-keeping record during the final Test match against South Africa at the Wanderers Stadium in Johannesburg on January 13. He took 10 catches in the on-going Test match and surpassed Australia's Adam Gilchrist and former Indian captain, MS Dhoni, to become the only wicket-keeper captain with the most number of catches in a match. Furthermore, the Pakistani captain has also made another record; taking five catches in each innings of a Test match.

16. 'IMBEX 2018-19' has started between India and which of the following countries?

- [A] Bangladesh
- [B] Myanmar
- [C] Mauritius
- [D] Indonesia

Correct Answer: B [Myanmar]

Notes:

On 14th January 2019, the 2nd edition of India-Myanmar bilateral Army exercise 'IMBEX 2018-19' has commenced at Chandi Mandir military station in Haryana that houses the headquarters of the Western Command of the Indian Army. The purpose of this joint training event is to train the Myanmar delegation for participation in UN peacekeeping operations. The exercise includes participation of 15 officers from Myanmar Army and 15 officers from Indian Army who shall jointly train for over a period of six days. During the exercise, focus will be on training the Myanmar Army on tactics, procedures, expertise and methodology required by the contingent of the member nations for serving in UN peacekeeping operations.

17. Michael Atiyah was the noted mathematician of which country, who passed away recently?

- [A] Germany
- [B] United Kingdom
- [C] France
- [D] United States

Correct Answer: B [United Kingdom]

Notes:

Prof. Sir Michael Atiyah (89), the noted British mathematician has passed away in United Kingdom on 11th January 2019. He was best known for his co-development of a branch of mathematics called topological K-theory and the Atiyah-Singer index theorem. His research also involved deep insights relating to mathematical concepts known as "vector bundles". Sir Michael was also a recipient of the Abel Prize (2004) and Fields Medal (1966), and was the former president of the Royal Society in London. He was one of the foremost mathematicians whose work encompassed topology and geometry, and worked with several Indian mathematicians such as Indian-American mathematician Harish-Chandra and Vijay Kumar Patodi, during his career.

18. Who is the head of the committee which is formed by Madras High Court to weed out invasive plant species from Western Ghats?

- [A] M M Sundaresh
- [B] N Sathish

[C] Cherukuri Raghavendra Babu

[D] Priyavrat Sisodiya

Correct Answer: C [Cherukuri Raghavendra Babu]

Notes:

The Madras High Court has expressed serious concern over the exotic invasive species that have stifled the growth of the native shola forests and grasslands on the Western Ghats. It observed that such species are the second largest cause of biodiversity loss in the world and impose high costs to agriculture, forestry, and aquatic ecosystems. Hence, for this burning issue, the court has constituted an expert committee to suggest ways and means to remove the alien plants species and rehabilitate the forests. Here, a division bench of justices M M Sundaresh and N Sathish passed the interim order on a batch of Public Interest Litigation (PIL) petitions seeking to restrain the Tamil Nadu government from cultivating eucalyptus trees in Western Ghats for commercial purpose. It has also directed the committee to file a report on the ways to weed out such species within two months. The committee will be headed by Cherukuri Raghavendra Babu, the chairman of the expert committee on invasive species in Chennai National Biodiversity Authority.

19. Which country has taken over the Chair of the Group of 77 (G-77) for 2019?

[A] Burundi

[B] China

[C] Egypt

[D] Palestine

Correct Answer: D [Palestine]

Notes:

The State of Palestine has launched the historical phase by presiding Group of 77 (G-77) for 2019 on January 15. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas succeeded Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi with a promise to confront "assaults" on multilateralism and a pledge to seek a peaceful two-state solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The decision to elect Palestine as the 2019 Chair of the G77 was taken in September 2018 by the foreign ministers of the Groups' member states. For this, the UN General Assembly (UNGA) in 2017 adopted a resolution granting the observer-state of Palestine additional rights to act as chair of the G-77. The bloc – which through an expanding membership is now comprised of 134 countries – rotates chairmanship duties each year to different members. The G-77 is the global body's largest intergovernmental organisation of developing countries including India. It is established in 1964 by 77 developing countries in Geneva. It claims to provide the means for the countries of the South to articulate and promote their collective economic interests and enhance their joint negotiating capacity on all major international economic issues within the UN system and promote South-South cooperation for development.

20. Which state government has launched 'Ama Ghare LED' scheme?

[A] Tripura

[B] Odisha

[C] Arunachal Pradesh

[D] Mizoram

Correct Answer: B [Odisha]

Notes:

Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has recently launched 'Ama Ghare LED' scheme, under which about 95 lakh families in the State will each get four LED bulbs free of cost. Under the scheme, each beneficiary registered under National Food Security Act (NFSA) and the State Food Security Scheme (SFSS) will be provided four LED bulbs of 9 watt each free of cost. To implement the scheme, the bulbs will be distributed at Panchayat offices as well as PEETHA (People's Empowerment—Enabling Transparency and Accountability of Odisha Initiative) camps across the state. The beneficiaries will have to produce biometric authentication to get the benefits of the scheme.

21. Which city is the venue of the 1st National EMRS National Sports Meet 2019?

[A] Hyderabad

[B] New Delhi

[C] Dehradun

[D] Chennai

Correct Answer: A [Hyderabad]

Notes:

On 14th January 2019, the 1st National Level Sports Meet for the students of Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) was held at G.M.C Balayogi Stadium in Gachibowli, Hyderabad. The event has a participation of 1777 students comprising of 975 boys and 802 girls representing 20 States of the country. The striking feature of Sports meet has been the platform made available to tribal students studying in EMRS from the remote corners of North East India to Himachal Pradesh in North to Kerala in South and Gujarat in West to exhibit their latent talent in sports which would otherwise not be possible in normal course. The three day event had competitions in 13 different disciplines of track and field that includes Hockey, Wrestling, Football, Archery, Volley Ball, Kabaddi, Handball, Kho Kho and Athletics. The scheme of EMRSs is one of the flagship intervention of the Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs introduced in the year 1997-98 to ensure tribal students get access to quality education in the remote tribal areas.

22. Who has been named as the chief coach for the Indian women boxers?

[A] Gurbax Singh Sandhu

[B] Anoop Kumar

[C] Mohammed Ali Qamar

[D] Chhote Lal Yadav

Correct Answer: C [Mohammed Ali Qamar]

Notes:

Mohammed Ali Qamar, India's first Commonwealth Games gold medal in boxing, has been named as the chief coach for the Indian women boxers. With this new role, he became the youngest ever person to get the top job. Ali Qamar replaced veteran Shiv Singh as the women's coach. Prior to this, Ali Qamar was an assistant coach in the national camp for more than a year. Ali Qamar had created history in the 2002 Manchester edition of the Commonwealth Games, when he became the first Indian ever to win a Commonwealth Boxing Gold.

23. Who has won the Franco-German Human Rights Award?

[A] Maria da Penha

[B] Yu Wensheng

[C] Thun Saray

[D] Wang Qiaoling

Correct Answer: B [Yu Wensheng]

Notes:

Detained Chinese lawyer, Yu Wensheng has won the Franco-German Human Rights Award for his exceptional contribution to the protection and promotion of human rights. His wife, Madam Xu Yan, received the Franco-German Prize for Human Rights and the Rule of Law on her husband's behalf from the French and German ambassadors to China at an event organised by the German embassy in Beijing on January 14, 2019. Wensheng is best known for suing the Beijing government over the city's once chronic pollution – was detained in January 2018 and charged with "inciting subversion of state power". Prior to his arrest, he had circulated an open letter calling for five reforms to China's constitution, including the institution of multi-candidate presidential elections.

24. D Gukesh, who has been crowned India's youngest Grandmaster (GM), is from which state?

[A] Karnataka

[B] Tamil Nadu

[C] Andhra Pradesh

[D] Kerala

Correct Answer: B [Tamil Nadu]

Notes:

D Gukesh from Chennai has become the 2nd youngest Grandmaster (GM) in the world and the youngest Indian to achieve the feat at 12 years, seven months and 17 days. He erased the mark set by his state-mate R Praggnanandhaa in June 2018. He achieved his third and final GM norm at the ongoing 17th

Delhi International Open Chess tournament in Delhi after beating compatriot D K Sharma in the ninth round. Gukesh becomes India's 59th Grand Master. Sergey Karjakin from Ukraine holds the record for the world's youngest- ever grandmaster, having qualified for the title at the age of 12 years and 7 months in 2002.

25. Who has been appointed the new CEO of the International Cricket Council (ICC)?

- [A] K P Sharma
- [B] Manu Sawhney
- [C] Mohan Das Pai
- [D] Vinod Rai

Correct Answer: B [Manu Sawhney]

Notes:

Manu Sawhney, a veteran media professional, has been appointed the new Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the International Cricket Council (ICC). He will join the organisation in February and take formal charge of his position in July, once incumbent David Richardson steps down following the 2019 ICC Men's Cricket World Cup. Sawhney is the former CEO of Singapore Sports Hub and Managing Director of ESPN Star Sports.

26. Which state government has recently decided to start bird hospitals?

- [A] Kerala
- [B] Delhi
- [C] Rajasthan
- [D] Madhya Pradesh

Correct Answer: B [Delhi]

Notes:

In a first, the government of Delhi has proposed a specialised treatment facility for birds in the National Capital Territory, as part of its Animal Health and Welfare Policy 2018. It aims to strengthen overall animal health cover through prevention, control and eradication of various disease conditions, disease monitoring, surveillance and extension of veterinary services. It also aims to animal welfare through sensitization of public, rehabilitation of animals, crisis/disaster management for animals, infirmary for sick or injured, hostel facility for farm, stray or abandoned animals.

27. The 10th edition of the India Rubber Expo (IRE-2019) has started in which of the following cities?

- [A] Mumbai
- [B] Kochi
- [C] Shimla
- [D] Hyderabad

Correct Answer: A [Mumbai]

Notes:

The 10th edition of the India Rubber Expo (IRE-2019) has been inaugurated by Union Minister Suresh Prabhu at the Bombay Convention & Exhibition Centre in Mumbai on January 17. The IRE will showcase the latest technological developments in rubber industry and also talk about the current market status, facilities and services on R&D and quality control. It provides a platform for the Indian companies to meet and collaborate with overseas companies. The 3-day event offers a unique opportunity for Indian companies to meet and collaborate with overseas companies. The India Rubber Expo is Asia's largest rubber expo.

28. Which organisation / personality has been chosen for the Gandhi Peace Prize 2018?

- [A] Ekal Abhiyan Trust
- [B] Akshaya Patra Foundation
- [C] Yohei Sasakawa
- [D] Sulabh International

Correct Answer: C [Yohei Sasakawa]

Notes:

Yohei Sasakawa, who is Goodwill Ambassador of the WHO for Leprosy Eradication, has been conferred the Gandhi Peace Prize for 2018. The award will be given to Sasakawa in recognition of his work towards eradication of the disease in India and across the world. The Ministry of Culture has also announced the Gandhi Peace Prize for the years 2015, 2016 and 2017. These are as follows: Ekal Abhiyan Trust has been chosen for the award for year 2017 while Akshaya Patra Foundation and Sulabh International will share the award for 2016. Vivekananda Kendra, Kanyakumari bagged the award for 2015. Vivekananda Kendra will be awarded for its contribution in rural development, education, development of natural resources. The annual award was instituted by the Government of India in 1995 during the commemoration of 125th Birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. The award carries an amount of Rs 1Crore, a Citation in a scroll, a plaque as well as an exquisite traditional handicraft/handloom item.

29. Who is the convenor of the newly constituted Group of Ministers (GoM) to look at issues related to lottery under GST?

- [A] Sudhir Mungantiwar
- [B] Himanta Biswa Sarma
- [C] Mauvin Godinho
- [D] Krishna Byre Gowda

Correct Answer: A [Sudhir Mungantiwar]

Notes:

In pursuance of decision in the 32nd Meeting of GST Council held on 10th January 2019 at New Delhi, a Group of Ministers (GoM) on issues relating to lottery has been constituted. The ministerial panel headed by Maharashtra Finance Minister Sudhir Mungantiwar will examine uniformity of taxation on lottery under GST or other issues arising out of it. Under GST, state-organised lottery falls under the 12% tax slab while state-organised lottery attracts 28% tax. According to the terms of reference, the panel will decide whether the disparity in tax structure on the same product needs be continued or a uniform rate be prescribed for both. The panel will also examine any other issue related to enforcement, including the legal frame work, in order to curb evasion of tax on lottery and suggest appropriate tax rate to address the problem. The GoM for lottery will submit its report to GST Council in next its meeting for approval.

30. Saksham 2019 is an annual high intensity people-centric mega campaign under the aegis of which ministry?

- [A] Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation
- [B] Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas
- [C] Ministry of Finance
- [D] Ministry of Information and Broadcasting

Correct Answer: B [Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas]

Notes:

Saksham 2019 is an annual high intensity one-month long people-centric mega campaign, which is organised by Petroleum Conservation Research Association (PCRA) under the aegis of Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas. The purpose of the Saksham (Sanrakshan Kshamta Mahotsav) is to sensitize the masses about conservation and efficient use of petroleum products which will lead towards better health and environment. The campaign seeks to promote effective utilization of petroleum products, something that will lead to environmental protection.

31. Who has become the first Indian athlete to be nominated in Laureus World Comeback of Year Award?

- [A] Vinesh Phogat
- [B] Hima Das
- [C] Mary Kom
- [D] Muhammed Anas Yahiya

Correct Answer: A [Vinesh Phogat]

Notes:

Ace Indian female wrestler Vinesh Phogat from Haryana has become the first Indian athlete to receive a

nomination in the prestigious Laureus World Comeback of the Year Award. Vinesh made a sensational comeback after battling a long injury lay-off to win a gold medal at the Gold Coast Commonwealth Games and Jakarta Asian Games. She has been nominated alongside US Tour Championship winner Tiger Woods, who won his first tournament in five years. The Awards will be presented in Monaco on the 18th of February 2019. Monaco is a tiny independent city-state on France's Mediterranean coastline.

32. Which state government has announced Shaurya Award for Students?

- [A] Sikkim
- [B] Haryana
- [C] Himachal Pradesh
- [D] Rajasthan

Correct Answer: B [Haryana]

Notes:

Haryana chief minister Manohar Lal Khattar has announced a 'Shaurya Award' to students in the name of 71 martyrs of state police force who laid down their lives in the line of duty while protecting society and maintaining law and order in the state. It was announced by the state government while organizing the first state-level function at the National Police Memorial in New Delhi to honour the families of all 71 policemen who died in various attacks and encounters since the formation of the state in 1966. Under this award, a prize money of Rs 11,000 in memory of a police martyr will be given to a student for courageous deeds every year in a village block where the school is located and where a martyr studied during his childhood.

33. Who has been appointed as Director General (Investigation) in the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)?

- [A] Amit Kulshrestha
- [B] S N Pradhan
- [C] Prabhat Singh
- [D] Pradeep Das

Correct Answer: C [Prabhat Singh]

Notes:

Prabhat Singh, a 1988 batch IPS officer of Jharkhand cadre, has been appointed as new Director General (Investigation) in the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC). Singh is at present Special Director in Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF). He has been appointed to the post for a period up to April 30, 2020, the date of his superannuation. The NHRC is an autonomous public body constituted on 12th October 1993 under the Protection of Human Rights Ordinance of 28 September 1993. It was given a statutory basis by the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993 (TPHRA). Apart from him, S N Pradhan has been appointed Director General of National Disaster Response Force (NDRF).

34. What is the theme of the 9th Vibrant Gujarat Global Investors Summit 2019?

- [A] Gujarat Going Global
- [B] Shaping a new India
- [C] Gujarat Connecting India to the World
- [D] Explore India

Correct Answer: B [Shaping a new India]

Notes:

On 18th January, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the 9th edition of Vibrant Gujarat global investors' summit- 2019 at Mahatma Mandir Exhibition cum Convention Centre in Gandhinagar. The main theme of the 3-day summit is "Shaping a new India". More than 30 thousand international and Indian delegates including the 5 Heads of States from from Uzbekistan, Rwanda, Denmark, Czech Republic and Malta are participating in the summit. Apart from this, 11 international organizations are participating as partner organizations for the Summit. The summit will provide a forum for discussion on Global, National and State-level agendas with a sharp focus on all round economic development for a 'New India'.

35. Which union ministry has decided to organize Shehri Samridhi Utsav?

- [A] Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution

- [B] Ministry of Women and Child Development
 [C] Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
 [D] Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs

Correct Answer: D [Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs]

Notes:

Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs has decided to organize an event named Shehri Samridhi Utsav from 1st -15th February 2019 all over the country focusing on urban livelihoods. The purpose of the event is to extend the outreach of Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NULM) to the poorest of poor and the most vulnerable.

36. The Ministry of Finance has started which series on Twitter to educate general public about the budgetary process?

- [A] Know Budgetary Process
 [B] Know Your Budget
 [C] Know Your Economy
 [D] Know Making of Budget

Correct Answer: B [Know Your Budget]

Notes:

The Union Ministry of Finance has started 'Know Your Budget' fortnight series on its Twitter handle to educate general public about the budgetary process. The series would explain the importance of Union Budget and its making, and would continue for about a fortnight. In the first series of tweets, the Ministry explained the terms – Union Budget and Vote on Account. These are as follows: The Budget is the most comprehensive report of the government's finances in which revenues from all sources and outlays for all activities are consolidated. The Budget also contains estimates of the government's accounts for the next fiscal year called Budget estimates. The Vote on Account is defined as a grant made in advance by Parliament for expenditure for a part of the next financial year.

37. Who has become the first Indian and youngest man to climb the seven highest peaks and volcanic summits across all continents?

- [A] Mamta Sodha
 [B] Jaahnavi Sriperambuduru
 [C] Malavath Purna
 [D] Satyarup Siddhanta

Correct Answer: D [Satyarup Siddhanta]

Notes:

Mountaineer Satyarup Siddhanta conquered the highest point Antarctica 'Mount Sidley' on 19th of January 2019. With this feat, he became the first Indian and youngest man to climb the seven highest peaks and volcanic summits across all continents. According to the in-Reach Satellite, Communicator Satyarup was carrying, he summited Mount Sidley at 6. 28 in the morning Indian Standard Time (IST) at a temperature of minus 40-degree Celsius. He achieved the feat at the age of 35 years and 262 days. Australia's Daniel Bull had done it at the age of 36 years 157 days. Last year, Satyarup had scaled the highest volcanic peak in North America, Pico de Orizaba. Satyarup hails from Haridevpur in South Kolkata and is a software engineer by profession.

38. Which Indian-born personality is the recipient of the 2019 Japan Prize for his outstanding contribution to sustainable soil management?

- [A] Rattan Lal
 [B] Jayant Narlikar
 [C] Rohini Godbole
 [D] Raghunath Mashelkar

Correct Answer: A [Rattan Lal]

Notes:

The Japan Prize Foundation has recently announced the laureates of the 2019 Japan Prize, who have

pushed the envelope in their respective fields of "Materials and Production" and "Biological Production, Ecology". Indian-born Dr. Rattan Lal, a soil scientist at The Ohio State University, has been awarded the 2019 Japan Prize for his outstanding contribution to sustainable soil management. Lal is the first Ohio State scientist and the first soil scientist to ever receive the prize. Apart from Lal, Dr. Yoshio Okamoto, Professor Emeritus at Nagoya University in Japan, has also been chosen for the award. To honor Drs. Lal and Okamoto, the Japan Prize Foundation will host an award ceremony on April 8, 2019 in Tokyo. Each laureate will receive a certificate of recognition and a commemorative gold medal. A cash award of 50 million Japanese yen (approximately \$450,000 USD) will also be given to each prize field.

39. Which city is the venue of the 2nd World Orange Festival (WOF-2019)?

- [A] Kanpur
- [B] Udaipur
- [C] Nagpur
- [D] Jhansi

Correct Answer: C [Nagpur]

Notes:

In Maharashtra, the 2nd World Orange Festival (WOF-2019) has started in Nagpur from 19th January, which will continue till to 21st of this month. The festival, while offering its famed oranges to the world, will also showcase and brand the exquisite fruit in order to boost its export. Agricultural experts and scientists from various countries will participate in the workshops and guide farmers.

40. The world's first human rights TV channel has been launched in which of the following cities?

- [A] New York
- [B] London
- [C] Berlin
- [D] Paris

Correct Answer: B [London]

Notes:

The world's first television channel dedicated to human rights has been launched in London with a promise to deliver hidden stories ignored by mainstream media into people's living rooms. The International Observatory of Human Rights (IOHR) stated that its web-based channel would bring human rights issues to audiences in over 20 countries across Europe, Latin America and the Middle East. Topics will include refugees, press freedom and the incarceration of journalists, extremism, women's rights, LGBT+ issues and the plight of the world's stateless people. Broadcasts can be viewed via the netgem.tv interactive platform and will shortly be available via a mobile app.

41. The state-of-the-art National Museum of Indian Cinema (NMIC) has recently inaugurated in which of the following cities?

- [A] Mumbai
- [B] Shillong
- [C] Hyderabad
- [D] Varanasi

Correct Answer: A [Mumbai]

Notes:

On 19th January, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the National Museum of Indian Cinema (NMIC) in Mumbai, Maharashtra. The state-of-the-art Museum has been built at a cost of over Rs 140 crore. The objective of the Museum is to take its visitors through an absorbing journey of over a century of Indian cinema in a story telling mode with the help of visuals, graphics, artifacts, interactive exhibits and multimedia expositions. The Museum is housed in two buildings – the New Museum Building and the 19th century historic palace Gulshan Mahal in the Films Division campus in Mumbai. The New Museum Building has four Exhibition Halls which encapsulate Gandhi and Cinema, Children's Film Studio, Technology, creativity and Indian Cinema and Cinema across India. The museum will not only cater to the needs of film critics and enthusiasts but also enthrall visitors through visuals, graphics, interactive exhibits and multimedia expositions about India's century-long cinematic journey.

42. The Government of India (GoI) has approved setting up of three new Naval Air Squadrons in

which of the following states?

- [A] Assam and Sikkim
- [B] Gujarat and Tamil Nadu
- [C] West Bengal and Odisha
- [D] Kerala and Karnataka

Correct Answer: B [Gujarat and Tamil Nadu]

Notes:

The Government of India (GoI) has approved setting up of three new naval air squadrons in Gujarat and Tamil Nadu as part of efforts to bolster the Indian Navy's overall strength. Besides this, the Central Government has also sanctioned manpower towards manning additional aircraft in existing Dornier Surveillance Squadrons in Kerala and Andaman Islands. A contract for procurement of 12 Dornier aircraft was signed with Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) two years back and their delivery is commencing soon. The new Dornier 228 maritime surveillance aircraft to be delivered to the Navy are fitted with improved 'state of the art' sensors and equipment which includes glass cockpit, advanced surveillance radar, optical sensors and networking features. The aircraft will enhance maritime domain awareness of Indian Navy through round the clock sensor based surveillance and provide targeting data in areas of operation to ward off terror and other threats from sea. The addition will further strengthen Indian Navy's efforts at Coastal Security of India's vast coastline of over 7 thousand kilometres.

43. The German parliament has classified which of the following North African states as safe countries of origin?

- [A] Algeria
- [B] Tunisia
- [C] Morocco
- [D] All of the above

Correct Answer: D [All of the above]

Notes:

The German parliament has recently adopted a draft law that classifies the North African states of Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco as well as Georgia as safe countries of origin. The move is meant to deter migrants from those countries and streamline the handling of asylum applications. Once the law is approved by the German Federal Council, asylum procedures for people arriving from these countries will be accelerated. The return procedure of rejected applicants to their home country will also be sped up. According to the German constitution, safe countries of origin are countries in which there is neither political persecution nor inhuman or degrading punishment and treatment. The law has yet to be approved by the German Federal Council.

44. Who has been elected as the new Prime Minister of Sweden?

- [A] Gustav Fridolin
- [B] Stefan Lofven
- [C] Ulf Kristersson
- [D] Jimmie Åkesson

Correct Answer: B [Stefan Lofven]

Notes:

In Sweden, Prime Minister Stefan Lofven has been elected for a second term on 18th January 2019 after an agreement was struck between the Social Democrats, Greens, Liberals, and Centre Party, and after the Left Party agreed to abstain from voting against Lofven. He is expected to formally present his new government and its full programme on 21st January 2019. It will be one of the weakest administrations in Sweden in 70 years, with just 32.7% of voters having cast ballots for the two parties. Sweden's inconclusive legislative elections in September 2018 had not left either main parliamentary bloc with a majority.

45. Which of the following state governments have approved 10% reservation reservation for poor among general category?

- [A] Odisha and Uttar Pradesh
- [B] Gujarat and Assam

- [C] Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan
 [D] Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh

Correct Answer: D [Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh]

Notes:

After Gujarat and Jharkhand, the Uttar Pradesh government has approved 10% reservation in jobs and educational institutions for economically backward in the general category. The decision was taken at the state cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath in Lucknow. Recently, President Ram Nath Kovind cleared the landmark Constitution (124 Amendment) Bill, 2019 passed by parliament, which will provide 10% reservation in government jobs and college seats for people outside high income brackets. Now, the Act empowers all individuals of the General category whose family's combined annual income is less than Rs 8 lakh, and who hold less than five acres of agricultural land.

46. Diffo Bridge, which is in news recently, is located in which of the following states?

- [A] Andhra Pradesh
 [B] Arunachal Pradesh
 [C] Himachal Pradesh
 [D] Uttar Pradesh

Correct Answer: B [Arunachal Pradesh]

Notes:

In Arunachal Pradesh, Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has inaugurated the Diffo Bridge over Diffo river in Lower Dibang Valley district on 18th January 2019. The bridge is 426 mts long Pre Stressed Concrete Box Girder type bridge on Roing-Koron-Paya road in the state. It would provide uninterrupted access between Dibang valley and Lohit valley region of Eastern Arunachal Pradesh and an all-weather Road to the troops deployed on the China Border. The construction work was done by Project Udayak, Border Roads Organisation (BRO) in this region.

47. Which city is the venue of the 7th ASEAN-India Tourism Ministers 2019?

- [A] Ha Long
 [B] Paris
 [C] Tokyo
 [D] Berlin

Correct Answer: A [Ha Long]

Notes:

The 7th ASEAN-India Tourism Ministers was held in Ha Long City, Viet Nam on 18th January 2019. Here, Union Tourism Minister of India, K J Alphons co-chaired the Tourism Ministers' meeting with the Vietnamese minister, Mr. Nguyen Ngoc Thien. As a follow up to the Summit, the Ministers launched the ASEAN-India Tourism Cooperation Year 2019, and looked forward to enhancing cooperation with a view to increasing two-way tourist visits and promoting greater people-to-people exchanges between ASEAN and India. The Ministers' meeting agreed to further enhance ASEAN-India cooperation in tourism under the framework of the '2012 Memorandum of Understanding between ASEAN and India on strengthening tourism cooperation with intensified efforts and activities. The Tourism Ministers of Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand also attended the meeting.

48. Which company has launched India's first PolicyHack for Teachers?

- [A] Infosys
 [B] Dell
 [C] Reliance
 [D] Wipro

Correct Answer: B [Dell]

Notes:

India's first PolicyHack for Teachers has been launched by Dell in partnership with the UNESCO Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIEP) and Ignus. As a part of its three-city PolicyHack series, Dell hosted an interactive hackathon where teachers focused on their learning journey. It's first-of-its-kind hackathon for teachers which will create a platform where

teachers, school representatives and a cross-sectional group experts related to education can interact with each other.

49. Which IIT will launch India's first B.Tech course in Artificial Intelligence (AI)?

- [A] IIT Hyderabad
- [B] IIT Bombay
- [C] IIT Indore
- [D] IIT Kanpur

Correct Answer: A [IIT Hyderabad]

Notes:

The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Hyderabad will launch India's first full-fledged B.Tech (Bachelors of Technology) programme in Artificial Intelligence (AI) for the academic year 2019-20. The course will have an intake of around 20 students and the admission will be done on the basis of the JEE-Advanced score. The course syllabus will comprise of the study of algorithms from the computer science department, signal processing from the electrical engineering department, robotics from mechanical engineering department and mathematical foundations. The course will also focus on application verticals such as healthcare, agriculture, smart mobility, among many others. The aim here is to produce students with a sound understanding of the fundamentals of theory and practice of AI and machine learning. Globally, US-based Carnegie Mellon University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) offer similar courses. It must be noted that IIT Hyderabad already offers an M.Tech programme in Artificial Intelligence-Machine Learning.

50. India's First Lithium Ion Giga Factory will be build by which of the following companies?

- [A] Antrix Corporation
- [B] GAIL
- [C] HAL
- [D] BHEL

Correct Answer: D [BHEL]

Notes:

India's First Lithium Ion Giga Factory will be build by Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) and Libcoin. Both the companies are in dialogue to form a world class consortium to initially build 1GWh lithium ion battery plant in India. Its capacity will be scaled up to 30GWh in due course. With this, India has finally taken steps into its energy security and clean energy commitment to the world. This project will bring energy independence by replacing oil imports with abundant renewable. This project also includes "Made by India, for India", with focus on core-cost components manufactured domestically. It will also create integrated manufacturing ecosystem resulting in self-reliance and lower cost.

51. Which of the following cities has been named as the World Capital of Architecture for 2020?

- [A] Pune
- [B] Rio de Janeiro
- [C] Paris
- [D] Melbourne

Correct Answer: B [Rio de Janeiro]

Notes:

The Brazilian city of Rio de Janeiro has been named as the World Capital of Architecture for 2020 by the UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization). Rio will be the first city to receive the title under a program launched together by UNESCO and the International Union of Architects (UIA) in 2018. The city will host the 27th edition of the World Congress of the International Union of Architects (UIA) in July 2020, an event that occurs every three years. According to UNESCO, the World Capital of Architecture is intended to become an international forum for debates about pressing global challenges from the perspectives of culture, cultural heritage, urban planning and architecture. As one of the oldest cities in Brazil, Rio has a mix of modern and colonial architecture, with world-renowned sites like the statue of Jesus Christ and contemporary constructions like the Museum of Tomorrow.

52. Shivakumara Swami was the spiritual leader of which sect, who passed away recently?

- [A] Vaishnavism
- [B] Shaivism
- [C] Shaktism
- [D] Tantrism

Correct Answer: B [Shaivism]

Notes:

Shivakumara Swami (111), a revered seer of the Lingayat-Veerashaiva faith, has passed away in Tumkur, Karnataka on January 21, 2019. He was affectionately referred to as Nadedaduva Devaru (Walking God) in the State. He was also the head of 5-centuries-old Sree Siddaganga Matha, which educated and hosted lakhs of students from economically deprived backgrounds. In recognition of his humanitarian work, the Swami was conferred with an honorary degree of Doctor of Literature by Karnataka University in 1965. On his centenary in 2007, the Government of Karnataka awarded Swamiji the prestigious Karnataka Ratna award, the highest civilian award of the state. In 2015 the Government of India awarded him the Padma Bhushan.

53. Which country is hosting the 2nd World Integrated Medicine Forum (WIMF-2019)?

- [A] China
- [B] Japan
- [C] India
- [D] Russia

Correct Answer: C [India]

Notes:

The 2nd World Integrated Medicine Forum (WIMF-2019) on the 'Regulation of Homeopathic Medical Products' will be held in Goa from 23-25 January, 2019. The 3-day forum, which will be inaugurated by AYUSH Minister Shripad Naik, will explore and illustrate the potential benefits and pitfalls of bi-lateral/multilateral collaboration and advance global cooperation on a synergistic basis. In it, approx 20 countries are participating.

54. Which city is the venue of the Youth Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (YPBD-2019)?

- [A] Varanasi
- [B] Hyderabad
- [C] Jabalpur
- [D] Jaipur

Correct Answer: A [Varanasi]

Notes:

The Youth Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (YPBD-2019) has started at Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh on January 21. The theme for this year PBD is "Role of Indian Diaspora in building New India". Prime Minister Narendra Modi will formally inaugurate the event tomorrow, with Prime Minister of Mauritius, Pravind Kumar Jugnauth being the Chief Guest. Several world leaders of Indian origin will share their insights into the role of Indian diaspora for a New India.

55. The Government of India (GoI) has decided to recruit women in military police after graded induction at what percentage?

- [A] 10%
- [B] 15%
- [C] 20%
- [D] 25%

Correct Answer: C [20%]

Notes:

The Government of India (GoI) has decided to induct women in Personnel Below Officer Rank (PBOR) role in Corps of Military Police for the first time ever. The women will be inducted into the military police in a graded manner, and will eventually comprise 20% of its total strength. The decision to induct women in the military police will enhance their representation in the armed forces. Their role would range from probing rape and molestation cases to assisting the Army wherever required. Currently,

women are allowed in select areas such as medical, legal, educational, signals and engineering wings of the Army. The role of the military police includes policing cantonments and army establishments, preventing a breach of rules and regulations by soldiers, maintaining movement of soldiers as well as logistics during peace and war, handling prisoners of war and extending aid to civil police whenever required.

56. Which country to host 14th Session of the Conference Of Parties (CoP) to UNCCD in 2019?

- [A] Brazil
- [B] Canada
- [C] South Africa
- [D] India

Correct Answer: D [India]

Notes:

India will host the 14th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD COP-14) to address the issue of land degradation and desertification. The conference is scheduled to be held in October 2019, and will have participation from over 100 countries. The UNCCD, established in 1994, has 197 parties working towards maintaining and restoring land and soil productivity and mitigating the effects of drought.

57. The central bank of which country has recently banned the use of Indian currency notes?

- [A] Pakistan
- [B] Bangladesh
- [C] Nepal
- [D] Sri Lanka

Correct Answer: C [Nepal]

Notes:

The Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB), the central bank of Nepal, has recently announced the ban of Indian currency notes with denominations above Rs.100. Under the new rule, Nepali citizens cannot carry these denominations to other countries except India. Similarly, Nepalis are also not allowed to bring such notes from other countries. The central bank has issued a circular prohibiting Nepali traveller, banks and financial institutions from holding or carrying and trading Indian bank notes higher than Rs. 100. The central bank said in its circular that Indian denominations of Rs 2,00, Rs 500 and Rs 2000 cannot be carried and used for trading. The decision to ban these notes has come at a time when the NRB has requested the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to allow Nepal to use currency notes with all denominations. At present, only the notes with a denomination of Rs. 100 and below are freely exchangeable in Nepal.

58. Who has been chosen for the first-ever Sheikh Saud International Prize for Materials Research?

- [A] K. Radhakrishnan
- [B] K Sivan
- [C] C N R Rao
- [D] G. Madhavan Nair

Correct Answer: C [C N R Rao]

Notes:

Eminent scientist and recipient of Bharat Ratna, C N R Rao has been chosen for the first Sheikh Saud International Prize for Materials Research, given by the Centre for Advanced Materials of the UAE. The award includes a plaque, a medal and a cash prize of \$100000. The award will be presented to Rao at the International Workshop on Advanced Materials in Ras Al Khaima on February 25. Professor Rao is the National Research Professor, Linus Pauling Research Professor and Honorary President of Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research (JNCASR). He was awarded the Bharat Ratna, the highest civilian award of India in 2014.

59. Which state government has recently roll out Startup and Innovation policy '2018-2023'?

- [A] Karnataka
- [B] Tamil Nadu

- [C] Kerala
[D] Telangana

Correct Answer: B [Tamil Nadu]

Notes:

On January 19, the Tamil Nadu government roll out 'Startup & Innovation policy 2018-2023' with a mission of providing an enabling and innovative ecosystem for startups registered in the State and to make Tamil Nadu a 'Global Innovation hub for startups' by 2023. The mission shall aim for a minimum of 1,00,000 high skilled job creation, direct and indirect, in the Startup ecosystem. For implementing the policy, the State will set up Tamil Nadu Startup Fund with a corpus of Rs 250 crore. The fund will be invested in other SEBI registered Alternative Investment Funds for investment in startups and MSMEs established in Tamil Nadu.

60. Which country has launched satellite to create world's first artificial meteor shower?

- [A] India
[B] Japan
[C] Russia
[D] China

Correct Answer: B [Japan]

Notes:

The Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) has launched a rocket carrying a satellite capable of delivering an artificial meteor shower into the Earth's atmosphere. This will be the world first artificial meteor satellite if the mission succeed. The satellite was launched by Epsilon-4 Rocket from the JAXA Uchinoura Space Center. It is carrying the first of two micro-satellites built by Tokyo-based startup Astro Live Experiences (ALE). The satellite is set to release tiny balls from the micro-satellites in the hope of mimicking shooting stars in the night sky above Hiroshima in 2020. The process of producing such simulation is called Plasma Emission. Once the tiny ball is released in the space, it will automatically burn up to ashes so that no risk is posed to the people. The glow will be so much bright that it will be seen even through the light-polluted Tokyo city. The tiny ball is expected to shine for several seconds before being completely burned up. Apart from this tiny ball, the ALE is also looking forward to introducing disused satellites so that it will produce even brighter glows. Hence, the world's first artificial shooting star project 'Sky Canvas' aims to bring people from all over the world together to witness an unprecedented, collective experience.

61. Who is the head of the IBBI working group to suggest a suitable framework for Group Insolvency?

- [A] Anshula Kant
[B] Shardul Shroff
[C] UK Sinha
[D] Pradeep Kumar

Correct Answer: C [UK Sinha]

Notes:

The insolvency regulator Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) has set up a 11-member working group under the Chairmanship of former SEBI chief UK Sinha to go into the concept of 'Group Insolvency' and suggest a suitable framework. This Working Group has been tasked to submit a report — within two months and will recommend a complete regulatory framework to facilitate insolvency resolution and liquidation of corporate debtors in a corporate group within the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC). At present, the IBC provides for the resolution or liquidation of only individual stressed companies. So a framework within the IBC is sought to be created for the resolution/liquidation of an entire stressed corporate group having several entities in multiple NCLT jurisdictions.

62. Which city is the venue of the Arab Economic And Social Development Summit 2019?

- [A] Muscat
[B] Beirut
[C] Riyadh
[D] Baghdad

Correct Answer: B [Beirut]

Notes:

The Arab Economic and Social Development Summit held in the Lebanese capital Beirut, in which the Arab leaders and officials issued a joint statement called Beirut Declaration. The declaration calls for the establishment of an Arab free trade zone. It also urged the International community to support nations hosting Syrian refugees and take steps to minimise the impact of the refugee crisis. The declaration stated that the refugee crisis in Arab countries is the worst humanitarian problem since World War II. It points out that the crisis leads to an economic slowdown, increases the expenditure and deficit, imposes burdens on public sectors and infrastructure and poses risks to the society. At the conclusion of the 2019 summit, Arab leaders have agreed a 29-item economic agenda in addition to encouraging the safe return of Syrian refugees to their homeland.

63. Which Indian-American philanthropist has been conferred with the 2019 Rosa Parks Trailblazer award?

- [A] Dalip Singh Saund
- [B] Balvir Singh
- [C] Gurinder Singh Khalsa
- [D] Manka Dhingra

Correct Answer: C [Gurinder Singh Khalsa]

Notes:

An Indian-American philanthropist and entrepreneur, Gurinder Singh Khalsa has been conferred with the prestigious 2019 Rosa Park Trailblazer award for his campaign that forced US authorities to change their policy towards headgear of the Sikh community. In 2007, Khalsa was refused access to board an aeroplane because of his turban. Thereafter Khalsa mobilised more than 67,000 people nationwide for petitions and took the issue to all the way to the US Congress, which forced Transportation and Security Administration (TSA) to change its headgear policy towards the Sikh community. As a result, Sikhs can now wear their turban through airport security in the US. Khalsa natively belongs to village Adhoi in Barara block of the Ambala district.

64. Masazo Nonaka, who passed away recently, was the world's oldest man of which country?

- [A] Japan
- [B] South Korea
- [C] Germany
- [D] Spain

Correct Answer: A [Japan]

Notes:

On 20th January 2019, Masazo Nonaka, a Japanese supercentenarian, has passed away in Japan at the age of 113 after living a stress-free life. The Guinness World Records officially recognised Nonaka as the world's oldest living man after the death of 113-year old Spaniard Francisco Nunez Olivera in 2018. Nonaka was born on 25th July 1905, two years after the Wright Brothers launched the first power-driven flight and just months before Einstein published his theory of relativity. Japan has one of the world's highest life expectancies and was home to several people recognised as among the oldest humans to have ever lived.

65. Which of the following Indian players are featured in both ICC Test & ODI team of the year 2018?

- [A] Virat Kohli and Jasprit Bumrah
- [B] Rishabh Pant and Rohit Sharma
- [C] Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli
- [D] Jasprit Bumrah and Rohit Sharma

Correct Answer: A [Virat Kohli and Jasprit Bumrah]

Notes:

The International Cricket Council (ICC) has recently announced the men's Test and ODI teams of the year 2018. Three players, each from India and New Zealand, were named in Test team while four players, each from India and England, were named in ODI squad. Virat Kohli has been named captain of both

sides following a remarkable 2018 as batsman and skipper. The Test team also features his compatriots, wicketkeeper Rishabh Pant and fast bowler Jasprit Bumrah, who is the only player apart from Kohli to feature in both sides. The ODI team has opener Rohit Sharma, spinner Kuldeep Yadav and Bumrah from India side. The awards, which honour performances during a calendar year, saw the India captain Kohli walk into both sides which were selected by the ICC Voting Academy comprising former players, members of the media and broadcasters. In the last calendar year, skipper Kohli scored more than 2,500 runs in both formats of the game combined with 11 centuries. Kohli also ended 2018 as the top-ranked Test and ODI batsman in the ICC Player Rankings while his side finished the year as the top-ranked side in Tests and number two in ODIs, behind England.

66. The annual meet of World Economic Forum (WEF) has started in which of the following cities?

- [A] London
- [B] Berlin
- [C] Paris
- [D] Davos

Correct Answer: D [Davos]

Notes:

The annual meet of World Economic Forum (WEF) has started in Davos with theme 'Globalization 4.0: Shaping a Global Architecture in the Age of the Fourth Industrial Revolution'. The aim of the 5-day event is to discuss what's ailing the world amid fears of the global economy sleepwalking into a crisis. Those expected to attend include German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Swiss President Ueli Maurer, Japan's Shinzo Abe, Italy's Giuseppe Conte and Israel's Benjamin Netanyahu among more than 30 heads of states/government, as also CEOs of global corporations, central bankers, economists, civil society leaders, media heads, celebrities and heads of international organisations like IMF, WTO, OECD and World Bank, among more than 3,000 participants. More than 100 CEOs from India are expected to participate in the meet. Nobel Laureate Kailash Satyarthi and filmmaker Karan Johar are also going to be a part of session which would be open for public.

67. India's first private-sector Howitzer gun-manufacturing plant has come up in which of the following cities?

- [A] Hyderabad
- [B] Kochi
- [C] Dehradun
- [D] Surat

Correct Answer: D [Surat]

Notes:

On 19th January, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the India first Armoured Systems Complex (ASC) built by a private company – Larsen & Toubro (L&T) – at Hazira in Surat, Gujarat. This is the India's first private facility where the K9 Vajra self-propelled Howitzer guns will be manufactured. Spread over 40 acres within L&T's 755-acre Hazira Manufacturing Complex, the ASC is executing the K9 Vajra guns programme. The K9 Vajra contract involves delivery of 100 such systems in 42 months, which is the largest contract awarded to a private company by the Ministry of Defence. L&T had signed a transfer of technology contract for guns with South Korean company Hanwha Corporation. The gun weighs 50 tonnes and can fire 47kg bombs at a 43-kilometre distance target. It can turn around at zero radius. The ASC is a state-of-the-art facility to manufacture and integrate advanced armoured platforms such as self-propelled artillery Howitzers, future infantry combat vehicles (FICV), future ready combat vehicles (FRCV) or future main battle tanks.

68. Raghbir Singh Bhola, who passed away recently, was the veteran personality of which sports?

- [A] Cricket
- [B] Hockey
- [C] Football
- [D] Basketball

Correct Answer: B [Hockey]

Notes:

Raghbir Singh Bhola (92), the former India hockey player, has passed away in New Delhi on January 21,

2019. He represented India in the 1956 Melbourne and 1960 Rome Olympics, winning a gold and silver medals respectively for the country. His dedication and passion for field hockey continued in various aspects throughout his life and he served in diverse roles such as member of the IHF selection committee, FIH international umpire, manager of the Indian hockey team, TV commentator and government observer at the Olympic Games. He successfully captained the Indian Air Force hockey and Services team from 1954-60 and won the Inter Services Hockey Championship three times and the National Hockey Championship on two occasions. In 2000, he was honoured with the Arjuna Award for his life time achievements in Field Hockey.

69. Which the following states celebrated their 47th statehood day on 21st January 2019?

- [A] Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram
- [B] Manipur, Mizoram and Nagaland
- [C] Manipur, Meghalaya and Tripura
- [D] Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya and Nagaland

Correct Answer: C [Manipur, Meghalaya and Tripura]

Notes:

The states of Manipur, Meghalaya and Tripura celebrated their 47th statehood day on 21st January 2019. On this day in 1972, all the three states became full-fledged states under the North Eastern Region (Reorganisation) Act, 1971. The erstwhile princely states of Tripura and Manipur were merged with India in 1949 and became full-fledged states in 1972. Meghalaya was a part of Assam before it was carved out as a full-fledged state under the NER Act of 1971.

70. Aadhaar cards are now valid travel documents for Indians travelling to which of the following neighboring countries?

- [A] Nepal and Bhutan
- [B] Nepal and Bangladesh
- [C] Bhutan and Myanmar
- [D] Sri Lanka and Bangladesh

Correct Answer: A [Nepal and Bhutan]

Notes:

According to recent Union Home Ministry communique, Aadhaar cards are now valid travel documents for Indians under 15 and over 65 years travelling to Nepal and Bhutan. Indians other than those in the two age brackets will not be able to use Aadhaar to travel to the two neighbouring countries, for which no visas are needed. Indian citizens going to Nepal and Bhutan don't need a visa if they have a valid passport, a photo identity card issued by the Government of India (GoI) or an election ID card issued by the Election Commission (EC). Earlier, persons over 65 and under 15 could show their PAN card, driving licence, Central Government Health Service (CGHS) card or ration card, but not the Aadhaar, to prove their identity and visit the two countries.

71. Which city is the venue of the India Steel 2019 Exhibition and Conference?

- [A] Mumbai
- [B] New Delhi
- [C] Dehradun
- [D] Hyderabad

Correct Answer: A [Mumbai]

Notes:

India Steel 2019 Exhibition and Conference has started in Mumbai on January 23. The three-day event organised by Ministry of Steel will help chart out the future growth path of the steel industry. The event will provide an opportunity for all the stakeholders to deliberate and identify ways to contribute towards building a robust roadmap for the further growth of the steel sector. Over 250 exhibiting companies from 15 countries, over 200 International buyers and large number of delegates are expected to hold business meetings during this event. More than 10 thousand business visitors both from India and abroad are expected to visit.

72. The Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose museum has recently inaugurated in which of the following cities?

- [A] Port Blair
- [B] New Delhi
- [C] Tiruchirappalli
- [D] Kollam

Correct Answer: B [New Delhi]

Notes:

On 23rd January, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Subhash Chandra Bose museum at the iconic Red Fort in New Delhi to mark the leader's 122nd birth anniversary. The Museum on Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose and Indian National Army provides a detailed account of Subhash Chandra Bose and the history of Indian National Army (INA). It also showcases various artefacts related to Subhash Chandra Bose and INA. The artefacts include wooden chair and sword used by Netaji, medals, badges, uniforms and other artefacts related to INA. Beside this, Prime Minister also inaugurated the Yaad-e-Jallian Museum on the Jallianwala Bagh and World War I, the Museum on 1857- India's first war of Independence and Drishyakala-Museum on Indian Art within the Red Fort complex.

73. Who has been sworn-in as the new President of Madagascar?

- [A] Freddy Tinasoa
- [B] Marc Ravalomanana
- [C] Andry Rajoelina
- [D] Jean Pierre Rakoto

Correct Answer: C [Andry Rajoelina]

Notes:

Andry Rajoelina has been sworn-in as the new President of Madagascar after taking the oath of office in Antananarivo before 9 judges of the High Constitutional Court. He won the 2018 Malagasy presidential election with 56% of the vote.

74. Who has won the 'Prabha Khaitan Woman's Voice Award' at the Apeejay Kolkata Literary Festival (AKLF-2019)?

- [A] Arundhathi Subramaniam
- [B] Vikram Seth
- [C] Keki N. Daruwalla
- [D] Ranjani Murali

Correct Answer: D [Ranjani Murali]

Notes:

US-based Indian poet Ranjani Murali has been bestowed the "Prabha Khaitan Woman's Voice Award' at the Apeejay Kolkata Literary Festival (AKLF-2019). The award carries a cash prize of Rs 1 lakh and a citation. The purpose of the award is to recognise and encourage creative writing by women in India, to create a forum for their work and to support the publication of their writing. It is a joint initiative between Oxford Bookstore and Prabha Khaitan Foundation.

75. Who has become the first player-ever to win ICC Test, ODI Player And Cricketer Of The Year?

- [A] Virat Kohli
- [B] Kane Williamson
- [C] Kumar Dharmasena
- [D] M S Dhoni

Correct Answer: A [Virat Kohli]

Notes:

Team India skipper Virat Kohli has become the first player-ever in history to win all three of top ICC awards after being named captain of the ICC's Test and ODI teams of 2018 for a fabulous run in international cricket. These are: the Sir Garfield Sobers Trophy for ICC Cricketer of the Year, the ICC Men's Test Player of the Year and the ICC ODI Player of the Year awards. Kohli scored 1,322 runs at an average of 55.08 in 13 Tests with five hundreds during the calendar year while in 14 ODIs he amassed 1202 runs at an astonishing average of 133.55 with six centuries. He also scored 211 runs in 10 T20Is. He also ended the year at No. 1 in both the rankings for Tests and ODIs. His performance was put into

sharper context by the fact that India played most of their cricket in 2018 away from the subcontinent. Among the other major winners were Rishabh Pant, who was named the Emerging Cricketer of the Year. Sri Lanka's Kumar Dharmasena was named the Umpire of the Year, while New Zealand cricketer Kane Williamson won the Spirit of Cricket award.

76. Which technical giant has launched a new e-commerce platform re-weave.in for handloom weavers?

- [A] Microsoft
- [B] Wipro
- [C] Facebook
- [D] Infosys

Correct Answer: A [Microsoft]

Notes:

Microsoft India has launched a new e-commerce platform re-weave.in for handloom weavers under its Project ReWeave, as part of its philanthropic initiatives. This e-commerce platform will help connect artisans to buyers directly and enables them to expand to newer customers and markets. The new e-commerce website hosts signature collections created by weaver communities and showcases traditional designs and products created from natural dyes. This e-marketplace will help sell to a broad set of customers, helping weavers to increase their income and earn a sustainable livelihood, while also reviving forgotten Indian art. The Indian handloom industry is the second-largest employment provider for the rural population in India, with almost 43 lakh weavers. Project ReWeave also aims to help weavers with working capital support through non-profit organisations.

77. Which Indian armed force has conducted the massive coastal defence exercise 'Sea Vigil-2019' to check 26/11-style attacks?

- [A] Indian Army
- [B] Indian Air Force
- [C] Indian Navy
- [D] All of the above

Correct Answer: C [Indian Navy]

Notes:

The Indian Navy, in coordination with the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) and other stakeholders, conducted the massive coastal defence exercise codenamed 'SEA VIGIL-2019' off the Indian coast on January 22-23, 2019. The exercise, a first of its kind, covered the entire 7516.6 km coastline and Exclusive Economic Zone of India and involves all the 13 coastal States and Union Territories along with all maritime stakeholders, including the fishing and coastal communities. The main goal of the large-scale exercise is to comprehensively and holistically validate the efficacy of the measures taken since '26/11'. The exercise also aims to test India's preparedness to thwart any attempt by anti-national elements to carry out an attack on its territory or against its citizens by infiltrating through the sea route.

78. Which of the following ports has become the only Indian port to be listed amongst the world's top 30 container ports, as per the latest Lloyds Report?

- [A] Visakhapatnam
- [B] Kandla
- [C] Paradip
- [D] JNPT

Correct Answer: D [JNPT]

Notes:

The Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (JNPT) has got listed amongst the top 30 container ports globally, as per the latest Lloyds Report. Hence, JNPT has become the only Indian port to be listed amongst the world's top 30 container ports. JNPT notched up five spots, to be 28th on the list, compared to its previous ranking. This is a validation of all the efforts and strategic initiatives being implemented at JNPT in order to enhance overall port efficiency. The JNPT also launched their App service to facilitate better tracking of consignment and ease the trade process for their EXIM partners.

79. Which international organization has recently released the World Economic Outlook (WEO)?

- [A] UNESCO
- [B] IMF
- [C] World Bank
- [D] AIIB

Correct Answer: B [IMF]

Notes:

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has recently released its biannual World Economic Outlook (WEO) update at the World Economic Forum (WEF-2019) in Davos. In it, IMF estimates India's economic growth at 7.3% in 2018-19, 7.5% in 2019-20 and 7.7% in 2020-21. With the latest outlook, India will remain the fastest-growing economy in the world, at least for the next two years. The IMF report stated that India's economy is poised to pick up in 2019, benefiting from low oil prices and a slower pace of monetary tightening than previously expected as inflation pressures ease. The latest growth projection by the IMF is a tad higher than the Central Statistics Office's (CSO) estimate of 7.2%, but lower than the RBI's estimate of 7.4%. But it is in line with the World Bank's estimate of 7.3%.

80. The Union Cabinet has approved MoU between India and which country for cooperation on the recruitment of domestic workers?

- [A] Japan
- [B] Iran
- [C] Kuwait
- [D] Saudi Arabia

Correct Answer: C [Kuwait]

Notes:

The Union Cabinet has approved recently the signing of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and Kuwait for cooperation on the recruitment of domestic workers. The MOU provides a structured framework for cooperation on domestic workers related matters and provides strengthened safeguards for Indian domestic workers including female workers deployed in Kuwait. The MOU is initially valid for a period of 5 years and incorporates provision for automatic renewal. Around three lakh Indian domestic workers deployed in Kuwait will benefit from the decision. The MOU will promote bilateral cooperation in domestic workers related matters between the two countries.

81. Which state government has declared Pakke Paga Hornbill Festival (PPHF) as the "State Festival"?

- [A] Manipur
- [B] Arunachal Pradesh
- [C] Nagaland
- [D] Meghalaya

Correct Answer: B [Arunachal Pradesh]

Notes:

The Arunachal Pradesh government has recently declared the Pakke Paga Hornbill Festival (PPHF)—the state's only conservation festival, as a "State Festival". The purpose of the fest is to recognise the role played by the resident Nyishi tribe in conserving hornbills in the Pakke Tiger Reserve (PTR), to devise alternative sources of income for a region that relies on hunting and logging, and to tell the rest of the country about the wonders of the PTR and its surrounding areas. As part of the festival, visitors are treated to cultural programmes, food stalls, plays, sightseeing, river and village walks, bird-watching, screenings of short films as well as local tribal sports and dances.

82. Which state government has decided to give 5% quota for Kapu community in 10% reservation for EWS?

- [A] Andhra Pradesh
- [B] Jharkhand
- [C] Tamil Nadu

[D] Telangana

Correct Answer: A [Andhra Pradesh]

Notes:

The Andhra Pradesh government has approved a proposal to grant 5% quota to the Kapu community in the state, after the Central Government recently passed a Bill to provide 10% reservation to Economically Backward Classes (EBCs) from the general category in jobs and education. The decision to ensure that half of the quota under the EBC category be reserved for upper caste Kapus was taken after a state cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu. The Kapus are primarily an agrarian community based in the Andhra-Telangana region. It is one of the dominant caste groups with political influence in the state. The Kapu community comprises nearly 26% of the state's five crore people.

83. Who has been bestowed with the 2017 Saraswati Samman?

[A] Ramakanta Rath

[B] Padma Sachdev

[C] Mahabaleshwar Sail

[D] Sitanshu Yashashchandra

Correct Answer: D [Sitanshu Yashashchandra]

Notes:

Noted Gujarati poet Sitanshu Yashashchandra has been awarded the 27th edition of the Saraswati Samman 2017 for his poetry collection in Gujarati named "Vakhar". He received the award by the noted film director and author Gulzar at a solemn function at National museum auditorium in New Delhi. The prestigious award is instituted by K.K.Birla foundation & is given every year to an outstanding work of an Indian citizen published during the last 10 years in any of the languages mentioned in Schedule 8 of the constitution. The award comprises of a citation and a plaque apart from award money of Rs. 15 lakh. Mr. Yashashchandra, recipient of the Padmashri in 2006, is known for seamlessly blending history with poetry.

84. What is the India's rank at the Global Talent Competitive Index (GTCI) 2019?

[A] 80th

[B] 64th

[C] 76th

[D] 98th

Correct Answer: A [80th]

Notes:

India has been ranked 80th at the Global Talent Competitive Index (GTCI) 2019, according to a report released by INSEAD business school in partnership with Tata Communications and Adecco Group. It was released during the World Economic Forum (WEF) Annual Meeting in Davos on 22nd January 2019. The list is topped by Switzerland, followed by Singapore, the US, Norway and Denmark. According to the report, India's biggest challenge is to improve its ability to attract and retain talent. Above all, there is a need to address its poor level of Internal Openness (116th) — in particular with respect to weak gender equality and low tolerance towards minorities and immigrants and its disappointing showing in lifestyle (112th) indicators. The survey measures how countries and cities grow, attract and retain talent, ranking 125 countries and 114 cities across all groups of income and levels of development.

85. What is the theme of the National Girl Child Day (NGCD-2019)?

[A] Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao

[B] Empowering Girls for a Brighter Tomorrow

[C] Protect, Educate and Value Girls

[D] Protect Future, Protect Girl

Correct Answer: B [Empowering Girls for a Brighter Tomorrow]

Notes:

The National Girl Child Day (NGCD) is celebrated every year on January 24 in India to raise awareness against the social stigma and discrimination faced by girl. The day also highlights the need to protect girl child who is prone to sex selective abortions, sexual abuse and trafficking in India. The 2019 theme

"Empowering Girls for a Brighter Tomorrow" was celebrated with objectives of generating awareness on the issue of declining Child Sex Ratio (CSR) and create a positive environment around valuing the girl child. The Union Ministry of Women and Child Development (WCD) celebrated the NGCD-2019 day at Pravasi Bharti Kendra in New Delhi. The programme also observed anniversary of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) Scheme. A booklet on "Innovations under BBBP" was also released on the occasion. The Ministry has compiled 38 Innovative Activities from Districts across the country to set an example for other Districts. These interventions have been categorized according to five themes, which are Survival, Protection, Education, Participation and Valuing Girls.

86. What is the India's rank at the 2019 Bloomberg Innovation Index?

- [A] 19th
- [B] 36th
- [C] 54th
- [D] 67th

Correct Answer: C [54th]

Notes:

India has been ranked at 54th position in the list of world's most innovative countries, according to Bloomberg 2019 Innovative Index. It is for the first time that India has made it to the rankings. South Korea has topped the Index for the sixth time in a row with a total score of 87.38, followed by Germany, Finland, Switzerland, Israel, Singapore, Sweden, U.S., Japan and France in the top 10. The annual Bloomberg Innovation Index (BII) analyses dozens of criteria using seven metrics, including research and development spending, manufacturing capability and concentration of high-tech public companies. In the 2019 Index, India is among the new entrants from the world's largest emerging economies with a total score of 47.93. Barring India, other nations include Mexico, Vietnam and Saudi Arabia also made a surprise entry. Bloomberg has published top 60 economies out of 95 economies analyzed for the ranking process for the year 2019. Each economy has been assigned a score from 0-100 on the basis of seven equal-weighted metrics.

87. Which city is the venue of the Indian Africa Field Training Exercise (IAFTX-2019)?

- [A] Kochi
- [B] Kolkata
- [C] Pune
- [D] Chennai

Correct Answer: C [Pune]

Notes:

The Indian Africa Field Training Exercise (IAFTX-2019) will be conducted at Aundh Military Station and College of Military Engineering in Pune from March 18 to 27. The joint training exercise is being conducted with more than a dozen African countries and India to synergise humanitarian mine action and joint peace operations. The IAFTX-2019 is a positive step towards growing political and military ties with the member nations of African continent and will boost the already strong strategic cooperation between the countries.

88. Bhanu Prakash Singh, who passed away recently, was associated with which field?

- [A] Arts
- [B] Politics
- [C] Sports
- [D] Journalism

Correct Answer: B [Politics]

Notes:

Bhanu Prakash Singh (90), the former Union minister, ex-Goa Governor and head of the Narsingharh royal family, has passed away in Indore, Madhya Pradesh on January 24, 2019. He was elected as an MP from Rajgarh Lok Sabha seat in 1962 as an independent candidate. Singh later became close to former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and joined the Congress in 1964. He became a minister in her cabinet. However, when Indira Gandhi abolished privy purses, Singh revolted and resigned from the Congress. In 1991, he became the Governor of Goa.

89. Which NDRF's Battalion has won the first-ever Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan

Puraskar?

- [A] 9th
- [B] 11th
- [C] 8th
- [D] 4th

Correct Answer: C [8th]

Notes:

The Government of India (GoI) has recently instituted an annual award titled Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar. The award is to be announced every year on 23rd January on the birth anniversary of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose. For the year 2019, 8th Battalion of National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) located at Ghaziabad has been selected for the award for its commendable work in Disaster Management. The Award recipient will receive a certificate and a cash prize of Rs. 51 lakh. The 8th Battalion of NDRF was raised in 2006 and is a highly specialised Rescue and Response Force with large area of responsibility covering National Capital Region (NCR), Uttarakhand, Western UP & Haryana. The battalion has participated in 314 major operations and rescued over 50,000 people. In the devastating Kerala floods in 2018, the battalion had rescued 5,338 victims and evacuated 24,000 people to safety. Other major disasters in which this NDRF battalion participated are Leh cloud burst (2011), Kedarnath floods (2013), cyclone Hudhud (2014), Chennai floods (2015) and Tripura floods (2018).

90. Which international organisation has published its latest World Economic Situation and Prospects (WESP) report?

- [A] IMF
- [B] WHO
- [C] World Bank
- [D] United Nations

Correct Answer: D [United Nations]

Notes:

As per latest United Nations' World Economic Situation and Prospects (WESP) report 2019, India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is expected to grow at 7.4% during 2018-19 and improve to 7.6% in FY20. The report also expected that India's economy to expand by 7.4% in 2020-21. Referring to the global economy, the report said it would continue to grow at a steady pace of around 3% in 2019 and 2020 amid signs that growth has peaked. The report also highlighted that global trade tensions pose a threat to the economic outlook. The 2019 report offers timely warnings about a range of macroeconomic challenges facing policymakers as they aim to deliver on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

91. The first-ever UN's International Day of Education is celebrated on which date?

- [A] January 26
- [B] January 25
- [C] January 24
- [D] January 23

Correct Answer: C [January 24]

Notes:

The first-ever UN's International Day of Education is observed on January 24 to highlight the role of education for peace and development. Education is a human right, a public good and a public responsibility. The day recognizes the importance of ensuring inclusive quality education & access to lifelong learning opportunities for all. The right to education is enshrined in article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Today, 262 million children and youth still do not attend school; 617 million children and adolescents cannot read and do basic math; less than 40% of girls in sub-Saharan Africa complete lower secondary school and some four million children and youth refugees are out of school. Their right to education is being violated and it is unacceptable. Hence, UNESCO calls on governments and all partners to make universal quality education a leading priority. In India, National Education Day (NED) is observed on November 11 to commemorate the birth anniversary of the first education minister of independent India — Maulana Abul Kalam Azad.

92. Who is the author of the novel 'Zindaginama'?

- [A] Rahul Sankrityayan
 [B] Krishna Sobti
 [C] Mridula Garg
 [D] Chitra Mudgal

Correct Answer: B [Krishna Sobti]

Notes:

Krishna Sobti (94), the famous Hindi fiction writer and essayist, has passed away in New Delhi on January 25, 2019. She had won the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1980 for her novel Zindaginama and was awarded the Jnanpith in 2017 for her contribution to Indian literature. Sobti is best known for her 1966 novel Mitro Marajani, an unapologetic portrayal of a married woman's sexuality. Some of her notable works are as follows: Daar Se Bichchuri, Surajmukhi Andhere Ke, Yaaron Ke Yaar, Zindaginama. Some of her well-known short stories are Nafisa, Sikka Badal gaya, Badalom ke ghare.

93. The new Naval Air Base 'INS Kohassa' has commissioned at which of the states /UTs?

- [A] Gujarat
 [B] West Bengal
 [C] Lakshadweep
 [D] Andaman and Nicobar Islands

Correct Answer: D [Andaman and Nicobar Islands]

Notes:

The new naval air base 'INS Kohassa' has recently commissioned by Navy Chief Admiral Sunil Lanba into the Indian Navy at the Shibpur Naval Air Station in Diglipur, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, as part of efforts to expand operational presence in the Indian Ocean where China has been increasing its military presence. This is the India's fourth air base and the third naval air facility in the region that overlooks key sea lanes of communication and strategic points. INS Kohassa has been named after a White-Bellied Sea Eagle, which is a large bird of prey, endemic to A&N islands. The new airbase will be used for both Defence and civil aircraft. Earlier, Naval Air Station at Shibpur was manned by utilizing the manpower from INS Utkrosh. Now, the airbase will function as an independent unit. The airbase will be used to handle operations of helicopters and small aircraft like the Dornier.

94. Which IIT has launched an app 'Roshni' to help blind identify notes?

- [A] IIT Kanupur
 [B] IIT Ropar
 [C] IIT Indore
 [D] IIT Bombay

Correct Answer: B [IIT Ropar]

Notes:

IIT Ropar has launched an android app 'Roshni' to help the blind in recognizing the denomination of the currency notes, using image processing and analytics. At present, notes of Rs 10, 20, 50, 100, 200, 500 and 2,000 are in circulation, which the blind people find it difficult to recognize due to their size and the tactile marks. The app can recognize both old and new notes and gives audio information as to which note you are holding in your hands. The user has to bring the currency note in front of phone camera and the app would provide audio notification intimating the currency notes denomination to the user. The app uses the patterns and features embedded on the notes to differentiate and determine the currency denomination. The app is developed by assistant professor Dr Puneet Goyal and his students — Mandhatya Singh, Joochi Chauhan, and R Ram.

95. The Union Cabinet has approved the amendment to which article to strengthen northeast autonomous councils?

- [A] Article 282
 [B] Article 284
 [C] Article 281
 [D] Article 280

Correct Answer: D [Article 280]

Notes:

The Union cabinet has approved the landmark amendment to Article 280 of the Constitution to increase the financial and executive powers of the 10 autonomous councils in the Sixth Schedule areas of the Northeast Region (NER). The amendment would impact a population of about 1 crore tribals living in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram. The Finance Commission would be mandated to recommend devolution of financial resources to the councils. Till now, the autonomous councils have depended on grants from Central Ministries and the State governments for specific projects. As per the proposed amendment, there will be State Election Commissions (SECs) for holding elections to the autonomous councils, village and municipal councils in the areas of Assam, Mizoram and Tripura. At least one third of the seats would be reserved for women in the village and municipal councils in the Sixth Schedule areas of Assam, Mizoram and Tripura. Here, Meghalaya has for the time being opted out of the provision for elected village and municipal councils and one-third reservation for women.

96. ISRO has successfully launched military satellite 'Microsat-R' from which launch vehicle?

- [A] PSLV-C43
- [B] PSLV-C44
- [C] PSLV-C45
- [D] PSLV-C46

Correct Answer: B [PSLV-C44]

Notes:

ISRO has successfully launched a military satellite 'Microsat-R' and a student satellite 'Kalamsat-V2' into their designated orbits from PSLV-C44 launch vehicle. The launch was the 46th flight of the PSLV which lifted off from Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) in Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh. PSLV-C44 is the first flight of PSLV-DL, a new variant of PSLV with two strap-on motors. With this launch, India also becomes the first country to use the fourth stage of a space rocket as an orbital platform for microgravity experiments. The PSLV is a four-stage launch vehicle with alternating solid and liquid stages.

97. The world's longest 3D-printed concrete bridge has opened in which country?

- [A] North Korea
- [B] Japan
- [C] China
- [D] South Korea

Correct Answer: C [China]

Notes:

In China, the world's longest 3D-printed concrete bridge has recently opened across a canal on the Wenzaobang River in Shanghai. The bridge is The newly-opened bridge is 26.3 metre-long and 3.6-meter-wide, and is designed by Professor Xy Weiguo from Tsinghua University in China. Its design was inspired by an ancient Chinese bridge named "Anji Bridge" in Hebei Province. The system is cost-efficient uses smart technology and digital design to print 3D concrete blocks. A total of 44 hollowed-out 3D printed concrete blocks were used to lay the bridge while 68 concrete units made the handrails. The bridge has sensors that collect displacement data which will be used to improve the design of future bridges constructed using 3D printing.

98. Which state government has decided to set up anti-poaching tiger protection force?

- [A] Madhya Pradesh
- [B] Gujarat
- [C] Rajasthan
- [D] Telangana

Correct Answer: D [Telangana]

Notes:

The Telangana government has decided to set up an armed "State Tiger Protection Force" (STPF) to save the Big Cat population in the State. The 112-member-armed STPF will be headed by an Assistant Conservator of Forests to protect tiger population in Amarabad and Kawal Tiger Reserves. The State and Central government will share the cost of the force on 40:60 basis. The cases under the Preventive Detention Act would be registered against violators.

99. Which of the following novels has been adjudged as the best novel of 2017 at the Kerala Sahitya Akademi Awards?

- [A] Nireeswaran
- [B] Aarachaar
- [C] Thakshankunnu Swaroopam
- [D] Naalukettu

Correct Answer: A [Nireeswaran]

Notes:

The Kerala Sahitya Akademi Awards for the year 2017 have been announced on 23rd January 2019. In it, 'Nireeswaran' by V.J. James has been adjudged the best novel of 2017, while Aymanam John's Ethara Characharangalude Charitra Pusthakam has secured the award for the best short story. Mindaprani, written by Veerankutty, is the best poetry. The award is given each year by the Kerala Sahitya Akademi (Kerala Literary Academy) to Malayalam writers for their outstanding books of literary merit.

100. Who has become the India's first woman IPS officer to complete South Pole expedition?

- [A] Aparna Kumar
- [B] Vimla Mehra
- [C] Archana Ramasundaram
- [D] Meera Borwankar

Correct Answer: A [Aparna Kumar]

Notes:

Aparna Kumar has become the India's first woman Indian Police Service (IPS) DIG and Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) officer to successfully complete the South Pole expedition. She unfurled the National and the ITBP flags at the South Pole on 13th January 2019 after covering 111Km of walking on the snow. Aparna will now attempt to conquer the North Pole this April. She has covered six of the highest peaks across continents including the Mount Everest. The one left for her to scale is the Mount Denali in Alaska. The ITBP is a Central Armed Police Force which is primarily deployed to secure the icy Himalayan borders of the nation since its inception in 1962.

101. What is the theme of the National Voters Day (NVD-2019)?

- [A] Proud to be a voter – Ready to vote
- [B] Accessible elections
- [C] No Voter to be Left Behind
- [D] Proud to be a voter

Correct Answer: C [No Voter to be Left Behind]

Notes:

The National Voters Day (NVD) is celebrated every year in India on January 25 since 2011 to enhance participation of citizens in the electoral process. The day also marked the Foundation day of Election Commission of India (ECI), which was established on 25th January 1950. The main purpose of the celebration is to encourage, facilitate and maximize the enrollment, especially for the new voters. In view of the upcoming Lok Sabha Elections, 'No Voter to be Left Behind' has been selected as the theme for the 9th National Voters' Day. During the 9th NVD 2019, the National Awards for the Best Electoral Practices were conferred on Officers for their outstanding performance in the conduct of elections. President Ram Nath Kovind was the Chief Guest at the main function being organized by Election Commission in New Delhi.

102. Who among the following has/have been awarded Bharat Ratna posthumously in 2019?

- [A] Bhupen Hazarika
- [B] Nanaji Deshmukh
- [C] Madan Mohan Malaviya
- [D] Both a & b

Correct Answer: D [Both a & b]

Notes:

On 26th January 2019, President Ramnath Kovind conferred the Bharat Ratna, the nation's highest civilian honour, on former President Pranab Mukherjee, along with social activist Nanaji Deshmukh (posthumous), and Assamese musician Bhupen Hazarika (posthumous). Nanaji Deshmukh was a senior RSS leader who also worked for rural development and welfare of farmers, and was considered a stalwart of the Sangh Parivar. Mr. Hazarika's award appears to be a nod to the importance the North East has been accorded by the current government amid huge unrest following the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill being pushed. Mr. Mukherjee is a Congressman for five decades before he became President (2012-2017) spoke at an annual RSS event in Nagpur in 2018. The last time Bharat Ratnas were conferred was in 2015, when educationalist-politician Madan Mohan Malviya and former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee were the recipients.

103. Who led the all-women Assam Rifles contingent, which has created history by participating for the first time in a Republic Day parade?

- [A] Shikha Surabhi
- [B] Khushboo Kanwar
- [C] Aparna KUMar
- [D] Bhavna Syal

Correct Answer: B [Khushboo Kanwar]

Notes:

On 70th Republic Day parade 2019, women power displayed at Rajpath, with contingents of the Indian Navy, India Army Service Corps and a unit of Corps of Signals (transportable satellite terminal) were all led by women officers and a woman officer exhibiting stunts on bike. In it, Major Khushboo Kanwar led all-women Assam Rifles contingent has created history by participating for the first time in a Republic Day parade. Capt Shikha Surabhi from the Corps of Signals became the first woman to perform bike stunts alongside her male teammates as part of daredevils, a major attraction every Republic Day. For the first time, a lady officer, Lt. Bhavana Kasturi led a contingent of the India Army Service Corps and Capt Bhavna Syal, a third-generation officer in the armed forces, led the transportable satellite terminal's contingent.

104. Who has been named as the new King of Malaysia?

- [A] Ahmad Shah
- [B] Abdul Rahim
- [C] Sultan Abdullah
- [D] Sirajuddin

Correct Answer: C [Sultan Abdullah]

Notes:

Sultan Abdullah of Pahang has been elected as the new King of Malaysia, after Malaysian King Sultan Muhammad V step down from the throne before completing his five-year tenure on 6th January 2019. Sultan Abdullah will be sworn-in as the Nation's 16th Yang di-Pertuan Agong (or head of state) in a traditional ceremony on 31st January 2019. Malaysia is the only country in the world to have a rotational monarchy since the country became independent from Britain in 1957. The country has nine royal households, who typically take turns to sit on the throne. King's constitutional powers include the ability to veto the appointment of key political office holders, including the prime minister. The king also has powers to grant full pardons to citizens convicted in the courts.

105. Who is the author of the book 'Panchashati Galpo'?

- [A] Krishna Sobti
- [B] Nirmal Verma
- [C] Mannu Bhandari
- [D] Atin Bandyopadhyay

Correct Answer: D [Atin Bandyopadhyay]

Notes:

Atin Bandyopadhyay (85), the renowned Bengali writer, has passed away in Kolkata on 19th January, 2019. Born in 1934 in Dhaka, he had taken up various jobs as a sailor, school teacher, factory manager, journalist to finally became a writer. He won the 2001 Sahitya Akademi award for his compilation of short stories 'Panchashati Galpo'. His masterpiece is considered to be a four-part tetralogy on the

Partition: "Nilkantha Pakhir Khonje", "Manusher Gharbari", "Aloukik Jalajan" and "Ishwarer Bagan".

106. Russell Baker, the two-time Pulitzer Prize-winning author has passed away. He was from which country?

- [A] Italy
- [B] United States
- [C] France
- [D] Germany

Correct Answer: B [United States]

Notes:

Russell Baker (93), the two-time Pulitzer Prize-winning author, has passed away in Virginia, United States on January 21, 2019. He was the genial, but sharp-witted writer for his humorous columns in The New York Times and a moving autobiography of his impoverished Baltimore childhood and later hosted television's 'Masterpiece Theatre'. He won Pulitzers in 1979 for the 'Observer', the Times column he wrote for 35 years, and in 1983 for his autobiography 'Growing Up'. It was the first Pulitzer for commentary awarded to a humorist.

107. The Airports Authority of India (AAI) and Saab have signed a pact to explore air traffic management. Where is the headquarters of Saab located?

- [A] Sweden
- [B] Singapore
- [C] Seychelles
- [D] South Africa

Correct Answer: A [Sweden]

Notes:

The Airports Authority of India (AAI) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Swedish aerospace and defence company (Saab) to explore Air Traffic Management (ATM) solutions for airports operating under the UDAN regional connectivity scheme. In the sector of ATM solutions, Saab has a portfolio ranging from Advanced-Surface Movement Guidance & Control System (A-SMGCS) and Surface Movement Radar (SR- 3), to Remote Towers which can be deployed at all types of airports. ATM solutions from Saab can support both single and multiple runway airfields, as well as remote operations and deployable systems. Hence, the MoU with Saab will support AAI's need for ATM solutions and training of its personnel in ATM services. The MoU highlights the efforts of AAI to build infrastructure for the Indian government's UDAN-RCS regional airport development and regional connectivity plan, helping to make air travel more affordable and widespread.

108. The researchers of which country have developed a system that can produce electricity and hydrogen fuel from carbon dioxide?

- [A] Japan
- [B] South Korea
- [C] China
- [D] Russia

Correct Answer: B [South Korea]

Notes:

Scientists from Ulsan National Institute of Science and Technology (UNIST) in South Korea have developed a system that can produce electricity and hydrogen fuel from carbon dioxide. The Hybrid Na-CO₂ system can continuously produce electrical energy and hydrogen through efficient carbon dioxide (CO₂) conversion with stable operation for over 1,000 hours. The key to this technology is the easy conversion of chemically stable CO₂ molecules to other materials. Much of human CO₂ emissions are absorbed by the ocean and turned into acidity. The researchers focused on this phenomenon and came up with the idea of melting CO₂ into water to induce an electrochemical reaction. If acidity increases, the number of protons increases, which in turn increases the power to attract electrons. If a battery system is created based on this phenomenon, electricity can be produced by removing CO₂. In particular, this system has shown stability to the point of operating for more than 1,000 hours without damage to electrodes. The system can be applied to remove CO₂ by inducing voluntary chemical reactions.

109. What is the theme of the 2019 International Customs Day (ICD)?

- [A] Digital Customs – Progressive Engagement
- [B] Smart borders, Smart Customs
- [C] SMART borders for seamless Trade, Travel and Transport
- [D] Secure & Smart business for economic development

Correct Answer: C [SMART borders for seamless Trade, Travel and Transport]

Notes:

The International Customs Day (ICD) is observed every year on January 26 to recognize the role of custom officials and agencies in maintaining border security. It focuses on the working conditions and challenges that customs officers face in their jobs. The 2019 theme is "SMART borders for seamless Trade, Travel and Transport". This reflects the fact that the expectations of travellers and businesses around the world are changing.

110. Who has won the women's singles 2019 Australian Open Tennis Tournament?

- [A] Petra Kvitova
- [B] Maria Sharapova
- [C] Naomi Osaka
- [D] Simona Halep

Correct Answer: C [Naomi Osaka]

Notes:

Naomi Osaka from Japan has won the women's singles 2019 Australian Open Tennis Tournament. She beat Czech Petra Kvitova in a seesaw Australian Open final by 7-6 (7-2) 5-7 6-4 to win back-to-back Grand Slams and become the new World No.1. Osaka is known for her multi-ethnic background and her shy, candid personality. On the court, she has an aggressive playing style with a powerful serve.

111. Which railway zone has bagged No.1 position for cleanliness in India?

- [A] Western Railway
- [B] Central Railway
- [C] Southern Railway
- [D] North Western Railway

Correct Answer: C [Southern Railway]

Notes:

The Southern Railway has bagged the number one position for cleanliness in the country. This achievement was under the category of other than Premium Category trains in the recent Trains Cleanliness Survey conducted by IRCTC on all India level. During the year 2018, Southern Railway's gross earnings also stood at more than Rs six thousand crores rupees which is almost 10% higher than the last year earnings. To cater to the growing demands of passengers, Southern Railway has also introduced 54 trains over past four years.

112. Which Indian golfer has won the New South Wales men's Amateur Golf Championship in Australia?

- [A] Anirban Lahiri
- [B] Kartik Sharma
- [C] Shiv Chawrasia
- [D] Aman Raj

Correct Answer: B [Kartik Sharma]

Notes:

Kartik Sharma from India has won the New South Wales men's Amateur Golf Championship in Australia. Kartik notched up a magnificent win over Australia's Nathan Barberie in the scheduled 36-hole final to emerge as champion. Kartik has been playing for India since the age of 10 as part of the National Squad. He had been selected to represent Indian Golf Union for three events in Australia.

113. SANH, which is in news recently, is a research programme to tackle which pollution?

- [A] To study nitrogen pollution
- [B] To study noise pollution
- [C] To study radioactive pollution
- [D] To study light pollution

Correct Answer: A [To study nitrogen pollution]

Notes:

The South Asian Nitrogen Hub (SANH) is a major international research programme to tackle the challenge that nitrogen pollution poses for environment, food security, human health and the economy in South Asia. The SANH will be established with funding from UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) under its Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF). 18 Indian research institutions are part of a group of 50 which have received £20 million funding from the United Kingdom Government. The SANH will study the impact of the different forms of pollution to form a coherent picture of the nitrogen cycle. In particular, it will look at nitrogen in agriculture in eight countries – India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Maldives. The Hub's recommendations will support cleaner and more profitable farming, as well as industrial recycling of nitrogen, fostering development of a cleaner circular economy for nitrogen.

114. Which of the following trains has been named as Vande Bharat Express?

- [A] Deccan Odyssey
- [B] Golden Chariot
- [C] Lifeline Express
- [D] Train 18

Correct Answer: D [Train 18]

Notes:

The Indian Railways has named the indigenously manufactured Train 18 as Vande Bharat Express. The train is set to run between Delhi and Varanasi at a maximum speed of 160kmph. The 16-coach train is designed and manufactured by the Chennai-based Integral Coach Factory (ICF) at a cost of approx Rs 97 crore. It is regarded as a successor to the 30-year-old Shatabdi Express. Train 18 is also the first locomotive-less train in the country. The fully air-conditioned train will stop at Kanpur and Allahabad and will have two executive chair cars. It has diffused lighting, automatic doors and footsteps besides GPS-based Passenger Information System.

115. Oxford dictionaries has declared which word as the Hindi word for the year 2018?

- [A] Jugaad
- [B] Nari Shakti
- [C] Aadhaar
- [D] Surya namaskar

Correct Answer: B [Nari Shakti]

Notes:

Oxford dictionaries has declared "Nari Shakti" as the Hindi word for the year 2018. The announcement was made during a session at the ongoing Jaipur Literature Festival (JLF) at the Diggi Palace. According to the Oxford dictionaries, the word has been derived from Sanskrit and is used today to symbolise women "taking charge of their lives". The word was selected by the Oxford Dictionaries (India) with the help of an advisory panel of language experts, including Namita Gokhale, Randhir Thakur, Kritika Agrawal and Saurabh Dwivedi. Oxford had named 'Aadhaar' as its Hindi word for the year 2017.

116. Which neighboring country of India has recently declared sugarcane juice as 'national drink'?

- [A] Bangladesh
- [B] Bhutan
- [C] Pakistan
- [D] Nepal

Correct Answer: C [Pakistan]

Notes:

The Government of Pakistan has recently declared sugarcane juice as the 'national drink' of the country.

The announcement came after the government conducted a Twitter poll where people were asked to decide on the country's national drink with two other options — orange and carrot — besides sugarcane. According to the poll, 7,616 people or 81% cast their votes favouring sugarcane juice, 15% voted for orange juice while 4% chose carrot. Upon securing majority votes, sugarcane juice was declared as the 'national drink' of Pakistan.

117. Who has won the 2018 DSC Prize for South Asian Literature?

- [A] Mohsin Hamid
- [B] Jayant Kaikini
- [C] Kamila Shamsie
- [D] Jeet Thayil

Correct Answer: B [Jayant Kaikini]

Notes:

Jayant Kaikini, renowned Kannada poet short-story writer, columnist and playwright and lyricist, has won the prestigious 2018 DSC Prize for South Asian Literature for 'No Presents Please: Mumbai Stories' at the Tata Steel Kolkata Literary Meet. The novel is a collection of short stories set in Mumbai dating back to the 1980s. It offers a fine-grained, ground-up view of arguably India's greatest metropolis. The book was originally written in the southern Indian language of Kannada and translated into English by the award-winning translator Tejaswini Niranjana. The \$25,000 (£19,100) prize rewards the best writing about south Asian culture from writers of any ethnicity and from all over the world, will be split equally between author and translator. It will be split equally between author and translator. No Presents Please is the first work in translation to win the award in the prize's eight-year history.

118. Who has won the men's singles 2019 Australian Open Tennis Tournament?

- [A] Marin Cilic
- [B] Novak Djokovic
- [C] Rafael Nadal
- [D] Andy Murray

Correct Answer: B [Novak Djokovic]

Notes:

Novak Djokovic from Serbia defeated Rafael Nadal to win his 7th Australian Open Men's Singles title at Melbourne on 28th January 2019. The resurgent world No.1 outplayed the second-ranked Nadal 6-3, 6-2, 6-3 in a largely one-sided match. With this, Djokovic has surpassed American legend Pete Sampras to elevate himself to outright third on the all-time Grand Slam title leaderboard. Earlier, In 2019 Women's Singles, Japan's Naomi Osaka clinched her first-ever Australian Open Grand Slam Singles title in Melbourne. With this, Osaka became the first Asian player to achieve the world number one ranking.

119. Which country has recently stripped of the right to host the 2019 World Para Swimming Championships?

- [A] Malaysia
- [B] Israel
- [C] Indonesia
- [D] Germany

Correct Answer: A [Malaysia]

Notes:

Malaysia has been stripped of the right to host the 2019 World Para Swimming Championships for threatening to refuse to allow Israeli athletes to take part. The decision was taken by International Paralympic Committee (IPC) after the Malaysian authorities failed to provide the necessary guarantees that Israeli Para swimmers could participate, free from discrimination, and safely in the Championships. IPC President Andrew Parsons said when a host country excludes athletes from a particular nation, for political reasons, then they have absolutely no alternative but to look for a new Championships host. The 2019 championships was a qualifying event for the 2020 Tokyo Paralympics & were due to take place in Kuching on July 29-August 4.

120. Saina Nehwal has won the 2019 Indonesia Masters title against which player?

- [A] Huang Sui

- [B] Ratchanok Intanon
 [C] Wang Shixian
 [D] Carolina Marin

Correct Answer: D [Carolina Marin]

Notes:

On 27th January 2019, Ace shuttler Saina Nehwal won her first Indonesia Masters title after three-time world champion Carolina Marin of Spain limped out of the final due to a leg injury in Jakarta. Marin was leading 10-4 in the first game when she developed an injury in the knee.

121. In which year, India would participate in the International Student Assessment (PISA)?
- [A] 2023
 [B] 2020
 [C] 2021
 [D] 2022

Correct Answer: C [2021]

Notes:

In New Delhi, the Union Human Resources Development (HRD) Ministry signed an agreement with Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) for India's Participation in Programme for International Student Assessment- PISA 2021. The student assessment by PISA will ensure learning outcome through education. Students will be selected by PISA through random sampling. The format for the student assessment will be offline and the question to Indian students will be related to India's perspective only. The PISA test will help reveal where they stand globally as far as learning outcomes are concerned. PISA is a triennial international survey in which students are assessed in reading, mathematics, science and collaborative problem-solving. The purpose of the survey is to evaluate the education system worldwide by testing the skills and knowledge of 15-year-old students. The CBSE and NCERT will be part of the process and activities leading to the actual test.

122. Which Indian personality has been appointed the WHO regional director for South-East Asia?
- [A] Indira Hinduja
 [B] Shashi Wadhwa
 [C] M. Subhadra Nair
 [D] Poonam Khetrapal Singh

Correct Answer: D [Poonam Khetrapal Singh]

Notes:

Dr. Poonam Khetrapal Singh has been appointed the South-East Asia regional director of the World Health Organization (WHO) for a second five-year term. Under her leadership, the Region has made remarkable progress. In her first term, she focused on building an increasingly responsive and accountable WHO in the Region, while prioritizing persisting and emerging epidemiological and demographic challenges; promoting universal health coverage and building robust health systems; strengthening emergency risk management and articulating a strong regional voice in global health agenda. In the last five years, four countries eliminated measles and six controlled rubella. Thailand became the first in Asia-Pacific and the first with a large HIV epidemic—to eliminate mother-to-child transmission of HIV and syphilis. Maldives and Sri Lanka were certified malaria free. Maldives, Sri Lanka and Thailand eliminated lymphatic filariasis, India was declared yaws-free and Nepal trachoma-free.

123. Which union ministry has launched 'RDP INDIA 2019 app' for Republic Day parade?
- [A] Ministry of Home Affairs
 [B] Ministry of Defence
 [C] Ministry of Information and Broadcasting
 [D] Ministry of Women and Child Development

Correct Answer: B [Ministry of Defence]

Notes:

The Ministry of Defence launched a mobile app 'RDP India 2019' to let people watch highlights of the 70th Republic Day event all over the world. This app contains information about the Parade on Rajpath, New Delhi, including Order of the March, details of the tableaux presented by different States and

Ministries, children cultural performances, fly past and names of recipients of Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar 2019. It was extremely informative to the spectators witnessing the Parade and was widely appreciated. The app also had the provision for live streaming of the Parade. People who desire to know the theme and ideas depicted in the tableaux and also those who for some reason could not witness the Parade on Rajpath or watch it on TV, can still download the app and gather all information about the event. This new initiative is in sync with the Digital India campaign of the Government.

124. Atal Setu, which is in news recently, is built across which river in Goa?

- [A] Harnal
- [B] Mandovi
- [C] Terekhol
- [D] Galjibag

Correct Answer: B [Mandovi]

Notes:

Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari inaugurated Atal Setu — the third Cable bridge across river Mandovi in Panaji, Goa. The new bridge is four-lane and 5.1Km long, and is expected to overcome the bottlenecks and curb traffic jams at Panaji Circle and Panaji entrance. It is constructed by the GIDC (Goa Infrastructure Development Corporation) and engineering and construction major Larsen and Toubro. This is the third bridge across Mandovi River. It is named as ATAL SETU in memory of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpeyee.

125. Who has been conferred the Assam Republic Day Journalism Award 2019?

- [A] Dharendra Nath Chakraborty
- [B] Kishalay Bhattacharjee
- [C] Homen Borgohain
- [D] Siddhartha Sarma

Correct Answer: A [Dhirendra Nath Chakraborty]

Notes:

Dhirendra Nath Chakraborty, the veteran journalist and former editor, has been conferred the Assam Republic Day Journalism Award 2019 for his lifelong contribution to journalism in the state. The award comprises a cash prize of Rs.1 lakh, a citation, the Assamese 'xoraai' (the bell metal memento presented as an honour), 'jaapi' (headgear) and an angavastra. Chakraborty is the former editor of Dainik Asom, Dainik Janambhumi and Ajir Batori group of newspaper.

126. Which state government has decided to launch Yuva Swabhiman Yojana for urban poor youth?

- [A] Jharkhand
- [B] Madhya Pradesh
- [C] Rajasthan
- [D] Chhattisgarh

Correct Answer: B [Madhya Pradesh]

Notes:

On the occasion of 70th Republic Day 2019, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath announced the launch of the 'Yuva Swabhiman Yojana' for youths from the Economically Weaker Sections (EWSs) in urban areas. The purpose of the scheme is to empower the unemployed youth candidates. Under this scheme, 100 days of employment will be provided to youngsters from economically weaker sections of the society in urban areas. Apart from this, they will also be given skill training by the government.

127. Who has become the first Indian transgender to be honoured with Padma Shri?

- [A] Madurai Chinna Pillai
- [B] Narthaki Nataraj
- [C] Bangaru Adigalar
- [D] R V Ramani

Correct Answer: B [Narthaki Nataraj]

Notes:

Narthaki Nataraj, a renowned dancer from Tamil Nadu, has become the first Indian transgender to be honoured with Padma Shri, the third highest civilian award of India. She is a Bharatanatyam exponent and specialises in the Thanjavur-based Nayaki Bhava tradition. Born in the temple town of Madurai, Nataraj learned the art under Tanjore Shri K P Kittappa Pillai and gave her on advances to the Tanjore Quartet of Bharatanatyam (Nayaki Bhava tradition) through a dance school she established.

128. Who is the head of IRDAI committee to identify Systemically Important Insurers (SII)?

- [A] Anup Sah
- [B] Devarapalli Prakash Rao
- [C] Nagindas Sanghavi
- [D] Pravin Kutumbe

Correct Answer: D [Pravin Kutumbe]

Notes:

Insurance regulator IRDAI has constituted a committee that will not only facilitate in identifying the Systemically Important Insurers (SIIs), but also recommend enhanced supervision measures for them. The committee headed by IRDAI member (finance and investment) Pravin Kutumbe will submit its report within six months. The committee would study the methodology followed by International Association of Insurance Supervisors (IAIS) for identification of SIIs and those followed by other financial regulators, particularly by RBI for identification of SIFIs. As per the terms of reference, the panel has also to develop a paper on assessment methodology for SIIs in India and recommend enhanced supervision for them.

129. Who has become the Pakistan's first Hindu woman judge?

- [A] Gita Mehta
- [B] Smita Kolhe
- [C] Suman Kumari
- [D] Draupadi Ghimiray

Correct Answer: C [Suman Kumari]

Notes:

Suman Kumari has become the first Hindu woman in Pakistan to be appointed as a civil judge after passing an examination for induction of judicial officers. She hails from Qambar-Shahdadt Kot & will serve in her native district. Suman passed her LLB examination from Hyderabad and did her masters in law from Karachi's Szabist University. This is not the first time that a person from the Hindu community has been appointed as a judge. The first judge from the Hindu community was Justice Rana Bhagwandas, who served as the acting chief justice for brief periods between 2005 and 2007. Hindus make up nearly 2% of Pakistan's total population and Hinduism remains the second largest religion in Pakistan after Islam.

130. Which of the following states has been declared best state for active participation in Swasth Bharat Yatra?

- [A] Punjab
- [B] Tamil Nadu
- [C] Uttrakhand
- [D] Gujarat

Correct Answer: B [Tamil Nadu]

Notes:

On 28th January 2019, Tamil Nadu was declared the 'Best State Overall' for its active participation in the national campaign 'Swasth Bharat Yatra'. The campaign was a 100-day consumer outreach programme of the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), which was launched on 16th October 2018 to amplify its Eat Right India initiative. Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra were adjudged the Best States with population above 3 crore. Punjab, Goa and Delhi were recognised as the Best States having population less than 3 crore. Meghalaya, Jammu and Kashmir and Uttrakhand were given special awards for their participation despite their hilly and difficult terrain. The Yatra saw the involvement of 10 lakh participants and reached to around 2.5 crore people across various States and UTs. It also led to the creation of 21,000 local 'Eat Right Champions' who would sustain this movement

in the future.

131. Which state government has launched Jiban Sampark project to reach vulnerable tribes?

- [A] Odisha
- [B] Assam
- [C] Punjab
- [D] West Bengal

Correct Answer: A [Odisha]

Notes:

Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has recently announced to launch "Jiban Sampark" project in partnership with UNICEF India to generate awareness about the development and welfare initiatives of state government among the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG) of the state. The announcement was made at the annual tribal fair popularly known as "Adivasi Mela" on 70th Republic Day 2019. The focus areas of the Project will include skill development, empowering communities, cooperation and innovation among the groups. Of 75 tribal communities in the country, 13 PVTGs reside in remote and far-off areas of 12 districts in Odisha.

132. Which country is the largest producer of crude steel in the world, according to latest report of World Steel Association (WSA)?

- [A] China
- [B] South Korea
- [C] Japan
- [D] India

Correct Answer: A [China]

Notes:

As per latest report of the World Steel Association (WSA), China is the largest producer of crude steel accounting for more than 51% of production. While, India has replaced Japan as world's second largest steel producing country. The crude steel production of India in 2018 was at 106.5 MT. It went up by 4.9% from 101.5 MT in 2017. Japan produced 104.3 MT in 2018, down 0.3% compared to 2017. Global crude steel production reached 1,808.6 MT for the year 2018 from 1,729.8 MT in 2017, a rise of 4.6%. The WSA is the international trade body for the iron and steel industry. Its members represent around 85% of the world's steel production, including over 160 steel producers with 9 of the 10 largest steel companies, national and regional steel industry associations, and steel research institutes.

133. The 2019 International Holocaust Remembrance Day is observed on which of the following dates?

- [A] January 30
- [B] January 27
- [C] January 31
- [D] January 29

Correct Answer: B [January 27]

Notes:

The International Holocaust Remembrance Day is observed every year on 27th of January to commemorate the tragedy of the Holocaust that occurred during the Second World War. It commemorates the genocide that resulted in the death of an estimated 6 million Jews and others by the Nazi regime.

134. Who is the head of Lokpal search panel to select members of anti-corruption ombudsman Lokpal?

- [A] Shabbirhusein S Khandwawala
- [B] Ranjit Kumar
- [C] Ranjana Prakash Desai
- [D] Lalit K Panwar

Correct Answer: C [Ranjana Prakash Desai]

Notes:

On 29th January, the 8-member Lokpal search panel hold its first meeting to select members of anti-corruption ombudsman Lokpal. The committee, headed by former Supreme Court judge Ranjana Prakash Desai, is understood to have discussed modalities related to the appointments of the chief and members of Lokpal. The meeting comes days after the Supreme Court set up a February-end deadline for the search committee to send a panel of names who could be considered for the appointment as chairman and members of Lokpal by Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led selection committee. The Lokpal Act, which envisages establishment of the anti-graft body Lokpal at the Centre and Lokayuktas in states to look into cases of corruption against certain categories of public servants, was passed in 2013.

135. Which city is the venue of the 2019 International Stock Taking Conference on Tiger Conservation?

- [A] New Delhi
- [B] Bhopal
- [C] Hyderabad
- [D] Dehradun

Correct Answer: A [New Delhi]

Notes:

The 3rd International Stock Taking Conference on Tiger Conservation was held in New Delhi on January 28, 2019. The 2-day conference was hosted by the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) in close collaboration with the Global Tiger Forum (GTF) which is an International, Intergovernmental Organization for conserving tigers in the world. In it, the 13 tiger range countries discussed on the status of the Global Tiger Recovery Program (GTRP) besides deliberations on combating wildlife trafficking. This is the second stock taking conference held in India after 2012. The major outcome of the Conference is expected to be course correction in strategies envisaged in Global and National Tiger Recovery Programs (GTRP/NTRP) which shall take tiger conservation forward to the intended goal as outlined in St. Petersburg, Russia.

136. Which state government has decided to introduce MSP for farmers based on MS Swaminathan report?

- [A] Tamil Nadu
- [B] Maharashtra
- [C] Punjab
- [D] Delhi

Correct Answer: D [Delhi]

Notes:

The Delhi government has decided to provide the Capital's farmers a Minimum Support Price (MSP) for their crops based on the recommendations of the M.S. Swaminathan Committee's report. In its 2006 report, the National Commission on Farmers' chairman Prof. M S Swaminathan suggested the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) to fix MSP at least 50% more than the weighted average cost of production.

137. Who has become the youngest batsman to smack a half-century in international cricket?

- [A] Matt Renshaw
- [B] Prithvi Shaw
- [C] Rohit Paudel
- [D] Kagiso Rabada

Correct Answer: C [Rohit Paudel]

Notes:

On 26th January 2019, Nepalese batsman Rohit Paudel created history by becoming the youngest player in men's international cricket to hit a half-century surpassing the likes of batting legends Sachin Tendulkar (in Tests) and Shahid Afridi (in ODIs). He accomplished the feat in the 2nd ODI against the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in Dubai at the age of 16 years and 146 days. Hence, Paudel overtook the long-standing record held by Tendulkar, who achieved the feat in a Test against Pakistan at the age of 16

years and 213 days. In ODI cricket, the record was held by Shahid Afridi who creamed a maiden 50-over century aged 16 years and 217 days in his maiden international innings against Sri Lanka. Though, the overall record for the youngest player to hit a half-century in international cricket is held by South African female player Johmari Logtenburg who recorded Test and ODI half-centuries at the age of 14.

138. Which country bagged the Award of Excellence for 'Best in Show' at the New York Times Travel Show 2019?

- [A] China
- [B] Japan
- [C] India
- [D] Nepal

Correct Answer: C [India]

Notes:

India received the Award of Excellence for 'Best in Show' at the recently concluded New York Times Travel Show (NYTTS-2019). It is the largest travel show in North America which is held from 25th – 27th January at the Jacob K Javits Centre in New York, United States. The Ministry of Tourism (Government of India) participated as the 'Presenting Partner' in the NYTTS 2019 with a view to scale up its tourism promotional efforts in the US, enhance India's visibility and to increase its share of US Outbound travel market. A high-level delegation led by Tourism Ministry Secretary Yogendra Tripathi and a number of stakeholders from India's tourism industry participated in the Show.

139. Which state government has recently launched a special scheme to curb infant deaths?

- [A] Jharkhand
- [B] Delhi
- [C] Uttar Pradesh
- [D] Maharashtra

Correct Answer: D [Maharashtra]

Notes:

The Maharashtra government has launched a special scheme to curb infant deaths. The scheme is applicable only for the first child and will benefit around four lakh women across the state, Women. Each kit contains a blanket, a small mattress, a towel, a thermometer, baby oil, shampoo, toys, nail-cutter, gloves, socks, among other things. The cost of the kit is around Rs 2,000. For this cause, Child Development Minister Pankaja Munde distributed baby-care kits to the children born in primary health centres and government hospitals.

140. The world's longest expressway will come up in which of the following states?

- [A] Uttar Pradesh
- [B] Madhya Pradesh
- [C] Arunachal Pradesh
- [D] Himachal Pradesh

Correct Answer: A [Uttar Pradesh]

Notes:

First time in the history of Kumbh, UP State government's cabinet meeting was held at Prayagraj Kumbh on 29th of January 2019. It is also 2nd time in the history of UP that cabinet meeting held outside the state capital. Here, the State cabinet decided to construct 600 km long Ganga Expressway from Meerut to Prayagraj with a cost of Rs. 36000 crores to provide better connectivity from Western districts to Prayagraj. The expressway is being touted as the world's longest highway. It will be built on a stretch of 6,556 hectares of land. The proposed Ganga Expressway will weave through Meerut-Amroha-Bulandshahr-Budaun-Shahjahanpur-Kannauj-Unnao-Rae Bareli-Pratapgarh and end at Prayagraj, earlier known as Allahabad. Yogi Adityanath-led cabinet also approved proposal of Gorakhpur link road project connecting Azamgarh and Ambedkarnagar with Purvanchal expressway. UP Cabinet has also decided to set up statue of Nishadraj at Sringeripur at Prayagraj and develop Ashram of Maharshi Valmiki at Chitrakoot. The Cabinet has also decided to exempt film URI from State GST as film is based on patriotism and sacrifice of soldiers. The first meeting of the Uttar Pradesh cabinet away from Lucknow was held in 1962 in Nainital when Govind Vallabh Pant was the Chief Minister.