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FEBRUARY 2018

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Union Budget & Economic Survey Highlights

GST in Union Budget 2018

- Instead of 12 months, government will account for 11 months of revenue only, under GST for 2017-2018.
- Rs 21.57 lakh crore has been transferred in form of net GST to finance the shortfalls of states against the predicted amount of Rs 21.47 lakh.

Railways in Union Budget 2018

- Total capital expenditure for Indian Railways set at Rs 1, 48, 528 crores.
- A Special Railway University will also be set up in Vadodara, Gujarat.
- In order to cut travel times and delays, the FM proposed cutting 4, 267 unmanned railway crossings.

Agriculture & Allied Sectors and Rural Development

- Minimum support price (MSP) for all upcoming Kharif crops has been raised to 1.5 times the cost of production.
- Agricultural market and infra fund of with corpus of Rs 2,000 will be created for 22,000 gramin agricultural markets and 585 APMCs.
- Export of agricultural commodity has been liberalized to meet India's agricultural exports potential of \$100 billion.

Health & Social Security

- Govt to set up 1.5 lakh centres under Aayushman Bharat Programme to provide health facilities with an allocation of ₹1,200 crore.
- 10 crore people to get Rs 5 lakh Health Coverage for hospitalization every year.
- Government has set a target to construct at least 2 crore toilets under Swachh Bharat Mission.

Education in Union Budget 2018

- Allocation of Rs 1 lakh crore has been proposed for revitalizing and upgrading education sector.
- Education in country to be treated without segmentation from KG till class 12.
- By 2022, every block with over 20,000 tribals and over 50 per cent STs will have a special Eklavya school.

Banks in Union Budget 2018

- Mudra Yojana lending target set at Rs 3 lakh crore.
- PM Jivan Bima Yojana gave benefits to 5.22 crore families in 2017.
- Allocation of ₹52,719 crore for social inclusion of scheduled castes is proposed in the budget.

Taxation in Union Budget 2018

- Government proposes no change in personal income tax rates for salaried class. There has been a 12.6%

growth in direct taxes in 2017-18; 18.7% growth in indirect taxes in 2017-18.

- Corporate Tax has been reduced from 30 percent to 25 per cent for companies with turnover up to Rs 250 crore, move to boost MSME sector.

Technology and IT Sector

- Allocation of Rs 3,073 crore was done for Digital India scheme.
- As many as 5 lakh Wi-Fi hotspots will be installed to give access of broadband services to 5 crore rural citizens.
- Government will now explore the usage of Blockchain technology but it will also take steps to prohibit circulation of Cryptocurrencies.

Awards & Honours

Pranab Mukherjee to get honorary D.Litt

- Former President Pranab Mukherjee will be conferred an honorary D.Litt. by the Indian Institute of Engineering Science and Technology.
- Mukherjee will be conferred the honour during IIST convocation for his role as a public figure for many decades.
- Mukherjee was also awarded an honorary D. Litt by Jadavpur University in December last year.

EY Entrepreneur of the Year 2017

- Sanjiv Bajaj, managing director of Bajaj Finserv, has been named the EY Entrepreneur of the Year 2017.
- Bajaj Finserv has emerged as the country's leading name in financial services with solutions across lending, life and general insurance and wealth advisory.
- Bajaj will now represent India at the EY World Entrepreneur of the Year Award (WEOY) in Monte Carlo from June 13-17, 2018.

'Startup of the Year' 2017

- Milkbasket, India's first and largest micro-delivery platform has been recognised as 'Startup of the Year' 2017 at the 7th Small Business Awards.
- Milkbasket delivers milk, bread, eggs, butter, juices and other daily need items every morning.
- The startup of the year award is dedicated to young SMEs, aged 7 years or less, with great potential to become big in local/international markets.

Asha Bhosle honoured with Yash Chopra Award

- Legendary singer Asha Bhosle has been honoured with the Yash Chopra Memorial Award.
- Bhosle, who is the fifth recipient of the award, was felicitated by actress Rekha during the ceremony.
- Bhosle's illustrious music career spans 7 decades having recorded over 11,000 songs in 20 different languages.
- Previous recipients of the award are Lata Mangeshkar, Amitabh Bachchan, Rekha & Shah Rukh Khan.

TCS recognized as the world's Best employer

- Tata Consultancy Services has been recognized as the world's best employer by the Top Employer Institute for the 3rd consecutive year.
- TCS was selected from a pool of 1,300 companies in 113 countries for offering exceptional services to its employees.
- Top Employer rankings are based on criteria including Talent Strategy, Workforce Planning, Learning & Development & On-boarding among others.

Vikas Sathaye honoured at Oscars

- Vikas Sathaye has been honoured with the Scientific and Engineering Academy Award at the Oscars Scientific and Technical Awards 2018.
- Sathaye and his team received the award for his contribution towards conceptualisation, designing, engineering, and the implementation of the 'Shotover K1 Camera System'.
- The Shotover K1 Camera System is a camera mount that is used in aerial filming.

Umang App wins Best M-Govt Service award

- Umang App was announced the winner of the Best M-Government Service award in the Accessible Govt category while Aadhar won the best emerging technology award at the World Government Summit 2018 in Dubai.
- Aadhaar was also recognized as the world's largest biometric-enabled identification programme.
- The award acknowledged Govt of India's efforts to provide convenient services to its citizens.

RIL wins Golden Peacock Award for CSR

- Reliance Industries has won the Golden Peacock Award 2017 for success of its Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives.
- One of RIL's key social projects aim at impacting the livelihood of farmers through water and food security interventions.
- The award aims to give attention to social & environmental concerns & encourage companies to balance financial profits, value addition & social good

Modi gets Grand Collar of State of Palestine

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been conferred with the 'Grand Collar of the State of Palestine'.
- The Grand Collar is Highest order given to foreign dignitaries, in the past it has been awarded to King Salman of Saudi Arabia & President Xi Jinping of China among others.
- Modi is the first Indian Prime Minister to make an official visit to Palestine.

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The Shape of Water won award: Guild Awards

- Guillermo del Toro, director of 'The Shape of Water', won the prize for Outstanding Directorial Achievement in Feature Film at the Directors Guild of America Awards.
- It received 13 nominations at Oscars 2018.
- Reed Morano was named best director in Dramatic Series for 'The Handmaid's Tale' while Jordan Peele was awarded best First-Time Feature Film Director for 'Get Out'.

Benegal Awarded Lifetime Achievement Award

- Mumbai International Film Festival (MIFF) committee has decided to bestow V. Shantaram lifetime achievement Award to veteran film producer and director Shyam Benegal.
- He will be awarded a trophy, cash price of 10 lakh rupees, a certificate and a shawl by Governor of Maharashtra C. Vidyasagar Rao.
- Benegal has been selected for his contribution to the promotion of the documentary movement.

Shabnam won Times Power Woman 2017 Award

- Shabnam Asthana was awarded the 'Times Power Women of the Year 2017' - Pune for Global PR.
- The Times Group celebrated the invaluable contribution of women by introducing The Times Power Woman 2017 (Pune) awards.
- The award was conferred on her by Dilip Kamble, Minister of State for Social Justice and Special Assistance in the Government of Maharashtra.

Madhukar awarded with Bhasha Samman

- Magahi writer Shesh Anand Madhukar, who has been working extensively for the development of the language, was honoured with this year's Sahitya Akademi Bhasha Samman award.
- The second writer of Magahi language to be given the award, Madhukar was conferred the award comprising Rs 1 lakh cheque and a memento.

Days & Events

National Science Day- 28th February

- National Science Day (NSD) is celebrated every year on 28th February.
- The theme of NSD-2018 is "Science and Technology for a Sustainable Future".
- NSD is celebrated to commemorate the discovery of the 'Raman Effect', which led to Sir C.V. Raman winning the Nobel Prize.
- The theme has been chosen for the purpose of raising public appreciation of scientific issues.

Modi addressed India-Korea Business Summit

- PM Modi addressed the 2nd India-Korea Business Summit in New Delhi.

- The summit aims to create framework for an open & action-oriented dialogue b/w top business leaders & govt officials from India & Korea.
- This year, the theme of the summit is "India-Korea: Scaling up the Special Strategic Relationship through Trade & Investments".
- India and Korea are the 3rd & 4th largest economies in Asia.

International Conf. on Sustainable Biofuels

- An International Conference on Sustainable Biofuels has been organized by Department of Biotechnology & Govt. of India. It will take place in New Delhi.
- It will bring together experts from Biofuels sector to take stock of current knowledge, share info & best practices to build consensus on the actions most needed to move forward.
- Sustainable Biofuel is 1 of the 7 Mission Innovation Challenges.

Assam To Celebrate 'Rhino Day' On Sept 22

- In a bid to keep the world famous one-horned rhinoceros of Assam under the global spotlight, Assam Government has decided to celebrate September 22 as 'Rhino Day'.
- CM Sarbananda Sonowal made this announcement at the 10th meeting of State Board for Wildlife.
- The day would be a tribute to the approx. 2500 rhino population in the state, which is the 'one of the many prides of Assam'.

International Mother Language Day

- International Mother Language Day is a world-wide annual observance held on February 21st to promote multilingualism and create awareness for linguistic & cultural diversity.
- The theme of this year is 'linguistic diversity and multilingualism for sustainable development'.
- There are more than 7,000 languages in the world; India alone has about 22 officially recognised languages.

PM Modi inaugurates UP Investors' Summit 2018

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the two-day Uttar Pradesh Investors Summit 2018 along with Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath in Lucknow.
- The Investors' Summit has been organised to further the cause of economic development in the state and attract investments.
- The Summit is being attended by at least 5,000 people including industry heads from India and abroad.

UN observes World Day of Social Justice 2018

- World Social Justice Day is observed annually on 20th Feb for promoting efforts to tackle issues such

as poverty, unemployment, gender equality & to create an equitable society for all.

- The theme of World Day of Social Justice 2018 is 'Workers on the Move: the Quest for Social Justice'.
- This year the theme is focused on hurdles of migrant workers who are suffering for good work opportunities.

India to be Global Host for Environment Day

- India and United Nations have signed a document declaring India as the Global Host of World Environment Day, 2018.
- This came despite the fact that India was one of the 3 countries to reject concrete target in a UN agreement to reduce plastic waste in oceans in December 2017.
- The theme of this year's environment day observance is 'Beat Plastic Pollution'.

World Congress on Information Technology

- The 3-day long, World Congress on Information Technology (WCIT) has begun in Hyderabad.
- WCIT was organised first time in the country & Prime Minister Modi will inaugurate the summit through a video conference.
- It has been organized in partnership with NASSCOM, WITSA & the Government of Telangana.
- The humanoid, Sophia the robot is also one of the featured speakers at the WCIT summit.

Maharashtra's first Global Investors Summit

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has inaugurated the 'Magnetic Maharashtra' Convergence Summit 2018.
- This is Maharashtra's first Global Investors Summit and is being regarded as one of the biggest such events, especially on the lines of the 'Make In India' initiative.
- The summit is being attended by the top names from India Inc. as well as prominent global corporates.

VP Inaugurated Theatre Olympics

- Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu will inaugurate the 8th edition of the Theatre Olympics at Lal Quila in New Delhi.
- The theme of the festival is - "Flag of Friendship".
- The 51-day long, nationwide theatre extravaganza will be held in 17 cities, including Ahmedabad, Bhopal and Patna.
- It is for the first time that India is hosting the event.
- More than 25 thousand foreign artists will participate.

World Sustainable Development Summit 2018

- PM Modi inaugurated the World Sustainable Development Summit 2018 in New Delhi.

- Event has been organized by The Energy and Resources Institute to discuss frameworks to resolve climate change crises in developing countries
- The summit will see participation from over 41 countries, bringing together different stakeholders in the fields of sustainable development, energy and environment sectors.

China to host SCO Summit in Qingdao

- China has announced that this year's summit of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation will be held in the city of Qingdao in June.
- SCO focuses on security-related issues of the region specially on counterterrorism cooperation.
- It is comprised of China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India & Pak.
- China, which is one of the founders of SCO, plays an influential role in it.

World Radio Day - 13th February

- World Radio Day is observed annually on 13th February. The theme for WRD 2018 is "Radio and Sports".
- The Day is organised globally by the UNESCO.
- The objective of the Day is mainly to raise greater awareness among the public and the media for the importance of radio and to encourage decision makers to establish and provide access to information through radio.

International Conference on Unani Medicine

- The International conference on Unani Medicine was inaugurated by Dr. Jitendra Singh at New Delhi.
- The theme of the conference is Integration of Unani System of Medicine in mainstream healthcare.
- It is organized by Central Council for Research in Unani Medicine, under the Ministry of AYUSH.
- This year is special for Unani fraternity as it is the 150th Birth Anniversary of Hakim Ajmal Khan.

National Deworming Day conducted

- National Deworming Day is observed on 10 Feb & 10 Aug each year to tackle the countrywide public health threat of intestinal worm infections in children & related morbidity.
- It is a single fixed-day approach to treating intestinal worm infections in all children aged 1-19 yrs.
- It aims to create awareness about the most effective & low-cost STH treatment administering albendazole tablets.

World Cancer Day Observed

- The World Cancer Day is observed on 4th Feb, across the world, including India with an aim to raise awareness among people about the disease.
- For 2016 to 2018, the theme for observing World Cancer Day is 'We can. I can.'

- People are expected to, individually and collectively, understand and work towards lessening the impact and harmful effects of the condition globally.
- Watch this video to know more about World Cancer Day celebration and theme:

Buddhist Fest 'Global Shanti' Celebrated

- The 'Global Shanti: Amaravati Buddhist Heritage Festival' kicked off in Andhra Pradesh.
- The 3-day festival, organised by the Andhra Pradesh Tourism Authority, aimed to set a world record for 'largest online chanting session'.
- 1000+ monks from various countries including like China, Myanmar, Japan & Thailand participated in the festival.

Maratha Light Infantry to Mark 250 years

- Maratha Light Infantry, one of the oldest regiments of the Army has entered its 250th year.
- Maratha Light Infantry was the first infantry to be designated as a light infantry during the British Raj, for being swift-footed.
- The regiment draws inspiration from the legacy of Maratha warriors.
- Feb 4th is celebrated as "Maratha Light Infantry Day" across the regiment throughout the country.

World Wetland Day Celebrated in Assam

- The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change in collaboration with Assam government organized the national-level celebration of World Wetlands Day 2018 at Deepor Beel, a Ramsar Site in Guwahati.
- The theme for 2018 was "Wetlands for a sustainable urban future".
- Every year, 2nd Feb is celebrated as World Wetlands Day, to mark the date of adoption of Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

International Affairs

Davis Cup to Convert into 'WG of Tennis'

- The Davis Cup, in existence since 1900, may be converted into a 'World Cup of Tennis' from next year.
- The new format will feature 18 teams playing a week-long event at one venue, instead of the existing 16 teams playing across four different months.
- A 25-year, \$3 billion partnership with investment group Kosmos is in place for the new event.

Brussels to go Transport Free on High-Pollution Days

- Belgium's capital Brussels will provide free public transport on days of excessive air pollution under new emergency rules.

- Speed limit of cars would be reduced by a third and wood fires will be banned unless they are the only source of heating for households.
- Brussels has also launched an app for citizens to monitor air quality levels.

Saudi Military Leaders Replaced

- Saudi King Salman has sacked his military chief and a number of other top commanders in a shakeup apparently aimed at overhauling its Defense Ministry.
- The changes were made on the recommendation of the minister of defense, who is the Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.
- The decisions come as the Saudi-led coalition, chiefly backed by UAE, remains mired in a stalemate in Yemen.

U.S. to Overtake Russia as Top Oil Producer

- According to International Energy Agency, U.S. will overtake Russia as the world's biggest oil producer by 2019 at the latest.
- U.S. crude oil output rose above 10 million barrels per day late last year for the first time since 1970s.
- U.S. oil is also increasingly being exported, including to the world's biggest and fastest growing markets in Asia.

Saudi Arabia allows Women to Join Military

- Saudi Arabia has for the first time opened applications for women to join its military.
- The women, however, will not be given combat roles but will work in security.
- To apply, women will need to fulfil 12 requirements besides obtaining their guardian's approval.
- Decision to recruit female soldiers is one of many reforms enhancing women's

Rome's Colosseum Lit Red to Show Protest

- The Colosseum in Rome was lit in red in solidarity with persecuted Christians, particularly a Catholic woman named Asia Bibi.
- Bibi has been living on death row under Pakistan's blasphemy laws since 2010, when she was condemned for allegedly making derogatory remarks about Islam.
- Her husband and daughter addressed a gathering at the Colosseum.

China Elected as FATF Vice President

- India congratulated China for being elected Vice President of the Financial Action Task Force.
- China's election to the FATF assumes significance as Pakistan is set to be put in the watchdog's grey list.
- The FATF, also known as 'Groupe d'action financière' is an intergovernmental organization founded in 1989

on the initiative of the G7 to develop policies to combat money laundering.

Ranil takes over Law Ministry in reshuffle

- In the cabinet reshuffle of Sri Lanka, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe took over the key Law and Order Ministry.
- He replaced his close aide and party colleague Sagala Ratnayaka.

CPC Clears the Decks for Third Term for Xi

- China cleared the decks for President Xi Jinping's 3rd consecutive term in office, ahead of a crucial session of parliament next month.
- Communist Party of China proposed that the President and the Vice-President will not be constitutionally restricted to 2 consecutive terms in office.
- This, in effect, means that Mr. Xi, who is serving his 2nd consecutive 5-year term, can continue beyond 2023.

U.S. to Shift its Embassy to Jerusalem in May

- U.S. will move its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem by May of this year in time to mark the 70th anniversary of Israel's independence.
- At first, the embassy will operate out of the U.S.'s current consular premises in Arnona, south Jerusalem.
- Trump officially recognised Jerusalem as Israel's capital in December, despite fury from the Palestinians and warnings from Western allies.

UNSC Approves Syria Ceasefire Resolution

- United Nations Security Council has unanimously backed a 30-day ceasefire resolution in Syria to allow for humanitarian aid deliveries & medical evacuations.
- The vote comes in response to the 7 day airstrikes & bombings in the war-torn country that has claimed over 500 lives so far.
- Russia, an ally of Syria's govt, wanted changes, while Western diplomats accused Moscow of stalling for time.

'Largest-ever' Sanctions Against North Korea

- U.S. announced the largest-ever sanctions on North Korea as claimed by President Donald Trump.
- The sanctions will target more than 50 vessels, shipping companies, and trade businesses assisting North Korea in evading sanctions.
- U.S. has been imposing sanctions to put pressure on North Korea over its nuclear and ballistic missile programme.

Pakistan to be on Terror Watchlist

- China has voted in favour of putting Pakistan on the global terrorist-financing watchlist of Financial Action Task Force (FATF), removing its earlier objections to the move, according to reports.
- Pakistan is expected to be placed on the 'grey list' from June.
- The listing could make it harder & more expensive for Pakistan to borrow money from debt markets.

U.S. Tightens H-1B Visa Rules

- Donald Trump has just made it more difficult for companies and individuals to get H-1B work visas.
- Indians and Indian IT companies will feel the impact most because they are the biggest users of this visa.
- H-1B is a visa in U.S. under the Immigration and Nationality Act, section 101(a)(15)(H) which allows U.S. employers to employ foreign workers

ICC Approves T20 league in Canada

- International Cricket Council (ICC) has given green light to the Cricket Canada's maiden venture 'Global T20 Canada', expected to be held in July this year.
- Four Canadian local players will be playing in every squad of the league.
- Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau signed a bat wishing the Global T20 Canada league good luck.

'Perceived Corruption' List Ranks India at 81

- India has been ranked at 81st place out of 180 countries on a 'Corruption Perception Index', in a list released by Transparency International.
- India's ranking is worse than those of China and Bhutan but better than Pakistan & Bangladesh.
- India's score is 40. New Zealand & Denmark topped the list, while Syria, South Sudan & Somalia are at the bottom with scores of 14, 12 & 9 respectively.

Maldives Extends State of Emergency

- Maldives Parliament has approved the extension of State of Emergency by 30 days, a day after President Yameen sought extension citing threat to national security.
- Opposition leaders boycotted, calling the extension illegal & unconstitutional
- Maldives is facing political unrest since President Yameen imposed emergency after refusing to implement a SC order of freeing imprisoned opposition leaders.

Pakistan Gets 3 Months Reprieve

- Pakistan has been granted a 3 month reprieve by the Financial Action Task Force to be placed on a terror-financing watch-list.
- The reprieve comes a week after Pak amended its anti-terror laws to ban groups listed as terrorists by the United Nations.

- Pakistan had been on the FATF watchlist for years but was removed in 2015 following "significant progress" in meeting the demands of the group.

Saudi Arabia to Host First Arab Fashion Week

- Saudi Arabia is set to host its first Arab Fashion Week next month as part of a push to support aspiring Saudi designers and drive growth in the sector.
- The move is another example of the opening up of the country under Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman's ambitious transformation programme.
- In the past, Arab Fashion Week has been hosted so far exclusively by Dubai.

Mandarin Approved as Official Language of Pak

- Pakistani Senate has approved a motion to declare Mandarin as one of the official languages of Pak.
- Relation b/w Islamabad & Beijing would deepen further & help people connected with CPEC communicate easily if Mandarin was made the official language.
- Punjabi, which is widely spoken in Punjab province of Pakistan, Pashto & many other native languages have not been declared official languages.

Singapore to Impose Carbon Tax from 2019

- Singapore would impose a carbon tax from next year to cut its greenhouse gas emissions.
- The tax would be levied on all facilities producing 25,000 tonnes or more of greenhouse gas emissions a year.
- Singapore ranks 26th out of 142 countries in terms of emissions per capita.
- Singapore expects to collect carbon tax revenues of nearly Sg\$1.0 billion in the first five years.

Saudi Arabia Allows Women to Start Business

- Women in Saudi Arabia can now open their own businesses without the consent of a husband or male relative.
- Women can now practice all their commercial transactions in Ministry of Commerce & Investment without a guardian or a notary.
- This approach will open the door to women in Saudi to highlight their talents & ideas & translate them into a realistic business with a worthy financial return.

Pakistan Borrows \$500 Million from China

- Pakistan has contracted a commercial loan of \$500 million from the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC) to shore up its depleting reserves.
- This is the 2nd loan that the ICBC has given to Pakistan to support its diminishing foreign currency reserves.
- The loans are obtained to stop the downward slide of the official foreign currency reserves that currently stand at \$12.8 billion.

Ethiopia Declares National State of Emergency

- A state of emergency has been declared in Ethiopia after the resignation of Prime Minister Desalegn.
- Emergency has been declared as protests have caused massive displacement of citizens, destruction of properties & threats against constitutional order of the country.
- In Aug 2017, Ethiopia lifted a 10-month state of emergency imposed after hundreds of people were killed in anti-govt protests.

Security Conference Begins in Munich

- The Munich Security Conference, in its 54th edition, began in Munich, Germany.
- World leaders and ministers are meeting in Munich to discuss pressing security issues, including North Korea's nuclear and missile programs and the Syrian Civil War.
- Among this year's attendees are U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono.

Pakistan to Station Troops in Saudi Arabia

- Pakistan Army has announced plans to deploy troops in Saudi Arabia under an existing bilateral security cooperation agreement.
- Saudi has been pushing Pak to provide troops since the start of Yemen conflict.
- Troops would be sent on a training & advisory mission & would not be deployed outside the kingdom.
- Around 1000 Pakistani troops are deployed in Saudi in various advisory & training roles.

WADA Suspends Romanian Laboratory

- The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) has suspended Romania's drug-testing laboratory for six months.
- WADA has imposed the sanction on the lab in Bucharest due to a number of nonconformities with regulations.
- The lab is now forbidden from testing any samples and must transfer any in its possession to another laboratory.

Japan Posts Longest Growth Since 1980

- The Japanese economy posted its longest period of growth since the 1980s boom, government data showed on Wednesday.
- The world's third-largest economy expanded at an annualised rate of 0.5% in the fourth quarter of 2017, the eighth straight quarter of expansion.

- The growth was mainly due to increased consumer spending, which accounts for about two-thirds of the country's GDP.

South Africa's President Resigns

- Jacob Zuma resigned from the post of South Africa's President after defying a 48-hour deadline given by the ruling African National Congress (ANC) to leave the office.
- Zuma, who had to face a no-confidence vote in Parliament said, "I fear no motion of no confidence"
- He said, No life should be lost The ANC should never be divided in my name.

UN Urges to 'Break Up' with Plastics on V-Day

- UN has urged people around the world to break up with plastics on Valentine's Day.
- It also focused on ending the use of mineral water bottles and straws, among other plastic products.
- UN released a video as part of its Clean Seas initiative to address the global challenge of plastic pollution which is affecting "marine life".

Germany Running out of Warships

- Defence Committee of German Parliament has urged the Navy to stop deploying warships overseas, saying that the country does not have enough ships.

- Adding that several warships were already decommissioned due to their age, the committee blamed bureaucracy in the defence agencies as well as military contractors' reluctance to supply necessary spare parts on time for the situation.

Pakistan to get First Woman Hindu MP

- Pakistan Peoples Party's Krishna Kumari is poised to become the country's first woman Hindu lawmaker next month, after the party nominated her for the upcoming Senate elections.
- Ms. Kumari said she faced a "slave-like situation" during her childhood in the remote village of Nagarparkar in Sindh Province.
- She worked on the farm of a feudal landlord who was abusive to his workers.

South African Prez Given 48 hrs to Resign

- South Africa's ruling African National Congress gave President Jacob Zuma 48 hours to resign.
- It came after an eight-hour meeting of the party's top leadership.
- Zuma, who has been South Africa's President since 2009, has come under increasing pressure to resign in recent weeks due to economic decline and multiple charges of corruption against him.

Pak lists Hafiz Saeed's JuD as Terror Outfit

- Pakistan's President Mamnoon Hussain has signed an ordinance amending the country's Anti-Terrorism Act to list groups sanctioned by the United Nations Security Council as terrorist organisations.
- The move designates 26/11 Mumbai terror attack mastermind Hafiz Saeed-led groups Jamaat-ud Dawa (JuD) and Falah-e-Insaniyat Foundation as terror outfits which were earlier not banned by Pakistan.

World's Tallest Hotel 'Gevora' Opens In Dubai

- The Gevora Hotel in Dubai, developed by Al Attar Group has now become the 'world's tallest hotel'.
- It stands 356 metres and 53 centimetres tall. It is one metre taller than the previous holder of the title, JW Marriott Marquis, in the same city.
- The title has been confirmed by Guinness Book of World Records.

World's First Robot Ski Competition Held

- World's first robot ski competition was held in South Korea in which self-operational humanoid skiers with two legs participated wearing skis.
- The robots were reportedly equipped with sensors, batteries and deep learning algorithms that allowed them to move on their own.
- Eight teams from local universities and tech firms took part in the competition, reports said.

Indian Engineer Awarded at Sci-Tech Oscars

- Vikas Sathaye, an engineer from Mumbai, is part of a four-member team that bagged the 'Scientific and Engineering Award' at the Oscars 2018 Scientific and Technical Awards.
- The team was honoured for development and implementation of Shotover K1 Camera System.
- The six-axis stabilised aerial camera mount gets attached to the base of helicopters and helps in shooting steady footage.

World Government Summit 2018 held in Dubai

- 6th edition of the World Government Summit 2018 was held in Dubai, UAE from February 11 to 13.
- The Indian delegation was led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- The summit acts as a knowledge exchange hub between government officials, thought leaders, policy makers and private sector leaders, and as an analysis platform for the future trends, issues and opportunities facing humanity.



India Ranks 44th In GIPI

- India has increased "substantially" its score in the Global Intellectual Property (IP) Index, ranking 44th among 50 nations, according to the US Chambers of Commerce report.
- Last year, India ranked 43rd out of 45 countries in the Index.
- Top 3 countries in the list are- The USA, The United Kingdom, Sweden.

Most Cryptocurrencies are Ponzi Schemes: WB

- World Bank President Jim Yong Kim has said that most of the cryptocurrencies are "basically Ponzi Schemes".
- "It's still not really clear how it's going to work," he added.
- However, he said that blockchain technology can be used by developing nations to "follow the money more effectively" and that World Bank is "looking really carefully" at the technology.

US lists Three Militants as Global Terrorists

- The US Department of Treasury has designated three individuals allegedly linked to Pakistan-based terror networks including Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Taliban as Specially Designated Global Terrorists.
- The move is intended to disrupt the South Asian terrorist support networks.
- The three include Rahman Zeb Faqir Muhammad, Hizb Ullah Astam Khan and Dilawar Khan Nadir Khan.

Gerber 'Spokesbaby of Year'

- Baby product company Gerber has selected a one-year-old baby with Down syndrome as its 'Spokesbaby of the year' for the first time in over 90 years.
- Lucas Warren, who is from United States' Georgia, was selected from around 1.4 lakh entries submitted online.
- Gerber CEO Bill Partyka said, "Lucas' smile and happy expression captured the hearts of the Gerber team."

Google Fined ₹136 Crore for 'Search Bias'

- Competition Commission of India (CCI) imposed a fine of ₹135.86 crore on Google for "search bias", in the latest regulatory setback for the world's most popular internet search engine.
- The CCI said Google was abusing its dominance in online web search and online search advertising markets.
- The fine has to be deposited within 60 days, it added.

U.S. Democrat gives Record 8-hour-long Speech

- U.S. Democrat Nancy Pelosi gave an eight-hour-long speech, demanding a vote on an immigration bill to give protection to 'Dreamers', the immigrants who were brought illegally to the U.S. as children.
- The address is the longest speech ever delivered in the US House of Representatives.
- Pelosi delivered the speech wearing four-inch-heels, forgoing any breaks, and only sipping water.

Bermuda Abolishes Same-Sex Marriage

- Bermuda has become the first country to legalise and then repeal same-sex marriage.
- Bermuda's governor John Rankin approved a bill reversing the right of gay couples to marry, despite a supreme court ruling last year authorising same-sex marriage.
- About half a dozen same-sex marriages took place in Bermuda after the supreme court ruling in May 2017.

Indian Princess gets Royal Mail Stamp

- Indian princess Sophia Alexandra Duleep Singh has been honoured with a Royal Mail stamp of the UK to mark the centenary of the suffragette movement.

- Sophia, the daughter of Maharaja Duleep Singh, is the only woman to have one of the eight stamps to herself.
- The image on the stamp shows her selling copies of a Suffragette newspaper in 1913.

India Slams UN Sanctions Committees

- India's Ambassador to the United Nations Syed Akbaruddin slammed the Sanctions Committees for taking decisions beyond "the gaze of public knowledge".
- Calling for reforms to make their decision-making transparent, he said, "No rationale is provided for such anonymous vetoing of a submission."
- This comes after China vetoed declaring Jaish-e-Mohammad chief a global terrorist, reports said.

UK Visa Cost to Increase

- The UK government has announced that it'll double the health surcharge on visas to the country from £200 per person per year to £400.
- The surcharge is paid by all visitors from outside the EU, seeking to live in the UK for six months or more, for availing UK national healthcare system's services.
- The surcharge, introduced in April 2015, will rise from 200 pounds to 400 pounds per year.

Jerome Became Chairman Of Federal Reserve

- Jerome H Powell was sworn in as the 16th Chairman of the Federal Reserve for a four-year term.
- Mr Powell has succeeded Janet Yellen, the first woman to lead the U.S. central bank in its 100-year history.
- Powell was nominated for the post in November 2017 by President Donald Trump.
- The oath was administered by Vice Chairman Randal K. Quarles in the Boardroom.

Balance b/w Fiscal Prudence & Growth: Moody

- India's budget for the fiscal year ending March 2019 strikes a balance between fiscal prudence and growth, says Moody's Investors Service.
- Slight slippage in the budget deficit target has no material impact on the country's overall fiscal strength.
- It is in line with the global credit rating agency's expectations, said Moody.

Australian Bowler Doug Retires from Cricket

- Left-arm paceman Doug Bollinger, retired from a successful cricketing career in which he represented Australia across all three formats.
- NSW quick Bollinger, 36, played 12 Tests, 39 one-day internationals and nine T20s in an international career spanning 2009-2014.

- He bagged 50 Test wickets at an average of 25.92, 62 ODI wickets at an average of 23.9 and nine T20 scalps at 27.66.

Maldives' Chief Justice arrested

- Maldives police has arrested the country's Chief Justice Abdulla Saeed along with Supreme Court judge Ali Hameed.
- It came after President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom declared a 15-day state of emergency on Monday.
- The political crisis began after the Maldives government refused to obey a court order to release political prisoners and accused the court of attempting to impeach the President.

Dubai Opens Sustainable Floating Drive-thru

- A floating burger joint, billed as the world's first sustainable floating drive-thru, has come up in Dubai.
- The joint, named Salt Bay, provides a catering service to customers on boats, jet skis and yachts.
- Its owners say it currently serves burgers but will expand its menu to include pizzas and desserts if the joint gains popularity.

U.S. Begins Withdrawing Troops from Iraq

- U.S. forces have begun reducing their numbers in Iraq after Iraqi authorities declared "victory" over Islamic State.
- Iraqi forces backed by a US-led international coalition last year captured all the territory that fell under Islamic State control in 2014 & 2015 including the northern city of Mosul.
- U.S. had more than 5,500 troops in Iraq at the height of the battle of Mosul in July 2017.

Maldives President Declares Emergency

- Maldives President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom declared a 15-day state of emergency amid the ongoing political crisis in the country.
- The move would give sweeping powers to security forces to arrest and detain suspects.
- Defying the country's Supreme Court, the Maldives government had refused to release political prisoners and accused the court of attempting to impeach the President.

Ancient Mayan City Discovered Under Jungle

- Archaeologists have discovered an ancient Mayan city in the jungle of Guatemala's Peten region using an aerial mapping technique.
- Researchers mapped over 2,100 square kilometre of the region and found more than 60,000 hidden Mayan ruins, including houses, buildings, defence works and pyramids.
- As per estimates, nearly one crore people may have inhabited the ancient city.

Nicos Becomes President of Cyprus Again

- Cyprus President Nicos Anastasiades has won re-election for a second term.
- The official final result after a second-round run-off put the conservative incumbent on 55.99% of the vote, ahead of Communist-backed Stavros Malas on 44%.
- Anastasiades has taken credit for steering the economy of Cyprus to recovery after it was plunged into crisis in 2013.

Sri Lanka Celebrates Independence Day

- Sri Lanka on 4 february celebrated the 70th Independence Day in a grand ceremony at the Galle Face Green in Colombo.
- It was on this day in 1948 that country achieved freedom from British rule.
- Representing Britain's Queen, Prince Edward, Earl of Wessex, and the Countess of Wessex participated in the celebrations as Chief Guests.
- The theme of this year's ceremony was "One Nation".

Pakistan, Afghanistan to Continue Talks

- Islamabad & Kabul have decided to continue holding discussions to reach an agreement on the entire Afghanistan-Pakistan Action Plan for Peace & Solidarity.
- The meeting comes in the backdrop of a series of deadly attacks in Afghanistan allegedly by Pakistan.
- APAPPS is a joint action plan for cooperation in the areas of counter-terrorism, peace, reconciliation and joint economic development.

Bangladesh gets New Chief Justice

- Bangladesh has appointed Syed Mahmud Hossain as the new Chief Justice.
- This comes as the predecessor & Bangladesh's 1st Hindu chief justice was virtually forced to resign amid grave graft allegations.
- Hossain is the 22nd chief justice of Bangladesh.

UAE Launches World's Longest Zip Line

- The United Arab Emirates has made a record by opening the world's longest zip line, measuring 2.83 km in length.
- Guinness World Records officials certified the zip line in Ras al-Khaimah.
- The Jebel Jais Flight takes thrill-seekers atop the country's largest mountain peak, from a launch pad 1,680 meters (5,512 feet) above sea level.

India Important in Success of South Asia Policy

- India is a key player in ensuring the success of the U.S.' South Asia policy, U.S. Defense Department has said.

- India plays an important role in the fight against terrorism which is one of the key aspects of the policy, it added.
- U.S. had sought an enhanced role for India in the implementation of the policy.

Homosexuality A Mental Disorder: Indonesia

- Indonesia's Health Ministry has announced that it has listed homosexuality as a mental disorder and will publish a medical guide stating the same.
- Ministry added that homosexuality is against the ethos of the country.
- Indonesian Parliament is currently discussing an amendment to the penal code to criminalise homosexuality in the country which is the world's largest Muslim-majority nation.

Rwanda to Provide Eye Care For All

- Rwanda became the first low-income country to provide universal eye care for its 12 million population.
- The government has partnered with organisation Vision for a Nation (VFAN) to train more than 3,000 eye care nurses based in 502 local health centres.
- They will prescribe glasses and refer those with serious eye problems to national clinics.

Govt Debt Constraints India's Rating

- Fitch Ratings said that high debt burden of the government constraints India's rating upgrade.
- It comes a day after Finance Minister Arun Jaitley projected a fiscal deficit of 3.5 % of GDP against the earlier target of 3.2 %.
- Thomas Rookmaaker said that weak public finances "constrain India's sovereign ratings".

National Affairs

Railways to Install Sanitary Pad Dispensers

- The Railway Ministry said it aims to install sanitary pad dispensers and incinerators at about 200 stations before International Women's Day on March 8.
- The move is aimed to benefit Railway employees and passengers from financially weaker sections.
- The dispensers have already been installed at railway stations in New Delhi and Bhopal.

Govt. Sanctions Funds for Delhi Pollution

- The central government has sanctioned ₹1,200 crore for schemes to tackle air pollution in Delhi, NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant has said.
- He claimed that the city won't face pollution on account of agriculture residue from neighbouring states this year.
- He further suggested that "those who are not able to live up to the environment control" will be penalised.

Noida gets Free Dispensary for Stray Animals

- A free, 24x7 dispensary for stray animals has been set up in Noida by 'House of Stray Animals'.
- The dispensary, which will be overseen by expert veterinary doctors, will also have a mobile OPD to treat suffering stray animals.
- An emergency OPD-on-wheels will also be available for animals who have suffered serious injuries in accidents.

Gadkari laid the NTCPCW Foundation Stone

- Shri Nitin Gadkari laid the foundation stone for setting up of a 'National Technology Centre for Ports, Waterways & Coasts' at IIT Chennai.
- NTCPCW, being set up under the Sagarmala Programme will act as a technological arm of the Ministry of Shipping.
- It will provide engineering and technological inputs and support for Ports, Inland Waterways Authority of India and other institutions.

SC wants Details of Jails with 150% Occupancy

- The Supreme Court has asked the National Legal Services Authority to look into the issue of overcrowding of prisons.
- A three-judge bench was headed by Justice Madan B Lokur.
- The Bench also asked an advocate, who is assisting the court as an amicus curiae (advisor or volunteer) in the matter, to look into the issue of rehabilitation and welfare of women prisoners as well as their children, including the education of such kids.

CSIR inks MoU with IORA-RCSTT

- The Council of Scientific and Industrial Research has signed a MoU with the Indian Ocean Rim Association's Regional Center for Science and Technology Transfer.
- The MoU is for designating Central Institute of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants in Lucknow as the coordinating centre on medicinal plants.
- The IORA Centre will establish a database on the important medicinal plants.

CSIR Project to Find Pollution Spots

- To warn people of pollution hotspots, the National Institute of Science, Technology and Development Studies is rolling out a project to install pollution sensors at New Delhi's traffic junctions.
- The aim is to develop a messaging alert system that will warn people of spikes in pollution in certain localities.
- NISTADS is the policy arm of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research.

Govt. Announces Reduction in Haj Airfare

- The government has announced a significant reduction in airfare for those going on the Haj.
- The reduction will be applicable to passages on Air India, Saudi Airlines and Flynas to Jeddah and Medina from 21 airports in India.
- This comes a month after the government abolished subsidies given to those on Haj pilgrimage.

Nadda rolls out Free HIV Viral Load Tests

- Health minister JP Nadda has launched the free Viral Load Tests, which measure the quantity of virus in the body.
- The move shall benefit 12 lakh people living with HIV/AIDS (PLHIV) in the country.
- The test is of immense importance to monitor the effectiveness of treatment of patients taking lifelong antiretroviral therapy.

Intermodal Stations to come up in 15 Cities

- Intermodal stations are terminal infrastructure integrating transportation modes like rail, road, inland waterways, etc so that people can move from one mode to another seamlessly.
- National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has prioritized 15 cities across the country to develop intermodal stations.
- Out of these 15 cities, Nagpur & Varanasi have been selected as pilot projects.

Bihar Couples to take Cleanliness 'Pheras'

- A Block Development Officer (BDO) in Bihar's Supaul district has started a new initiative asking Hindu couples to take eight pheras at their wedding.
- An extra phera as a cleanliness pledge.
- The BDO created a team of officials who have been going to weddings in the district, without a formal invitation, and asking couples to take the eighth phera.

Only 7.28% Women in Country's Police Force

- According to latest government data, women constitute only 7.28% of the country's police force.
- This comes despite the government's repeated directions to all state governments and union territories to increase the strength of women police personnel to 33%.
- Interestingly, overall crimes against women rose from 3.29 lakh cases in 2015 to 3.38 lakh in 2016.

Conference On E-Governance In Hyderabad

- The 21st national conference on e-Governance will be held in Hyderabad.
- The government of India and Telangana Administrative Reforms department are jointly organising the conference.
- The main theme is 'Technology for Accelerating Development'.

- The two-day conference will deliberate on several aspects of the e-governance like universalization and replication.

Modi Flags Off 'Run For New India' Marathon

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi flagged off the 'Run for New India' marathon in Surat, Gujarat.
- Around 1.50 lakh runners participated in the 'Run for New India' marathon which was organized by the Surat Nagrik Samiti.
- The Marathon aimed at creating awareness about social causes and called upon all to decide to build a New India.

Government forms 'Niti Forum' for Northeast

- A special Niti forum has been created to accelerate the government's efforts to spur inclusive growth in the north-eastern region of the country.
- The forum will work to identify limitations that stand in the way of achieving accelerated, inclusive and sustainable economic growth.
- It would recommend suitable interventions for addressing the identified constraints.

Airtel Joins Global Alliance for Net in Air

- Airtel joins a new global collaboration to bring high-speed and uninterrupted in-flight data connectivity to mobile customers.
- The global partnership Seamless Alliance, whose other founding members include OneWeb, Airbus, Delta and Sprint, will work towards strengthening satellite technology.
- It will offer high-speed data connectivity even in the sky.

Lithium-ion Batteries Charge up Rural Houses

- The shift towards lithium ion batteries from the older lead acid batteries has allowed firms like Kaho India Private Ltd to help the Centre achieve its rural electrification target.
- Kaho India Private Ltd, started in 2012, seeks to provide last-mile energy access through compact solar-modules to areas that are so far not connected to the grid.
- Subhang Jain is the CEO of the company.

CRPF starts Bike Ambulance in Bastar

- The CRPF has launched a bike ambulance initiative in areas of anti-Naxal operations in Chhattisgarh, to provide basic healthcare facilities to those living in remote jungle areas of Bastar region.
- Medical teams, accompanied by well-armed security personnel ride their motorcycles to help the sick and injured in about 70 villages.
- The battalion is based in Bijapur.

1000 cr Development Projects for Daman & Diu

- PM Modi has launched the development schemes worth Rs 1,000 crore for Daman and Diu.
- Modi laid the foundation stones for various projects, including a water treatment plant, a gas pipeline, an electric sub-station and a foot-bridge.
- He also inaugurated a flight connecting Ahmedabad to coastal town of Diu and a helicopter service.

Elephanta Island gets Permanent Power Supply

- Elephanta Island near Mumbai received permanent electricity connection for the first time since 70 years of Independence.
- The project will benefit around 1,200 residents on the island.
- UNESCO World Heritage Site, Elephanta Caves are located on Elephanta Island.
- Prior to this, the villagers resorted to solar energy and power generators for their requirements.

Indian Billionaires' Wealth Equals 15% of GDP

- The total wealth of Indian billionaires is 15% of country's GDP, a report by charity group Oxfam has revealed.
- The report said India ranks among the world's most unequal countries because of "lopsided" policies of successive governments.
- Oxfam report also states that the wealthiest in India control a huge part of wealth created in the country through Capitalism and inheritance.

ED Freezes ₹94 cr worth Shares of Nirav Modi

- The Enforcement Directorate (ED) froze shares and mutual funds worth ₹94.52 crore belonging to Nirav Modi and Mehul Choksi's firms.
- Further, the Income Tax Department has attached 141 bank accounts and fixed deposits worth ₹145 crore of the Nirav Modi group.
- Nirav and his uncle Choksi are accused of defrauding PNB of \$1.77 billion.

DoT to encourage Synergy among 7 PSUs

- Telecom minister, Manoj Sinha introduced a strategic plan to enable 7 state-owned companies under the DoT (Dept. of Telecommunication) to work closely with an aim of promoting greater operational synergy among them.
- Plan covers MTNL, BSNL, Indian Telephone Industries, Centre for Development of Telematics, Telecommunications Consultants India Ltd., Testing & Certification of Telecom Equipments and BharatNet.

'Installation' Work at KIA Motors Inaugurated

- CM Chandrababu Naidu inaugurated the 'framework installation' work at the KIA Motors site near Penukonda town of the Anantapur district.
- It will produce the first KIA test car in a year.

- Its total cost will be more than ₹13,000 crore, would produce 3 lakh cars initially and will eventually be scaled up to 4 lakh cars.
- Kia Motors is South Korea's second-largest automobile manufacturer, following the Hyundai Motor Company. Han-Woo Park is the CEO & President of the KIA motors.

Only M2M SIMs to have 13-digit Numbers

- Starting July 1, all SIM-based M2M communication devices will carry a 13-digit number, instead of the 10-digit number now.
- This is applicable only to numbers used by machines to communicate with other machines and not normal retail mobile numbers.
- The DoT had asked all telecom service providers to ensure that their network elements are aligned with the 13-digit numbering before July 1, 2018.

Transport plane Saras to be fast-tracked

- The government will fast-track the revived light transport plane Saras towards production and begin the feasibility study for a 70-seater regional transport aircraft RTA-70.
- The improved 19-seater would be first produced for the Indian Air Force by Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd.

The image is a promotional banner for a 'TATKAL QUIZ' (Tatkal means instant) for RAILWAYS ALP & GROUP D. It features a dark background with a red and white striped pattern. The text 'TATKAL QUIZ' is prominently displayed in large, bold, white and yellow letters. Below it, 'RAILWAYS ALP & GROUP D के लिये' is written in white. A yellow box contains the text 'FREE TEST DAILY 8.00 PM TO 9.00 PM'. At the bottom, it says 'WIN testbook PASS' with a blue 'PASS' stamp graphic.

CBFC clears S Durga Without any Cuts

- Malayalam film S Durga, which was dropped from IFFI last year, has been cleared by the censor board without any cuts.
- Directed by Sanal Kumar Sasidharan, the film is about the patriarchal society of Kerala.
- It has won the Hivos Tiger Award in 2017, and Golden Apricot at Armenia's Yerevan Film Festival in the category Int. Feature Competition.

- It is the only Indian film to win the title.

India Int. Textiles Expo Begins In Colombo

- A three day India International Textiles Expo of India began in Colombo, Sri Lanka.
- It is being organized by Powerloom Development & Export Promotion Council with the support of Ministry of Textiles & Ministry of Commerce & Industry.
- At the event, about 45 exhibitors from various textile clusters of India displayed variety of fabrics, home textiles, traditional items etc.

NITI Aayog Budget Allocation Increased

- Allocations to the NITI Aayog, has increased by more than 20% over last year i.e. to Rs 339.65 crore in 2018-19 from Rs 279.79 crore in 2017-18.
- It includes a defined role for NITI Aayog in critical areas of artificial intelligence and agriculture policy.
- NITI Aayog, as the premier 'think-tank' of the GoI has been crucial in navigating and charting the course of the country.

Vaccination Compulsory for School Admissions

- Kerala government has made vaccination compulsory for school admissions from next academic year onwards.
- Parents will have to show details of shots given to children at the time of enrolment in schools.
- The move comes in the wake of stiff opposition from certain communities against the vaccination drive.

PM Flags Off Palace Queen Humsafar Express

- PM Modi flagged off the Palace Queen Humsafar Express between Mysuru and Udaipur in the Mysuru Railway Station.
- The train between Mysuru and Udaipur will act as a backbone of tourism, an employment generating industry.
- Both the Mysuru Palace and Udaipur palace are iconic tourist attractions and this special train will create a new tourist circuit connecting North India and the South.

Tribunal to settle Mahanadi water dispute

- Cabinet has approved setting up of a tribunal to resolve the dispute b/w Odisha & Chhattisgarh on sharing Mahanadi river water.
- The tribunal would determine water sharing on the basis of availability of water in Mahanadi basin, present utilisation of water resource & potential for future development.

Govt Gives Nod to Chit Funds (Amendment) Bill

- Cabinet has given its nod to introduce Chit Funds (Amendment) Bill in the parliament.

- Bill aims to amend Sec 85 (b) of the Chit Funds Act, 1982 to remove ceiling of Rs 100.
- It also aims at hiking ceiling of foreman's commission from a max of 5% to 7%.
- Chit business will be required to use the word Fraternity Fund to signify its nature as well as to differentiate its working from Prize Chits

Modi launches Nasscom's 'Future Skills'

- PM Modi has launched Nasscom's platform - Future Skills - for skill development in 8 varied technologies.
- Modi launched the platform via video conference during the inaugural session of the World Congress on Information Technology 2018.
- The platform offers skilling and upskilling in Artificial Intelligence, Virtual Reality, Internet of Things, Big Data Analytics, 3D Printing & Cloud Computing.

Foundation stone for Navi Mumbai airport

- PM Modi has laid the foundation stone of Navi Mumbai International Airport.
- The new airport which is expected to ease the load of congested Mumbai Airport will become functional in 2019.
- City Industrial Development Corporation is developing the airport along with GVK Group.
- The 16,700-crore project which was overdue from past 21-year was planned in 1997 to meet the growing needs of Mumbai.

PSB to Transfer Officers Completing 3 years

- Central Vigilance Commission has issued an advisory to all public sector banks ordering them to transfer the officers who have completed 3 yrs as on Dec 31, 2017.
- As per Bank's Transfer Policy, no officer would be retained in the same post for a period in excess of 3 yrs & in the same station for a period in excess of 5 yrs.
- CVC is an apex governmental body to address governmental corruption

Kerala Govt to geotag livestock farmer houses

- Kerala govt is gearing up to geotag the houses & farms of over 10 lakh livestock & poultry farmers in the state as part of its massive digitisation drive.
- The objective is to compile a comprehensive digital repository of information of animal husbandry & dairying in the state.
- The data would be useful during the time of the outbreak of any diseases among domestic animals and birds

Maharashtra Govt to Roll out 'Asmita Yojana'

- Maharashtra govt is all set to roll out Asmita Yojana on the International Women's Day next month.

- Under the scheme, girls in Zilla Parishad schools will get sanitary napkin packet at Rs 5 while rural women can avail it at a subsidised rate of Rs 24 & Rs 29.
- Beneficiary girls will be given Asmita Cards while participating SHGs will be entrusted with the task of supply & sale of sanitary pads

Govt to set up 562 more Ekalavya schools

- Centre will set up 562 more Ekalavya Model Residential Schools in tribal areas of the country.
- It has been announced in the Budget that by 2022, every block with at least 20,000 tribal persons will have an Ekalavya School.
- These schools will provide boarding & lodging facilities to tribal students & will be bought at par with the Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya through high-quality education.

Sumitra Mahajan Inaugurates CPA Conference

- Lok Sabha Speaker Sumitra Mahajan inaugurated the 6th Conference of Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) of India Region in Patna.
- The 2-day Conference will discuss subjects of 'Parliament's Role in the Development Agenda' and 'Legislature and Judiciary'.
- Over 100 delegates from India and abroad, including Australia, Britain and Uganda, will participate in the conference.

Sex Ratio at Birth Dips in 17 of 21 States

- The sex ratio at birth saw a decline in 17 out of 21 large States of the country, with Gujarat recording an alarming dip of 53 points.
- Gujarat is followed by Haryana, which registered a drop of 35 points, Rajasthan (32 points), Uttarakhand (27 points), Maharashtra (18 points).
- Improvement in SRB was witnessed in Punjab, which registered a rise of 19 points, followed by UP & Bihar.

Modi to Inaugurate container Terminal at JNPT

- PM Modi will inaugurate the fourth container terminal at Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust in Mumbai.
- The JNPT's Fourth Container Terminal Phase I is expected to boost container trade & logistics in a big way.
- It has been completed in a record time at a cost of ₹4,719 crore.
- The terminal will be able to dock mother vessels, handle the biggest containers ships from a quay (area to unload from ships) length of 1 km.

Tiger census begins in Odisha

- The biennial (once in 2 years) census of the big cat has begun across different forests of Odisha.
- More than 900 cameras will be used to carry out the census.

- While 40 tigers were spotted in Odisha during the previous census in 2016, the forest & environment department expect the numbers to go up this time.
- M-STrIPES App will be used which is expected to eliminate the error which is caused by camera trapping

National Conference to discuss farm issues

- Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare is organizing a National Conference named 'Agriculture 2022 - Doubling Farmers' Income in New Delhi.
- Aim of the conference is to build a consensus around appropriate recommendations that will help in shaping the vision of Govt on Doubling Farmers' Income.
- It is being organised to identify critical issues relating to agriculture & farmers' welfare.

Govt to change base year for GDP, IIP

- The govt will change the base year to 2017-18 for calculation of GDP & IIP numbers while for retail inflation the year will be revised to 2018.
- Change in base year is significant as capturing economic activity much away from base year gives unrealistic numbers & does not capture changed economic scenario.
- Earlier in 2015, CSO had changed the base year for GDP to 2011-12 from 2004-05.

Maneka Gandhi to launch #YesIBleed campaign

- Union Minister for Women and Child Development Maneka Gandhi launched a menstrual hygiene campaign on Feb 20.
- The objective of the campaign is to create a holistic approach to the issue of menstruation, which is an experience that transcends culture, class, and caste.
- The campaign called "#YesIBleed" will be initiated formally across all multi-media platforms, including Facebook and YouTube

Cauvery Water Dispute

- Declaring Cauvery a national asset & upholding principle of equitable apportionment of inter-State river water among riparian States, the SC reduced the allocation of Cauvery water from Karnataka to Tamil Nadu.
- Karnataka would now need to supply 177.25 TMC rather than 192 TMC Cauvery water to Tamil Nadu.
- Court has also granted global status to Bengaluru, hence it will get more Cauvery water.

GST will replace excise, VAT on crude

- Union Oil Minister Dharmendra Pradhan has said that excise duty and VAT on crude oil will be replaced with Goods and Services Tax (GST) in the coming one to two years.

- He added that the shift will happen gradually as many states are worried if their revenue collection might decline once GST is implemented.

NEET mandatory for MBBS aspirant going abroad

- Government makes it mandatory for Indian students to clear NEET to obtain an eligibility certificate for applying to medical colleges abroad.
- Currently, anyone who scores 50% in 12th boards is eligible to go abroad which is why Medical Council of India proposed making NEET mandatory.
- A common national entrance exam - NEET - is mandatory for admission to all medical courses in the country.

India's 1st Online Radio Station Launched

- India's 1st Online Radio Station 'Radio Umang' was launched recently in India.
- Listeners can tune in to this online radio station through web streaming or download the app.
- With 24 hours programming, it has found listeners in Hindi speaking regions of India and in over 60 countries worldwide.

India-Russia Agriculture Business Summit Held

- India-Russia Agriculture Business Summit 2018 was held in New Delhi.
- The two countries discussed trade relations in the agricultural sector.
- The summit was organized by the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare.
- Gajender Singh Shekhawat, Union Minister of State for Agriculture and Sergey Beletskiy, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Agriculture, Russia addressed the Summit.

Delhi-Pune in top ten air routes

- Delhi-Mumbai-Delhi, Delhi-Bengaluru-Delhi and Mumbai-Bengaluru-Mumbai routes continued on top, ranked in terms of number of seats deployed.
- Routes such as Delhi-Pune-Delhi have, however, climbed from the fifteenth place in 2007 to the sixth place in 2017.
- It is according to data sourced from civil aviation research firm OAG.

RIL to invest in mobile making unit: Tirupati

- Mukesh Ambani-led RIL has plans to manufacture 10 million mobile phones per annum in Andhra Pradesh.
- The RIL is looking for 150 acres of land to start a cell phone manufacturing unit near Tirupati in Chittoor district.
- The government is planning to offer it at Tirupati where an electronic manufacturing park already exists.

Rice mill in Palakkad turns into MGR Memorial

- One of the first modern rice mills to come up in Kerala's Palakkad district, Bhama Rice Mill of Vadavannur village, is being converted into a memorial for iconic Tamil politician and matinee idol M.G. Ramachandran.
- His childhood home is located in the same village.
- The memorial will also serve as a 'village heritage centre'. It is named as the heritage centre MAGORA.

Int. Conf. on 'Indian Power Stations 2018'

- Union Minister of State (IC) for Power and New and Renewable Energy, Shri R.K. Singh inaugurated the 'Indian Power Stations 2018' in New Delhi.
- It is the three-day International Conference on Operations and Maintenance.
- The Minister exhorted the NTPC to become India's power sector multinational by setting up power plants in other Nations and become world's largest power producer.

India posts marginal increase in forest cover

- India posted a marginal 0.21% rise in the area under forest between 2015 and 2017, according to the biennial India State of Forest Report 2017.
- The document says that India has about 7,08,273 square km of forest, which is 21.53% of the geographic area of the country.
- Getting India to have at least 33% of its area under forest has been a long standing goal of the government since 1988.

12th International Conference on CSR Held

- The Institute Of Directors organised its 12th International Conference on Corporate Social Responsibility in Bengaluru, Karnataka.
- In the conference, the Prestigious Golden Peacock Award 2017 were presented.
- The leadership award for philanthropy and social change was presented to Mr. Vineet Nayar, Founder Chairman, Sampark Foundation.

Andhra's Chandrababu is richest CM in India

- Andhra Pradesh's Chandrababu Naidu is the richest Chief Minister in India with declared assets worth over ₹177 crore, the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) stated.
- Naidu is followed by Arunachal Pradesh CM Pema Khandu with assets worth over ₹129 crore and Punjab's Amarinder Singh with ₹48 crore.
- Tripura's Manik Sarkar with ₹26 lakh is the CM with lowest declared assets.

Industrial activity posts robust growth

- Industrial activity saw robust growth for the second consecutive month in December, with the Index of Industrial Production growing 7.07%.

- The rise follows strong growth in the manufacturing, capital goods, and consumer non-durables sectors, according to official data released.
- The Consumer Price Index quickened by 5.07% in that month.

Raje announces farm loan waiver for farmers

- Rajasthan CM Vasundhara Raje announced a one-time loan waiver for small and marginal farmers up to ₹50,000 each from their outstanding short-term debt in the 2018-19 State budget presented in the Assembly.
- While this move will cost ₹8,000 crore to the State exchequer, no new taxes were imposed in the budget.
- The budget proposed a total outlay of ₹1,07,865.40 crore on schemes and projects.

India's 1st Ever Highway Capacity Manual

- The Minister of Road Transport & Highways Mr Nitin Gadkari released India's first ever Highway Capacity Manual (HCM) in Delhi.
- The manual is also known as Indo-HCM and it has been developed by CSIR.
- CSIR is developing it on the basis of an extensive, country-wide study of the traffic characteristics on different categories of roads like a single lane, two-lane, multi-lane urban roads etc.

Asia's largest Christian meet

- The 123rd Maramon Convention which is billed as Asia's largest week-long annual Christian meet began.
- It started with a call to conserve river Pampa and the environment at its traditional venue on the riverbed of Pampa at Maramon near Kozhencherry on Sunday afternoon.
- The convention venue was shifted to Maramon a few years ago.

Mumbai 12th richest city globally

- India's financial capital Mumbai, with a total wealth of \$950 billion, has been named among the top 15 wealthiest cities globally, while New York topped the list.
- Mumbai which also features among the top 10 cities in terms of billionaire population is the home to 28 billionaires.
- Going forward, Mumbai is expected to be the fastest growing city in terms of wealth growth over the next 10 years

Rajnath inaugurates spoken Sanskrit centre

- Home Minister Rajnath Singh has launched the Centre for learning Sanskrit language in Gujarat University in Ahmedabad.

- It will offer a 6 month course for people on how to speak the language, anybody who loves Sanskrit can join this course.
- For the course, no prior knowledge of Sanskrit is required, the minimum strength of the class will be 30 students while the fees has been fixed at Rs 500.

Panels for artificial intelligence

- The ministry of electronics and IT has formed four committees to prepare a roadmap for the national artificial intelligence programme.
- The committees will be headed by IIT directors and experts from industry bodies.
- The four committees will be for citizen centric services; data platforms; skilling, reskilling and R&D; and legal regulatory and cybersecurity.

Kerala top NITI Aayog's health index report

- Kerala, Punjab and Tamil Nadu were the top rankers in NITI Aayog's latest Health Index report.
- Report for the first time, attempted to establish an annual systematic tool to measure and understand the heterogeneity and complexity of the nation's performance in the health sector.
- The report was released on Friday by Amitabh Kant (CEO of NITI Aayog).

South Central Railway with 100% LED Lighting

- The South Central Railway (SCR) has become the first railway zone in the country to complete 100% LED lighting at all the stations under its jurisdiction.
- The SCR has been on the forefront of adopting energy conservation measures.
- It has attained the status of becoming the first zone in the Indian Railways to complete 100% LED lighting in all the 733 stations under its jurisdiction.

Khelo India School Games Concludes

- The first Khelo India School Games concluded in New Delhi with sports powerhouse Haryana topped the overall medal tally.
- The state won 102 medals which include 38 gold and 26 silver.
- Maharashtra with 110 medals (36 of them gold) finished second while Delhi with 94 medals came third.
- Sports Minister, Col. Rajyavardhan Rathore presented the top State Haryana with the glittering trophy.

Haryana to name projects after Captain Kundu

- After two days of cremation of 22-year-old Captain Kapil Kundu, in his native village, Ransika, the government school will be named after him.
- The road leading towards the area and the Khod village bus stop, located nearby, will be named after him.

- Kundu was martyred in Jammu and Kashmir's Rajouri district on Sunday, as a result of shelling from Pakistani forces across the border.

Forbes Releases Cryptocurrency Rich List

- Business magazine Forbes has released its first-ever Crypto Rich List, comprising 20 wealthiest people in the cryptocurrency space.
- The list was topped by Ripple Co-founder Chris Larsen, who is estimated to have a crypto net worth of \$7.5-8 billion.
- He is followed by Ethereum Co-founder Joseph Lubin (\$1-5 billion) & Founder of cryptocurrency exchange Binance Changpeng Zhao (\$1.1-2 billion).

SC cancels 88 iron ore mining lease renewals

- The Supreme Court canceled 88 iron ore mining lease renewals in Goa and held that mining in the state would stop after March 15.
- While hearing a plea filed by NGO Goa Foundation, the court added that new licences would be given afresh through auction.
- In 2015, the state had renewed the licenses despite accusation of illegal extractions.

Howrah Bridge celebrates 75th anniversary

- On the night of February 3, 1943, the inauguration of the Howrah bridge took place without any fanfare when a lone tramcar rolled down from the Kolkata city end to the Howrah Railway station end.
- This marvel turned 75 this year.
- The Howrah Bridge is a suspension type balanced cantilever bridge with the central span between the two main towers of the bridge measuring about 1500 ft.

Nod for 24 new medical colleges

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs gave its approval for setting up 24 new medical colleges in underserved areas.
- This will increase the under and post graduate medical seats by 18,058 and adding 248 nursing and midwifery schools.
- This is to be done at a total estimated cost of ₹14,930.92 crore up to 2019-20.

881 km of rail network to be electrified

- The Union Budget for fiscal 2018-19 has proposed electrification of 881 km of rail network in WB at a proposed cost of ₹771.54 cr.
- The project will be undertaken in seven zones of West Bengal, under the jurisdiction of Kolkata-based Eastern Railway, South Eastern Railway & Maligaon-based North Frontier Railway.
- The electrification of the WB part of this route involves a cost of ₹124.95 crore

Separate Karnataka flag not against Const.

- A nine-member committee has concluded in its report to the Karnataka government that having a separate flag for the state is not against the Constitution, reports said.
- The committee was formed in July 2017 following demands from Kannada activists for an independent state flag.
- An unofficial Karnataka flag, red and yellow in colour, is often seen hoisted at public places.

Akshay Kumar to be ambassador for road safety

- Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari on Tuesday said he has requested actor Akshay Kumar to become the brand ambassador for the government's Road Safety Awareness Campaign.
- Adding that the actor promised full cooperation, Gadkari said celebrity ambassadors "will have a positive impact on the new generation".
- Earlier, Kumar was appointed ambassador for UP government's cleanliness campaign.

CSE Ranked Top Environment Policy Think Tanks

- The Centre for Science and Environment has been ranked the top environment policy think tanks in India while it has secured the 16th position in global rankings.
- The rank was given by The Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program of the Lauder Institute at the University of Pennsylvania.
- In the 'Energy and Resource Policy Think Tanks' category, CSE has been ranked the 2nd in India.

Bhutan, Nepal, B'desh: part of Tiger Census

- India's tiger census, which began late last year, will see coordination with Bhutan, Nepal and Bangladesh.
- This is the first time all countries are uniting in arriving at tiger numbers, particularly in regions with shared borders.
- The once-in-four-years exercise calculated, in 2006, that India had only 1,411 tigers. This rose to 1,706 in 2010 and 2,226 in 2014.

Modi's Birthplace to be a Major Tourist Hub

- With a ₹100 crore budget, Gujarat and the Centre are jointly developing the historical and ancient town of Vadnagar, PM Narendra Modi's birthplace, as a major tourist hub.
- The town full of sites related to Hinduism and Buddhism is being showcased as a heritage destination.
- The projects cover Vadnagar's famous Kirti Toran, Sharmishtha lake, Hatkeshwar Temple and archaeological sites.

Centre clears Rs 62cr for cleaning Sal river

- The central government has approved a project to decrease pollution of river Sal at Navelim in Goa at an estimated cost of Rs 61.7 crore.
- CPCB in 2015 had identified the river stretch at Navelim as one of the 302 polluted river stretches across the country.
- It is based on biochemical oxygen demand (BOD) levels - a key indicator of organic pollution showing water quality.

Reservation counters at post offices

- The Indian Railways has signed an agreement with the Department of Posts to set up Passenger Reservation System (PRS) counters at post offices across the country.
- Currently, around 280 post offices have PRS counters.
- The PRS counters in post offices will be opened in areas with no Railway Reservation Counters, Minister of State for Railways Rajen Gohain said.

Mumbai airport sets new record

- Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport on January 20 handled 980 flights in 24 hours, breaking its own record of 974 flights in December 2017, airport officials said.
- The airport has an average of 48 departures and arrivals during peak hours.
- Notably, it recorded 18.6% of the total air traffic in India, second only to Delhi's IGI airport.

Mughal Gardens to open for public from Feb 6

- The Rashtrapati Bhavan's Mughal Gardens will be open to public from February 6 to March 9 between 9:30 am and 4:00 pm after President Ram Nath Kovind inaugurates the annual 'Udyanotsav' on Monday.
- Its major attraction will be 10,000 Tulips imported from the Netherlands.
- The garden will be open on March 9 exclusively for differently-abled persons and defence personnel.
- **World's 1st robot citizen to come in India**
- World's first robot citizen Sophia made a public appearance at a global technology event in Hyderabad.
- The humanoid, designed in British actress Audrey Hepburn's image by Hong Kong-based Hanson Robotics, was given citizenship by Saudi Arabia last year.
- Sophia made her first appearance in India draped in a sari at IIT Bombay in December 2017.

VP to inaugurate 1st International Kala Mela

- Vice President M. Venkaiah Naidu will inaugurate the first International Kala Mela at the Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts in New Delhi.

- The objective of the event is to focus on the direct interaction between the artist and the connoisseur and also educating and raising awareness about art.
- More than 800 artists from all over the country are expected to participate in the event.

I&B Ministry mulls expansion of DD news

- The Information and Broadcasting ministry is mulling expansion of Doordarshan's round-the-clock news broadcast to around 100 countries.
- It is being done to reach out to the diaspora and put across India's perspective on domestic and international issues.
- The initiative would put India in the league of countries like the UK & China whose public broadcasters reach a number of countries.

Indian Railways to create database

- For the first time, Railways will have a database of workers engaged by contractors in non-operational areas such as housekeeping, cleaning, consultancy etc.
- The database is being created to keep an eye on any violation of labour rights.
- It will comprise of details of all workers with their personal details, police verification, medical insurance, identification certificate & other details.

Maharashtra to setup Transgender Board

- Maharashtra govt is making a provision of Rs 5 crore for setting up the transgender welfare board.
- Board will look after education, employment, housing & health schemes for transgenders & protect their Constitutional and human rights.
- Maharashtra will be the first such state to have such a Board.

No Diesel Locomotives in Delhi area

- According to Railway Minister Piyush Goyal, no diesel locomotives will be allowed in the Delhi area after March 2019.
- The railway ministry has set a target of 2022 to switch to electric locomotives completely by phasing out their diesel counterparts with a focus on increasing speed.
- The Railways will save about ₹11,500 crore annually through such a move.

1500 km gas pipeline in Assam

- 5 major oil and natural gas PSUs would set up a joint company for a 1500-km gas pipeline at an estimated cost of Rs 6000 crore.
- The pipeline will run from Guwahati to Tinsukia via Numaligarh to supply gas to the eight North East states.

- The five PSUs that would form the company are ONGC, Oil India Limited, Indian Oil Corporation, Numaligarh Refinery Limited and GAIL.





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Guwahati inks deal for 65-storey twin towers

- The Assam government inked a deal with National Building Construction Corporation for setting up a 65-storey twin tower trade centre in earthquake-prone Guwahati.
- The agreement for building the trade centre was made ahead of the two-day Global Investors' Summit.
- The twin tower will boost business, which aspires to be a hub of trade between India and the bloc of Southeast Asian nations.

Cochin Shipyard Signs MoU with Russia

- Cochin Shipyard signed a MoU with United Ship Building Corporation of Russia to collaborate in design and development of state of the art Vessels for waterways.
- The MoU will cater to the demand for different kinds of vessels.
- Both will work for the development of high-speed vessels, river-sea cargo vessels, and other watercraft for Indian waterways and coastal shipping.

Modi Inaugurates Global Investment Summit

- The first two-day Global Investment Summit has been organized in Assam.
- The summit emphasises on promoting investments in the state and the North East.
- The conference was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- Investor's from Bhutan, Bangladesh, Germany and Japan as well as ASEAN countries will attend the summit.

4 Rivers in J&K declared 'Nat Waterways'

- Four major rivers, including Jhelum and Chenab, in Jammu and Kashmir have been declared "National Waterways".
- It paved the way for inland navigation on them to boost water transport and tourism.
- The Union government has declared four rivers namely Chenab, Indus, Jhelum and Ravi as national waterways, which would be developed in a phased manner.

New tunnel planned in Arunachal Pradesh

- With increased friction along the border with China, the government is focussing on improving connectivity in such areas.
- Arun Jaitley proposed construction of a new tunnel in Arunachal Pradesh.
- The tunnel is to be constructed under Sela Pass.
- Earlier Rohtang tunnel was built which has ensured all-weather connectivity to the Ladakh region and "Zozila Pass tunnel" is being constructed.

Railways sets highest ever capital spend

- The NDA government charted out a plan for the Railways with a capital expenditure target of Rs 1.47 lakh crore and a revenue target of over Rs 2 lakh crore — the highest ever.
- It also pledged to upgrade the suburban railway network of Mumbai and Bengaluru.
- This is in consonance with the government's focus on long-term capacity augmentation and upgradation of the country's railway network.

Railways to get high-speed locomotive

- Indian Railways' all new 12,000 horsepower electric locomotive would be rolled out in March.
- It is produced in collaboration with Alstom of France and can run at speeds of up to 120 kmph.
- The all new engine would be rolled out in March this year, when president of France, Macron will visit India to participate in the International Solar Alliance meeting.

PAN needed for trans. over ₹2.5 lakh

- The government has made Permanent Account Number (PAN) mandatory for any entity conducting financial transactions of ₹2.5 lakh or more.
- Adding that an Aadhaar-like identity number is being developed for enterprises.
- The government said PAN will also be used as a Unique Entity Number for non-individuals, starting April 1.

Foundation of Universal Peace Center

- Andhra Pradesh laid the foundation stone for the Universal Peace Retreat Center of 'Prajapita Brahmakumari Eswariya University' in Amaravati.
- The Center will be built with a capacity to provide shelter to 1500 people.
- It will propagate and teach raja yoga, Dhyana, youth development, women empowerment, stress relief activities, child care, positive attitude, life skills and moral values.

Maharashtra govt to give sanitary pads

- The Maharashtra government has launched a scheme to make a pack of sanitary pads available to 7 lakh girls studying in government schools for a subsidised price of Rs 5.
- It intends to increase the percentage of usage of sanitary pads to 75% from the current 17% in rural Maharashtra.
- The scheme named Asmita (meaning dignity) will give sanitary pads to girls aged between 11 and 19.

India & World

Team India, Proteas donate ₹5.5L

- Team India captain Virat Kohli and his Proteas counterpart Faf du Plessis have donated ₹5.5 lakh to

the Cape Town Water Crisis on behalf of both the teams for drought relief efforts in Cape Town.

- This comes days after Cape Town pushed back 'Day Zero' to July 9, the day the city is expected to run out of water.
- The currency of Cape Town is South African Rand.

India and Canada ink Six Pacts

- India and Canada have signed six agreements, including in the area of nuclear science, energy cooperation and information communication technology.
- An agreement between India's Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports and the Department of Canadian Heritage was also signed for cooperation in sports.
- An MoU between the two countries for cooperation in higher education was also signed.

7th meeting of EPG on Nepal-India relations

- 7th meeting of Eminent Persons Group on Nepal-India relations has begun in Kathmandu.
- Representatives from Nepal & India will discuss various bilateral issues including Peace & Friendship treaty, trade, transit & border.
- EPG is a joint mechanism consisting of experts & intellectuals from India & Nepal to provide suggestions for updating existing bilateral treaties between the two countries

Mahindra arm, Viking Air ally for UDAN plan

- Aerospace Private Limited has signed a MoU with Canada's Viking Air Ltd. to form a strategic alliance to take advantage of India's growing regional air connectivity opportunities.
- Under the MoU, both would support each other's non-competing aircraft business to boost market expansion.
- In India, this portfolio can address the much-needed requirements of regional connectivity scheme, UDAN.

India, Uzbek region ink pharma pact

- Andijan Region of Uzbekistan and Indian Government have inked an agreement.
- This pact envisages cooperation in the implementation of a program for the production of pharmaceutical, bio-pharmaceutical products and medical equipment in the Andijan region of Uzbekistan.
- India and Uzbekistan will work together for attracting direct investments of Indian companies and Uzbek investors.

India, Germany sign pact

- India signed a MoU with Germany to develop modules for providing urban basic services and housing for smart cities.

- The MoU would develop and apply concepts for sustainable urban development providing urban basic services and housing in selected cities as well as smart cities in India.
- GIZ would contribute up to €8 million for the project which would run for a period of three years.

ADB and India Sign \$84 Million Loan

- The Government of India and Asian Development Bank (ADB) signed a \$84 million loan for improvement and expansion of water supply in Bhagalpur and Gaya in Bihar.
- The tranche 2 loan is part of the \$200 million multi-tranche financing facility (MFF) for the Bihar Urban Development Investment Program that was approved by ADB in 2012.
- The loan will have a 25-year term.

Telangana, Taiwan Sign MoU

- The Telangana Government signed an MOU with Taoyuan City of Taiwan for better technology partnership in the state.
- The agreement was signed after the World Congress on Information Technology (WCIT) 2018 in Hyderabad.
- IT Minister K T Rama Rao and Principal Secretary Jayesh Ranjan signed the agreement with Robert Huang, Director of the Board of Taiwan company at World IT Congress 2018.

India Signs MoU With IDRC

- An MoU between the Government of India and Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC) was signed in New Delhi.
- The agreement was signed to usher the "programme based research support" in addressing current and future global and local developmental challenges.
- IDRC has funded 551 research activities worth CA\$159 million in India through institutions, researchers and NGOs.

CRPF to guard Indian Embassy in Baghdad

- The government is planning to send Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) commandos to provide security to the Indian Embassy in Baghdad.
- An Official from Ministry of Home Affairs said that the deployment was being made on the request of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).
- The Iraqi government is locked in an armed conflict with the terrorist outfit Islamic State.

India, Russia to deepen cooperation in ICTs

- India & Russia have decided to strengthen practical cooperation to prevent misuse of Information & Communication technologies to fight against its use in criminal & terrorist activities.

- To prevent possibilities of conflict, appropriate mechanism for ensuring security in use of ICT should be put in place.
- Both sides reiterated the intention to strengthen cooperation in info sharing & capacity building.

Agreement with Israel on Film Co-production

- Cabinet has approved an agreement signed between India & Israel on co-production of films.
- Co-production of an Indian film with an International party means that Indian producer can access international funds & collaborate on script, talent & distribution at international level.
- It will also create a common pool of creative, artistic, technical, financial & marketing resources of the 2 countries.

UK, India launch Joint Research Projects

- UK- India Joint research projects on Water Quality Research & Energy Demand Reduction in Built Environment were launched in New Delhi.
- Water Quality Research programme has 8 projects & Energy Demand Reduction in Built Environment programme has 4 projects.
- The Projects aims to deliver benefits & research solutions not only to UK & India but also to address global sustainable development goals.

India slides 16 spots on Globalisation Index

- According to Global Connectedness Index 2016, India dropped 16 spots to 78 from 62 in 11 years to 2015.
- India's 16-place drop was the 2nd worst change among its neighbours in central & south Asia.
- Georgia fared the best by moving up 43 spots to 56 while Sri Lanka was the worst, dropping 19 spots to 86.
- The Index takes into account international flows of trade, capital, information & people.

Delhi, Mumbai to be world's 10 biggest cities

- As per the report released by United Nations' World Urbanization Prospects, Delhi and Mumbai would be among the 10 largest cities in the world by 2030.
- At present, Tokyo is the most populated city in the world with a population of 38 million.
- As per the report the population in the Middle East, Asia and Africa is only going to increase by 2030.

India to get control of key port in Iran

- India & Iran have signed a significant pact which gives India operational control of a part of strategically located Chabahar port for 18 months.
- Agreement was signed after PM Modi held wide-ranging talks with Iranian President Hassan Rouhani.
- First phase of Chabahar port was inaugurated in December last year, opening a new strategic route

connecting Iran, India & Afghanistan, bypassing Pakistan.

India, Iran sign nine MoUs

- India & Iran have signed 9 Memorandums of Understanding following the delegation-level talks between PM Modi & Iranian President Hassan Rouhani.
- The agreements were signed in areas like double taxation avoidance, extradition, agricultural cooperation, port lease, medicine & others.
- Both the countries also signed an agreement on exemption from visa requirement for holders of diplomatic passports.

Long Term Visa to Minorities From Afghanistan

- The government has given its nod to the proposal for granting long-term visa to minorities from Afghanistan seeking refuge in India.
- The Ministry of Home Affairs also relaxed norms for visa and residential permits for Afghan minorities which include Sikhs & non-Muslims
- The development assumes significance as it came at a time when Pakistan is imposing visa restrictions on Afghan nationals.

India should create more salaried jobs

- The World Bank has said that India needs to create more regular, salaried jobs with growing earnings.
- It should not focus on self-employment to become a middle-income country by 2047.
- It said that salaried jobs are a "rare privilege" in India today where less than 20% of workers are in salaried employment. India is currently classified as a lower middle-income country.

NTPC to supply extra 300MW to Bangladesh

- State-run NTPC Ltd will supply 300 megawatts (MW) to power-starved Bangladesh.
- It is a part of India's strategy of playing a key role in creating a new energy security architecture for its neighbours.
- Of India's current supplies of 660MW to Bangladesh, NTPC has been supplying 410MW.

ONGC Vid. Acquire stake in Abu Dhabi Oilfield

- ONGC Videsh Ltd and its partners have acquired a 10% in a large offshore oilfield Abu Dhabi National Oil Co.'s (ADNOC) in Abu Dhabi for \$600 million.
- It is the first time any Indian company has set foot in oil-rich Emirate.
- The current production of this field is about 400,000 barrels of oil per day (20m tonnes per annum) and Indian consortium's annual share shall be about 2 million tonnes.

India, Oman Sign 8 MoUs

- India and Oman have signed 8 MoUs in different areas during Modi's maiden visit to the Gulf nation.
- Agreements were inked in the areas of defence, health and tourism.
- An MoU on legal and judicial cooperation in civil and commercial matters was also signed.
- The agreements were inked after Mr Modi held delegation-level talks with the Sultan of Oman, Qaboos bin Said al Said in Muscat.

China reopens Nathu La route

- China has confirmed "resumption" of Kailash Mansarovar Yatra through the Nathu La route.
- Kailash Mansarovar yatra via Nathu La was not undertaken last year after the Chinese govt cited "unfavourable conditions" to ensure safe & smooth conduct of the yatra on this route.
- The yatra was stopped by China in the aftermath of the military face-off with India last year at Doklam.

India, Palestine sign 6 infra agreements

- India and Palestine have signed six agreements on the infrastructural development in the Palestine.
- A MOU was signed by the two countries for the construction of an India Palestine Centre for empowering women, "Turathi" at a cost of USD 5 million.
- A MOU for setting up of a new National Printing Press at Ramallah at a cost of USD 5 million was also signed between the two nations.

India, UAE sign five MoUs

- India & UAE have signed 5 agreements following a delegation-level talks headed by PM Modi & Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan.
- The MoUs signed and exchanged are related to energy sector, railways, manpower and financial services.
- To deepen bilateral cooperation in the field of finance, a MoU between Bombay Stock Exchange & Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange was signed.

India tops as a source market for Dubai

- Dubai witnessed 15% growth in tourist arrivals from India in 2017, hosting 2.1 million visitors, retaining top spot as the source market.
- It also became the first country to cross the 2 million mark in a single year.
- The growth is mainly due to the success of Dubai Tourism's ongoing collaboration with Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan in the 'BeMyGuest' campaign.

PM Narendra Modi in Palestine

- PM Modi's first engagement after arriving in Ramallah was to lay a wreath at the Mausoleum of Late President Yasser Arafat.
- Modi, who is on his maiden trip to Palestine, will be received by President Mahmoud Abbas.
- Prior to Modi, former President Pranab Mukherjee and External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj had visited Palestine in October 2015 and January 2016 respectively.

India rejects meeting with Maldives

- India has rejected a meeting with the Foreign Minister of Maldives Mohamed Asim.
- As the crisis there reached its peak, the Maldivian government under President Yameen has taken a stance to send emissaries to "friendly nation".
- Apart from India, America and the European Union have all expressed serious concern over the present situation in Maldives.

Israel to give Air India ₹6 crore

- Air India will get a one-time grant of approximately ₹6 cr from Israel for launching direct flights between New Delhi and Tel Aviv.
- The flight is expected to operate on the shortest route and significantly reduce the cost of travel between the two countries.
- In its efforts to attract Indian tourists, Israel has increased its promotional budgetary allocation to USD 2.5 m in the last 2 years.

Nepal's ex-King visits India

- Nepal's last monarch Gyanendra Shah has arrived in Odisha to attend the International Gau Sambardhana Mahotsav as Chief Guest.
- He will lay the foundation stone for a Gaumata Mandir.
- Dubbing the event as the 'Wow Cow Mission', the event's organisers said that it aims to raise the status of India's 'desi' cow to boost the economy, agriculture and nutrition.

Swaraj to leave for Saudi Arabia

- External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj has left for her first official visit to Saudi Arabia.
- During the 3-day visit, Mrs Swaraj will meet with the Saudi leadership to discuss bilateral, regional and global issues of mutual interest.
- She will also participate in the inauguration of the National Heritage and Culture Festival 'Janadriyah'.
- India is the guest of honour country at the fest.

PM to lay foundation stone of temple in UAE

- Narendra Modi will lay the foundation stone of a temple in Abu Dhabi during his visit to the United Arab Emirates.

- The event will be part of a three-nation tour from February 9 to 12, starting in Palestine.
- The UAE granted the temple project after India conveyed the demand of its nationals for a place of worship during Mr. Modi's 2015 visit to the country.

Manchester-India Partnership launched

- A new Manchester-India Partnership aimed at connecting Indian companies with northern regions of England has been set up.
- It aims to further enhance the trade, investment, science & innovation ties between India & Britain.
- This public-private initiative between India & Manchester is backed by Confederation of Indian Industry.

India-US trade to have touched \$140b in 2017

- Trade between India and the United States is estimated to have jumped substantially from \$118 billion in 2016 to \$140 billion in 2017.
- It is according to an advocacy group that aims to promote bilateral trade.
- In 2016, India was the ninth largest trading partner of the US and one of the major countries with which America has had trade deficit of more than \$30 billion.

India joins Ashgabat agreement

- The agreement will give India an access to connect with Central Asia and Persian Gulf.
- The founding members of Agreement are Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Iran and Oman. The agreement will come into force on 3rd February, 2018.
- Accession to the Agreement would diversify India's connectivity options with central Asia and have a positive influence on India's trade and commercial ties.

IWAI and DEA signs agreement with WB

- Inland Waterways Authority and Dept. Of Economic affairs signed agreement with world bank for Jal Marg Vikas project on Ganga.
- The project will increase the navigation capacity of commercial vessels on National Waterway 1 (River Ganga) from Varanasi to Haldia.
- The project will result in an environment-friendly, fuel-efficient and cost-effective alternative mode of transportation.

Swaraj's Goodwill Visit To Nepal concludes

- External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj has returned after successful completion of the visit to Nepal.
- During her stay in Kathmandu, Mrs Swaraj met top leaders and discussed ways to enhance bilateral cooperation and take forward age-old special relationship between India and Nepal.

- The visit was very significant as the new government under left alliance is likely to be formed soon in Nepal.

India signs \$100m loan agreement with WB

- Indian govt signed a \$100 million loan agreement with the world bank to support Tamil Nadu rural transformation project.
- The agreement will promote rural enterprises, facilitate their access to finance and create Employment opportunities especially for woman.
- It will also support households from socially and culturally disadvantaged groups.

India slips to 42nd place on EIU Index

- India has slipped to 42nd place on Economist Intelligence Unit's annual Global Democracy Index.
- India has moved down from 32nd place last year and remains "flawed democracies".
- Index ranks 165 independent states and 2 territories on the basis of 5 categories: electoral process & pluralism, civil liberties, functioning of government, political participation and political culture.

Personalities in News

Baichung Bhutia quits TMC

- Former Indian football team captain Baichung Bhutia has announced his resignation from Trinamool Congress (TMC).
- The former striker quit professional football in 2011 and joined the Mamata Banerjee-led TMC in 2013 to give politics a shot.
- In recent times, he went against the party stand on Gorkhaland and has expressed his support for a separate statehood for the region.

Former Cabinet Secretary T.S.R. Subramanian dies

- T.S.R. Subramanian, former Cabinet Secretary of the Union government passed away due to prolonged illness.
- Subramanian, a 1961 batch Officer of the Indian Administrative Service, was the Cabinet Secretary from August 1, 1996, to March 31, 1998.
- He also headed several government committees, including those on education and environment.

Abdullah II bin Al-Hussein arrives in India

- King of Jordan Abdullah-II bin Al-Hussein has arrived in India on a 3 day visit.
- This will be his second visit to India after his visit along with Queen Rania in 2006.
- The two sides are expected to sign a number of memorandums of understanding and agreements in diverse areas of bilateral cooperation.

- India is Jordan's fourth largest trading partner with bilateral trade worth \$1.35 billion.

Strandja Memorial Tournament

- Amit Panghal claimed his second consecutive international gold but MC Mary Kom settled for silver in the 69th Strandja Memorial boxing tournament for men and women in Sofia, Bulgaria.
- Amit (49kg), who fetched the top honours at last month's Indian Open, defeated Morocco's Said Mordaji.
- Seema Poonia (+81kg) also claimed silver by defeating Russia's Anna Ivanova.

Nilekani to develop IT Infra for 'Modicare'

- Nandan Nilekani will assist the government in developing IT infrastructure for the National Health Protection Scheme (NHPS), which seeks to cover 10-crore families.
- The IT infrastructure for the healthcare scheme will be of a huge scale as was required for Aadhar Card
- Former UIDAI Chairman Nilekani, the brain behind the Aadhaar is also a member of the GST return simplification committee.

Chopra quits as ambassador for Nirav's brand

- Actress Priyanka Chopra's spokesperson has confirmed that she has quit as the global ambassador of jewellery designer Nirav Modi's brand following allegations of money laundering against him.
- The actress had earlier accused him of non-payment of dues for several advertisement campaigns.
- Nirav Modi is the prime accused in the \$1.77 billion (\$11,400 crore) scam involving Punjab National Bank.

Kunwar Bai passes away

- Kunwar Bai, Chhattisgarh's Swachh Bharat Abhiyan mascot, passed away after suffering from a long time illness.
- She was 106 years old.
- She was felicitated by PM Modi for her work to make her village open defecation free in 2016.
- She sold her goats for Rs 22,000 and built a toilet at her home with that money.
- Kunwar Bai was made Swachhata Doot by Chhattisgarh state government.

Former Indore mayor Suresh Seth passes away

- Senior Congress leader and former Indore Mayor, Suresh Seth, breathed his last following an illness at a local hospital. He was 87 years old.
- Seth, known for his charismatic and robust personality, was also called as a 'Lion of Indore'.
- He aggressively took up people's issues and cut across party lines to deliver benefit to the common man.

CBI arrests Rotomac owner Vikram Kothari

- The CBI arrested Rotomac Pens' owner Vikram Kothari and his son Rahul for allegedly defrauding banks for ₹3,700 crore.
- Kothari's company had submitted forged documents to get loans and created shell firms to carry out illegal activities.
- Earlier, authorities had notified all land, sea & air ports to prevent Kothari and his family from leaving India.

Billy Graham Passes Away at 99

- Billy Graham preached millions in stadium events, called crusades, became a pastor to presidents and was best-known as Christian evangelist for more than 60 years.
- Mr. Graham spread his influence across the country and around the world through a combination of religious conviction, commanding stage presence and shrewd use of radio.

Kamal Haasan launches a political party

- Actor Kamal Haasan launched his political party 'Makkal Needhi Maiam' and hoisted a flag carrying the party's symbol in Tamil Nadu's Madurai.
- Haasan, who has embarked on a statewide tour, visited former President Dr APJ Abdul Kalam's residence and addressed three public meetings earlier in the day.

- He said that he is no longer a cinema star.

First Indian woman to fly fighter aircraft solo

- Flying officer Avani Chaturvedi has made history by becoming the first Indian woman to fly a fighter aircraft solo.
- She flew a MiG-21 bison in her first solo sortie from IAF's Jamnagar base in Gujarat.
- She is one of the three in the first batch of female pilots, besides Bhawana Kanth and Mohana Singh, who were inducted in Indian Air Force fighter squadron in 2016.

Spiritual leader Aga Khan to arrive in India

- Spiritual leader, Shah Karim Al Hussaini, the Aga Khan, will arrive in India on an 11-day visit.
- Aga Khan is the founder & chairman of the Aga Khan Development Network and is the 49th hereditary Imam (Spiritual Leader) of the Shia Imami Ismaili Muslims.
- He is visiting India on an invitation of the vice president as this year marks the Diamond Jubilee of Aga Khan leadership.

RB Pandit takes over as Commandant of INA

- Vice Admiral RB Pandit, Flag-Officer-Commanding, Western Fleet at Mumbai, took over as the Commandant of Indian Naval Academy.
- He replaces Vice Admiral SV Bhokare who handed over responsibilities to Vice Admiral Pandit after a tenure of over 15 months.
- He has also been the Naval Adviser at the High Commission of India at Islamabad, Pakistan.

Paytm appoints Pallavi Shroff as board member

- Paytm has appointed Pallavi Shroff, managing partner of Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas law firm to its Board of Directors.
- Her appointment will drive the growth of financial services business such as lending, insurance & wealth management.
- She joins as an independent director & is the 7th appointee to Paytm's board.
- Shroff is presently on the board of firms like Maruti Suzuki & Apollo Tyres.

Canadian PM Justin Trudeau arrives in India

- Canadian PM Justin Trudeau is on a 7 day visit to India to further strengthen strategic ties with a focus on defence and counter-terrorism besides expanding trade and investment ties.
- Both sides are also expected to deliberate on enhancing cooperation in a civil nuclear sector.
- His visit comes three years after PM Narendra Modi's state visit to Canada.

Japan reappoints Kuroda as BOJ chief

- Japan's govt has reappointed Bank of Japan (BOJ) Governor Haruhiko Kuroda to serve another 5 years term.
- It comes amid heightened anxiety in Japanese & global markets on speculation major central banks will soon wind down their crisis-era policies
- It would make Kuroda the longest-serving BOJ head in half a century, a sign of Abe's confidence in Kuroda's ability to pull Japan's economy out of stagnation

Cyril Ramaphosa elected as SA's new president

- Cyril Ramaphosa has been elected as South Africa's new president by ruling party legislators after the resignation of Jacob Zuma.
- Ramaphosa was the only candidate nominated for election in the parliament after two opposition parties said they would not participate.
- Ramaphosa is South Africa's fifth president since majority rule started after the end of apartheid in 1994.

Ethiopia PM Hailemariam Desalegn resigns

- Ethiopia's PM has submitted his resignation in a surprise move that comes amid protracted anti-govt protest.
- He said his resignation was vital to carry out reforms that would lead to sustainable peace & democracy.
- Hailemariam, who has led the country since 2012, also stepped down as chairman of the ruling alliance.
- He took office following the death of Meles Zenawi who had ruled since 1991

K P Sharma Oli becomes Nepal's PM

- The Communist Party of Nepal (UML) Chairman KP Sharma Oli has become new Prime Minister of Nepal.
- This is the second time Mr. Oli has become the prime minister. He had served as prime minister earlier from October 2015 to August 2016.
- The formation of new government after historic elections is expected to begin a new era of political stability in the Himalayan nation.

Ronaldo, the first player with 100 goals for 1 club

- Real Madrid frontman Cristiano Ronaldo has become the first player in UEFA Champions League in history to score 100 goals for a single club.
- His overall tally in the tournament has gone up to 116 goals, 19 more than Lionel Messi.
- Further, Ronaldo has scored 10+ UCL goals for the seventh straight season, no other player has done this before..

PBNS shortlists Siddharth for top edit job

- A high-level committee has identified Siddharth Zarabi for Head of TV News in DD News and Abhijit

Majumder for the position of Chief Editor, Prasar Bharati News Service (PBNS).

- Zarabi with 20 years of work experience is currently Executive Editor of Business TV India while Majumder is Managing Editor of Mail Today newspaper.

Ashok Das appointed Indian envoy to Brazil

- Ashok Das, a 1987 batch Indian Foreign Service (IFS) officer, was named India's new Ambassador to Brazil.
- Das, presently additional secretary in the external affairs ministry, is expected to take up his assignment shortly, according to the ministry's statement.
- Both India and Brazil are the members of the BRICS economic grouping that also includes China, Russia and South Africa.

Kambar to head Sahitya Akademi

- Kannada litterateur Chandrashekar Kambar has been elected as president of the Sahitya Akademi in the election held for the post.
- Hindi poet Madhav Koushik has been elected as vice-president for the same.
- Prof. Kambar is the third Kannada writer to head the country's premier literary institution, after Vinayak Krishna Gokak (1983) and U.R. Ananthamurthy (1993).

Parbati Ghose passed away

- Parbati Ghose, Odisha's first female filmmaker, passed away following a prolonged illness on Sunday night. She was 85.
- Born in Cuttack district in 1933, Parbati started as a child artiste in AIR (All India Radio) and soon moved to the silver screen, also as a child artiste, playing Nila Madhava in Shri Jagannath.
- In 'Bhai Bhai', one of the biggest Odia hits, Parbati played the lead female protagonist.

Johann Johannsson passes away

- Acclaimed Icelandic musician and Oscar-nominated composer Johann Johannsson has passed away at the age of 48.
- In 2014, he was nominated for BAFTA, Grammy and Oscar awards for his score from 'Theory of Everything,' and won the Golden Globe award.
- Johannsson also recorded several albums of his own, including "Fordlandia" and "Orphee."

Pakistani Activist Asma Jahangir passes away

- Asma Jahangir, Pakistan's renowned human rights lawyer, social activist and an outspoken critic of the country's powerful military establishment, passed away of cardiac arrest.
- She was the first woman to serve as the president of Supreme Court Bar Association of Pakistan.

- Born in January 1952 in Lahore, Asma co-founded and chaired the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan.

Rohan More swam Across Ocean Seven

- Pune-based swimmer, Rohan More became the first Asian as well as the first Indian to swim across the Ocean Seven. He is the youngest to complete it.
- He swam across the Cook Strait between North and South Islands of New Zealand in 8 hours and 37 minutes.
- With this, More becomes the ninth person in the world to complete it. He has received the Tenzing Norgay Award for his achievements.

Muthoot Group ropes in Amitabh Bachchan

- The Muthoot Group, a leading business conglomerate has engaged Amitabh Bachchan as their Brand Ambassador.
- Amitabh Bachchan will hereafter be representing The Muthoot Group across all their national campaigns.
- The Muthoot group has interests in Financial Services, IT, Media, Healthcare, Education, Power Generation and operates in 29 states in India.

Rakesh Singh to be the private banking head

- HDFC Bank has announced the appointment of Rakesh Singh as the private banking head.
- He will continue to head the bank's investment banking, capital markets and financial institutions businesses.
- Private banking is wealth management service of the bank catering to High Net Worth & Ultra-HNW individuals, families who aim to successfully manage and grow their wealth.

Tushar Mehta to be the new SPP for 2G case

- The Central government has appointed Additional Solicitor General Tushar Mehta as the Special Public Prosecutor for cases related to the 2G scam.
- However, the status of current SPP Anand Grover appointed by the Supreme Court remains unclear.
- On December 21 last year, a special CBI court acquitted all the accused in the 2G scam, including former telecom minister A Raja and DMK MP Kanimozhi.

Biswamohan As NPCI's Non-Executive Chairman

- National Payments Corporation of India appointed Biswamohan Mahapatra as non-executive chairman for two years with immediate effect.
- He succeeds B Sambamurthy who was the interim chairman.
- National Payments Corporation of India is the umbrella organisation for all retail payment systems in India, which aims to allow all Indian citizens to have unrestricted access to e-payment services.

Indra Nooyi becomes ICC's 1st Female Director

- PepsiCo Chairman and CEO Indra Nooyi has been appointed as the International Cricket Council's (ICC) first-ever independent female director.
- Nooyi will join the cricket body in June 2018 for a 2-year term.
- The introduction of an Independent Director, who must be female, was approved by the ICC in June 2017, aimed at improving the global governance of the sport.

John Mahoney of 'Frasier' fame dies at 77

- John Mahoney, a veteran character actor best known for playing the rude dog-loving father of the title character in TV's "Frasier," has died. He was 77 years old.
- Mahoney was born in Blackpool, England, according to his biography on the online Broadway database Playbill.
- He worked as a college professor and a medical orderly also

Akshay Kumar to be ambassador for road safety

- Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari on Tuesday said he has requested actor Akshay Kumar to become the brand ambassador for the government's road safety awareness campaign.
- Adding that the actor promised full cooperation, Gadkari said celebrity ambassadors "will have a positive impact on the new generation".
- Earlier, Kumar was appointed ambassador for UP government's cleanliness campaign.

Madavoor Vasudevan Nair passes away

- Kathakali maestro Madavoor Vasudevan Nair collapsed on stage and died while performing at Agasthyacodu Mahadeva Temple, Kerala.
- A recipient of several awards, including Padma Bhushan, he was the follower of the Kaplingattu School, the particular style of south Kerala.
- Madavoor had also worked as a faculty in the Thekkan Kalari of Kerala Kalamandalam.

Niti Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant gets extension

- Niti Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant has been given an extension till June 30 next year, according to an official order.
- He was appointed the Chief Executive Officer of the government think tank on February 17, 2016 for a two-year term.
- The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet has approved extension of Kant's tenure till June 30, 2019, the order issued by the personnel ministry.

Bhumi features in Forbes '30 under 30' list

- Bollywood actors Bhumi Pednekar, Mithila Palkar and Vicky Kaushal have been named as part of Forbes India's 30 under 30 list.
- Bhumi and Vicky have already carved a niche for themselves in Bollywood, while Mithila, will soon debut in a feature film opposite Irrfan Khan.
- Bumrah, Harmanpreet are also named in Forbes India 30 Under 30 list.

Odisha appoints Naba Kumar Nayak as State EC

- Retired bureaucrat Naba Kumar Nayak is appointed as the State Election Commissioner (SEC).
- A retired IAS officer, Nayak, has long administrative experience including election management.
- He served the state government in various capacities including district collector, Puri (2012-13) and Mayurbhanj (2012) and deputy relief commissioner.

Saurav becomes Highest-Ranked Squash Player

- India's leading squash player, Saurav Ghosal jumped five places to No. 14 to become the highest ranked Indian in the latest Professional Squash Association (PSA) rankings.
- Ghosal beat Joshna Chinappa who slipped three places to No. 17 while Dipika Pallikal Karthik remained on 20.
- Former Indian national champion Harinder Pal Sandhu was placed at 49th.

Neelam Kapur appointed DG Of SAI

- Senior-most Indian Information Service (IIS) officer Neelam Kapur was appointed Director-General of Sports Authority of India (SAI).
- She is at present the Principal Director General of the Directorate of Field Publicity (DFP).
- It is for the first time that an IIS officer has been appointed as SAI chief. This post is usually held by an Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer.

Environment

Cultural festival in Varanasi on cleanliness

- Varanasi will host a 2-day festival "Swachhagraha Bapu ko Karyaanjali" on Feb 21 & 22 to bring focus to cleanliness by using different forms of culture.
- It will be held at Man Mandir Ghat & Assi Ghat in Varanasi.
- It will see the engagement of academia, artists, artisans on use of cultural expressions for conservation & protection of the river and the city.

UK team to study ice shelf in Antarctic

- A British Antarctic Survey-led team will investigate a marine ecosystem hidden for up to 120,000 years beneath the Larsen C Ice Shelf, which lost a trillion-tonne iceberg last year.

- They will investigate the 5,818-square-km of seabed left exposed by the separation.
- The team plans to conduct the research before sunlight changes the undersea environment changes, giving birth to new species.

MP agrees to shift six tigers to Odisha

- The Madhya Pradesh government has given affirmation to translocate three pairs of tigers to Odisha's Satkosia Tiger Reserve.
- The in-principle approval came after CM Shivraj Singh agreed to the Odisha government's request for translocation of the big cats.
- Principal Chief Conservator of Forest, Wild Life, Jitendra Agrawal said the STR is left with only one pair of tigers.

Centre drafts 10-city plan to clean Ganga

- The Centre has drafted a plan to check the flow of sewer water into the river Ganga by installing sewage treatment plants (STP) in 10 major cities.
- These cities reportedly contribute about 65% of the total polluted water flowing into the river.
- As per an official of National Mission for Clean Ganga, these STPs would ensure 100% sewage treatment.

Clean air for Delhi campaign launched

- Delhi govt & MoEF has jointly launched Clean Air Campaign, which will continue for 2 weeks till Feb 23.
- As part of the Campaign, 70 teams have been constituted, comprising 1 officer of MoEF & CC & another from Delhi govt, who will be the co-leaders of the team.
- Campaign would include enforcement of pollution-control measures for vehicles, driving discipline & inspection of power plants.

Chile gets 5 national parks together

- Chile has created five new national parks that are collectively the size of Switzerland.
- The new national parks, which aim to preserve vast tracts of Patagonia, comprises 9 million acres of federal land and over 1 million acres of land donated by American philanthropists.
- Interestingly, the later marks the largest private land donation in the world.

Second shipwreck found near Vizag

- A 2nd shipwreck was discovered by a team of experienced divers in the sea off Bheemunipatnam, 45 km from Vizag.
- This comes a month after a century-old shipwreck was unearthed in the region.
- An extremely rare species of Goliath grouper fish, considered to be the keystone species of an

ecosystem is also found here. This fish is recognised as a critically endangered species by the IUCN.

NGT imposes 10 lakh envt compensation on UP

- The National Green Tribunal imposed an environment compensation of Rs 10 lakh on the UP government for failing to take action on disposing e-waste from the banks of the Ramganga river in Moradabad.
- A bench, headed by acting NGT Chairperson, Justice U D Salvi imposed the compensation.
- The green panel also imposed an environment compensation on the Moradabad district magistrate.

Floating Treatment wetlands inaugurated

- It is the largest floating treatment wetland having plants as cleaning agents was inaugurated on Nekampur lake, Hyderabad.
- The plants on the floating treatment wetlands help clean the lakes by absorbing nitrates and oxygen in water.
- Cleaning agents planted on the FTW include vetivers, canna, cattail, bulrush, citronella, hibiscus, fountain grass, flowering herbs, tulsi and ashwagandha.

Government Policies & Schemes

2nd Project Of Swajal Yojana launched

- Union Minister of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Uma Bharti launched the Swajal pilot project at Village Bhikampura in Rajasthan.
- Besides ensuring the availability of clean drinking water to every household round the year, the project would also generate employment.
- Swajal is a community-owned drinking water programme for sustained drinking water supply.

EPFO Introduces UAN - Aadhar Linking Facility

- Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) has introduced UAN-Aadhaar linking facility for the convenience of members using EPFO Link in UMANG Mobile App.
- The facility on e-KYC Portal has further added a new feature to link UAN with Aadhaar online using biometric credentials.
- For using this facility with UMANG APP, member will have to provide his/her UAN.

Modi launches Amma two-wheeler scheme

- PM Modi kickstarted the subsidised Amma two-wheeler scheme meant for working women, on the occasion of former Tamil Nadu's Chief Minister Jayalalithaa's 70th birth anniversary.
- As part of the scheme, every beneficiary in the state of Tamil Nadu will be given 50% of the cost of a two-wheeler or a grant of ₹25,000.

- Each year, one lakh working women would be covered under this scheme.

Kids aged less than 5 yrs to get blue Aadhaar

- UIDAI tweeted that children below the age of five years will receive a blue-coloured 'Baal Aadhaar' card.
- While the Baal Aadhaar will not carry biometric details of the child, it will be updated with the information after the child crosses the age of five.
- Several schools across Delhi have reportedly made children's Aadhaar numbers mandatory for admissions.

First sale of electoral bonds from March 1

- The first sale of electoral bonds will start from March 1 for a period of 10 days at 4 main branches of SBI in Chennai, Kolkata, Mumbai and Delhi.
- These bonds will have a life of 15 days, and a citizen of India or an entity incorporated or established in the country can purchase them.
- Bonds can be bought for any value, in multiples of Rs 1,000, Rs 10,000, Rs 1 lakh, Rs 10 lakh or Rs 1 cr.

Modi to inaugurate first ever TB India summit

- India is all set to organise a mega India TB summit from March 13-16.
- All chief ministers will be invited and Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the first of its kind event which is aimed at generating sufficient momentum for his vision of a TB free India by 2025.
- It is five years ahead of the global TB elimination target of 2030.

Parivartan scheme launched in Haryana

- Haryana launched Parivartan scheme designed to address 10 issues.
- The 10 issues include facilitation of financing, making agriculture profitable & sustainable, improving health services, implementing Swachh Bharat, decongesting market areas, engaging the youth, checking air pollution, ensuring availability of identity-related services, effective policing, and ensuring road order and conduct.

60,000-crore fund for urban housing scheme

- The Union Cabinet has approved the creation of National Urban Housing Fund (NUHF) with Rs 60,000 crore in its kitty.
- The fund will be situated in Building Materials and Technology Promotion Council under the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.
- The Ministry has so far sanctioned 39.4 lakh houses under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban).

Government extends Anti-Narcotics scheme

- The government has extended the anti-narcotics scheme for 3 more years to combat illicit trafficking in drugs and psychotropic substance.
- The purpose of the scheme is to assist states and Union Territories, which are contributing in controlling the inter-state and cross-border drug trafficking.
- The scheme was first launched in 2004 for a period of five years.

No GST on food served to patients in hospital

- The government has clarified that the food served to patients admitted to the hospital is part of healthcare services and is therefore exempted from GST.
- However, the food served by the hospital to patients who are not admitted will be taxable.
- Also, there will be no GST levied on services provided by doctors, consultants, and technicians at the hospital.

J'hkhand govt pushed for SHGs manufacturing pads

- The Jharkhand government will purchase sanitary napkins from SHGs for distribution among schoolgirls, Chief Minister Raghubar Das has said.
- Government had during the recent budget session taken this decision to empower women working in SHGs.
- The state government's move comes at a time when people have been actively participating in actor Akshay Kumar's 'Pad Man Challenge' on social media.

Air dispensary set to take off in Northeast

- The air dispensary service in the North East, which is the "brainchild" of the Manipur Governor Najma Heptulla, will be commissioned soon in Manipur and Meghalaya.
- Governor Ms. Heptulla said that she first came to know of the air dispensary in Australia during a visit there.
- Doctors and paramedics will rush in helicopters to attend the patients.

Tribal areas to soon get bike ambulances

- Relieved by the response to the free bike ambulance service in Mumbai, the State government is planning to expand the fleet and run similar services in tribal-dominated regions.
- The Maharashtra government is planning to launch 30 additional ambulance bikes, out of which 10 will be used in Mumbai.
- This emergency first responder service is available through the '108' helpline.

NHAI to start 'Pay As You Use' pilot project

- The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) will start a pilot project called "Pay As You Use" on the Delhi-Mumbai Highway.
- It will study and implement the ability of the system in the country.
- The project to be run for one year involves implementing a satellite-based electronic toll collection system running on GPS/GSM technology for around 500 commercial vehicles.

RK Singh launches ASH TRACK Mobile App

- Union Minister of State (IC) for Power and New & Renewable Energy, Shri R.K Singh, launched a Web-based Monitoring System and a Fly Ash mobile application named ASH TRACK.
- These platforms will enable better management of the ash produced by thermal power plants.
- It will provide an interface between fly ash producers (Thermal Power Plants) and potential ash users.

Goa to launch bike ambulances in the state

- Goa Chief Minister Manohar Parrikar is planning to launch 20 bike ambulances to deal with casualties in the state's tourism belt.
- The ambulances will be equipped with basic life-saving equipment and two oxygen cylinders to serve as rapid service at places where four-wheeler ambulances cannot reach.
- A total of 100 bike ambulances will be introduced in the next six months.

₹1,650cr allotted for PM Research Fellow plan

- The Union Cabinet has approved the implementation of 'Prime Minister's Research Fellows' scheme at a cost of ₹1,650 crore for a period of seven years starting 2018-2019.
- Under the scheme, students pursuing PhD in IITs and IISc will be offered fellowships worth ₹70,000-80,000 per month for five years.
- A total of 3,000 fellows will be selected for the fellowship.

Ujjwala Yojana to benefit 8 crore women now

- The Cabinet has approved the increase in the target for the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana, meant to provide LPG connections to rural women, to eight crore from the earlier five crore, adding that this has to be achieved by 2020.
- It also approved an additional allocation for the scheme of ₹4,800 crore.

Haryana to set up 'Kisan Kalyan Pradhikaran'

- In an attempt to increase farm productivity and farmers' income, the Haryana government announced the setting up of 'Haryana Kisan Kalyan Pradhikaran'.

- The Pradhikaran will undertake all possible measures to enhance farm productivity and mitigate the physical, financial and psychological distress of farm households.
- It will maintain projects through the Agriculture Advisory Council.

UP Government launches DASTAK Campaign

- UP State government in association with UNICEF has launched massive door to door campaign DASTAK to eradicate deadly Acute Encephalitis Syndrome and Japanese Encephalitis disease in the state.
- DASTAK stands for 'Darwaja Khat khatao, AES aur JE ko bhagao'.
- In DASTAK campaign, whole state machinery with the help of UNICEF will now literally go door to door in 38 JES and AE affected districts.

Gobardhan Yojana launched to support farmers

- Haryana launched the 'Gobardhan Yojana' to provide organic manure and cow urine with an aim to benefit farmers, CM Manohar Lal Khattar said.
- A provision of Rs 11 crore has been made to provide benefits of various projects under this scheme.
- The Yojana would help in doubling the income of farmers and next time, the MSP would be given with additional benefit of 50% over the cost of production.

FSSAI asks states to ensure 'Hygienic' prasad

- The country's food safety regulator has asked the states to roll out a project to ensure that devotees were served safe prasad at places of worship.
- FSSAI said these places are requested to roll out the project BHOG.
- Blissful Hygienic Offering to God, or BHOG, is a part of FSSAI's safe and nutritious food bouquet of initiatives launched a year ago.

Scheme for promoting solar power production

- Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahaabhiyan or KUSUM scheme would provide extra income to farmers when by selling the power to the grid.
- It will help in de-dieselisation of the farm sector.
- The scheme will promote energy efficiency and water conservation.
- The Centre will spend ₹48,000 crore on the ten-year scheme which was announced in the Union Budget 2018-19.

Gobar-Dhan Scheme to be launched

- In an effort to make the villages open defecation free and improving the lives of villagers, the Finance Minister announced the launch of Galvanizing Organic Bio-Agro Resources Dhan (GOBAR-DHAN).

- Jaitley added that this will manage and convert cattle dung and solid waste in farms to compost, biogas and bio-CNG.
- He announced that 187 projects have been sanctioned under Namami Gange Programme

New interest rates for senior citizens

- Mr. Jaitley made an effort to ease the cash flows of senior citizens that are largely dependent on interest income.
- The exemption limit on interest income on bank and post office deposits has been raised from ₹10,000 to ₹50,000 a year.
- The deduction available for health insurance premium and medical expenditure has been raised from ₹30,000 to ₹50,000.

'ModiCare' - World's Biggest Health Plan

- India will have the world's largest healthcare programme for half a billion of its poorest citizens.
- The plan was soon dubbed "NaMoCare" by BJP president Amit Shah and "ModiCare" by many online.
- The government's new national health protection scheme will cover 10 crore poor and vulnerable families, Mr Jaitley said.
- Each family would be entitled to up to ₹5 lakh every year.

FY19 revenue loss estimated at 7K cr

- In a big boost to the small and medium enterprises, Arun Jaitley announced a reduction in corporate tax rate from existing 30% to 25%, for companies with turnover of up to Rs 250 crore.
- The decision will benefit the entire class of MSME that account for almost 99% of companies filing their tax returns.
- But it will lead to an estimated revenue loss of Rs 7,000 cr in the financial year 2018-19

Govt to spend ₹2.95 lakh cr on defence

- The government hiked the defence budget for the next financial year to ₹2.95 lakh crore, a nearly 7.81% increase from last year.
- This includes nearly ₹1 lakh crore allotted for capital expenditure including modernisation.
- The share of the defence budget in terms of GDP has slipped to 1.57%, the lowest since the 1962 Indo-China war.

India will grow at 7.2-7.5%

- Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said that India is expected to register a growth rate of 7.2-7.5% in the second half of the current fiscal.
- While unveiling the Budget 2018-19, he said, India has grown on an average of 7.5 percent in the first three years of the current government and has become a \$2.5 trillion economy.

- He said, India is expected to become 5th largest economy soon.

₹2,000 cr fund for agriculture market

- Arun Jaitley said that this year's Budget will focus on strengthening agriculture and the rural economy.
- The Finance Minister says that APMCs will be linked with ENAM. The government will develop 22,000 Gramin agricultural markets.
- Minimum Support Price shall be increased by 1.5 times. Operation Green will be launched for agriculture and the Minister allocates ₹500 crore for this.

Govt to construct 2 cr toilets in 2 yrs

- The government is targeting to construct two crore new toilets in the next financial year, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley announced during his budget speech.
- Speaking about the 'Swachh Bharat Mission' he said that already 6 crore toilets have been built as part of the mission.
- Jaitley has allocated ₹22,356.6 crore for SBM, a 6.89% decrease from last year's allocation of Rs 24,011.18 crore.

Govt allots ₹56k cr for SC welfare

- Arun Jaitley announced ₹56,619 crore for SC welfare and ₹39,135 crore for ST welfare.
- Every block with more than 50% ST population and at least 20,000 tribal people will have an 'Eklavya' model residential school by 2022.
- Ekalavya Model Residential School is a scheme for model residential school for Indian tribes across India. It was established by the Tribal Ministry, Government of India.

₹14.3 lakh cr to be spent on rural infrastructure

- Arun Jaitley said that the government has allocated ₹14.3 lakh crore to be spent for rural infrastructure.
- He said every block with more than 50% ST population and at least 20,000 tribal people will have a model residential school by 2022.
- He added social security will be provided to aged, widows, and orphaned children.

8 cr women to get free LPG connections

- While presenting the Union Budget 2018 in Parliament, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley announced that eight crore poor women will be provided with free LPG connections under the Ujjwala scheme.
- The Minister added that the Saubhagya scheme will provide power to four crore families and that the government will spend ₹16,000 crore on this scheme.

World's largest govt-funded health programm

- Finance Minister Arun Jaitley has announced the world's largest government-funded healthcare programme with ₹5 lakh annual cover per family for 10 crore poor families.
- The government also allocated ₹1200 crore for construction of 1.5 lakh new healthcare centres.
- Jaitley also announced setting up of 24 new government medical colleges and hospitals by upgrading existing district hospitals.

Art & Culture

44th Khajuraho Dance Festival Held In MP

- The 44th edition of Khajuraho Dance Festival 2018 was held at Khajuraho temple, a UNESCO world heritage site in Madhya Pradesh.
- Khajuraho Dance Festival is an annual cultural festival that highlights the richness of various Indian classical dance styles.
- The 6-day festival showcased classical dances including Kathak, Odissi, Bharatnatyam, Kuchipudi, Kathakali and Mohiniattam.

Guwahati organises festival 'Aadi Mahotsava'

- On 23rd February 2018, 'Aadi Mahotsava', a tribal festival organized by Assam, began at Gandhi Mandir Indoor stadium, in Guwahati, Assam.
- The 'Aadi Mahotsava' is held for 10 days. It was inaugurated by Assam's Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal.
- 'Aadi Mahotsava' celebrates the art and culture of tribal communities.

People blew 'shankh' to create world record

- A record was set on the second day of Rajim Kumbh Mela in Chhattisgarh after over 2,100 saints and locals blew 'shankh' (conch shells) together.
- Golden Book of World Records certified the record.
- Adding that the sound of conch shells soothed the environment, the state minister Brijmohan Agrawal said, "We wanted to send message of peace and prosperity."

Madavoor Vasudevan Nair Passes Away

- Kathakali maestro Madavoor Vasudevan Nair collapsed on stage and died while performing at Agasthyacodu Mahadeva Temple, Kerala.
- A recipient of several awards, including Padma Bhushan, he was the follower of the Kaplingattu School, the particular style of south Kerala.
- Madavoor had also worked as a faculty in the Thekkan Kalari of Kerala Kalamandalam.

Kovind Inaugurates Mahamastakabhisheka Utsav

- President Ram Nath Kovind will inaugurate the 88th Mahamastakabhisheka Utsav of Lord

Gommateshwara in Sharavanabelagola in Hassan district of Karnataka.

- Mahamastakabhisheka of Gommateshwara, who is also known as Bahubali takes place once in 12 years.
- It is an important Jain pilgrimage centre and lakhs of tourists visit Shravanabelagola to see 57 feet tall monolithic stone statue.

Taj Mahotsav to start soon

- This year's 'Taj Mahotsav' will start with a dance-drama based on Lord Ram instead of the usual theme based on Mughal culture.
- The move has led to the state government being accused of ignoring the Mughal history.
- The government has, however, denied any role in the decision, saying that the event is organised by local administration.

4,400-year-old tomb discovered in Egypt

- The tomb of ancient Priestess Hetpet has been uncovered by archaeologists near Cairo, Egypt.
- The tomb, which dates back 4,400 years, is covered in paintings showing Hetpet hunting and receiving gifts from her children.
- Notably, Hetpet served Hathor, the goddess of fertility who assisted women in childbirth.

Science & Technology

New record for Fastest Distance Measurements

- Germany and France-based researchers have recorded 100 million distance values per second, demonstrating the fastest distance measurements so far!
- The team studied a bullet travelling at 540 kmph with micrometre accuracy using laser-based LIDAR (light detection and ranging).
- This technology could be used in autonomous navigation and 3D cameras.

Jupiter's Icy Moon May Host Life

- Jupiter's moon Europa may host life in an ocean of liquid water under its 10-km-thick ice crust, suggested Brazilian researchers.
- The team based their claims on a bacterium that survives deep underwater without sunlight in environments similar to that of Europa.
- The bacterium in 2.8-km-deep South African mines was found to synthesise its energy from rock sulphates, formed via ionising radiation.

Google brings 'Symptom Search' to India

- Google India has rolled out its feature called "Symptom Search" in India that lets users find quality health information on their smartphones.

- Google in collaboration with a team of doctors from Apollo Hospitals will add tailor-made information about commonly-searched symptoms in its Search.
- The project aims to provide quality healthcare information which can be accessed by a billion Indians

Airtel, Huawei Conduct India's first 5G trial

- Airtel & Huawei have conducted India's 1st 5G network trial which took place at Airtel's Network Experience Centre.
- India plans to roll out 5G services for consumers by 2020.
- User throughput speed of 3GBPS was achieved during the trial, which companies claim is the highest for 3.5GHz band.

'Dhanush' Missile Successfully Test-Fired

- India has successfully test-fired the nuclear-capable surface-to-surface Dhanush ballistic missile with a strike range of 350 km.
- This naval variant of the indigenously-developed Prithvi-II missile was test-fired from the ship positioned near Paradip in the Bay of Bengal.
- 'Dhanush' missile is capable of carrying a payload of 500 kg and hitting both land and sea-based targets.

Neanderthals were First 'Artists' on Earth

- The world's first cave art was made by human ancestors called Neanderthals and not Homo sapiens, an international study has claimed.
- Researchers studied three caves in Spain dating back at least 64,000 years, with walls paintings depicting animals and geometric signs.
- Neanderthals were settled in Europe before modern humans left Africa to reach Europe about 40,000 years ago.

January 2018 was the 5th Warmest January

- January 2018 was the fifth warmest January in 138 years of modern record-keeping, according to a monthly analysis of global temperatures by NASA.
- The only months of January warmer than that occurred in 2016 (+1.16°C), 2017 (+0.97°C), 2007 (+0.95°C), and in 2015 (+0.81°C).
- Last month was 0.78°C warmer than the average January of the 1951-1980 period, said NASA.

SpaceX Launches Falcon 9 Rocket

- Elon Musk-led space exploration startup, 'SpaceX' successfully launched its Falcon 9 rocket, which carried 2 test satellites called 'Tintin A' and 'Tintin B' for its planned global internet broadband service.
- The rocket also carried Spanish company Hisdesat's PAZ satellite to low Earth orbit as payload.

- The launch was carried out from Vandenberg Air Force Base in California, United States.

Starlink May provide Net for All

- Starlink, a constellation of satellites that would provide a cheap, high speed, global Internet connection.
- If successful, (the) Starlink constellation will provide high-speed broadband services around the world.

Facebook to Verify ads with Postcards

- Facebook will use postcards sent through US mail in an attempt to prevent foreign meddling in US elections in the future.
- FB will send postcards to buyers of political ads to confirm they reside in the US, recipient would then have to enter a code to continue buying the ad.
- The plan was presented a day after Robert Mueller charged 13 Russians with interfering in 2016 US presidential election

ISRO plans to Launch 2nd Space Observatory

- Indian Space Research Organisation is planning to launch the country's 2nd AstroSat-2 or space observatory.
- The advantage of having such a space observatory in outer space is that it helps observe distant planets, galaxies and other astronomical objects more clearly than from the Earth.

India's 1st Artificial Intelligence Centre

- Maharashtra state govt will be setting up India's 1st institute for artificial intelligence.
- The AI institute will give a fresh impetus to the 'fourth industrial revolution' & promote Mumbai as an investment destination in innovations & data analysis.
- CM Devendra Fadnavis will unveil the plan for the institute during Magnetic Maharashtra Summit which will be inaugurated by PM Modi on Feb 18.

Kepler Discovers Nearly 100 New Exoplanets

- Team of scientists have confirmed the discovery of nearly 100 new exoplanets - planets located outside our solar system.
- Discovery was based on data from the 2nd mission of NASA's Kepler Space Telescope released in 2014.
- The detected planets range from sub-Earth-sized to the size of Jupiter & larger.
- Newly discovered exoplanets brings the total no of exoplanets by K2 mission to almost 300.

India to Land Chandrayaan-2 on Moon

- India, which has been making strides in the space race, is set to land its Chandrayaan-2 on the Moon in April.

- Chandrayaan-2 is India's second lunar exploration mission after Chandrayaan-1 which discovered the presence of water on the surface of the moon.
- The mission will cost around 800 crore rupees which includes cost of orbiter, lander and rover.

NITI Aayog & KPIT Tech to promote innovation

- KPIT tech has announced 2-year statement of intent with NITI Aayog to promote innovative skills among students of senior secondary level as part of AIM.
- It aims to push students to understand the concepts of science, technology, engineering & maths through new-age technologies.
- KPIT will provide 2 volumes of booklets named 'Chhote scientists' that will help schools to prepare the curriculum.

Andromeda Formed after Earth

- Milky Way's nearest spiral galaxy Andromeda formed in a "recent" crash between two smaller star systems when Earth already existed.
- China and Europe-based astronomers have found this in study.
- Scientists showed that two galaxies, with a galaxy four times more massive than the other, fused between 1.8 billion and 3 billion years ago to forge Andromeda.

NASA to Send Martian Meteorite Back to Mars

- NASA is sending a Martian meteorite, discovered in 1999, back to the Red Planet aboard its Mars 2020 rover.
- The rock will be used as target practice for a high-precision laser called 'SHERLOC' on the rover.
- After calibration, the rover will take pictures of Martian rocks and analyse them to look for chemicals that make the ingredients of life.

Sea Level will Rise by Over 2 Feet by 2100

- Scientists have learned from 25 years of satellite data that sea levels are rising at 3 mm every year, while its rate is increasing about 0.08 mm per year.
- Scientists fear if the oceans continue to change at this pace, global sea levels would rise 65 cm by 2100, which could flood coastal cities.
- This has been brought under notice by a new assessment led by CIRES Fellow Steve Nerem.

World's 1st Autonomous Pods Unveiled In Dubai

- Dubai's Roads and Transport Authority launched the first tests of the world's first autonomous pods at the World Government Summit.
- The pods are launched in cooperation with Next Future Transportation and are designed to travel short and medium distances in dedicated lanes.

- They can be coupled together in as little 15 seconds or detached depending on the riders' destination in five seconds.

Three new Eel Species Found in Bay of Bengal

- Scientists have discovered three new species of eel along the northern Bay of Bengal coast in the past few months.
- One was discovered at the Digha coast of the Bay of Bengal.
- The other two species were discovered from the Visakhapatnam coast of the Bay of Bengal.
- A description of all the three new species was published in the journal Zootaxa.

Scientists Simulate Mars Mission in Desert

- Over 200 scientists from 25 countries have chosen a desert in Oman to field-test technology for a manned Mars mission for four weeks.
- Analog astronauts would sport a 50-kg spacesuit and stay in an inflated habitat, having a 10-minute communication delay from their base in Austria.
- The project features 15 experiments including exploration of the surface using a wind-powered rover.

NASA Probe Beams Farthest Image

- NASA's New Horizons spacecraft has beamed back an image while being 6.12 billion km away, breaking a 27-year-old record set by Voyager 1.
- NASA's Voyager 1, the farthest man-made object, had captured the "Pale Blue Dot" photo of Earth before exiting the Solar System.
- Meanwhile, New Horizons shared an image of a Kuiper belt object, beyond the orbit of Neptune.

Asteroid shaves past Earth

- Asteroid 2018 CB, estimated to be around 15-40 metres in size, safely flew past Earth making a closest approach of about 64,000 kilometres, nearly one-fifth the average Earth-Moon distance, on Saturday at 4:00 am IST, NASA revealed.
- "Asteroids of this size do not often approach this close to our planet - maybe only once or twice a year," said NASA.

Cryptocurrency for Gamers

- A Hyderabad-based entrepreneur, Prashant Surana, plans to introduce his own cryptocurrency, for online gaming enthusiasts.
- The virtual currency, will be issued in April through an Initial Coin Offering.
- Called the Universal Gaming Coin, the coins can be bought with Ethereum and Bitcoin cryptocurrencies.
- The gamers can use these coins to play games such as Poker, Blackjack and Rummy.

'Superionic Water Ice' made on Earth

- US-based scientists have detected the first experimental evidence of 'superionic water ice'.
- The new form of matter is said to occur naturally on Uranus and Neptune, when water is heated to several thousand degrees at high pressure.
- First predicted in 1988, the exotic state of water is characterised by liquid-like hydrogen ions moving within a solid lattice of oxygen.

Second Shipwreck Found Near Vizag

- A 2nd shipwreck was discovered by a team of experienced divers in the sea off Bheemunipatnam, 45 km from Vizag.
- This comes a month after a century-old shipwreck was unearthed in the region.
- An extremely rare species of Goliath grouper fish, considered to be the keystone species of an ecosystem is also found here. This fish is recognised as a critically endangered species by the IUCN.

Material 100,000 times Thinner than Paper

- IIT Gandhinagar researchers claim to have created the world's thinnest material, measuring one nanometre, about 100,000 times thinner than a sheet of paper.
- The 2D material was made using Magnesium diboride for the first time with boron atoms in a honeycomb structure.
- Scientists have earlier made single-atom-thick graphene, a 2D form of carbon, whose discovery won the 2010 Physics Nobel.

Spider with a Tail found in 100m yr old Amber

- An international team of scientists has found an arachnid resembling a spider with a tail, which was fossilised in amber in Myanmar, about 100 million years ago.
- Although no living spider has a tail, researchers noted that some relatives do have an anal flagellum.
- The new species with four pairs of legs and silk-producing spinnerets at its rear was named Chimerarachne yingi.

SpaceX Launches Its Most Powerful Rocket

- The US-based SpaceX has successfully launched the world's most powerful operational rocket Falcon Heavy towards Mars.
- The rocket, carrying a Tesla Roadster car, will revolve around the Sun in a way that will repeatedly bring it close to the Earth and Mars.
- Falcon Heavy's thrust and capacity are the highest since NASA's Saturn V, which carried astronauts to the Moon.

Indian Rover to Spend 14 Days on Moon

- ISRO is leaving no stone unturned to make the Chandrayaan-2 (lunar-2) mission a success.

- This time, heavy-payload lifter GSLV Mk II will launch the spacecraft weighing 3,290kg as the module will carry an orbiter, a rover and a lander to the moon.
- Chandrayaan- 2, will spend 14 Earth days on the lunar surface, before going into sleep mode.

New AI system can Train Robots for Armies

- Scientists have developed an AI Technique that will teach robots and computer programmes to interact with a human instructor and perform tasks for the army.
- Researchers at the US Army Research Laboratory and the University of Texas considered a specific case where a human provides real-time feedback in the form of critique.
- The team developed a new algorithm called Deep TAMER.

Evidence of Particle Predicted in 1970s Found

- A team of over 100 physicists at the Large Hadron Collider in France claimed to have found a potential evidence of the existence of a subatomic quasiparticle called 'Odderon'.
- It's existence was first predicted in the 1970s.
- The finding, which was brought about during the analysis of proton collisions, may help refine the current Standard Model of particle physics.

Chandrayaan-2 to land Near Moon's South Pole

- ISRO is planning to send Chandrayaan-2 on the world's first-ever mission to soft-land near the Moon's south pole.
- Former ISRO chief AS Kiran Kumar said the mission could take place either in the first quarter or second half of 2018.
- The Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle Mark II will reportedly carry the Chandrayaan-2.

Tiniest Satellite Carrying Rocket Launched

- Japan has successfully launched the world's smallest satellite-carrying rocket following a failed attempt in January last year.
- The rocket is about the size of a utility pole, measuring 10 meters in length and 50 centimeters in diameter.
- The launch was aimed at verifying JAXA's technology to send a small rocket made with commercially available components to the sky at a lower cost.

Cancer Vaccine with 97% Success Rate Made

- A Stanford University study has secured approval to conduct human tests for a cancer vaccine that had a 97% success rate in tests on mice.

- The experiment used two immune-stimulating agents to boost cancer-fighting T-cells, which gets suppressed in cancer patients.
- The vaccine had cured 87 of the 90 mice and the rest were cured after a second treatment.

Paleontologists Discovered Ancient Fish

- Palaeontologists have discovered a new species of fish after a 10-year-old tourist noticed the shape of a fish in flagstones during a monastery tour in Colombia.
- The fossil, about 90 million years old, has no modern relatives and is the first "fish lizard" from the Cretaceous period.
- Canada-based researcher Oksana Vernygora told the details about the fish.

Interaction b/w Dinosaur & Mammals found

- A sandstone containing at least 70 mammal and dinosaur tracks was discovered at NASA Goddard Space Flight Center.
- They are older than 100 million years, according to a new paper published by journal Scientific Reports.
- The sandstone shows that there was interaction between mammals and dinosaurs.

A Hill on Mars Named after Kalpana

- NASA named 7 hills on planet Mars after the seven crew members, including India-born astronaut Kalpana Chawla, of the Space Shuttle Columbia who lost their lives while returning from their mission.
- The crew died when the space shuttle disintegrated on re-entering Earth's atmosphere on February 1, 2003.
- The 16-day mission was dedicated to research in physical, life and space sciences.

Places in News

Fliers to Bengaluru Can Soon Use 'Heli Taxi'

- Thumbby Aviation, a heli taxi operator, will start flights next week to ferry air passengers from Bengaluru's Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) to Electronics City, where companies such as Infosys and Wipro are based.
- Currently, it takes more than an hour-and-a-half to reach Electronics City.
- The heli taxi service will take just 15 minutes.

Country's First All-Women Railway Station

- Jaipur's Gandhinagar railway station has become the country's only non-suburban railway station to be entirely run by women.
- The station is fully operated by 28 women employees, including ticket checkers, RPF, operations staff and reservation and booking supervisors. The station has a footfall of nearly 7000

passengers per day and of the 50 trains which pass by, 25 trains halt here.

PM Modi Opens 'Biggest Party Office in World'

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated BJP's new headquarters on Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, spread over 1.70 lakh square feet.
- According to the BJP Chief, the building is bigger than the office of any political party in the world.
- The new headquarters is fitted with latest communication technologies and has a spacious social media office.

Tibetan Buddhism's Most Sacred Shrine Damaged

- A fire broke out at the most important shrine in Tibetan Buddhism - Jokhang Monastery in Lhasa.
- The incident took place as Tibetans were celebrating Losar, their traditional new year.
- The Jokhang monastery, which is over 1,000 yrs old, is a Unesco World Heritage Site.
- Tibet, the remote & mainly-Buddhist territory known as 'roof of the world' is governed as an autonomous region of China

Karnataka's Hampi as 'Iconic Tourism' site

- Centre announced that Karnataka's Hampi monuments will be among the ten destinations selected as 'Iconic Tourism' sites.
- In his Union Budget speech, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley had said that the sites will be provided support for holistic infrastructure and skill development.
- Other selected sites include the Taj Mahal, Konark Sun Temple and Ajanta & Ellora caves.

World's First Robot Ski Competition Held

- World's first robot ski competition was held in South Korea in which self-operational humanoid skiers with two legs participated wearing skis.
- The robots were reportedly equipped with sensors, batteries and deep learning algorithms that allowed them to move on their own.
- Eight teams from local universities and tech firms took part in the competition, reports said.

PM Visits 125-year-old Shiva Temple in Muscat

- Modi visited a 125-year-old Shiva Temple and the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque, which is made of 3 lakh tonnes of Indian sandstone, in Oman's capital Muscat.
- PM Modi, who is on a three-nation tour to the Middle East, reached Oman on Sunday and addressed a gathering of nearly 20,000 Indians at the Sultan Qaboos Stadium.
- Temple was constructed 125 years ago by the merchant community from Gujarat.

Abu Dhabi to get its First Hindu Temple

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will lay the foundation stone of the first Hindu temple to be built in Abu Dhabi.
- The temple spread over an area of 55,000 square meters will be located off the Dubai-Abu Dhabi Sheikh Zayed Highway at Al-Rahaba.
- The temple's construction will be completed by 2020 and it will be open to people of all religious backgrounds.

Books & Authors

Book on Dhaka Terror Attack Victim Released

- A book, titled Abinta Kabir: Mulyabodh O Swapner Nam, on the life of Abinta Kabir, the 19-year-old Bangladeshi national killed in the terror attack in Gulshan area of Dhaka on July 1, 2016, was released.
- She was studying in Atlanta-based Emory University.
- She, along with 20 others including an Indian, Tarishi Jain were killed in the attack.

Book to Help Students Tackle Exam Stress

- The cover of PM Narendra Modi's book that addresses ways students can tackle stress during examinations has been released.
- Titled 'Exam Warriors', the book is a first-of-its-kind initiative by a serving Prime Minister, according to reports.
- Conceptualised by PM Modi, the book emphasizes why students should prioritise knowledge over marks.

Committees & Recommendations

Committee to Study Brahmaputra

- Centre has constituted a committee headed by Rajiv Kumar, Vice Chairman of the NITI Aayog to study the Brahmaputra & flood control measures in Assam & neighbouring states.
- Assam govt has submitted required report on flood control measures to the committee.
- PM Modi during his visit to Guwahati last year, announced to provide 100 crores to find out a permanent solution of flood.

Panel to Look into Factors Leading to Frauds

- RBI has set up a panel under board member Y.H. Malegam, a former president of Institute of Chartered Accountants of India, to look into factors leading to increasing incidents of bank frauds.
- The Maelgam panel will also look into reasons for high divergence in NPA classification and provisioning by banks.
- The move comes a week after PNB said it has fallen victim to a Rs11,400 crore fraud.

Business & Economy

Amazon buys Video Doorbell Startup Ring

- E-commerce giant Amazon has agreed to buy US-based video doorbell startup Ring, the companies confirmed.
- According to reports, the deal could be worth more than \$1 billion, making it one of the most expensive acquisitions in Amazon's history.
- Founded in 2012, the startup makes video doorbells and security cameras that connect to users' phones or computers.

Centre Names 9,491 'High Risk' NBFCs

- The government has categorised 9,491 non-banking financial companies in the country as "high risk" prone.

- These NBFCs have been categorised as high risk prone as they had not complied with a stipulated provision of the anti-money laundering law.
- The list of 9,491 'high risk financial institutions' has been published by Financial Intelligence Unit that functions under Finance Ministry.

Tie up between Tamil Nadu Govt. and Microsoft

- Govt. of Tamil Nadu has signed an agreement with Microsoft to improve integration of technology in teaching & learning in the state.
- The partnership aims to reform education sector, build tech capacity & enhance digital literacy across all levels.

- As a part of the agreement, Microsoft will adopt 7 schools identified by govt. & train their teachers & students around building 21st century skills.

AIIB Approves \$1.5 Billion of Loans to India

- Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank has approved \$1.5 billion in loans to India for infrastructure-related projects in 2018.
- The funds would be used for investment in India's energy, roads and urban development projects.
- The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank is a multilateral development bank that aims to support the building of infrastructure in the Asia-Pacific region.

Shipping Ministry and IIT Madras Joins Hand

- Shipping ministry has set up a centre in a joint initiative with IIT Madras to accelerate indigenous development of technology & patents.
- It also aims to reduce reliance on costly foreign consultations.
- The centre, supported by ministry's flagship Sagarmala Project, will be located at the satellite campus of IIT Madras.
- It is expected to serve as the technological arm of shipping ministry.

Tech Mahindra sets up Lab in Bengaluru

- Tech Mahindra has set up a lab in Bengaluru in association with U.S. chipmaker Intel to prepare for 5G services, according to a top executive of the IT firm.
- The company's CEO CP Gurnani said that about 30,000 of its employees have already been re-skilled to handle the emerging technologies.
- The company expects to roll out 5G services by 2019.

State Bank of India set for UK Restructuring

- SBI is set for a major restructuring of its business in UK from April.
- SBI's UK operations will transform into a subsidiary named State Bank of India UK Limited from April 1.
- It means that all retail branches of SBI in UK will fall under a new UK-incorporated banking entity instead of their previous status as overseas branches of the Indian entity.
- SBI operates 7 branches in London.

RBI asks Banks to Link SWIFT to Core Banking

- RBI has directed banks to link SWIFT (Society for World Interbank Financial Telecommunication System platform) with core banking solutions of banks by April 30, 2018.
- Failure of SWIFT-CBS link has led to Rs 11,400 crore fraud at PNB.

- SWIFT system promoted in 1973 by banks globally is used to transmit messages relating to cross border financial transactions.

Institutes to Improve Ease of Doing Business

- Commerce & Industry Ministry has appointed 4 institutes to interact with stakeholders and suggest measures to push India's ranking in ease of doing business index.
- NICMAR, IIFT, ICSI and ICAI are the four institutes that have been roped in for the exercise.
- As per the latest World Bank's Ease of Doing Business ranking, India's position improved by 30 places to 100th.

India's first 4G LTE Telecom System Unveiled

- Telecom Minister Manoj Sinha has launched India's first locally developed 4G/LTE telecom system.
- The system has been designed and developed by VNL Ltd., keeping in mind requirement for high speed connectivity, particularly in rural areas.
- These systems offer compact and versatile radio applications and can operate flawlessly even in harsh environment.

RBI launches Ombudsman Scheme for NBFCs

- RBI launched 'Ombudsman Scheme' for redressal of complaints against NBFCs.
- "The scheme will provide a cost-free and expeditious complaint redressal mechanism relating to deficiency in the services by NBFCs covered under the Scheme," the Central Bank said.
- Offices of the NBFC Ombudsman will function at 4 metro centres - Chennai, Kolkata, Mumbai and New Delhi.

Birla's Idea Payments Bank Begins Operations

- Aditya Birla Idea Payments Bank Ltd. commenced operations as a payments bank with effect from February 22, 2018.
- In November 2016, Airtel Payments Bank Ltd became the first entity to start operations as Payments Bank. Paytm and Fino Payments Bank are the other two entities that have already launched their operations.
- India Post Payments Bank is expected to start operations from April 2018.

Paytm Launches Two Insurance Companies

- Digital payments startup Paytm has launched two insurance companies, Paytm Life Insurance and Paytm General Insurance.
- Paytm Founder Vijay Shekhar Sharma, CFO Madhur Deora, and Shankar Prasad Nath are the three signatory stakeholders in both the companies.
- In January this year, Paytm announced that it has set up Paytm Money Limited, a wholly owned subsidiary of One97 Communications.

PNB Adopts Stricter SWIFT Control After Fraud

- PNB has reportedly stepped up its controls on use of messaging network SWIFT following a \$1.77-billion fraud.
- Any SWIFT message will now have to be created, verified and authorised by three different officers, while previously only two officers were needed.
- PNB officials had issued unauthorised LoUs via SWIFT for firms linked to jeweller Nirav Modi and his uncle Mehul Choksi.

Ambani's Reliance to Buy 5% Stake in Eros

- Mukesh Ambani-led Reliance Industries said it will buy a 5% stake in NYSE-listed Eros International for \$48.75 million (over ₹316 crore).
- Separately, the companies also announced a ₹1,000-crore fund to produce and acquire Indian films and digital content.
- Last year, Reliance had purchased 25% stake in media company Balaji Telefilms for ₹413 crore.

New Rules for Telco-run Payments Banks

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has said that KYC (Know Your Customer) verification of payments bank customers done by telecom companies is not permissible.
- It has instructed payments banks to complete the KYC process independently through third parties.
- This comes after Airtel was penalised by UIDAI for allegedly opening payments bank accounts without 'informed consent' of the users.

Capital First gets NHB Nod for Merger

- Capital First announced that the regulator National Housing Bank has approved the merger of the company along with Capital Home Finance and Capital First Securities Limited with IDFC Bank.
- The share swap ratio for the merger is fixed at 139:10, meaning IDFC Bank will issue 139 shares for every 10 shares of Capital First.
- The merger is likely to be completed in the next two-three quarters.

UP Government Signs Pact with Amazon India

- Uttar Pradesh's Khadi and Village Industries Board has signed a pact with Amazon India.
- It is to facilitate online selling of Khadi products.
- As part of an MoU, Amazon India will educate, train and enable rural khadi artisans to directly sell their products to Amazon.in customers across the country under the brand of UP Khadi.

Centre Reboots eNAM to Draw More Farmers

- In a bid to engage more farmers on the eNAM platform, the government unveiled mobile payment facility BHIM, and other features in regional languages as well.

- The eNAM website is now available in Gujarati, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, Bengali and Odia besides Hindi and English, while the eNAM trading facility is available in six languages.
- It is strengthened with features like MIS dashboard, BHIM.

Niti Aayog Making New List of Sick PSUs

- Government think-tank NITI Aayog is preparing another list of sick PSUs that can be privatised.
- PMO had asked the think-tank to look into the viability of sick state-run companies.
- The Aayog has already recommended strategic divestment of 40 sick Public Sector Units.

Blockchain Tech Could Help Prevent Frauds

- The adoption of blockchain by India's banks could help avert frauds such as the one at PNB.
- It updates information across all users simultaneously, which would have ensured that various officials would have instantly been alerted to the creation of the LoUs.
- Blockchain is a distributed ledger technology originally developed as an accounting system for the cryptocurrency Bitcoin.

EPFO Fixes Interest Rate at 8.55 %

- The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation, EPFO has declared 8.55% interest rate for 2017-18 for its about 5 crore members, the lowest in five years.
- The move will affect around 6 crore subscribers and leave EPFO with a surplus of Rs 586 crore against Rs 695 crore in the previous financial year.
- Cut comes at a time when returns on debt funds have decreased to 6.75% from 7.5-8% last year.

Google Launches Google Pay

- Google has combined its two payment services, Google Wallet and Android Pay, into a new app called Google Pay.
- Google Pay combines features from both, including the ability to pay at checkout counters with a smartphone, and even the option to scan into transit systems.
- With Google Pay, one can digitally store their credit and debit cards, as well as gift cards and rewards cards.

India-Morocco Cooperation Agreement Approved

- Cabinet has given its ex-post facto approval to the Cooperation Agreement between India & Moroccan National Railways Office.
- The agreement aims to develop long-term cooperation & partnership in different areas of the Railway Sector.
- The Agreement will enable technical cooperation in Training and Staff Development & Mutual technical

assistance, including exchanging of experts among others.

India's Medium-Term Potential Growth Above 7%

- According to a UBS report, India's medium-term growth is likely to be above 7% backed by policy reforms & stable global growth environment.
- India ranks higher in medium-term growth potential compared to other markets like Russia & China.
- The report said, India needs to adopt reforms like stepping up infra investment, education & health reforms & others to improve its potential growth outlook.

BSNL signs pact with Japan's NTT AT

- BSNL & Japan's NTT AT along with their Indian partner Virgo Corps, have signed an agreement to collaborate in developing futuristic technologies.
- The companies would collaborate in futuristic technologies such as artificial intelligence / IoT & jointly create a 5G test bed
- Agreement is in line with the vision of PM Modi & Japanese PM Shinzo Abe to collaborate on next generation technologies.

Virgin Group & Mah govt. to Build Hyperloop

- The Virgin Group has signed an 'intent agreement' with the Maharashtra State govt to build a hyperloop transportation system between Mumbai and Pune.
- The first hyperloop route will link central Pune with Mumbai and the proposed Navi Mumbai international airport.
- The hyperloop is expected to reduce travel time between the cities to 20 minutes, from the present three hours.

Private Companies to Bid for Coal Mines

- The cabinet has approved a plan to allow private companies to bid for coal mines for commercial production.
- It is the most awaited reform in the coal sector that will bring updated foreign mining technologies, investments into the country while rising output and saving forex.
- Coal accounts for 70% of India's power generation, and the country has a target to produce 1 billion tonnes by 2022.

PNB's Viability Rating on Negative Watch

- Amid the ongoing million dollar fraud, credit rating body Fitch has placed Punjab National Bank's viability rating in the negative watch category.
- PNB's viability rating of 'bb' was placed in the Rating Watch Negative, following the fraud reported recently.

- Fitch would resolve the rating watch once more clarity emerges on the extent of control failures & impact on PNB's financial position.

Star India wins Audio-Visual Production Right

- Star India has won the audio-visual production rights for not just IPL but also for BCCI's domestic circuit for the 2018-19 season.
- The service agreement and the contract term will cover one season of the IPL (2018) and one season of Domestic Cricket (2018-2019).
- The Star India also holds the media rights of the Indian Premier League.

Axis Bank Opens Offshore Banking Branch

- Axis Bank has announced opening of offshore banking unit at the International Financial Services Centre at Gujarat International Finance Tec-City.
- The Bank will now be able to provide a more comprehensive range of products to its customers with access to International financial markets.
- Offshore Banking unit is capable to trade in foreign currency in overseas market & also with Indian Banks

Amazon Enters Food Retail Venture

- Amazon has rolled out its own food retailing business in India called Amazon Retail with a pilot in Pune.
- With this Amazon becomes the 1st foreign e-commerce firm to stock & sell food items directly to consumers.
- Amazon had last year secured govt's permission to invest \$500mn in a wholly-owned venture to retail locally produced & packaged food products through offline & online channels.

Axis Bank Hikes MCLR by 10 Basis Points

- Axis Bank has hiked its benchmark marginal cost of funds based lending rate by 10 basis points in the three month to three year buckets.
- The bank's 3 month MCLR is now 8.15% and 6 months at 8.30% while the 1 year rate is 8.40%.
- This is the second time that the bank has hiked its lending rates in two months.
- MCLR is closely linked to the cost banks pay on their deposits.

RIL plans Digital Industrial Area in Mah

- Reliance Industries along with global firms, is planning to invest more than ₹60,000 crore in Maharashtra in the next 10 years for establishing an integrated digital industrial area.
- Once built, it will be the first integrated digital industrial area in the country.
- More than 20 global companies including Cisco, HP, Dell, Nokia & Nvidia among others have already agreed to invest in it.

PhonePe Partners with IOCL

- PhonePe has partnered with Indian Oil Corporation Limited for adoption of its indigenously-designed Point of Sale device at IOCL retail outlets.
- Customers can now pay using UPI, credit & debit cards, PhonePe wallet & other wallets for their fuel purchases, through PoS device at IOCL retail outlets in Bengaluru.
- PhonePe received its RBI licensing in Aug 2014 & was later acquired by Flipkart.

WhatsApp to Launch Inter-Bank Money Transfer

- WhatsApp will launch a “full feature” inter-bank money transfer service in India, its biggest market, after a test involving a million users.
- This uses customers’ phone numbers linked to bank accounts to facilitate payments.
- 4 banks will join United Payments Interface which powers the payments service for WhatsApp. At present ICICI Bank processes the fund transfers on WhatsApp.

Privatisation of Cooperative Spinning Mills

- Maharashtra govt has decided to allow privatisation of spinning mills & powerloom societies that are operated on cooperative basis across the state.
- It will be allowed to be privatised provided they are ready to return the govt equity, loan & interest thereupon.
- State’s new textile policy allows them to change land use, which means they can use it for reasons other than industrial purpose.

IOC to Expand Refining Capacity

- Indian Oil Corp will invest Rs 70,000 crore to raise its oil refining capacity by about a quarter by 2030.
- IOC will expand its refining capacity to 116.55 MTPA by 2030 from the current 80.7 MTPA.
- The investment planned by IOC also includes in upgradation of major units at existing refineries to help produce cleaner Euro-VI or BS-VI grade petrol & diesel by April 2020.

MoU Signed Between BSI and NHM, UK

- Botanical Survey of India & Natural History Museum have signed a MoU for cooperation in the field of genetic studies, research, training & conservation in India.
- NHM will help in capacity building in areas of systematic botany & long-term conservation of plant genetic resources.
- BSI is an organization for survey, research & conservation of plant resources, flora & endangered species of India

Fairfax to Acquire 51% Stake in CSB

- Canadian investor Prem Watsa’s owned Fairfax Holdings will buy a 51% stake in Kerala-based Catholic Syrian Bank.
- The deal, if it materialises, will be the first takeover of an Indian bank by a foreign non-banking financial entity after RBI tweaked ownership norms last May.
- Founded in 1921, CSB has a strong base in Kerala & a significant presence in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka & Maharashtra.

Union Bank Hit by Fraud

- Days after the fraud at PNB shook the country, Union Bank has suffered three fraudulent remittances of nearly \$2 million.
- Just like the fraud at PNB, no entries of remittances were made in the ledgers of City Union Bank & transfers were pushed through the SWIFT financial platform.
- The transfers were made through correspondent banks even though it had not requested the transfers.

PNB Housing Finance & IFC Tie Up

- PNB Housing Finance has tied up with International Finance Corporation (IFC), part of the World Bank Group, to raise \$800 million for green and affordable housing in India.
- IFC’s move to invest in India’s housing programme is aimed at improving the supply situation in the market by expanding liquidity.
- The move comes as a big boost to Prime Minister Modi’s housing for all scheme by 2022.

SBI Launches Global Customer Service Centre

- State Bank of India has launched its Global NRI Centre (GNC) in Kochi, a one-stop customer service point for all NRI banking-related activities.
- Through its GNC, SBI aims to centralise operations which are currently spread across 16 circles, 92 NRI branches in 66 different locations and several NRI-intensive branches.
- SBI has a strong NRI customer base of over 33 lakh as on January 31.

NDB to Lend \$100 mn for Water Project

- India has signed 2nd loan agreement for \$100 million with New Development Bank for efficient use of water in desert areas of Rajasthan.
- The objective is to rehabilitate 678-km-long Indira Gandhi Canal system to prevent seepage, conserve water & enhance water use efficiency.
- Project is aimed at rehabilitation of waterlogged areas & modernisation of irrigation management practices among others

HomeShop18, Shop CJ Network Merge Businesses

- E-commerce company Homeshop18 and home shopping network Shop CJ Network have combined their businesses.
- This combination makes HomeShop18 the largest TV home-shopping network in India.
- The resultant benefits of scale shall better the growth prospects for the combined entity, allowing it to improve its standing in the TV home-shopping landscape.

India lets Businesses Invest in Iran in Rupee

- India is allowing its businesses to invest in Indian Rupees in Iran, in a major departure from rules that allow Indian investors to open business abroad only in foreign currency
- So far permission to invest in Rupees has only been given to businessmen investing in Nepal & Bhutan
- Exception has been made in case of Iran as West Asian country has imposed restriction, barring it from dealing in \$ and €

Yes Bank Lists Country's First \$600m MTN Bond

- Yes Bank has announced the listing of its debut US \$600 million bond issue under its maiden US \$1 billion medium-term note bond on country's 1st international exchange BSE's IndiaINX.
- With this, Yes Bank's MTN programme became country's first capital raising platform for international investors in any currency.
- Medium Term note is a debt note that matures or has a payback period of 5 yrs.

BHEL Bags Rs 560 Crore Order From NTPC

- Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited has bagged an order worth Rs 560 crore from NTPC for setting up a system for emission control.
- BHEL has secured the order for "supply and installation of the flue gas desulphurisation system from NTPC for 2x490 MW National Capital Power Station at Dadri in Uttar Pradesh.
- Earlier, BHEL has executed the FGD system at Tata Power Trombay Unit 8 in 2008.

Wipro among 135 Most Ethical Companies in World

- Tata Steel and Wipro are the two Indian companies that have been named by US-based Ethisphere Institute in the list of World's Most Ethical Companies for 2018.
- The think tank has honoured 135 companies from 23 countries and 57 industries.
- Notably, Tata Steel and Wipro are receiving the award for the sixth and seventh time respectively.

PNB Loses ₹3,800 Crore M-Cap

- Punjab National Bank's market capitalisation fell by more than ₹3,800 crore after the bank detected

fraudulent transactions worth over ₹11,300 crore at a Mumbai branch.

- The bank is currently valued at ₹35,365 crore after its shares fell nearly 10%.
- The CBI is investigating billionaire jeweller Nirav Modi and his firms in relation to the fraud transactions.

Can't buy Cryptocurrencies from Card: Citibank

- Citibank India has banned the use of its credit and debit cards towards purchase or trading of cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin.
- It said the decision came following concerns expressed by the RBI regarding potential risks associated with cryptocurrencies.
- The govt had said it will take all measures to eliminate use of cryptocurrencies in illegitimate activities but did not declare them illegal.

Bajaj Allianz Insurance Partners with Quikr

- Bajaj Allianz General Insurance has entered into a partnership with Quikr to increase the insurance
- With 30 million monthly Unique Visitors, Quikr will be a new age distribution channel for Bajaj Allianz's products.
- Under this key agreement, Bajaj Allianz General Insurance will offer personal lines of insurance products.

Centre to Consolidate Small Savings Laws

- In a bid to consolidate the legislations pertaining to small savings schemes, the government is proposing a merger of the various laws into a Government Savings Promotion Act.
- The government gives highest priority to the interest of small savers.
- In order to remove existing ambiguities due to multiple Acts and rules for small saving schemes, the government has proposed merger.
- outreach and offer people with adequate financial protection.

'New RBI norms to Spur Surge in NPAs'

- RBI's new norms could result in a jump in bad loans, according to Moody's unit ICRA.
- The RBI said that for accounts where a bank's exposure exceeds ₹2,000 crore, a resolution plan must be implemented within 180 days from the date of first default.
- In case a resolution is not implemented, lenders should file an insolvency petition within 15 days of the expiry of the 180 days.



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BoB to Exit South Africa after Controversies

- Bank of Baroda will reportedly exit the South African market amid allegations that politically connected Gupta family used its network for illicit transactions.

- Authorities alleged that the Gupta family used the bank to transfer large sums of illegal money and influence President Jacob Zuma.
- Bank of Baroda was the last lender in South Africa that offered services to Guptas' companies.

NTPC may Borrow Rs 16,000 crore

- State-run power giant NTPC may borrow about Rs 16,000 crore next financial year for adding 6,900 MW of fresh electricity generation capacity by March 2019.
- "The corporation may hit the bonds or debt market to borrow about Rs 16,000 crore during the next financial year for financing the ongoing projects," a source said.
- NTPC is currently working on adding 21,000 MW capacities.

Govt saved ₹56kcr through Aadhaar-enabled DBT

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that the Union government has saved ₹56,000 crore through Aadhaar-enabled Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) of about 400 government schemes.
- Speaking at the World Government Summit in Dubai, he further said that India is going through a revolution in digital payment space and moving towards a less cash economy at a fast pace.
- It was held in Dubai.

Direct Tax Collection Rise 19.3% In April-Jan

- Direct tax collections grew by nearly 20% between April and January this year with strong growth in both corporate and personal income tax receipts.
- According to official data released, net direct tax collections grew by 19.3% up to January 2018 to Rs 6.95-lakh crore.
- While net corporate income tax grew by 19.2%, personal income tax receipts rose by 18.6 per cent in January this year.

SBI has over Rs 20,000 Crore Bad Loans

- SBI wrote off bad loans worth Rs 20,339 crore in 2016-17, the highest among all the public sector banks, which had a collective write off of Rs 81,683 crore for the fiscal.
- The data pertains to the period when the associate banks of SBI were not merged with it.
- Besides SBI, Punjab National Bank had a write-off of Rs 9,205 crore in 2016-17, followed by Bank of India (Rs 7,346 crore).

Microsoft and Paisabazaar Comes Together

- Microsoft & Paisabazaar.com have entered into a partnership to develop industry first innovations on Microsoft's Cloud platform using artificial intelligence & machine learning.

- The collaboration would help Paisabazaar identify customer needs more accurately, factoring in their lifestyle & life-stage.
- It would also expedite processes on Paisabazaar platform through automation & digitisation.

India Signs Concessional Agreement with UAE

- India has signed the first concessional agreement with the United Arab Emirates in the oil sector.
- The agreement was signed between a consortium of the Indian oil companies and Abu Dhabi National Oil Company for the acquisition of 10% participating interest in the offshore Lower Zakum Concession.
- This first concessional agreement will be for 40 years from 2018 to 2057.

PNB Signs Pact with National e-Gov Services

- PNB has signed an agreement for information utility with National e-Governance Services.
- It will enable storing of financial information that will help substantiate defaults & verify claims expeditiously.
- This will in turn facilitate resolution in National Company Law Tribunal in a time bound manner.
- The objective of the agreement is to augment the information infrastructure in India.

IPPB to Enable Digital Payments

- India Post Payments Bank will enable Digital Payments in Post Offices by April this year.
- Once expansion is completed, IPPB will provide largest financial inclusion network in the country.
- IPPB will be the 3rd payments bank to have full-fledged operations after Airtel Payments Bank & Paytm.
- It will provide digital payment services at the doorstep with the help of Postmen & Gramin Dak Sewaks

SBI posts a Quarterly Loss in 17 years

- India's largest lender State Bank of India (SBI) on Friday reported a loss of ₹2,416.4 crore for the December quarter, marking its first quarterly loss in at least 17 years.
- The bank had reported a standalone profit of ₹2,610 crore in the corresponding quarter last fiscal.
- The bank's net interest income during the quarter rose to ₹18,688 crore.

Only Online Application for Education Loan

- The government has directed the banks to only accept online applications for education loans in a bid to make the loan disbursement process transparent and efficient.
- The banks have also been asked to not consider any application received in physical form.

- The move also aims to tackle the delay in sanctioning of the education loans.

WhatsApp Rolls out Payments Feature in India

- Facebook-owned messaging service WhatsApp has started rolling its Payments feature on both Android and iOS operating systems in India, according to reports.
- The feature will allow users to instantly transfer money via the Unified Payments Interface (UPI).
- Earlier reports said that WhatsApp was working with banks including HDFC and ICICI to integrate its UPI-based payments platform.

Most Cryptocurrencies to Hit Zero: Goldman

- Goldman Sachs' head of investment research Steve Strongin has said most cryptocurrencies will lose all their value as they are replaced by a small set of future competitors.
- Adding that cryptocurrencies don't have any "intrinsic value", he said most will never see their recent peaks again.
- It's worrying that all cryptocurrencies move together as a single asset class, he added.

RBI To Set Up Ombudsman For NBFCs

- The Reserve Bank of India announced setting up ombudsman for addressing customer grievances in the non-banking finance companies.
- The rules will be laid out by the end of February 2018. RBI will start with deposit-taking NBFCs and widen the scope to cover NBFCs with asset size of Rs 100 crore.
- Around 20 banking ombudsman have been appointed with offices mostly in state capitals.

RBI To Link Base Rate With MCLR

- Reserve Bank of India will link the base rate with the MCLR from 1st of April 2018 to ensure expeditious transmission of its policy rate to borrowers.
- The RBI had introduced the MCLR system with effect from 1st April 2016, the Central bank observed that a large proportion of bank loans continue to be linked to Base Rate. Urjit Patel is the Governor of RBI.

Google & NCERT Join Hands

- Google and NCERT signed a pact to integrate a course on 'Digital Citizenship and Safety' in information and communication technology curriculum.
- It was signed on the occasion of Safer Internet Day (06th February).
- The curriculum is spread into four themes - being smart, being safe, being a digital citizen and being future ready.

TVS Motor, Intel tie up for Green Scooter

- TVS Motor Company Ltd., unveiled 'futuristic' scooter and motorcycles to transform future mobility using alternative fuel.
- It included electric scooter, ethanol-powered Apache motorbike and cruiser motorcycle.
- To reduce the carbon footprint, TVS showcased ethanol-powered TVS Apache RTR 200 Fi Ethanol. The use of ethanol will reduce the dependence on import of petroleum products.

RBI keeps Repo Rate Unchanged at 6%

- The RBI has kept the repo rate, the rate at which banks borrow from RBI, steady at 6% for the third time in a row during its sixth bi-monthly monetary policy review.
- This comes after retail inflation in December rose to a 17-month high of 5.21%.
- The RBI last cut the rate by 25 basis points in August last year.

5.7 cr GST Evasion reported in first 5 months

- The government has discovered Goods and Services Tax (GST) evasion amounting to ₹5.7 crore in 16 cases in first five months of the ongoing fiscal.
- Further, it found service tax evasion of ₹9,660 crore in a total of 2,938 cases during April-December.
- Evasion of central excise amounting to ₹7,242 crore in 614 cases was found during the same period.

67 FDI Proposals Worth Cleared in Apr-Dec

- Union Minister P Radhakrishnan has said the government has cleared 67 Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) proposals worth ₹11,703 crore during the first nine months of this fiscal.
- Mauritius was the largest source of FDI in India in 2016-17, according to an RBI census.
- Further, the government has now cleared a proposal allowing 100% FDI in single-brand retail via automatic route.

No Angel Tax on Startups with up to ₹10 cr

- Startups incorporated before 2016 with up to ₹10 crore in angel funding will be exempted from giving angel tax, the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP) has reportedly said.
- It'll benefit about 300 startups that received funding from the Angel Investors Network.
- A separate committee will be set up for the startups' recognition, reports said, citing an official.

Student's Credit Card Loan Through Govt Body

- Bihar Deputy CM Sushil Modi announced that the state government would set up a corporation to disburse loans for Student's Credit Card scheme.
- Banks will continue to disburse education loans as it has been doing along with the SCC scheme.

- Bihar launched SCC scheme on October 3, 2016. Under the scheme, students are able to get education loan of upto Rs 4 lakh for pursuing higher education.

Assam and Ola Sign MoU For River Taxi Service

- Cab-hailing startup Ola and the Government of Assam have signed an MoU to pilot an app-based river taxi service in Guwahati.
- The river taxis will be machine-operated boats and users will be able to book the rides through Ola's app.
- It'll bring commute time down to 2-5 minutes from 45 minutes by road. This MoU was signed during the Global Investors Summit: Advantage Assam.

Singtel to Invest in Airtel's Parent Firm

- Singapore Telecommunications (Singtel) has said it will invest ₹2,649 crore in Airtel's holding company Bharti Telecom.
- With the investment, Singtel's total stake in the firm will increase to 48.9% from 47.17% while Bharti Enterprises will continue to hold over 50% in Bharti Telecom.
- Airtel said the fresh round of investment from Singtel highlights its confidence in the Indian telecom sector

Higher Fiscal Deficit for FY'19: Goldman

- The budgeted fiscal deficit is in line with expectations but there are some risks of slippage in financial year 2018-19.
- Goldman estimates a 20 bps upside risk to the fiscal deficit in 2018-19, unless economic activities formalise at a rapid pace.
- The government outlined a fiscal deficit target of 3.3 per cent of GDP in 2018-19 as against a revised estimate of 3.5 per cent in 2017-18.

Govt to Regulate Cryptocurrencies by March

- Economic Affairs Secretary Subhash Chandra Garg has said there will be regulations for cryptocurrencies by the end of this fiscal.
- The exchanges which are operating currently are not regulated and there are no legal requirements for conducting KYC, he added.
- The government in the Budget said it will take all measures to eliminate the use of cryptocurrencies in illegal activities.

Allahabad Bank Eyes Rs 270 Cr Capital

- Allahabad Bank is aiming to raise Rs 250-270 crore from the employee share offer which started from January 31, 2018.
- Allahabad Bank is the first among the public sector banks to offer share to its employees.
- The bank is giving a 25% discount on pricing at Rs 53.94 per share to the employees.

- So far in the current fiscal, the bank had raised Rs 700 cr as capital and also raised some bonds.

India's First MSE Sentiment Index

- The Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs Arun Jaitley launched CriSidEx, India's first sentiment index for micro and small enterprises.
- The index has been developed jointly by CRISIL & SIDBI.
- CriSidEx is a composite index based on a diffusion index of 8 parameters and measures MSE business sentiment on a scale of 0 (extremely negative) to 200 (extremely positive).

IOB Receives ₹173 Cr Capital Infusion

- Indian Overseas Bank has received ₹173.06 crore capital infusion from the government in the current fiscal.
- IOB has received Rs173.06 crore as the contribution of the central government in the preferential allotment of equity shares of the bank as government's investment during the 2017-18 fiscal.

No Change in Personal Income Tax Rates

- Finance Minister Arun Jaitley while presenting the Union Budget for the year 2018-19 announced that no change has been made in the personal income tax rates.
- "Government made many positive changes in the personal income tax rates in the last three years," Jaitley said.
- Around 1.89 crore salaried individuals have filed their tax returns, he added.

Axis Bank launches 4th "Evolve"

- Private Sector Axis Bank launched the fourth edition of 'Evolve' in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu.
- It is an annual multi-city knowledge series for Bank's small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) customers.
- The current edition of 'evolve' is titled as "Transform your Family Business into your dream company".
- This edition will span across 30 cities.

FY16 GDP growth revised up to 8.2%

- Central Statistics Office revised the GDP growth rate for 2015-16 to 8.2% from the earlier estimates of 8% and kept the 2016-17 growth unchanged at 7.1%.
- The real GDP for years 2016-17 and 2015-16 stand at ₹121.96 trillion and ₹113.86 trillion respectively.
- Under the third revision the GDP growth in 2014-15 is at 7.4% from earlier estimates of 7.5%.



Sports

Karnataka won Vijay Hazare Trophy

- Karnataka defeated Saurashtra by 41 runs in the Vijay Hazare Trophy final on Tuesday to win the tournament for the third time.
- Batting first, Karnataka put up a total of 253/10 driven by Mayank Agarwal's 90(79), before Saurashtra were bowled out for 212 in 46.3 overs.
- Agarwal hit 723 runs in eight matches in the tournament, including seven 80+ scores.

Federer won Most Decorated Laureus Award

- Tennis legend Roger Federer became the most decorated winner in the history of Laureus World Sports Awards after he won twin honours at the 18th edition of the awards ceremony in Monaco.
- It was his sixth award.
- American tennis great Serena Williams won the Sportswoman of the Year Award. She is now the most decorated female Laureus Award winner with five Laureus statuettes.

India got 11 Medals At Strandja Tournament

- India has come up with best ever performance at the 69th Strandja Memorial Boxing Tournament in Bulgaria.
- At Sofia, the country ended with a whopping 11 medals – five from men and six from women boxers.
- Overall, the contingent clinched two gold, three silver and six bronze medals.
- Vikas Krishan, who claimed a gold medal in 75 kg category, was also adjudged the best boxer of the event.

Youngest captain in International Cricket

- At 19 years of age, Afghanistan leg-spinner Rashid Khan is set to become the youngest captain in the history of international cricket.
- The World's No.1 ODI and Twenty20 International bowler, Rashid will lead Afghanistan after regular skipper Asghar Stanikzai was diagnosed with appendicitis.
- Rashid is also the youngest player to be ranked No.1 in the ICC's Player Rankings across formats.

Bangladesh appoint Courtney Walsh as coach

- Bangladesh has named former West Indies cricketer Courtney Walsh as the interim coach for upcoming tri-nation Twenty20 series.
- Walsh, who has been Bangladesh's bowling coach since 2016, takes over as interim coach from former Zimbabwean cricketer Richard Halsall.
- Position of Bangladesh's head coach had been vacant since October, when Chandika Hathurusingha quit after three years at the helm.

Tejaswin broke his own high jump record

- Competing for Kansas State University, 19-year-old Tejaswin Shankar broke his own national record by clearing a height of 2.28m.
- Shankar had set the record at the 2.26m mark at the Junior National Championships in Coimbatore in 2016 when he was a schoolboy.
- The height cleared by Shankar is the best this year amongst athletes from Commonwealth countries.

Sameer beats ex-world no. 2 to win Swiss Open

- Indian shuttler Sameer Verma beat former world number two Jan O Jorgensen and clinched the men's singles title at the \$150,000 Swiss Open Super 300 tournament.
- Verma, who joins Kidambi Srikanth and HS Prannoy as the Indian shuttlers who have won the Swiss Open, had clinched the Syed Modi Grand Prix Gold last year.
- He is presently world number 46.

PyeongChang Winter Olympics concludes

- The 2018 PyeongChang Winter Olympics concluded with a spectacular closing ceremony.
- In the closing ceremony, the Olympic flag was handed over to Chinese organisers for the next Winter Games in Beijing in 2022.
- With the 2022 Games, Beijing will become the first city in the world to host both the Summer and Winter Olympic Games after hosting the Summer Games in 2008.

Strandja Memorial Tournament

- Amit Panghal claimed his second consecutive international gold but MC Mary Kom settled for silver in the 69th Strandja Memorial boxing tournament for men and women in Sofia, Bulgaria.
- Amit (49kg), who fetched the top honours at last month's India Open, defeated Morocco's Said Mordaji.
- Seema Poonia (+81kg) also claimed silver by defeating Russia's Anna Ivanova.

Parupalli Kashyap wins Austrian Open

- India's Parupalli Kashyap overcame Malaysia's June Wei Cheam in straight games in the men's singles

final to clinch the Austrian Open International Challenge.

- This is Kashyap's first international title in over 3 years.
- Kashyap is the only male player from India to reach the Quarterfinals of men's singles at 2012 London Olympics.
- He was also awarded the Arjuna Award by Govt of India in 2012.

Aruna Reddy makes history

- Aruna Budda Reddy created history by becoming the 1st Indian gymnast to win an individual medal at Gymnastics World Cup as she clinched a bronze in women's vault event.
- She scored 13.649 average points to finish 3rd & claim the bronze medal.
- This was Aruna's first international medal, though she has taken part at World Artistic Gymnastics Championships, Commonwealth Games & Asian Games.

India presented with ICC Test mace

- The International Cricket Council presented the ICC Test Championship Mace to Virat Kohli after the end of the final T20 International against South Africa.
- Kohli received the ICC Test Championship mace on behalf of Team India for the second consecutive year for being the number one Test team.
- This is the fourth time that India has been presented with the prestigious mace.

1st Indian to be banned by NADA for drug

- Athlete Jithin Paul became the first Indian athlete to be banned by the National Anti-Doping Agency for possession of a prohibited substance.
- NADA has handed Paul a 4-year-ban for possession of a banned substance called 'Meldonium'.
- The anti-doping authority also said that Paul had no justification for possession of the substance.

1st Indian to cross 900 points in ICC ranking

- Virat Kohli has become only the second batsman in the history of the game to cross 900-point mark concurrently in Tests & ODIs.
- Kohli is only the 2nd batsman after AB de Villiers to attain the 900-point mark concurrently in both formats.
- Kohli thus moved ahead of Brian Lara in the all-timers' list & ranks 7th in ODI list of all-time rankings that is led by Vivian Richards with 935 points.

Shoaib Akhtar named PCB brand ambassador

- Former Pak pacer Shoaib Akhtar has been named as the brand ambassador of Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB).

- He was also appointed as the advisor to chairman on cricket affairs.
- Shoaib has represented Pakistan in 46 Tests, 163 ODIs & 15 T20s picking 444 wickets in international cricket.
- His career had been like a roller coaster ride as his journey was marred by controversies, struggles & injuries.

Roger Federer wins Rotterdam Open title

- Roger Federer celebrated his return to the top of the world rankings by winning his 3rd Rotterdam Open.
- Federer thrashed Bulgarian Grigor Dimitrov 6-2, 6-2 in a one-sided final that lasted less than an hour.
- In the Open era, only American Jimmy Connors has won more titles than Federer, with 109.
- Federer first became world number one in 2004, but has not topped the rankings since Oct 2012.

Sachin made T20 Mumbai League's ambassador

- Sachin Tendulkar has been made the brand ambassador of the upcoming T20 Mumbai League.
- The league will be organised by Sports India Pvt Ltd, a association of IIFL Group as Lead Member and Wizcraft, with the approval and sanction of the Mumbai Cricket Association.
- 6 teams from Mumbai North, North-West, North-East, North- Central, South-Central and South will participate in the League.

India's largest train the trainers programme

- Pullela Gopichand has initiated country's largest train the trainers programme, inducting 1500 Physical Education teachers from across Gujarat for advanced training.
- It aims to develop the skills of PE teachers so that they can impart the right techniques to children aspiring to make it big in sports.
- It will look at all-round development in sports, targeting PE teachers, students & schools.

Yuzuru Hanyu retains gold medal

- Japan's Yuzuru Hanyu has become the first figure skater in 66 years to win back-to-back Winter Olympic gold medals in the men's singles event.
- Hanyu won the title with 317.85 points, beating compatriot Shoma Uno and multiple world champion Javier Fernandez of Spain to the second and third spots.
- He also became the 1,000th gold medal winner in the history of Winter Olympics.

Federer becomes oldest world No.1 in tennis

- Roger Federer has become the oldest world number one after he defeated his Dutch opponent Robin Haase at Rotterdam's ABN Amro World Tennis Tournament.

- He became the oldest No. 1 male player, surpassing eight-time Grand Slam winner Andre Agassi, who holds the record at 33 yrs since September 2003.
- Federer is back on top after winning 3 majors in 13 months, including another Australian Open.

Guptill becomes the highest run-scorer in T20

- Martin Guptill has become the leading run-scorer in T20 Internationals with his 2nd century against Australia.
- It took Guptill's International T20 career total to 2,188 runs, surpassing Brendon McCullum's 2,140, Kohli is the next highest on the all-time list with 1,956.
- Guptill's century came off a mere 49 balls, which is also the record for fastest T20 hundred scored by any New Zealand batsman.

Odisha Govt to sponsor Indian hockey team

- Indian hockey has got a new sponsor in state govt of Odisha, which has decided to support the game for next 5 years.
- It is for the first time a state is sponsoring a National Hockey Team.
- Odisha is regarded as the cradle of hockey & has produced greats like Dilip Tirkey & Ignace Tirkey.
- Odisha has been supporting the game with various initiatives & also won the Kalinga Lancers in the HIL(Hockey India League).

Indian boxers win 10 medals

- Indian boxers have won 10 medals, including 5 gold, at the Asian Games Test event in Jakarta, Indonesia.
- Manish Kaushik, K.Shyam Kumar, Shaikh Salman Anwar and Ashish won a gold each in their respective categories.
- Pavitra was the lone Indian gold-winner in the 60-kilogram category of women's draw.

TN won Senior Women's Football Championship

- Tamil Nadu has won the Senior Women's National Football Championship for the first time.
- Tamil Nadu, which was playing its first-ever final, defeated Manipur, 2-1 at the Barabati Stadium in Cuttack, Odisha.
- Skipper Indumathi and Indrani found the net for Tamil Nadu, while Ratanbala scored Manipur's only goal.

India to host 8th Theatre Olympics

- In an effort to put India firmly among the top nations in the world theatre map, the country will play host to the 8th Theatre Olympics, the greatest carnival of thespianism.
- The 51-day theatre extravaganza which will be inaugurated at Red Fort, New Delhi.

- It will see 450 shows including 65 shows by international artistes, 600 ambient performances and 250 youth forum shows.

Ranking System for National Sports Federation

- The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports is planning a ranking system for National Sports Federations.
- Aimed at inculcating healthy competition between sports bodies, the rankings will be based on the federations' administrative capability, transparency, talent-spotting ability, and medal count of athletes.
- The implementation of the sports code will bar officials over 70 years old.

Gangolli won Chess Championship for the blind

- Defending champion Karnataka's Kishan Gangolli won the 13th edition of the National 'A' Chess Championship for the blind in Mumbai.
- The championship was organised by All India Chess Federation for the Blind (AICFB).
- At the end of the 13th round, Asian Championship winner, Gangolli became the champion for the fifth consecutive time with 10.5 points.

Keshavan comes 34th at his 6th Olympics

- Four-time Asian champion India's Shiva Keshavan on Sunday finished 34th out of 40 in the men's singles luge event at PyeongChang Games, his sixth Winter Olympics campaign.
- The 36-year-old Himachal Pradesh-born athlete's best finish at the Games had come in 2006 in Turin when he finished 25th.
- Shiva is one of the two Indians who qualified for the 2018 Olympic Games.

First Indian to qualify for China LPGA

- Sharmila Nicollet has become the first Indian golfer to qualify for the China Ladies PGA Tour.
- China LPGA Tour is a professional golf tour for women organized by the China Ladies Professional Golfers' Association.
- Sharmila is also the youngest Indian golfer to qualify for Ladies European Tour & the second Indian to earn a full card on the Ladies European Tour.

SA never lost ODI after wearing pink jersey

- The South African cricket team has never lost an ODI while wearing pink jersey.
- The team has appeared in five ODIs while dressed in pink to create awareness for breast cancer.
- Interestingly, South Africa have scored over 340 runs in three Pink ODIs, with their highest total being 439/2.

1,218 drones set record at Winter Olympics

- As many as 1,218 drones outfitted with LED lights were used during a light show at the opening ceremony of the PyeongChang Winter Olympics.
- This made a world record for the 'most unmanned aerial vehicles airborne simultaneously'.
- The drones, controlled through an automated software program, flew in sync and created light-up images of Olympic sports and the Olympic rings.

India won medals at Asian Para-Cycling C'ship

- The Indian contingent won a silver medal and two bronze medals at the Asian Para-Cycling Championships held in Naypyidaw, Myanmar.
- Last year's silver medallist Divij Shah repeated his silver-winning performance while BSF soldier Harinder Singh won bronze adding to his bronze from the last year.
- New entrant Madhu Bagri, meanwhile, won bronze in hand-cycling.

Winter Olympic Games Starts In Pyeongchang

- The 23rd Olympic Winter Games officially kicked off at Pyeongchang in South Korea. 92 countries are participating in the event.
- There will be 102 medals up for grabs in Pyeongchang, covering seven sports and 15 disciplines.
- The ceremony was directed by Song Seung-whan, a South Korean actor.
- Hosts South Korea also produced a show of unity with neighbours North Korea during the ceremony.

Khelo India School Games Concludes

- The first Khelo India School Games concluded in New Delhi with sports powerhouse Haryana topped the overall medal tally.
- The state won 102 medals which include 38 gold and 26 silver.
- Maharashtra with 110 medals (36 of them gold) finished second while Delhi with 94 medals came third.
- Sports Minister, Col Rajyavardhan Rathore presented the top State Haryana with the glittering trophy.

Jhulan Goswami takes 200 ODI Wickets

- Indian women's cricket team pacer Jhulan Goswami has become the first woman in the world to take 200 wickets in ODI cricket.
- Goswami achieved the feat playing in her 166th ODI against South Africa.
- Goswami had become the leading wicket-taker in women's ODI in May 2017, overtaking former Australian pacer Cathryn Fitzpatrick's record of 180 wickets.

Ormila Devi claims lift gold

- Kongsam Ormila Devi of Manipur lived up to her growing stature by winning gold in the 44kg category at the Khelo India School Games competition at the Indira Gandhi Stadium.
- Ormila Devi, the Commonwealth Youth Championship winner, lifted a combined total of 137 kg – 59kg in snatch and 78 kg in clean and jerk.
- It is 4 kg extra than what she achieved in the Commonwealth meet at Gold Coast.

Manav ends up with silver at WJC Finals

- Indian paddler Manav Thakkar settled for silver after losing in the final of the 2018 ITTF World Junior Circuit Finals at Luxembourg.
- The Indian failed to cash in on the close sixth game win as he ended with the junior boys silver medal on Sunday evening.
- The No. 3 seeded Indian lost to top-seed Kanak Jha of the US by 3-4 (11-9, 3-11, 11-9, 6-11, 3-11, 11-9, 6-11).

Shi Yuqi won India Open badminton men's title

- Shi Yuqi won the India Open badminton tournament for the first time after having not won a single title in 2017.
- Shi Yuqi, the current world number eight, defeated Taiwan's Chou Tien Chen in the Indian Open Badminton Tournament 21-18, 21-14.
- Beiwen Zhang won in the women's section.

Sindhu finishes as India Open runner-up

- Rio Olympic silver medallist PV Sindhu finished as runner-up after losing to America's Beiwen Zhang in the final on Sunday.
- Zhang defeated world number four Sindhu with a scoreline of 18-21, 21-11, 22-20 and took her head-to-head record against the Indian to 2-3.
- Sindhu had lifted the India Open title last year by defeating Olympic champion Carolina Marin.

Shubhankar Sharma won European Tour title

- India's Shubhankar Sharma came back from a four-stroke deficit to claim a two-shot win at the Maybank Championship in Malaysia for his second European Tour title on Sunday.
- Sharma had won his maiden title at the Joburg Open in December last year.
- The Indian holed 10 birdies to claim the title ahead of Spain's 31-year-old Jorge Campillo.

India lifts U-19 World Cup trophy

- India lifted the ICC Under-19 World Cup trophy for the record fourth time by defeating Australia in the finals.
- Coached by Rahul Dravid, the team had remained unbeaten in the tournament.
- With a fourth crown, India surpassed Australia in the race of most U-19 World Cup titles.

- India's star batsman Manjot Kalra led his team to the victory as he made a brilliant unbeaten century.

India won 7 golds at India Boxing Tournament

- Seven Indian boxers, including five-time world champion Mary Kom, won gold medals in the India Open International Boxing Tournament.
- Boxers Sanjeet, Manish Kaushik, Pwila Basumatar, Lovlina Borgohain, Pinki Rani and Manisha emerged victorious at the event in Delhi.
- Former world champion Sarita Devi lost to Finland's Marjut Mira Potkonen by a split decision in the lightweight category.

Srihari makes record in 100m backstroke

- Karnataka's Srihari Nataraj took the honours in the swimming pool on Day Two of the Khelo India School Games by winning the 100m backstroke gold in 56.90 seconds to set a new National mark in the event.
- The previous record of 56.99s was set by him at the Asian age group championship in Tashkent last year.
- Srihari also added the 4x100m freestyle gold to his kitty.

Mary Kom strikes gold

- M C Mary Kom claimed a gold in the India Open boxing tournament.
- Mary Kom won against Filipino Josie Gabuco by 4-1 and won her gold in the 48 kg class among women.
- Asian Games bronze-medallist Satish Kumar (+91 kg), however, settled for a silver, outwitted by Uzbekistan's Bakhodir Jalolov in a split 4-1 decision.

Defence

Uttarakhand to host 13th Surya Kiran Exercise

- India and Nepal will hold the 13th edition of Surya Kiran joint military exercise in Pithoragarh, Uttarakhand in a couple of months.
- The military exercise will include training on jungle warfare, anti-terrorism combat as well as disaster response activities.
- The announcement came days after Army chief Bipin Rawat visited Nepal to attend a function to mark the Army Day.

DRDO successfully Tests Rustom-2

- DRDO successfully flew 'Rustom 2' at its Aeronautical Test Range at Chalakere in Chitradurga district of Karnataka.
- A medium-altitude long-endurance unmanned aerial vehicle, Rustom 2 or TAPAS-BH-201 has been developed by India on the lines of the American Predator drones.
- Rustom 2 can conduct sustained surveillance and can carry weapons along with surveillance equipment.

Navy to Host MILAN from March 6 to 13

- Indian Navy will host the multinational MILAN exercise at Port Blair in Andaman and Nicobar islands from March 6th to March 13th, 2018.
- MILAN is a congregation of littoral navies conducted biennially by the Indian Navy under the aegis of the Andaman and Nicobar Command. It began in 1995.
- This year's theme is 'Friendship Across the Seas'. It will witness professional exercises and seminars.
- Maldives declined India's invitation to participate in the naval exercise 'MILAN'.
- The development comes on the backdrop of an ongoing state of unrest in the country.

8th Indo- Seychelles Army exercise starts

- The eighth joint military exercise between the Indian Army and Seychelles People's Defence Forces started at Mahe Island, Seychelles.
- The focus of the ongoing exercise is to conduct counter-insurgency and counter-terrorist operations in semi-urban environment under the United Nations Charter.
- The exercise is named "Lamitye" which in the local dialect 'Creole', means friendship.

20,000 crore Defence Corridor for Bundelkhand

- PM Modi has announced a defence industrial corridor in Bundelkhand region, one of the most backward regions of UP.
- In this year's budget, govt. had announced that it will establish 2 defence industrial production corridors.
- The corridor will link Agra, Aligarh, Lucknow, Kanpur, Jhansi & Chitrakoot.
- The decision was taken keeping in mind the developmental requirements of Bundelkhand region.

Successful Night Trial Of Prithvi-II Missile

- India successfully conducted a night trial of its indigenously developed nuclear capable Prithvi-II missile with a strike range of 350 km, from a test range in Odisha.
- The surface-to-surface missile was test-fired from a mobile launcher from launch complex-3 of the Integrated Test Range at Chandipur, Odisha.
- The perfect test launch came after the successful trial of the Agni-5 missile

India Test Fires Agni-II Missile

- India has test-fired its medium range nuclear capable Agni-II missile with a strike range of 2,000 km from Abdul Kalam Island off Odisha coast.
- Agni-II was developed by Advanced Systems Laboratory along with other DRDO labs & integrated by Bharat Dynamics.
- The 20-m-long Agni-II ballistic missile has a launch weight of 17 tonne & can carry a payload of 1,000 kg over a distance of 2,000 kms.

India, Indonesia begin Joint Drill

- A special task force of Indian Army & Indonesian Army have begun the 6th Garuda Shakti exercise in the West Java province of the archipelago country.
- Drill aims to build experience sharing in counter-terrorism operations, close quarter combat & other areas of special operations.
- The exercise b/w Indian & Indonesian Special Forces highlights the increasing trust & cooperation b/w the 2 armies

India's Defence Budget Breaks into Top 5

- According to a report by London-based global think tank, India's defence budget broke into the world's top 5, beating the UK for the first time.
- India overtook the UK as the 5th largest defence spender in 2017 at \$52.5 billion. While India continues to modernise its military capabilities, China's defence budget remains far ahead with 3 times India's defence budget at USD 150.5 billion.

Chindits Trail Expedition Flagged off

- Indian Army flagged off a Chindits Trail Expedition to commemorate the spirit of Indian troops employed on Burma front in 2nd World War.
- Expedition will cover a distance of 400 km in 4 phases over a period of 20 days.
- It will cover areas of Deogarh, Damoh & Nauradehi & will collaborate with local administration & forest department to connect with indigenous tribes inhabiting the region.

Air Force gets Vintage Dakota Aircraft

- Chief of the Air Staff of the Indian Air Force (IAF) Air Chief Marshal (ACM) B.S. Dhanoa received a restored World War-II DC3 Dakota aircraft from an IAF veteran.
- The gift deed was signed between ACM Dhanoa and Air Cdre (Retd) Chandrasekhar at a handover ceremony.
- The DC3 Dakota aircraft Parashurama bearing the Tail Number VP-905 will be part of the IAF's vintage fleet.

Government to Buy Assault, Sniper Rifles

- The Defence Acquisition Council, led by Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, has cleared proposals worth nearly ₹16,000 crore to buy seven lakh assault rifles and 5,700 sniper rifles.
- Over ₹1,800 crore was sanctioned to procure Light Machine Guns through the "fast track" route.
- In 2017, the ministry cleared ₹40,000 crore to replace ageing weapons under one of its biggest procurement plans.



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Russia seeks ₹125 crore to repair INS Chakra

- Russian authorities have demanded over \$20 million to rectify damage suffered by nuclear submarine INS Chakra, which was dry-docked last week.
- Before INS Chakra, indigenously built nuclear ballistic missile submarine INS Arihant suffered extensive damage because of human error over a year ago.
- INS Chakra is a Russia-made, nuclear-propelled, hunter-killer submarine.

India, UAE to Hold 1st Naval Drill in Gulf

- PM Modi reiterated strong cooperation on combating terrorism and a defence partnership that will see the Indian Navy conducting an exercise in the Gulf waters.
- This is the first time Indian Navy will be exercising in the Gulf, going beyond the Arabian Sea.

HAL Develops First Hawk-I Flight

- The Hindustan Aeronautics Limited has developed the first flight of Hawk-i with indigenous Real Time Operating System.
- Hawk-i is the first indigenous RTOS developed in India from scratch and certified by Center for Military Airworthiness and Certification.
- The RTOS provides a standard run-time environment for real-time applications execution in a safe and reliable manner.

Advisory Committee on Defence Procurements

- To expedite capital acquisitions in defence procurement, Defence Minister Sitharaman has constituted a 13-member Raksha Mantri Advisory Committee on Ministry of Defence Capital Projects.
- Committee will present an initial status report on identified projects to Defence Minister by March 31, 2018.
- The report shall include status of the projects issues, remedial measures etc.

US Air Force Chief flies Indo-made Tejas Aircraft

- Aiming to strengthen the relationship between the air forces of US and India, Chief of Staff of the US Air Force General David L Goldfein flew the 'Made in India' light combat aircraft Tejas.
- With this, Goldfein also became the first foreign military chief to fly Tejas aircraft.
- Tejas is a single jet engine, multi role light fighter designed by ADA and HAL for the Indian Airforce and Navy.

India's 1st Defence Industrial corridor

- The first of the two defence industrial production corridors, as announced in the Union Budget, will link Chennai & Bengaluru and will pass through Coimbatore and several other industrial clusters.

- The corridor shall provide impetus to the defence production industry in the country and in the region.
- The announcement on the second corridor would be made soon.

INS Karanj Launched By Indian Navy

- Indian Navy launched 'INS Karanj', the third of the six indigenous Scorpene-class submarines.
- The submarine, equipped with superior stealth features and precision-guided weapons, has been built at Mumbai's Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited. Admiral Sunil Lanba, Chief of the Naval Staff, was the chief guest.
- The submarine has an overall 67.5 x 12.3 metres.

Polity

States can decide on exempting liquor ban

- The Supreme Court gave the State governments the discretion to decide, on facts, whether areas covered by local self-governing bodies or areas proximate to municipal pockets should be exempted from the court's nationwide prohibition on sale of liquor within 500 metres along the highways.
- In July, 2017 the court exempted municipal areas from the prohibition.

Parrikar Presents Rs 17,123-Crore Goa Budget

- Goa Chief Minister Manohar Parrikar presented in the state assembly ₹17,123-crore budget for 2018-19, an increase of 6.84% over the ongoing fiscal.
- The Budget focuses on education and job creation.
- The total estimated expenditure on revenue account is Rs 11,795.40 crore, while that on capital account is Rs 4,218.25 crore.

Abhilasha Kumari becomes Manipur HC's CJ

- Justice Abhilasha Kumari is the first woman to become the Chief Justice of the Manipur High Court.
- Justice Kumari, daughter of former Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Virbhadr Singh has served as a Gujarat High Court Judge and Chief Justice of Tripura High Court.
- She also served as additional Advocate General of Himachal Pradesh after the Congress government came to power in March 2003.

U.P. govt. to provide Taj protection plan: SC

- Supreme Court directed the UP government to place before it a vision document on protection and preservation of the Taj Mahal.
- The TTZ is an area of about 10,400 sq. km spread over the districts of Agra, Firozabad, Mathura, Hathras and Etah in U.P. and Rajasthan.
- A Bench of Justices Madan B. Lokur and Deepak Gupta asked why there was a "sudden flurry of activity" in the Taj Trapezium Zone.

When 2 adults Marry, No one Can Interfere: SC

- While hearing a petition seeking ban on honour killings and khap panchayats, Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra said that when two adults marry, no one has the right to interfere.
- "Whether it is parents, society or anyone, they are out of it," he added.
- The Supreme Court asked the Centre to come up with suggestions for protecting couples.

Lock-in period for Capital Gains increased

- Capital gains from property transactions will have to be invested for a minimum of 5 years to avail tax exemption.
- Arun Jaitley proposed to increase the investment tenure of capital gains arising out of sale of land or building into bonds from the existing 3 years to 5 years.
- Such benefit would only be available for long-term capital gains arising out of sale of land and building or both.

NGT cannot have single-judge bench: SC

- The Supreme Court on Wednesday said that the National Green Tribunal (NGT) cannot have benches comprising of a single judge.
- The court was hearing a petition against a government law that allows for single-judge benches.
- The NGT, which was set up for speedy and effective disposal of environment-related cases, currently has six judges against its capacity of 40.

Credit for agriculture to be ₹11 lakh cr

- Finance minister said government will focus on strengthening rural, agriculture economy.
- It credit for agriculture is increased from 10 trillion rupees to 11 trillion rupees.
- Minimum support price of all crops will be increased to at least 1.5 times of production cost and export of agriculture commodities to be liberalised.

Govt. announces ₹10,000 cr for fisheries

- Finance Minister Arun Jaitley announced ₹10,000 crore for the fisheries and aquaculture and animal husbandry fund, during his Budget speech.
- He also said that Kisan credit cards will be extended to fisheries and animal husbandry farmers.
- He added that exports for agricultural commodities will be liberalised.

Govt. to contribute 12% as EPF

- Government will now contribute 12% of employee provident fund to the new employees in all sections for the next 3 years.

- EPF Act will be amended to reduce contribution of women to 8% from 12% with no change in employer's contribution.
- This would effectively mean women employees will be able to get a higher take home pay.

President's Monthly Salary to be ₹5 Lakh

- While presenting the Union Budget 2018, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley on Thursday announced that the President's monthly salary will be increased to ₹5 lakh from the earlier ₹1.5 lakh.
- Further, the Vice President's monthly salary will be increased to ₹4 lakh from ₹1.25 lakh.
- The government has proposed a law to automatically revise MPs' salaries every 5 years.

