

**IMPORTANT**

# CURRENT AFFAIRS CAPSULE

MARCH 2018

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## Awards & Honours

### President Kovind Presented Gallantry Awards

- President Ram Nath Kovind conferred Gallantry Awards and Distinguished Service Decorations at the Defence Investiture Ceremony held at Rashtrapati Bhavan.
- He presented 3 Kirti Chakras, India's 2nd highest military decoration and 17 Shaurya Chakras in the grand ceremony.
- Esteemed Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) Commandant Chetan Cheetah, who was shot 9 times and went into deep coma, was also a recipient of Kirti Chakra.

### Chhattisgarh Won 'Water Digest Award'

- Chhattisgarh bagged the National 'Water Digest Award' for Water Conservation-Diversion and for increasing the irrigation capacity in the state.
- This award is presented every year by a globally renowned magazine 'Water Digest' which focuses mainly on water resources.
- Chhattisgarh Water Resources Department has been given this Award for the 1st time in the past 17 years.

### Joginder Sanger Won Business Personality Award

- Joginder Sanger, a leading NRI entrepreneur won the 'Business Personality of the year 2018' award in the UK.
- He was awarded for showing a high level of commitment and enthusiasm in leading his business to success.
- Sanger is the chairman of Mastcraft Group and Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.
- Sanger had played a key role in raising funds for rebuilding the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan's building in the UK.

### 'Most Improved Airport' in Asia-Pacific Region

- Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport in Ahmedabad received the award for the 'Most Improved Airport' in the Asia-Pacific region.
- It is the 1st International award for Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport.
- With over 200 flight movements per day, it was the 8th busiest airport in terms of passenger traffic in India in 2016-17.
- (Memory tip: 'Most Improved Airport' in Asia-Pacific region is Ahmedabad.)

### Singapore's Changi Airport is 'World's Best Airport'

- Singapore's Changi Airport topped the list of 'World's Best Airport' for the 6th consecutive year at the Skytrax World Airport Awards held in Stockholm.
- South Korea's Incheon Airport, Tokyo Haneda in Japan, Hong Kong and Doha Hamad turned out to be the Top 5 on the list.

- Mumbai Airport got 63rd rank whereas Bangalore and Delhi airports got 64th and 66th rank respectively.

### Delhi & Mumbai Airports top in ACI Rankings

- The IGI Airport in Delhi and Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport have been adjudged joint-best in the world by Airports Council International in the 'Over 40 million passengers annually' category for year 2017.
- IGI took the top spot after being ranked second in the 2016.
- IGI crossed the 60 million passenger mark last year with a total traffic of 63.5 million.

### Google Honours Ustad Bismillah Khan

- Google celebrated the 102nd birth anniversary of Bharat Ratna awardee and Shehnai maestro Ustad Bismillah Khan on 21st March.
- He was awarded with Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan, Padma Shri and Sangeet Natak Akademi.

### 'G.K. Reddy Award' for journalist Karan Thapar

- Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh presented the G.K. Reddy Memorial National Award for journalism to senior journalist and television presenter Karan Thapar.
- He was associated with CNN-IBN and hosted 'The Devil's Advocate' and 'The Last Word'.
- In December 2013, Karan Thapar received the 'International Press Institute - India' Award for excellence in the field of journalism.

### NHAI Receives Best Design Pavilion Award

- The NHAI Pavilion at 105th 'Indian Science Congress-Pride of India Expo' held at Imphal from 16th-20th March 2018 has been adjudged as 'BEST DESIGN PAVILION'.
- The NHAI had put up an exhibition stall to showcase its Projects and other initiatives like Electronic Toll Collection, Wayside Amenities, Road Safety etc.
- The award was conferred by Dr Najma Heptulla, Governor of Manipur.

### DRDO Gets 'Most Informative Pavilion' Award

- The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has received the 'Most Informative Pavilion' award in the 'Pride of India Expo'.
- The event was organised as part of the 105th Indian Science Congress (ISC) in Manipur.
- DRDO participated in the expo showcasing cutting-edge indigenous defence technologies with over 150 exhibits and models from 18 of its laboratories.

### President Kovind Gave Away Padma awards 2018

- President Ram Nath Kovind gave away prestigious Padma awards to 85 winners at Rashtrapati Bhawan.

- Ilaiyaraaja got Padma Vibhushan, Mahendra Singh Dhoni is among the nine Padma Bhushan recipients.
- Padma Vibhushan and the Padma Bhushan are the 2nd and 3rd highest civilian awards of the country respectively.

#### Simi Garewal Won the UK Film Festival Award

- Veteran actress and talk show host Simi Garewal has been felicitated with a 'UK Golden Flame Award' for her contribution to Indian cinema.
- She received the award at the opening ceremony of the annual Tongues of Fire - UK Asian Film Festival in London.

#### Sri Lanka Cricket Released Book on Dalmiya

- Sri Lanka Cricket paid glowing tribute to the former BCCI President Jagmohan Dalmiya by releasing a book, titled 'A Tribute to Jagu'.
- SLC President Thilanga Sumathipala lauded Dalmiya's role in strengthening the Asian Bloc.
- They felicitated him posthumously as the greatest non-Sri Lankan contributor to their country's cricket.
- Jagmohan Dalmiya headed ICC from 1997-2000 & BCCI from 2001-04.

#### Festival of Innovation and Entrepreneurship

- President of India will inaugurate Festival of Innovation and Entrepreneurship (FINE) and will present Gandhian Young Technological Innovation awards at Rashtrapati Bhawan on March 19, 2018.
- FINE is an initiative to recognise, showcase, reward innovations and to foster a supportive ecosystem for innovators.
- It is a platform for innovators for building linkages with potential stakeholders.

#### Book Signed by Tagore auctioned for \$700

- A signed hardcover copy of Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore's 'The King of the Dark Chamber' - the English translation of his famous Bengali play '*Raja*' - has been sold for USD 700 at an auction in the US.
- The play revolves around a mysterious, unseen, omniscient king, who is both benevolent and efficient.
- Note: Tagore was the first Indian to win a Nobel Prize (Literature) in 1913.

#### ICMR Won the Kochon Prize for TB research

- The 2017 Kochon Prize was awarded to the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) for building a better TB research and development process.
- The \$65,000 Prize is awarded annually by 'Stop TB Partnership' to individuals and/or organizations that have made a significant contribution in combating TB.
- ICMR and several of its research groups are engaged in TB research.





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#### Medal for Excellence in Police Investigation

- The Government has approved to institute the 'Union Home Minister's Medal for Excellence in Police Investigation' to promote high professional standards of Investigation of Crime in the State/UT Police and Central Investigating Agencies.
- A total of 162 medals will be awarded every year.



- The names of awardees will be declared on 15th August every year.

#### **'Palace on Wheels' Bagged Tourist Train Award**

- The luxury train 'Palace on Wheels' of Rajasthan, popular among foreign tourists, has bagged the 'Tourist Train of the Year' award of the 'Pacific Area Travel Writers' Association.
- It was launched by the Indian Railways in association with Rajasthan Tourism Development Corporation to promote tourism in Rajasthan.
- Note: The Palace on Wheels was started on 26 January 1982.

#### **Amol Palekar Received 'Godavari Gaurav' Award**

- Noted actor Amol Palekar was honoured with the 'Godavari Gaurav' award.
- Palekar known for his performance in films like Gol Maal, Choti Si Baat, Chitchor among others, was presented with the award, which has been instituted by 'Kusumagraj Prathishthan'.
- The award was given by noted Marathi writer Madhu Mangesh Karnik, who is the chairperson of the Prathishthan.

#### **Commonwealth Point of Light Award**

- Britain's Queen Elizabeth II recognised Srishti Bakshi from India as the 26th Commonwealth Point of Light in honour of her exceptional service to empowering women in India.
- Srishti is the founder of the 'CrossBow Miles Movement'.
- Srishti leads workshops for women in rural communities on digital and financial literacy, leadership and health.

#### **Women Transforming India Awards 2018**

- The nominations for the 'Women Transforming India Awards' were opened during the launch of the Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP) at NITI Aayog.
- Note: The theme of the Awards for the year 2018 is 'Women and Entrepreneurship'.
- NITI's flagship event, which has been organised in partnership with United Nations, will also have the collaboration of DICE Districts.

#### **President Gives 'Nari Shakti Puraskar'.**

- On International Women's Day, President Ram Nath Kovind conferred Nari Shakti Puraskars to 30 eminent women and 9 distinguished Institutions in recognition of their service towards society and women's empowerment.
- Women and Organisations from fields of science, sport, art, etc., have been awarded.
- Note: The awardees were finalised by the Ministry of Woman and Child Development.

#### **Indian Architect BV Doshi Wins Pritzker**

- Balkrishna Doshi, the legendary Indian architect is being honoured with the Pritzker Architecture Prize, the Nobel equivalent for the field.
- The international prize, established by Chicago's Pritzker family in 1979, bestows laureates with \$100,000 along with a Bronze Medallion.
- Note: He is the 45th Pritzker laureate and the first from India.

#### **Guillermo Won Best Director Award: Oscars**

- Guillermo del Toro won Oscars in the Best Director category.
- He got the award for his film 'The Shape of Water'.
- The movie also won two other Oscars for Best Production Design and Best Score. Meanwhile, 'A Fantastic Woman' won Best Foreign Language Film at the award show.

#### **Oldman & McDormand Won Best Actor, Actress at Oscars**

- Gary Oldman was named Best Actor in a Leading Role for 'Darkest Hour' while Frances McDormand won Best Actress Oscar for 'Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri' at the 90th Academy Awards.
- Meanwhile, Sam Rockwell won Best Actor in a Supporting Role for 'Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri' while Allison Janney won best supporting actress for 'I, Tonya'.

#### **The Shape of Water won Best Picture Award**

- The Shape of Water has won the Oscar for best picture at the 90th Academy Awards.
- The Shape of Water is American fantasy drama film directed by Guillermo del Toro and written by del Toro and Vanessa Taylor.
- Set in Baltimore in 1962, the plot follows a mute custodian at a high-security government laboratory who falls in love with a captured humanoid-amphibian creature.

#### **Shatrughan won Lifetime Achievement Award**

- Shatrughan Sinha has been honoured with a lifetime achievement award for his contribution to the fields of arts and politics.
- He was awarded at a ceremony in the UK's Parliament complex in London.
- The annual 'Political and Public Life Awards', now in its 12th year, recognize individuals who have made a significant impact on public life or made a difference in their local communities.

### **Days & Events**

#### **₹350 Coin to be Released**

- The government will come out with a ₹350-commemorative coin to mark the 350th birth anniversary of Guru Gobind Singh, which was celebrated in 2016.

- The reverse side will bear the picture of 'Takht Shri Harimandir Ji Patna Sahib' in the centre.
- He was born on 2nd December 1666 in Patna.
- The years '1666' and '2016' in international numerals will be on the left and right periphery of the coin.

#### World Theatre Day Observed - 27th March

- World Theatre Day is celebrated annually on the 27th March by 'International Theatre Institute' Centres and the International Theatre Community.
- World Theatre Day was initiated in 1961 by the International Theatre Institute.
- One of the most important of these is the circulation of the World Theatre Day Message.
- The first World Theatre Day Message was written by Jean Cocteau in 1962.

#### Google celebrates Chipko Movement - 25th March

- Google commemorated the 45th Anniversary of the Chipko Movement with a doodle on 25th March.
- In 1973, villagers in Uttar Pradesh's Chamoli district (now Uttarakhand) took to hugging trees to prevent them from getting cut at the hands of contractors.
- The whole movement was taken forward by women participants, who became a driving force in educating people on the deleterious effects of deforestation.

#### International Day of Remembrance - 25th March

- International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade is a United Nations International observance designated in 2007 to be marked on 25 March every year.
- The day honours and remembers those who suffered and died because of the transatlantic slave trade.
- The 2018 theme was 'Remember Slavery: Triumphs and Struggles for Freedom and Equality'.

#### 'Print Biennale India 2018' Inaugurated - 26th March

- The first International Exhibition of Graphic Prints 'Print Biennale India 2018' was inaugurated in New Delhi on 26th March which is hosted by Lalit Kala Academy.
- The participants are from countries such as USA, UK, Sri Lanka, Italy, Mexico, China, Israel, Sweden, Lithuania etc.
- The event comprised a total of 200 original prints created by Indian and international artists.

#### Earth Hour observed from 8:30 to 9:30 PM

- People across the world observed the Earth Hour 2018 from 8:30 PM to 9:30 PM on March 24th by turning off their lights.
- Earth Hour is a global campaign wherein non-essential lights are turned off at 8:30 PM on a specific day towards the end of March.
- The concept of the Earth Hour began in Australia in 2007, and it is now being observed by 187 countries.

#### Govt to Declare 2018 as 'Year of Millets'

- The government has decided to declare 2018 as 'National Year of Millets'.
- This has been done to boost the cultivation of millets like Ragi and Jowar on a mission mode to achieve nutritional security.
- Millet Cultivation has declined due to change in dietary habits and unavailability of millets.

#### One-minute Blackout in Bangladesh on 25th March

- Bangladesh observed a one-minute 'blackout' on 25th March to mark 'Genocide Day', in memory of the three million people killed by Pakistani forces during the country's Liberation War in 1971.
- The government did not suspend power supply, but people were asked to switch their lights off.
- Bangladesh started observing 25th March as 'Genocide Day' from 2017.

#### World Tuberculosis Day- 24th March

- World TB Day is celebrated every year on March 24 to raise public awareness about the devastating health, social and economic consequences of Tuberculosis.
- The theme of World TB Day 2018 is 'Wanted: Leaders for a TB-free world'.

#### Elimination of Racial Discrimination Day – 21st March

- The International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination is observed annually on 21st March.
- The aim is to eliminate all the forms of Racial Discrimination.
- The theme for 2018 was 'Promoting Tolerance, Inclusion, Unity and Respect for Diversity in the context of combating Racial Discrimination'.

#### Bihar celebrates 106th Foundation Day – 22nd March

- Bihar is celebrating its 106th Foundation Day on 22nd March 2018.
- On 22nd March in 1912, the state was carved out of a United Bengal.
- Vice President M. Venkaiah Naidu inaugurated a 3-day Bihar Diwas celebration in Patna.
- The theme for this year's celebrations is "Centenary of Champaran Satyagraha and Elimination of Dowry and Child Marriage."

#### World Water Day- 22nd March

- The World Water Day is observed every year on 22nd March to mark the importance of fresh water.
- The first World Water Day, designated by the United Nations, was observed in the year 1993.
- The theme of World Water Day, 2018 is 'Nature for Water'.
- The UN World Water Development Report is released each year around World Water Day.

#### International Day of Forests – 21st March

- The International Day of Forests was started on the 21st day of March, by resolution of the United Nations General Assembly on November 28, 2012.
- The theme of the International Day of Forests in 2018 is 'Forests and Sustainable Cities'.
- The event marks the importance of sustaining and protecting woodlands and trees, which are vital to economies, livelihoods and environment.

#### World Sparrow Day observed - 20th March

- World Sparrow Day was observed on 20th March to create awareness about protection of sparrows.
- The theme for this year's day was 'I Love Sparrows'.
- The 1st World Sparrow Day was observed in 2010 across the globe.
- It is an international initiative by the Nature Forever Society of India in collaboration with the Eco-Sys Action Foundation (France).

#### International Day of Happiness - 20th March

- World Happiness Day, is celebrated every year on March 20 to recognize the importance of happiness in the lives of people around the world.
- The theme for 2018 is 'Share Happiness' - focusing on the importance of relationships, kindness and helping each other.
- March 20 has been established as the World Happiness Day & the idea had been originally conceptualized by United Nations.

#### WTO Ministerial Meeting in New Delhi

- Representatives from 50 countries will gather in New Delhi for a 2-day informal World Trade Organisation ministerial meeting.
- The meeting will provide an opportunity to engage in free and frank discussions with the hope that it will lead to political guidance on some major issues.
- Pakistan has decided not to attend the meeting amid growing tensions caused by the ongoing diplomatic standoff.

#### NSD to host 8th Theatre Olympics in Mumbai

- The National School of Drama (NSD) will host the "8th Theatre Olympics" at Mumbai in later March.
- The Mumbai chapter of the 8th Theatre Olympics is organised by the NSD in collaboration with the Directorate of Cultural Affairs, Maharashtra.
- The 8th edition of this global theatre festival is being held in 17 cities.
- The theme for the 8th edition is 'Flag of Friendship'.

#### India to Host Competition Conference

- India for the first time will host 17th Annual Conference of International Competition Network 2018 (ICN2018) from 21st to 23rd March 2018 in New Delhi.
- The ICN is an informal network comprising 138 competition authorities from 125 jurisdictions.

- This Annual Conference is a key international platform in the field of competition law and policy.

#### Prime Minister Inaugurates 105th ISC

- Hon'ble Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi inaugurated the 105th Indian Science Congress at Manipur University at Imphal.
- The theme of the Indian Science Congress is "Reaching the Unreached Through Science and Technology".
- This is the 2nd time in over a century that the Indian Science Congress is being held in the North-East.

#### Krishi Unnati Mela kicked off in Delhi

- The 3-day Annual Krishi Unnati Mela was held New Delhi with a focus on doubling the farmers' income.
- The objective of the event is to create awareness among farmers about the latest agriculture-related technological developments.
- During the Mela, latest agriculture and allied sector technologies will be displayed at more than 800 stalls.

#### Govt Celebrates World Consumer Rights Day

- The Department of Consumer Affairs is celebrating the World Consumer Rights Day this year with the theme 'Making Digital Marketplaces Fairer' in New Delhi on 15th March 2018.
- World Consumer Rights Day is an annual international event that signifies celebration and solidarity in the international consumer movement.
- The event also gives a chance to protest the market abuses.

#### Google Doodle celebrates Pi Day

- Google has dedicated a Doodle to mark 30 years of 'Pi Day', a day first recognised by Physicist Larry Shaw in 1988 to honour the mathematical constant.
- Pi is used in every field of science as it's used for calculations involving the volume and surface area of spheres.
- The 1st Pi Day was held at a San Francisco Science Museum in 1988.

#### International Women's Day, 2018

- International Women's Day is dedicated to celebrating womanhood, their social, political, cultural, economic achievements and their significant contributions to society and emphasize on gender equality.
- Before the UN adopted it in 1977, the day was mostly celebrated in socialist and Communist countries.
- Theme for this year is 'Time is Now: Rural and Urban Activists Transforming Women's Lives'.

#### Smriti Irani Inaugurated FICCI Frame

- Information and Broadcasting Minister Smriti Irani inaugurated 2018 edition of FICCI Frame in Mumbai.

- This year a maiden edition of Content Market has been added with over 70 buyers for a curated slate of new Indian Films.
- The event will have more than 35 knowledge sessions by experts besides having over 200 High Profile Speakers from across the world.

#### World Wildlife Day 2018 celebrated

- On 20 December 2013, at its 68th session, the UN General Assembly proclaimed 3rd March - the day of signature of the CITES as UN World Wildlife Day.
- This day was proclaimed to celebrate and raise awareness of the World's Wild Animals and Plants.
- The theme for World Wildlife Day 2018 is 'Big Cats'.

### International Affairs

#### UAE becomes 1st Arab Country to Have Nuclear Power

- United Arab Emirates (UAE) celebrated completion of the first-ever Nuclear Power Plant not only in the country but in the whole Arab Gulf Region.
- The \$20 billion Barakah Plant west of Abu Dhabi has been constructed by a consortium led by Korea Electric Power Corp in 9 years.
- It's one of the 4 nuclear reactors being constructed with South Korea's cooperation.

#### World's Largest Cruise Ship Sailed

- The world's biggest cruise-liner, 'Symphony of the Seas', has left the shipyard of Saint-Nazaire in France to embark on its maiden voyage in the Mediterranean.
- The Symphony can hold up to 8,000 people including 2,200 staff.

#### US Launched WTO Challenge Against China

- US has launched a challenge at World Trade Organization against China over intellectual property breaches.
- This is being done to address China's unfair technology practices that run counter to WTO rules.
- This comes just as the US prepares to impose tariffs of 25% on imported steel & 10% on aluminium - sanctions that are meant to hit China for flooding world with cheap steel & aluminium.

#### Australia Junks Work Visa Programme

- Australia has abolished its popular employer-sponsored 457 visa programme, widely used by Indians.
- The 457-visa programme allowed businesses to employ foreign workers for a period up to 4 years in skilled jobs where there was a shortage of Australian workers.
- Australia has replaced it with a new stringent programme that requires higher English-language proficiency and job skills.

#### US Bans Transgenders Serving in Military

- President Donald Trump released an order banning most transgender troops from serving in the military except under 'limited circumstances'.
- He declared that he would reverse an Obama-era plan to allow transgender individuals to serve openly.
- However, a US court had ordered the military to allow transgender members from January 1, 2018.

#### Bolton Appointed as US Security Adviser

- President Donald Trump has appointed Bush-era defence hawk and former United Nations ambassador, John Bolton as US National Security Adviser.
- He became Mr Trump's third National Security Chief in 14 months.
- Bolton will replace present US National Security Adviser, HR McMaster.

#### 44 African Countries Signed FTA

- 44 African countries have signed an agreement establishing the 'African Continental Free Trade Area' at a summit of the African Union in Kigali, Rwanda.
- The summit was a step forward for the African Union's 2063 project for closer African integration.
- If successful, it will be the biggest trade agreement since the formation of the World Trade Organization in 1995.

#### China is Building World's Fastest Wind Tunnel

- China is building the world's fastest hypersonic wind tunnel to develop a new generation of super-fast aeroplanes that could fly from Beijing to New York within two hours.
- Wind tunnel is a tool used in aerodynamic research to study the effects of air moving past solid objects, which is used by engineers to test models of aircraft, automobiles and other machines.

#### Vienna is World's Most Liveable City

- Austria's capital Vienna once again defended its position as city offering the best quality of life in the world in an annual survey from consulting firm Mercer.
- Vienna is followed by Switzerland's Zurich and then New Zealand's Auckland and Germany's Munich in joint third.
- Criteria to rank the cities were political stability, health care, education, crime, recreation and transport.

#### G20 Ministerial Meeting in Buenos Aires

- First G20 meeting of Finance Ministers and Central Bank governors began on 19th March in Buenos Aires, with the presence of 57 delegations from countries and institutions.



- The topics under discussion are 'Infrastructure' and the 'Future of Work in Digital Arena'.
- This is the first of five such meetings to be held before Argentina hosts the G20 Summit.

#### Myanmar President, Htin Kyaw Resigns

- Myanmar's President Htin Kyaw resigned due to ill health.
- Htin Kyaw, 71, was sworn in as Myanmar's official president in 2016 after Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party won landmark elections.
- He acted as a proxy for Suu Kyi, who is constitutionally barred from holding the presidency because her children are foreign nationals.

#### Canadian Mathematician Wins Abel Prize

- Canadian mathematician Robert Langlands won the prestigious Abel Prize for developing a programme connecting representation theory to number theory.
- The prize was established by the Norwegian government in 2002 to honour outstanding scientific work in the field of mathematics.
- Along with the Fields Medal, it is one of the world's most prestigious maths prizes.

#### UN Issues \$951 Million Appeal for Rohingya

- United Nations has issued an appeal for 951 million dollars to meet the needs of nearly 900,000 Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh.
- The appeal aims to support environmentally sustainable solutions, confidence-building & resilience of affected populations until the end of 2018.
- Over the months since the most recent Rohingya influx began, it has become the world's fastest growing refugee crisis.

#### Sri Lanka Lifted Nationwide State of Emergency

- Sri Lanka has lifted a state of emergency that was put in place after an outbreak of violence against Muslim communities.
- The emergency was imposed to control communal violence after Buddhists and Muslims clashed in the country's central district of Kandy.
- It was the first time in seven years that Sri Lanka had imposed a state of emergency.
- Sri Lanka is the second country in the region to have promulgated a state of emergency this year. In February, Maldivian President declared Emergency Rule for a fortnight.

#### 4 Nations Recommended for Graduation

- Bhutan, Kiribati, Sao Tome and Principe & Solomon Islands are set to move up from the ranks of poorest nations.
- The improvement in ranking is due to their increasing national earning power as well as access to better health care and education.

- The four countries will be recommended for graduation from the Least Developed Country (LDC) category.

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#### Trump Signed US-Taiwan Travel Bill

- Donald Trump has signed a legislation that encourages US to send senior officials to Taiwan to meet Taiwanese counterparts & vice versa.
- Taiwan Travel Act is a signal of improving ties b/w US & Taiwan, which have not maintained diplomatic relationships since 1979.
- China opposed to the legislation & urged US to abide by "one China" policy, which stipulates that Taiwan is part of China.

#### Philippines Withdraws From ICC

- Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte has announced immediate withdrawal of Philippines from the International Criminal Court.
- This comes after ICC started an investigation into allegations of crimes against humanity committed by Duterte in his war against drugs.
- He has accused UN special rapporteurs & ICC investigators of painting him as a 'ruthless and heartless violator of human rights'.

#### Xi-Jinping gets 2nd Term as China's President

- China's Parliament re-elected Xi Jinping as the country's president and the chairman of Central Military Commission of the People's Republic of China on 17th March.
- On March 11, China passed a constitutional amendment to remove any term limits enabling Xi Jinping to hold presidential office beyond 2023.
- Wang Qishan has been elected as Vice President of China.

#### Nepal Chief Justice Sacked

- Nepal's Chief Justice Gopal Parajuli has been sacked for faking his date of birth to remain in office longer.
- A judicial council concluded that Parajuli should have retired 7 months ago when he turned 65, the age of retirement for official positions in Nepal.
- Parajuli became Chief Justice last June after his predecessor Sushila Karki - the first woman to hold the position turned 65.

#### US Hits Russia With Sanctions

- US has slapped a series of sanctions on top Russian spy agencies & cyber actors for their alleged interference in the 2016 elections & conducting separate cyber-attacks.
- This move by Trump Administration is the 1st rebuke of Russia's interference during the election campaign.
- Russian President Vladimir Putin's 'Personal Chef', Yevgeniy Prigozhin is one of the individuals singled out by US.

#### **Bali went Quiet For 'Day of Silence'**

- Indonesia's tourist island Bali was set to go quiet with Internet service and flights temporarily halted for a 'Day of Silence'.
- Known locally as 'Nyepi', on this day people on the island are expected to stop all work and play and remain indoors.
- Effigies known as Ogoh-Ogoh, which represent demons, were paraded through the streets before they're burned to symbolise renewal and purification.

#### **Finland is the Happiest Nation on Earth**

- Finland has overtaken Norway to become the happiest nation on earth, according to the UN's 2018 World Happiness Report.
- Burundi in East Africa is the unhappiest place in the world.
- For the first time, UN also examined the happiness levels of immigrants in each country.
- The World Happiness Report is an annual publication from the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network.

#### **Saudi Arabia Cabinet Approves Atomic Policy**

- Saudi Arabia's cabinet approved the national policy of its atomic energy programme as the kingdom prepares to award contracts for its first nuclear power plants.
- The policy insists on limiting nuclear activities to peaceful purposes and for enhanced safety measures and safe disposal of nuclear waste.
- Saudi Arabia has signed cooperation agreements with countries to boost nuclear cooperation,

#### **Bhandari gets Second Term as Nepal President**

- Nepal's incumbent President Bidhya Devi Bhandari has been elected for a second term, extending the tenure of the Himalayan country's first female head of state for another five years.
- With this President Bhandari becomes the first President of federal Nepal.
- Note: She is also the first Nepali woman to be elected as the country's president twice.

#### **Maldives Approved Anti-defection Bill**

- Maldives Parliament has approved the anti-defection bill with retrospective effect amidst the boycott by opposition MPs.
- According to the bill, MPs elected on political party tickets will lose their seat if they leave their party, get expelled, or switch parties.
- The bill will give powers to the election commission to unseat MPs in case of defections.

#### **Vietnam's Nguyen Crowned Queen in Thai Pageant**

- Vietnam's Nguyen Huong Giang has been crowned this year's 'Miss International Queen' in Thailand at one of the world's top beauty pageants for transgender women.
- The winner fended off 26 competitors, from different parts of the world, to clinch the coveted crown.
- This popular contest has been running since 2004.

#### **World Ocean Summit 2018 Concluded in Mexico**

- World Ocean Summit was held recently in Mexico's Riviera Maya.
- The summit is for business, government and environmental leaders to talk about the problems faced by the world's seas and to come up with solutions to protect the planet's vast ocean resources.
- World Ocean Summit's vision is of an ocean with robust health and vital economy.

#### **WHO Steps up Fight Against Tobacco**

- World Health Organization has launched new guidelines on the role that tobacco product regulations can play in reducing tobacco demand.
- The new guide, titled 'Tobacco Product Regulation: Building Laboratory Testing Capacity' was launched at the 2018 World Conference on 'Tobacco or Health'.
- The laboratory guide has information on how to test tobacco products and what products to test.

#### **Marshall Islands to Have Own Cryptocurrency**

- Marshall Islands is creating its own digital currency in a bid to raise money.
- In doing so it has become the first country in the world to recognize a cryptocurrency as legal tender.
- The small Pacific Island nation passed the Sovereign Currency Act to create the 'sovereign', or SOV.
- This cryptocurrency will have equal status with the US dollar.

#### **China sets 2018 GDP Target at Around 6.5%**

- China has set its GDP growth target at around 6.5% for 2018, unchanged from that for 2017.
- The projected growth rate reflects China's position of not over-emphasizing speed but stressing improvements in the quality and effect of development.

- Chinese economy outperformed its annual growth target by expanding 6.9 percent last year, picking up for the first time in seven years.

#### Merkel Secures Fourth Term in Power

- Angela Merkel has secured her 4th term in power after Social Democratic party agreed to form another 'grand coalition' govt with conservative Christian Democratic Union.
- The decision ends almost 6 months of political uncertainty in Germany, the longest time the country has been without a govt in its post-war history.
- The deal will establish her third grand coalition during her time as chancellor.

#### Egypt Court Upholds Red Sea Islands Transfer

- Egypt's top court has upheld a deal to transfer 2 Red Sea islands 'Tiran' & 'Sanafir' to Saudi Arabia.
- Court ruled that all previous court verdicts in the case are annulled. It also turned down a second case over the issue filed by the govt.
- Situated b/w the 2 countries, islands of Tiran & Sanafir are largely unoccupied but they lie in a strategically important & politically sensitive area.

#### All-female Marathon held in Saudi Arabia

- For the first time in the nation's history, Saudi Arabia's women participated in an all-female marathon.
- The 3-km-long marathon, held in the eastern province of al-Ahsa on Saturday, reportedly saw participation from 1,500 women across several categories.
- Earlier in January, Saudi Arabia allowed its women, for the first time, to spectate at a football match.

#### Armen Sarkisian Elected as Armenian President

- Armenian lawmakers elected Armen Sarkisian as the new president of Armenia.
- He will succeed Serzh Sarkisian. Armen Sarkisian was the ambassador to the United Kingdom.
- He will assume presidential duties after his predecessor steps down in April 2018.

#### Israeli PM Netanyahu Named in Bribery Case

- Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu has been named as the beneficiary of a PR scheme worth 'up to a billion shekels'.
- Netanyahu allegedly benefitted from a deal struck between his former media adviser Nir Hefetz and communications giant Bezeq for positive coverage in return for ₹1,800 crores as bribe.
- The Israeli PM is already being investigated for two instances of corruption.

#### IOC Restores Russia's Olympic Membership

- International Olympic Committee has restored Russia's Olympic membership, following its

suspension from the Winter Olympics at Pyeongchang in South Korea.

- Russia was banned from February's Games by the IOC over state-sponsored doping.
- Before the closing ceremony of Winter Olympics, IOC had stated that the ban would be lifted, if there were no more anti-doping violations.

#### Office of Missing Persons: Sri Lanka

- Sri Lanka has appointed commissioners to a special panel tasked with investigating war-era disappearances.
- The Office of Missing Persons was officially launched by President Maithripala Sirisena.
- The country's parliament agreed two years ago to take the first steps toward reconciling its war-era past tracing about 20,000 people who went missing during 37 years of fighting.

#### Offers to Recognise Taliban as Political Group

- Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani offered to recognise Taliban as a legitimate political group to end the over 16-year-long war.
- "We are making this offer without preconditions, to lead to a peace agreement," Ghani said.
- He also proposed a ceasefire and the release of Taliban-linked prisoners along with fresh elections and a constitutional review.

### National Affairs

#### PV Sindhu, Smriti Mandhana in Forbes '30 Under 30'

- Ace shuttler, PV Sindhu and cricketer Smriti Mandhana featured in the Forbes '30 Under 30' Asia 2018 list.
- Four Indians are in the list's 'Entertainment & Sports' category.
- The other two being Bollywood actress-producer Anushka Sharma and Indian National Polo team captain Padmanabh Singh.

#### 3R - 'Reduce, Reuse, Recycle' forum in Indore

- India will host the 8th '3R (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle) Regional Forum in Asia and the Pacific' in its cleanest city, Indore from 9-12 April 2018.
- The forum has provided a platform for addressing the needs and priorities of 3R in Asian countries and sharing best practices in waste management.
- 'Regional 3R Forum in Asia and the Pacific' was launched in 2009 in Tokyo, Japan.

#### 'National Conference on Down Syndrome' Held

- A 'National Conference on Down Syndrome' was organised by the National Trust under Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment on 26th March.
- Down Syndrome is a chromosomal condition associated with intellectual and learning disabilities.

- On 19th December 2011, the United Nations General Assembly declared to observe 21st March as 'World Down Syndrome Day'.

### India is the 3rd Largest Electricity Producer

- India's electricity production grew 34% from 2010 to 2017, and the country now produces more energy than Japan and Russia.
- India produced 1,160.10 billion units (BU) of electricity in the financial year (FY) 2017.
- With a production of 1,423 BU in FY 2016, India was the 3rd largest producer and the third largest consumer of electricity in the world, behind China and the United States.

### India Ranks 109th Globally in Data Speed

- India, the largest consumer of mobile data in the world, ranks 109th when it comes to mobile Internet download speeds according to Ookla's Speedtest index.
- Norway is positioned at the top with an average download speed of 62.07 Mbps.
- Singapore leads in the fixed broadband front, with a download speed of 161.53 Mbps.

### Asia's Largest Tulip Garden in Srinagar Opens

- Kashmir's Tulip Garden in Srinagar was opened on March 25.
- The garden is situated on the foothills of Zabarwan range in Srinagar.
- The garden was conceived, conceptualized and created by the then Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, Ghulam Nabi Azad, in 2006-07.
- In 2014, it was declared as the 2nd best tulip garden in the world by World Tulip Summit Society.

### Vijay Raghavan appointed as Scientific Adviser

- Krishnaswamy Vijay Raghavan was appointed Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India on 26th March.
- Vijay Raghavan was serving as secretary of the Department of Biotechnology since January 2013.
- Vijay Raghavan will succeed physicist Rajagopala Chidambaram.

### SC Proposes Roll out of BS VI fuel

- The Supreme Court (SC) proposed a roll out of Bharat Stage-VI (BS-VI) fuel across 13 metros by April 1, 2019.
- The measure is expected to help tackle the problem of air pollution in Delhi by reducing vehicular emissions and improving fuel efficiency.
- The decision to go directly from BS-IV to BS-VI is in line with the Prime Minister's commitment at COP21 to cut carbon emissions.

### Maharashtra Bans Plastic Bags

- Maharashtra government has imposed a complete ban on plastic carry bags and thermocol cutlery.
- Maharashtra has become 18th state of the country to impose such ban.
- The state government has given traders, manufacturers and even consumers a time period of one month to dispose of the banned items in their possession.

### Odisha Signed MoU with British Council

- Odisha government has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the British Council to strengthen educational and cultural cooperation.
- The MoU was signed on British Council's 70 years presence in India.
- It aims at strengthening cooperation in several fields including English skill, education, sports, cultural exchange and investment promotion.

### Andhra Government Launches 'NAIPUNYA RATHAM'

- Andhra Pradesh Govt has launched, NAIPUNYA RATHAM or World on Wheels, a multi-utility vehicle that aims to bring technology to remote corners.
- It will facilitate & look to improve digital literacy, digital skills & create an awareness on various govt schemes that are underway in Andhra Pradesh.
- Govt has allotted Rs 300 crore for the project & will be setting up 1000 skill development centres

### Digital Speed Gun Cameras in Chandigarh

- Chandigarh has become the 1st city in North India to install Automatic Speed Gun Cameras with digital displays for traffic management.
- The high-tech speed cameras are equipped with night vision technology & will record the speed of oncoming traffic, helping Chandigarh Police to issue challans to anyone driving above the city speed limits
- The cameras will also beware motorists of over-speeding

### India to be 3rd Largest Tourism Economy

- 'India is expected to establish itself as the third largest travel and tourism economy by 2028', says the 2018 economic impact report by World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC).
- WTTC also called India the seventh largest travel and tourism economy in the world.
- The WTTC report, released globally also said India will add nearly 10 million jobs in the tourism sector by 2028.

### ISRO-BHEL to Manufacture Li-Ion Cells

- ISRO has signed a Technology Transfer Agreement with BHEL to transfer the technology for the manufacture of space grade 'Li-Ion cells'.
- ISRO uses 'Li-Ion batteries' as power sources for satellite and launch vehicle applications due to their high energy density, reliability and long cycle life.



### New Delhi in the List of Top Destinations

- New Delhi has been ranked 22nd in the world and eighth in Asia in the Top Destination for 2018, Travellers' Choice awards for Destinations by TripAdvisor.
- Paris in France topped the list of Travellers' Choice awards for Destinations followed by London (UK), Rome (Italy), Bali (Indonesia), Crete (Greece).
- The other two Indian places to feature in the list are Goa and Jaipur.

### Smart India Hackathon 2018 Held

- Ministry of Communications held the Smart India Hackathon 2018 – Software edition Grand Finale on March 30-31, 2018 in Panipat.
- Smart India Hackathon 2018 was launched on Oct 16, 2017, in Pune to harnesses creativity and expertise of students.
- It would be the 2nd hackathon initiative in India following Smart India Hackathon 2017.

### Agri & Skill Development Ministries Sign Pact

- The Ministries of Agriculture and Skill Development signed an agreement to conduct training programmes for agriculture and allied sectors at 690 Krishi Vigyan Kendras.
- The aim is to intensify the pace of skill development in 690 Krishi Vikas Kendras country-wide by training agricultural workforce.

### Robertsganj Station Renamed as Sonbhadra

- Union Home Ministry has given its approval to rename Robertsganj railway station in UP as Sonbhadra.
- This is the second railway station in the state to be renamed within a year, with the first one being the Mughalsarai railway station that was renamed to Deen Dayal Upadhyay station in August 2017.
- Station falls under the North-Central zone of the Indian Railways' Allahabad division.

### UGC Grants Autonomy to JNU, BHU, AMU

- University Grants Commission has approved autonomy for 60 higher educational institutions.
- They include Jawaharlal Nehru University, Banaras Hindu University & Aligarh Muslim University, which have maintained high academic standards.
- The selected institutes will remain under the ambit of UGC but will have the freedom to start new courses, off-campus centres & other new academic programs.

### World's 1st Trusted Digital Repository

- India's National Cultural Audio-Visual Archives (NCAA) has been certified as the world's 1st trusted digital repository by the UK-based organisation.
- NCAA is the project of Ministry of Culture and is implemented by Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts.

- The objective of the NCAA is to identify and preserve the cultural heritage of India available in audio-visual form by digitization.

### Vijay Sankar is Honorary Consul General

- Vijay Sankar, deputy chairman of The Sanmar Group, has been appointed the Honorary Consul General for Denmark in Chennai.
- His consul district consists of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Kerala, Karnataka and Puducherry.
- Mr Sankar succeeds his father N. Sankar and grandfather K. S. Narayanan, who had earlier served as Honorary Consuls for Denmark in south India

### 1st Unit of Kishanganga Project Commissioned

- State-run power equipment maker has commissioned 1st unit of 110 MW of the Kishanganga hydroelectric project of NHPC in Jammu and Kashmir.
- Located on the river Kishanganga, a tributary of the Jhelum in Bandipora district, all the 3 units of the 340 MW project will generate 1,350 million units of electricity annually.
- Bhel has commissioned 31 Hydro sets with a capacity of 1,257 MW in J&K.

### Global Digital Summit to Begin in Kochi

- Kerala government is organising a two-day global digital summit from March 22 to develop a roadmap to make the state a hub for digital innovation and investment.
- Theme of the event is 'Towards a Digital Future'.
- The event titled – '#Future' to be inaugurated by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan in Kochi is expected to be attended by 2000 delegates.

### Global Recycling Day

- To promote action on recycling, recycling associations across the globe observed the first Global Recycling Day on 18th March.
- By 2025, India's waste management sector is expected to be worth US\$13.62 billion with an annual growth rate of 7.17 percent.
- Polyethylene Terephthalate is a food grade plastic which is used for food and pharma packaging has the highest rate of recycling.

### 7th Women Science Congress at Imphal

- The 7th Women Science Congress at the 105th session of Indian Science Congress in Imphal was inaugurated on 18th March.
- Ministry of Science & Technology has launched the India-US Fellowships in December 2017 to encourage research by women in the field of science and technology.
- The first Women Science Congress was held in 2012.

### President Releases Commemorative Coins

- President Ram Nath Kovind released Rs 1,000 and Rs 10 commemorative coins on 'Nabakalebar festival'.
- Government had announced the release of the coins marking the festival which is a symbolic recreation of sibling deities - Lord Jagannath, Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra.
- The commemorative coins were released at a function of Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan at Puri in Odisha.

#### Maharashtra Generates Most Bio-Medical Waste

- According to a document submitted by the ministry of health and family welfare, Maharashtra tops the list of biomedical waste generated in the country daily.
- Maharashtra generated 53,385 kg a day in 2014, which increased to 62,740 kg a day in 2015 and further to 71,511 kg in 2016.
- Second on the list is Karnataka (at 66,468 kg a day) followed by Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

#### 'Women of India Organic Festival' Inaugurated

- 1st Mumbai Edition of Women of India Organic festival in Mumbai was inaugurated on 16th March.
- The event is aimed to promote Women farmers & Entrepreneurs engaged in organic produce from across India.
- This year's theme of the festival is 'Good for Women; Good for India; Good for You'.
- 'Women of India Festival 2018' is celebrated since 2015.

#### INDIA and ADB Sign \$120 Million Loan

- Asian Development Bank (ADB) signed a \$120 million loan agreement with India to improve the operational efficiency of Indian railways.
- The loan amount will be used for doubling the railway tracks and electrification of tracks along high-density corridors.
- The investment program is targeting routes in the states of Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh.

#### TDP Pulls Out of NDA

- Telugu Desam Party has decided to quit the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance.
- BJP and its Andhra ally TDP have been sharing a sour relationship over the issue of granting 'Special Category' Status to Andhra Pradesh.
- As the TDP quits the NDA, it has become the first party to leave the coalition since it came to power at the Centre in 2014.

#### Pranab Mukherjee Foundation Launched

- Pranab Mukherjee Foundation was formally launched by the former President Pranab Mukherjee and industrialist Ratan Tata in New Delhi.

- The foundation has been set up in partnership with various companies including Tata Trust.
- The foundation aims to work in the field of research, education, and rural development.

#### IATA Partners with Civil Aviation Ministry

- International Air Transport Association (IATA) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Ministry of Civil Aviation and the National Aviation University to enhance human resource availability in India's aviation industry.
- The 3 parties to the MoU formalised this partnership on sidelines of Wings India 2018.
- India is expected to be 3rd largest aviation market in the world

#### Pune tops in Improved Quality Governance

- Pune has emerged as the top city to show improvement in the quality of governance according to a survey.
- The other cities that came in the top five include Kolkata, Thiruvananthapuram, Bhubaneswar and Surat.
- Janaagraha Centre for Citizenship and Democracy conducted the survey.
- The worst performers for this year were Bengaluru, Chandigarh, Dehradun, Patna and Chennai.

#### World Bank Sees India's Growth at 7.3%

- According to the World Bank's 'India Development Update', India's economic growth will accelerate to 7.3% in 2018-19, from 6.7% in 2017-2018.
- World Bank said sustaining a growth rate higher than 7.5% will require contributions from all domestic sectors and support from the global economy.
- The report also highlights several challenges facing the Indian economy that need attention.

#### Delhi Energy Dialogue 2018

- Dharmendra Pradhan, Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas, will inaugurate the Delhi Energy Dialogue 2018, on March 14, organised by Ashden India Collective (AIC) in alliance with Climate Parliament.
- 'Delhi Energy Dialogue' is an initiative to promote sustainable solutions for better lives.
- Established in 2010, AIC helps to increase access to energy for India's rural poor.

#### Foreign Law Firms Can't Practise in India

- Supreme Court ruled that foreign law firms or foreign lawyers cannot practise law in the country either on the litigation or non-litigation side.
- This means overseas lawyers or firms cannot open offices in the country, appear in courts or before any authority or render other legal services.
- But overseas lawyers can fly in, fly out for a temporary period to give advice.

### Belgaum is now Home to India's Tallest Flag

- India's tallest national flag was unfurled in Belagavi (also known as Belgaum) in Karnataka.
- The flag in Belgaum is much larger than the one at the India-Pakistan border at Attari in Punjab.
- The flag is reported to be 110 m high from the base plate to the top, with a size of 120×80 ft.

### AP stands at 51st position in Poverty Index

- Andhra Pradesh stands at 51st rank globally in Multidimensional Poverty Index according to a household survey conducted in the state.
- Andhra Pradesh becomes the first Indian state to conduct a household survey at state and district level to estimate the multidimensional poverty of the state.
- The study was conducted by Govt. of Andhra Pradesh in collaboration with University of Oxford, UK.

### Sitanshu Kar Becomes new PIB chief

- All India Radio's News Services Division (NSD) director general Sitanshu Kar will be the next head of the Press Information Bureau (PIB).
- Kar, a senior Indian Information Service (IIS) officer, will take charge as PIB head on May 1.
- Doordarshan News DG, Ira Joshi will hold additional charge of DG of AIR's NSD with immediate effect.

### Khadi Industry lost 7 Lakh Jobs

- Number of people employed in the Khadi sector fell from 11.6 lakh to 4.6 lakh in the last two financial years, the government informed the parliament.
- However, the production of Khadi increased by 31.6% and sales grew by 33% during the period.
- Notably, 3.2 lakh jobs were lost in the central zone comprising UP, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

### Bengal Tops in Rural Job Scheme

- West Bengal has become the best performing State both in terms of allotting jobs and utilising funds under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act.
- West Bengal generated more than 28.21 crore work days under the scheme so far in 2017-18 and spent more than ₹7,335.31 crores for it.
- Tamil Nadu occupied the second spot with 22.17 crore work days and spent ₹5,981.75 crores.

### Start-up Incubator for Women 'We-Hub' Launched

- A start-up incubator was launched by the Telangana government to exclusively promote entrepreneurship among women.
- The facility, named We-Hub, is the country's first state-led incubator exclusively for women entrepreneurs.

- We-Hub is an entrepreneurial platform for aspiring women from rural and urban backgrounds helping them achieve being independent and overcome the societal barriers.

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### Passport Mandatory for Loans of Rs. 50 crores

- Government has made providing passport details mandatory for taking loans of Rs.50 crore and above.
- This has been done to ensure a swift action in case of fraud and prevent fraudsters from fleeing the country.
- The proposed law will also apply to defaulters who have an outstanding of Rs 100 crore or more and have escaped from the country.

### First Cyber Police Station of Haryana

- The first cyber police station of Haryana has been established in Gurugram where cyber offences related cases will be registered.
- The cyber police station was inaugurated by the chief executive officer, Gurugram Metropolitan Development Authority, Gurugram.
- The police station would work under the direct supervision of ACP Crime/DCP Crime Gurugram.

### PM Inaugurated National Legislator Conference

- PM Narendra Modi inaugurated National Legislators Conference on the theme 'We for Development' in New Delhi.
- The motive of the conference is to bring MPs and MLAs on a single platform where ideas and plans for development can be exchanged.
- The conference will hold discussions on how women help in the development work being done for the country where ideas on projects and plans can be debated

### Mumbai gets 47th Rank in Wealth Index

- Mumbai ranks 47 on the 'city wealth index' of 314 global cities in the Knight Frank Wealth Report 2018.
- The "city wealth index" is drawn from four major indicators -- wealth, investments, lifestyle and future.
- Mumbai ranked 16th among the top 20 costliest global cities.

### Passive Euthanasia Gets Legal Sanction

- Supreme Court of India allowed passive euthanasia after citing that persons have right to die with dignity.
- SC also allowed an individual to draft a living will specifying that they will not be put on life support if they slip into an incurable coma in the future.
- In a 'living will', a person can make a statement in advance that their life should not be prolonged by putting ventilator.

### Association of Metro Trains Launched

- 'I-METROS', an association of all Indian Metro Rail companies was launched by Cabinet Secretary.
- The platform will be a forum for exchange of ideas, pooling of knowledge and sharing of experience, best practices, innovations etc. among the Indian

Metro Rail companies to nurture excellence in performance.

- This association will also undertake and promote techno-economic studies and research.

### All 650 IPPB Branches by April, says Sinha

- Government aims to set up all 650 India Post Payments Bank branches by April this year, communications minister Manoj Sinha informed Parliament on Wednesday.
- India Post Payments Bank aims to have a pan-India reach (650 branches co-located at District Headquarter Post Offices) by April 2018.
- The postal department has already set up two branches on January 30, 2017, in Raipur and Ranchi.

### enTTech 2018 Inaugurated in Mumbai

- India's biggest Media & Entertainment Services Market – enTTech 2018 was inaugurated in Mumbai.
- The market, spread over two days (March 7 - 8, 2018) saw fast matchmaking between 100 international delegates and their Indian counterparts.
- The event was organized by SEPC in association with MEAI and TVAGA and supported by the Department of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce & Industry.

### Delhi & Mumbai Airports top in ACI Rankings

- The IGI Airport in Delhi and Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport have been adjudged joint-best in the world by Airports Council International in the 'Over 40 million passengers annually' category for year 2017.
- IGI took the top spot after being ranked second in the 2016.
- IGI crossed the 60 million passenger mark last year with a total traffic of 63.5 million.

### International Yoga Festival Held In Rishikesh

- Uttarakhand CM Trivendra Singh Rawat inaugurated the week-long 29th annual, world-famous International Yoga Festival (IYF) in Rishikesh's Parmarth Niketan.
- The IYF offers daily classes from 4 a.m. until 9:30 p.m. with more than 80 revered saints, yogacharyas, presenters and experts from nearly 20 countries around the world.

### Assam Government Extends AFSPA by Six Months

- The Assam government has extended the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), 1958 by six more months in the state.
- AFSPA gives special rights to security forces to carry out operations in "disturbed areas."
- This comes after Home Minister Rajnath Singh's remark that the era of violence in the state was over and the law and order situation has improved.

### Mumbai's AC Local has Green Coaches for Women



- Two coaches of Mumbai's first AC local train have been painted green to indicate that they are reserved for women.
- Meanwhile, Mumbai's tourist attractions, including the Bandra–Worli Sea Link and Gateway of India, have been painted on the coaches.
- Western Railway Divisional Railway Manager Mukul Jain said that the green colour signifies environment.

#### Jhunjhunu has Highest Sex Ratio in Rajasthan

- Rajasthan's Jhunjhunu district, which had the lowest sex ratio at birth (SRB) in the state in 2011, has become the district with the highest SRB in the state.
- The district has increased its ratio from 837 girls per 1,000 boys in 2011 to 955 girls in December 2017.
- The district administration said its crackdown on sex-determining centers caused the improvement.

#### DefExpo to be Organised

- DefExpo 2018 will, for the first time, project India's defence manufacturing capabilities to the world.
- DefExpo 2018 will brand India as a defence exporter of several defence systems and components for all three Services - Army, Navy and Air Force.
- The DefExpo is being held on sea-shore, along the East Coast road enroute Chennai to Mahabalipuram.

#### BJP won in Tripura for 1st time

- BJP defeated the CPI(M) in Tripura to form the state government for the first-ever time after winning 35 seats.
- The CPI(M), which ruled the state for 25 years, reportedly won 16 seats in the 60-member Assembly with 43% vote share.
- BJP-ally Indigenous People's Front of Tripura (IPFT) won 8 seats after fielding candidates in 9 constituencies.

#### Hung Assembly in Meghalaya

- Meghalaya faces a hung state Assembly after no party won the required 31 seats to form the government in the 60-member Assembly.
- The Congress, which has ruled the state for 10 years, won the maximum of 21 seats, followed by the National People's Party which won 19 seats.
- BJP secured two seats in the state Assembly.

#### BJP, allies likely to form Nagaland govt

- BJP is likely to form the Nagaland government after the party and its ally Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party won 28 seats in the 60-member Assembly.
- An Independent candidate and the JD(U), which secured one seat, also pledged their support to the BJP, bringing the count to 30.
- Notably, 31 seats are required to form the Nagaland government.

#### 13% Tiger Conservation Areas Meet Global Standards

- Only 13 % of the tiger conservation areas met the global standards of an accreditation system, the Conservation Assured | Tiger Standards (CA|TS).
- The survey was conducted at 112 sites located in 11 tiger-range countries, including India.
- CA|TS is a new conservation tool to set minimum standards for effective management of target species and to encourage assessment of these standards.

#### Centre moots Spice Park for Turmeric

- Centre has agreed to set up a special cell in the Spices Board for Telangana government to take care of issues related to turmeric farmers.
- The government also proposed to set up an exclusive Spice Park for turmeric in Telangana.
- Telangana is a top producer of turmeric in the country.

#### Race to Save 3,000-year-old Treasures in A.P.

- A small village in West Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh is yielding clues to life in the region some 3,000 years ago.
- The State Archaeology department has dug up artefacts from burial sites here dating back to 1000 B.C. and the megalithic era.
- However, it faces a challenge to complete the excavations early because the area will be flooded by the Polavaram project.

#### 1st Phase of World's Largest Solar Park

- Karnataka inaugurated the first phase of Pavagada solar park, which is set to become the world's largest when it attains its full potential of 2,000 MW.
- First phase of the park has 600 MW while another 1,400 MW will be added by December 2018.
- It is in Thirumani of Tumakuru district and has been christened 'Shakti Sthala'.

#### No Trans Fees on Rail Tickets with Debit Card

- Indian Railways has announced that Merchant Discount Rate (MDR) charges won't be levied on passengers for booking railway tickets through debit cards.
- These transactions include those made at the railway ticketing counters as well as through IRCTC ticketing website.
- However, the exemption has been granted only on the bookings made for an amount of up to ₹1 lakh.

#### Public Banks' Staff Involved in 2450 Cr Frauds

- Over 1,200 Public Sector Bank frauds cumulatively worth ₹2,450 crore were carried out across India with the help of bank staff between April 2013 to June 2016, RBI data has revealed.

- Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra witnessed the most number of cases.
- The highest amount of money was swindled in Rajasthan, Chandigarh, Delhi and West Bengal.

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### Centre Approves Rs 2900 Cr for Women Safety

- Women and Child Development Ministry has approved projects worth over Rs 2,900 crore under the Nirbhaya fund for eight major cities to make them safer for women.
- These cities are Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad and Lucknow.
- The decision was taken after a meeting of Empowered Committee, which is headed by Women and Child Development Secretary.

### New Regulators to Oversee Auditors: Cabinet

- Union Cabinet has approved the establishment of National Financial Reporting Authority (NFRA).
- NFRA will act as an independent regulator for the auditing profession which was one of the key changes brought in by the Companies Act 2013.
- The Cabinet also gave nod to the Fugitive Economic Offenders Bill - 2018 to deal with those escaping overseas to avoid getting caught.

### Phirangipuram to be All-Women Rail Station

- An all-women railway station is launched at Phirangipuram, Guntur, Andhra Pradesh.
- The railway station on the Guntur-Narsaraopet line would be handed over to an all-women crew from the station master to the signalling staff.
- Only the third-of-its-kind railway station in the country after Jaipur's Gandhi Nagar and Mumbai's Matunga, the all-women station is set to create history.

### India's 1st Aviation Multi Skill Dev. Centre

- Union Minister of Civil Aviation 'P Ashok Gajapathi Raju' inaugurated the country's first Aviation Multi Skill Development Centre at Chandigarh Airport's old terminal.
- The centre, which is a CSR initiative of Airports Authority of India (AAI), will initially train 2,360 students free of cost in three years.

### India and ADB Signed Loan Agreement

- India has signed an \$80 million loan agreement with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to help modernize technical and vocational education and training institutions and improve skills ecosystem in Himachal Pradesh.
- This project will also establish six City Livelihood and seven Rural Livelihood Centres, which in turn will increase employment for women in HP.
- Another objective of this project is to support the Skill Initiatives of Government of Himachal Pradesh.

### SACF Receives Frederick Pincott Award

- South Asian Cinema Foundation (SACF), has received the Frederick Pincott Award for 2017 from the Indian High Commissioner for promoting Hindi Cinema in Britain.
- This institution has been active in boosting the original research and books on Indian films.
- SACF have also made documentaries like "Beyond Partition", "Niranjan Pal" and "Indo-British Cinematic Encounters".

### OPIC Loan to Expand Access to Clean Drinking Water in India

- The US government's Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) has committed a ₹80 crore loan to Water Health India Pvt Ltd to finance installation of 900 decentralised plants in India.
- This project will expand access to affordable clean drinking water to millions of people in India.
- These plants will be mainly installed at public locations like railway stations, shopping malls etc.

### Ministry of External Affairs Sign the Host Country Agreement

- Ministry of External Affairs of India and the International Solar Alliance (ISA) signed the Host Country Agreement.
- This Agreement gives ISA the power to contract, to acquire and dispose of movable and immovable properties, to institute and defend legal proceedings.
- Thus, ISA became the first international intergovernmental treaty-based organization to be headquartered in India.

### J.S. Rajput Nominated as India's Representative

- The Government of India nominated Professor J.S. Rajput, former Director of NCERT, as India's representative to the Executive Board (EXB) of UNESCO.
- Professor J.S. Rajput is an eminent educationist with rich experience in various fields including UNESCO.
- The EXB is one of the constitutional organs of UNESCO and is elected by the General Conference.

### GSL Delivers 2nd 'AOPV' to Sri Lankan Navy

- Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL) has delivered second Sri Lanka Advanced Offshore Patrol Vessel (SL AOPV) of Sri Lankan Navy ceremoniously at Vaddem, Vasco da Gama.
- This vessel will be the largest and most advanced ship in the Sri Lankan Navy fleet.
- This is the fourth Offshore Patrol Vessel (OPV) delivered to Sri Lanka in the current financial year.

#### Air India Makes History by Flying to Israel

- Air India flight AI 139 from New Delhi to Tel Aviv became the first commercial aircraft to fly to Israel over Saudi Arabia.
- It is for the first time that Saudi Arabia has allowed an Israel-bound flight to enter its airspace, thus ending a 70 years old ban.
- Many Arab & Islamic nations do not recognise Israel & therefore disallow airlines from using their airspace for flight services to that country.

#### \$100 Million for Palestinian Refugees

- A group of 20 nations including India have pledged a total of around \$100 million to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees across the Middle East.
- The donor nations included Qatar, Norway, Turkey, Canada, India and Switzerland.
- Where India has pledged \$5 million while Switzerland has pledged \$4.2 million.

#### 7th India-Egypt Joint Commission Meeting

- The 7th India-Egypt Joint Commission Meeting was held in New Delhi on 23rd March 2018.
- The meeting was led by Indian External Affairs Minister, Sushma Swaraj and Egyptian Foreign Minister, Sameh Shoukry.
- Both the sides reviewed the progress in the areas of political, trade & investment, S&T, cybersecurity, capacity building, space and culture.

#### Gotsurve as Next Ambassador to Korea

- Shri Atul M. Gotsurve (IFS: 2004), currently Director in the Ministry of External Affairs, has been appointed as the next Ambassador of India to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.
- He is expected to take up his assignment shortly.

#### India, Hong Kong Signs Tax Avoidance Pact

- India and Hong Kong entered into a Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement, aiming to facilitate investment flow between both countries and prevent tax evasion.
- This agreement will prevent double taxation and provide for the exchange of information between the two contracting parties.
- This in turn will improve transparency in tax matters and help to curb tax evasion and tax avoidance.

#### Naval Ships Exercise to Boost UAE-India Ties

- Naval ships of the UAE and India will hold a first-ever joint exercise - 'Gulf Star 1' - giving a further boost to bilateral ties.
- INS Gomati (Guided Missile Frigate) and INS Kolkata (Guided Missile Destroyer) are participating in the exercise.
- This joint exercise is a part of the comprehensive strategic partnership and aims to further strengthen bilateral defence cooperation.

#### India and EU Sign an Agreement

- India and the European Union have signed an agreement that will enable them to share earth observation data from each other's satellites.
- The European Commission will provide India with free, full and open access to the data from the Copernicus Sentinel family of satellites and ISRO will share data from its Earth observation satellites.
- This pact was inked in Bengaluru.

#### India Hands Over 18th Diesel Loco to Myanmar

- India handed over the 18th Diesel-Electric Locomotive to Myanmar, thereby completing the 1st project under the current Indian line of credit (LoC) to the eastern neighbour.
- These locos are fitted with the Microprocessor Control Based System and have been customised for the Myanmar Railways.

#### India-Japan Workshop on Disaster Reduction

- The first two-day India-Japan Workshop on Disaster Risk Reduction was inaugurated on 19th March 2018.
- This workshop is being jointly organised by the Ministry of Home Affairs, National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and Government of Japan.
- The aim of this workshop is to develop a Specific Bilateral Action Plan on areas of cooperation in Disaster Risk Reduction.

#### UK-India Cooperation Energised at "Elecrama"

- The United Kingdom became the Indian electrical industry's international partner for the Elecrama 2018, which was held from 10th to 14th March 2018 at the World Utility Summit.
- Elecrama is the flagship showcase of the Indian Electrical Industry ecosystem and the largest congregation of power sector ecosystem in Geography.
- The event enabled to share lessons on building a cleaner, smarter and more efficient power sector.

#### German President Steinmeier Visited India

- German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier visited India from 22nd to 25th March 2018 with an aim to strengthen bilateral ties.
- It was his first visit to India as the President of Germany.

- Germany is India's largest trading partner in Europe and the sixth largest trading partner in the world.
- Germany is also the 7th largest foreign direct investor in India indicates the commercial significance of this meet.

#### India and Madagascar Ink Deal

- India and Madagascar have signed an agreement under which both the countries will explore various ways of cooperation in the field of defence.
- An amended Air Service Agreement was also signed to support efforts towards improving connectivity between the two countries.
- The Madagascar President decorated President Ramnath Kovind with second highest civilian honour, Grand Cross.

#### India Ranks 78th on Energy Transition Index

- India has been ranked 78th among the 114 countries on the World Economic Forum's (WEF) Energy Transition Index.
- The Index listed the countries based on their ability to balance energy security, environmental sustainability and affordability.
- The overall list was topped by Sweden, followed by Norway and Switzerland at the 2nd and 3rd position respectively.

#### MoU Between India and Sri Lanka

- The Union Cabinet has approved MoU (Memorandum of Understanding) inked between India and Sri Lanka for promoting cooperation in field of IT.
- This MoU aims to promote cooperation in the areas such as e-governance, m-governance, electronics-public services delivery, cyber security, software technology parks, startups etc.
- It will be implemented by constituting a Working Group comprising representatives from both the sides.

#### Delhi, Bangalore Among the Cheapest Cities in the World

- New Delhi, Bangalore and Chennai are among the cheapest cities in the world, according to an Economist Intelligence Unit's "The Worldwide Cost of Living" survey.
- Syria's capital, Damascus is the cheapest city while Singapore is most expensive city in the world.
- The Worldwide Cost of Living is a biannual survey that compares 400 individual prices across 160 products and services.

#### WHO's Southeast Asia Region Pledge to End TB

- Countries of WHO's South East Asia Region pledged to end Tuberculosis by 2030 and India assured its support to them for meeting their goals in eliminating this disease.

- The participating countries signed the 'Delhi End TB Summit Statement of Action', which will ensure that their TB plans are fully funded.
- India will support all member countries in meeting their goals of becoming TB-free.

#### Agreement for Avoidance of Double Taxation

- The Union Cabinet has approved an Agreement for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with respect to taxes on income between India and Iran.
- This Agreement will stimulate flow of investment, technology and personnel from India to Iran & vice versa.
- It will also improve transparency in tax matters and will help to curb tax evasion and tax avoidance.

#### World Hindi Secretariat Building in Mauritius

- President Ram Nath Kovind inaugurated the World Hindi Secretariat Building in Mauritius on his visit to the country.
- He also launched the World Hindi Secretariat Logo, an Early Digital Learning Programme as well unveiled foundation stones of a social housing project and a large ENT hospital being built with Indian assistance.
- He became the first Indian President to visit Madagascar.

#### Newton-Bhabha Fund for Arsenic Research

- An India-UK Joint Team has won the Newton-Bhabha Fund for a project on Groundwater Arsenic Research in Ganga River Basin.
- The Department of Science and Technology has undertaken the project with the Natural Environment Research Council, UK, to find solutions to the water challenges faced in the arsenic-affected Ganga River.
- This project will be conducted from three sites Bijnor and Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh and Nadia in West Bengal.

#### India Tops the List of Arm Buyers

- Arms import by India increased by 24% between 2008-2012 and 2013-2017 period as per data on international arms transfers released by International Peace Research Institute.
- India is followed by Saudi Arabia, Egypt, UAE, China, Australia, Algeria, Iraq, Pakistan and Indonesia as the World's Top Importers.
- The largest arms suppliers to India are Russia (62%), US (15%) and Israel (11%).

#### No Limit on Membership in ISA

- Membership of International Solar Alliance (ISA) will be open for all countries, with no restrictions on duration of sunlight or geographical location.
- When the ISA was announced in 2015, 121 nations situated between the Tropic of Cancer and the



- Tropic of Capricorn receiving at least 300 days of sunlight were eligible for membership.
- Sixty countries had signed up to join the ISA.

### UP's Largest Solar Power Plant Inaugurated

- PM Modi and French President Emmanuel Macron have inaugurated Uttar Pradesh's biggest solar power plant in Dadar Kalan village of Chhanvey block in Mirzapur
- Some 1,18,600 solar panels have been set up in over 380 acres.
- The solar plant will generate 15.6 crore units of electricity annually, which is about 1.30 crore units per month.

### EIB & IREDA Signed a Loan Agreement

- European Investment Bank (EIB) and Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency signed an agreement for the second line of credit of Euro 150 million on the non-sovereign basis.
- The line of credit will be used for financing Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency projects in India.
- More than 1.1 million households are expected to be benefitted from clean energy produced with these funds.

### India Won "Best Exhibitor Award"

- India has won the "Best Exhibitor Award" at ITB – Berlin. 'ITB- Berlin World Tourist Meet' was convened at Berlin, Germany from 7th March to 10th March 2018.
- More than 100 countries participated in the ITB-Berlin meet with their respective Tourism Ministers.
- India's Incredible India (Ministry of Tourism) presented a short film named "Yogi of the Racetrack" in the meet.

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### Indo-French Knowledge Summit Ends

- The first ever Indo-French Knowledge Summit was held successfully with a landmark agreement on mutual recognition of educational qualifications between India and France.
- The government will soon launch the "Study India programme" to increase the inflow of foreign students to India.

- The two-day summit was organized by the French Embassy in India and the Ministry of Human Resource Development.

### India, France Inked 14 pacts

- India and France inked key pacts in the strategic areas of security, nuclear energy after extensive talks between PM Modi and French President Emmanuel Macron.
- Agreements in the field of education, environment, urban development and railways were also signed.
- The two countries also decided to step up cooperation in space technology and use it in the maritime domain.

### 1000 GW of Solar Energy by 2030

- The International Solar Alliance (ISA) is working for the deployment of over 1,000 GW of solar energy and aims to mobilise more than USD 1,000 billion into solar energy project by 2030.
- The International Energy Agency (IEA) also signed a joint partnership declaration with the ISA.
- The International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) will sign a joint partnership declaration on 11th March 2018.

### Crime-free Zone Along Indo-B'desh Border

- The Border Security Force (BSF) and the Border Guards Bangladesh (BGB) declared an 8.3 km stretch along the border a 'crime free zone.'
- The stretch falls between the border outpost of Gunarmath and Kalyani of the BSF and Putkhali and Daulatpur of the BGB.
- Both the forces will work together to ensure that no crime or anti-social activity occurs along this stretch.

### Indian Military ranked 4th strongest in World

- Out of 133 countries, India is ranked fourth on a global index for its military strength.
- Only the United States, Russia and China are ranked above India on the list, according to the latest report of the Global Firepower index 2017.
- India maintained its position above France in the top five military powers in the world.

### India's Child Marriage Numbers Drop Sharply

- The proportion of girls getting married in India has nearly halved in a decade, the UN children's agency UNICEF said.
- UNICEF said 25 million child marriages were prevented worldwide in the last decade, with the largest reduction seen in South Asia.
- Currently, 27% of girls, or nearly 1.5 million girls, get married before they turn 18 in India. This is a sharp decline from 47% a decade ago.

### India, Israel Inked MoU On Water Conservation

- The government of India has signed an MoU with Israel to enhance cooperation on 'National Campaign for Water Conservation in India'.
- It was announced by the Minister of State for Drinking Water and Sanitation S S Ahluwalia.
- As per this MoU, both sides would work to enhance cooperation at the national, regional and international level to design.

#### India 12th Largest Holder of US Securities

- India's exposure to US government securities rose sharply to a high of \$144.7 billion at the end of 2017.
- In 2017, China was the largest holder of US government securities with holdings to the tune of \$1.18 trillion, followed by Japan at \$1.06 trillion.
- Among the BRIC countries, India had the third largest exposure while that of Russia was lower at \$102.2 billion.

#### Free Indo-Pacific Region for India & Vietnam

- India and Vietnam decided to deepen defence and security cooperation and resolved jointly for a free and open Indo-Pacific region.
- This comes in the wake of increasing assertiveness by China in the region, from South China Sea to the South Asian region.
- Vietnam is one of the key neighbours of China and has resisted Chinese claims in South China Sea.

#### India, Vietnam Ink 3 pacts

- India and Vietnam inked three pacts.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Vietnamese President Tran Dai Quang also vowed to expand bilateral cooperation in several key sectors, including defence, oil and gas, and agriculture.
- The three pacts signed after the talks between the two leaders would provide for cooperation in areas of nuclear energy, trade and agriculture.

#### India to Help Build Plant in Bangladesh

- India, Bangladesh and Russia have signed a tripartite memorandum of understanding (MoU) for cooperation in the construction of the Rooppur nuclear power plant in Bangladesh.
- The MoU was signed in Moscow by the Department of Atomic Energy of India, the Ministry of Science and Technology of Bangladesh and Rosatom.
- Russia is building the nuclear power plant in Bangladesh on a turnkey basis.

#### India-Jordan Sign Twelve Agreements

- India and Jordan have renewed their support to the Palestinian cause.
- The two sides signed twelve agreements, including one on defence cooperation, following a bilateral meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and King of Jordan Abdullah II bin Al Hussein.

- MoU for long term supply of Rock Phosphate and Fertilizer/NPK, Customs Mutual Assistance Agreement was signed.

#### India, Jordan Firm Up Security Cooperation

- India and Jordan signed an agreement in defence cooperation paving the way for a joint strategy to counter common threats.
- The defence agreement, the first such understanding between the two sides, is the biggest takeaway of the visit by the Jordanian King Abdullah II.
- India and Jordan held the first bilateral security dialogue in July 2016.

#### Indian Economy at 7.6% in 2018: Moody's

- Indian economy is starting to recover from the negative impact of demonetisation and disruption caused by the roll out of GST, Moody's Investors Service said.
- The international rating agency, however, kept the growth forecast for India in the calendar year 2018 unchanged at 7.6% and at 7.5% for 2019.
- According to the Economic Survey, the economy is likely to grow at 7-7.5% in 2018-19.

### Personalities in News

#### Stephen Hawking Passed Away

- Stephen Hawking, the British Physicist and the black hole theorist have died on 14th March 2018.
- Hawking had redefined Cosmology by proposing that black holes emit radiation and later evaporate.
- He is also the author of the bestselling book, "A Brief History of Time".

#### SC Appoints Acting Head for NGT

- The Supreme Court appointed Justice Jawad Rahim, judicial member of the National Green Tribunal (NGT), as its acting chairperson.
- The new acting chairperson will discharge his duties until a regular appointment is made and will take part in the selection process of other members of the NGT.
- Justice Rahim was the judge of the Karnataka High Court from 2006 to 2014.

#### CEO of Ayushman Bharat Appointed - Indu Bhushan

- Indu Bhushan was appointed as the Chief Executive Officer of the Ayushman Bharat National Health Protection Mission (ABNHPM).
- He is the Director General of East Asia Department, Asian Development Bank (ADB) in Manila, Philippines.
- The ABNHPM has the benefit cover of ₹5 lakh per family per year.

#### Pakistan Gets First Woman Opposition Leader

- Pakistani lawmaker, Sherry Rehman made history by becoming the first woman Leader of the Opposition in the senate.
- Rehman of Pakistan People's Party was declared as the Leader of the Opposition after she secured support of majority 34 opposition senators in the house of 104.
- She has served as Pakistan's ambassador to the US from 2011 to 2013 and was elected to the Senate in 2015.

#### Rakesh Bhatnagar Appointed BHU Vice Chancellor

- JNU professor Rakesh Bhatnagar has been appointed as the VC of the Banaras Hindu University.
- He will take charge from BHU Registrar Neeraj Tripathi, who had been holding the additional charge of the top post since October last year.
- He is a JC Bose National Fellow and has won the ICMR award for developing a recombinant vaccine against anthrax.

#### Nanda Bahadur Pun is the New VP of Nepal

- Nanda Bahadur Pun has been re-elected as the Vice-President of Nepal for the second term.
- President Bidya Devi Bhandari administered the oath of office and secrecy to her deputy, Vice-President Pun.
- Bidhya Devi Bhandari was elected as First President of Federal Nepal.

#### Vivo Signs Aamir Khan as Brand Ambassador

- Chinese smartphone maker Vivo announced the appointment of Bollywood actor Aamir Khan as its brand ambassador for India.
- Aamir has been signed for future brand and product communication initiatives of Vivo India.
- Vivo is also associated with popular sports platforms such as Indian Premier League (IPL) and Pro-Kabaddi League in the country.
- Vivo entered India in late 2014.


#### Hindi Poet Kedarnath Singh Passes Away

- Eminent Hindi poet Kedarnath Singh passed away on 20th March 2018 following a prolonged illness.
- A Jnanpith and Sahitya Akademi awardee, Kedarnath Singh was known for his simple style of writing.
- Some of his best-known works include the award-winning poetry collection 'Akaal Mein Saras', 'Bagh', 'Abhi Bilkul Abhi', 'Zameen pak Rahi Hai', 'Yahan se Dekho', 'Tolstoy aur cycle'.

#### Li Keqiang Re-elected as Prime Minister

- Chinese Prime Minister Li Keqiang was on 18th March 2018, re-elected for his second five-year term by the members of the 13th National People's Congress (NPC).

- Li Keqiang received 2964 votes in favour and two in against.
- Traditionally, the Chinese Prime Minister is regarded as the top economic official of the country.



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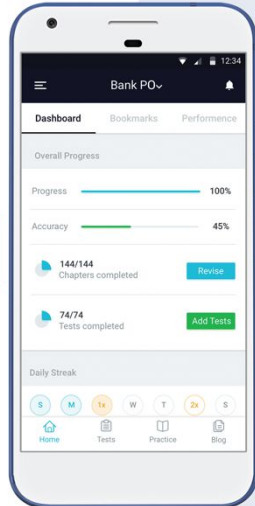
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#### Sony India Appoints Sunil Nayar as MD

- Sony India on 19th March announced the appointment of Sunil Nayar as its Managing Director (MD) in place of Kenichiro Hibi.
- Hibi, who was MD of Sony India from 2012 till 2018, has now been appointed as President of Sony Brazil.
- Nayar is the first Indian to be appointed as Managing Director for Sony India.

#### Vladimir Putin Wins 4th Term as President

- Vladimir Putin will lead Russia for another six years, after securing victory in the presidential elections held on 18th March.
- Putin, who has ruled Russia for almost two decades, won more than 75% of the vote.
- He was well ahead of his nearest rival Communist Party candidate Pavel Grudinin.

#### Deepa Malik Becomes Asian Rank 1

- Indian para-athlete Deepa Malik has won the gold in the F53/54 Javelin event at the World Para Athletics Grand Prix in Dubai.
- With this, she became the Asian rank one in the F-53 category.

- She has also qualified for the 2018 Asian Para Games held in Jakarta, Indonesia.
- Deepa Malik is the first Indian woman to win a medal at the Paralympics.

#### Kudlow to be Trump's New Economic Advisor

- Larry Kudlow, a well-known conservative media pundit, would be the new chief economic advisor of the US President Donald Trump.
- Kudlow would replace Cohen, who quit the post after his differences with Trump on imposing a 25% tariff on import of steel & 10% on aluminum.
- Kudlow, who served as Trump's informal economic adviser during the 2016 campaign, is a well-known conservative voice.

#### Kevin Pietersen Announced Retirement

- Former England batsman, Kevin Pietersen has officially announced his retirement from all forms of the game.
- Pietersen has been away from the biggest stage since his England exile started in 2014 following the team's Ashes Whitewash Down Under.
- A prolific scorer in all forms of the game, Pietersen has 8,181 runs in 104 tests, 4,440 runs in 136 ODIs & 1,176 runs in 37 Twenty20 Internationals.

#### N. Chandrasekaran Elected as IISc President

- Tata Sons Chairman N. Chandrasekaran has been elected as the President of the court of the Indian Institute of Science for three years.
- He has been elected as the 8th President of the Institute for the period 2018-21 and took over from K. Kasturirangan.
- Located in Bangalore, IISc is a primary institute for advanced scientific and technological research and education in the country.

#### Mauritius President Ameenah Fakim Resigned

- The president of Mauritius, Ameenah Gurib-Fakim, resigned from her position amid accusations of financial impropriety.
- It has been alleged that Gurib-Fakim made personal purchases worth thousands of dollars with a credit card provided by an NGO.
- Gurib-Fakim took the honorary position of president in 2015, becoming the first woman to do so in Mauritian history.

#### Second Indian Woman Fighter Pilot to Go Solo

- Flying Officer Bhawana Kanth became the 2nd woman pilot of IAF to fly solo in a fighter aircraft.
- She flew in a MiG-21 Bison aircraft from Ambala Air Force Station.
- In Feb, flying officer Avani Chaturvedi made history by becoming the first Indian woman to fly a fighter aircraft solo.

- Only selected countries, such as Britain, US, Israel & Pak have allowed women in the role of fighter pilots.

#### Tata Group Chief Ethics Officer Rajan Quits

- Tata Sons Chief Ethics Officer Mukund Rajan will leave the group to evaluate entrepreneurial pursuits in the coming months.
- Rajan, who was the former MD of Tata Teleservices, was appointed as the group spokesperson and brand custodian in Feb 2013.
- Rajan who is also the brother of Ex-RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan was the youngest director to be appointed on the boards of major Tata companies.

#### Lebanese Author Emily Nasrallah Passed Away

- Acclaimed Lebanese author and feminist Emily Nasrallah, who articulated women's experiences in her writing about Lebanon's civil war, has died at the age of 87.
- Nasrallah began her career as a journalist and published her first book, "Birds of September," in 1962.
- She was the author of several books for adults and children and was awarded regional and international prizes for her work.

#### Begum Hamida Pioneer in Women Empowerment Dies

- Begum Hamida Habibullah, a former Rajya Sabha member and a pioneer in women empowerment died on 13th March.
- Ms. Habibullah was known for working on women issues.
- She was the founder of "Self Employed Women's Association", which promoted self-employment for women and the art of Lucknow's famous "Chikankari".
- She joined politics in 1965 and went on to become an MLA from UP's Barabanki District.

#### John Sulston Human Genome Pioneer Passed Away

- British genome pioneer Sir John Sulston has died aged 75.
- Sir John won a Nobel Prize in 2002 for his work on the development of cells within a humble worm, which paved the way for innovations in cancer research.
- He was known as a passionate believer in pushing the boundaries of science and in making data on the human genome available to all.

#### Suresh Bhaiyyaji Joshi Re-elected

- Suresh Bhaiyyaji Joshi has been re-elected as general secretary of RSS for a 4th term.
- Joshi, who has been holding the post since 2009, will now continue in the position till 2021.



- He will be the 2nd Sarkaryawah of RSS to serve such a long stint after Seshadri who had held the post from 1987 to 2000.
- Sangh's general secretary is its executive head who looks after day-to-day affairs.

#### Senior Editor Ranjan Roy Passed Away

- Senior journalist Ranjan Roy passed away after battling cancer for several years.
- Roy was the chief of the Times News Network (TNN) and a member of the paper's national editorial board.
- An alumnus of Delhi's St. Stephen's College and Princeton University, US, Roy started his journalistic career in the Press Trust of India in New Delhi as a trainee in 1982.

#### Parag Agrawal appointed as Twitter's CTO

- Twitter has appointed Parag Agrawal as its Chief Technology Officer.
- Agrawal, an alumnus of IIT-Bombay and a PhD in Computer Science from Stanford University, succeeds Adam Messinger.
- His contributions at Twitter include leading efforts to increase the relevance of tweets in Twitter users' timelines using Artificial Intelligence.

#### Prabhu Given Charge of Aviation Ministry

- Commerce and Industries Minister Suresh Prabhu given additional charge of the Civil Aviation Ministry.
- The President, as advised by the Prime Minister, has directed that Suresh Prabhu, Cabinet Minister, shall be assigned the charge of the Ministry of Civil Aviation, in addition to his existing portfolio.
- Suresh Prabhu was the former Minister of Railways.

#### Uber Ropes in Virat Kohli as Ambassador

- Cab hailing platform Uber has roped in Indian cricket team captain, Virat Kohli as its brand ambassador in India.
- This is the first time the company has announced a brand ambassador in the Asia Pacific region.
- In February it had named footballer Mohamed Salah as the brand ambassador for the Egypt market.

#### Sanjeev Gupta Appointed as Ambassador

- Indian-origin steel tycoon Sanjeev Gupta has been appointed by Britain's Prince Charles as an official ambassador for the Industrial Cadets programme designed to nurture manufacturing skills.
- Mr. Gupta was appointed to the flagship programme to give young people a direct structured experience of the industry.
- The Industrial programme was set up at the behest of the Prince of Wales.

#### First Woman as Combat Officer in ITBP

- In another first for women, 25-year-old Prakriti has been inducted as the first direct-entry combat officer in the border guarding force, ITBP.
- The ITBP force is the last of the CAPFs to induct women officers in combat roles after the government first allowed it to enroll them in 2016.
- ITBP guards the 3,488 km-long Line of Actual Control (LAC) between India and China.

#### Sufi Singer Pyarelal Wadali Passed Away

- The Sufi singing pair of Wadali Brothers was broken as Pyarelal Wadali, the younger brother, passed away at the age of 65 in Amritsar.
- Besides Sufi kalaam and qawwali, the brothers sang the bhajan, ghazal and kaafi forms.
- The brothers got Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 1992, Tulsi Award in 1998, and Punjabi Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 2003.

#### Veteran Actor Shammi Passes Away

- Veteran Bollywood actor, who was fondly called 'Shammi Auntie' by many in the film fraternity passed away at the age of 89.
- Born as Nargis Rabadi she has appeared in over 100 films.
- She was well-known for her work in television series like Dekh Bhai Dekh, Zabaan Sambhal Ke, and Shriman Shrimati.
- She made her debut in Bollywood at the age of 18 with Ustad Pedro.

#### Biplab Deb became Tripura's Chief Minister

- The Bharatiya Janata Party has named the party's State president Biplab Kumar Deb as the chief ministerial candidate for Tripura.
- Jishnu Dev Varma, a member of the royal family there, has been named for Deputy Chief Minister.
- Mr. Deb will soon meet Governor Tathagata Roy to stake claim.
- The swearing-in ceremony is likely to be held on 8th March 2018.

#### Ivory Became Oldest Person to Win an Oscar

- James Ivory became the oldest person to win an Oscar with his award win for best adapted screenplay for the film 'Call Me By Your Name' at the 90th Academy Awards.
- The 89-year-old director and screenwriter had previously been nominated thrice in the best director category for 'A Room with a View', 'Howards End' and 'The Remains of the Day'.

#### Tribute Paid to Late Actress Sridevi: Oscars

- Late actress Sridevi was among those mentioned in the 'In Memoriam' section at Oscars 2018 as a tribute to personalities in the film industry who passed away.

- Shashi Kapoor, who passed away in December 2017, featured in the tribute montage.
- Late actor Roger Moore, known for his role as James Bond, filmmakers Jonathan Demme and George Romero were also mentioned.

#### Javed Abidi Passes Away

- Noted disability rights activist Javed Abidi passed away this afternoon due to chest infection.
- Abidi was the Director of the National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People and the Global Chair of Disabled People International.
- He was involved in several consultations with the government on policies for creating a barrier free environment for all, including the disabled

#### Conrad Sangma to be Next CM of Meghalaya

- National People's Party (NPP) President Conrad Sangma will be the new chief minister of Meghalaya.
- NPP came out as the second largest party with 19 seats in the recently held elections which threw a hung verdict.
- Sarma has informed that there will be no deputy chief minister in the new government.
- He will replace congress leader Mukul Sangma.

#### Hindu Woman Elected to Pakistan's Senate

- Krishna Kumari Kohli from Pakistan's Sindh province has become the 1st ever Hindu Dalit woman Senator.
- She is a member of Bilawal Bhutto Zardari-led Pakistan People's Party.
- Her election represents a major milestone for women & minority rights in Pakistan.
- She has actively participated & worked for the rights of downtrodden people of marginalised communities living in Thar & other areas.

#### 99-year-old Swims 50M in 56.12 Seconds

- A 99-year-old Australian swimmer broke the world record for the 100-104 age category in the 50m freestyle.
- George Coronos, who turns 100 in April, completed the 50m freestyle in 56.12 seconds, surpassing the previous record of 1:16.92 set by the late Canadian swimmer Jaring Timmerman in 2009.
- Coronos took up swimming "seriously" when he turned 80.

#### Kanchi Seer Jayendra Saraswathi Passes Away

- Sri Jayendra Saraswathi Swamigal, the senior seer of Kanchi Kamakoti Mutt situated in Tamil Nadu, passed away. He was 82-years-old.
- The junior pontiff, Sri Sankara Vijayendra Saraswathi will be the 70th Jagadguru of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam.
- Sri Jayendra Saraswathi came to wield enormous say in matters affecting the Hindu religion in the country, including the Ayodhya issue.

## Environment

#### 100% Solar Powered PHCs in Surat

- Surat has become the first district in the country to have 100 percent solar powered Primary Health Centers (PHC).
- There is a total of 52 PHCs in the district and all of them are now powered by the solar power system.
- This initiative will not only bring down the electricity bill by 40 percent but also help to fight global warming.

#### Rhino census begins in Assam

- In Assam, the rhino census at the world heritage site Kaziranga National Park began on 26th March.
- The census is carried out every three years.
- As per the last census conducted in 2015, 2401 rhinos were found at the Kaziranga National Park.
- Authorities divided the 430 sq km park into 74 compartments, with 300 government and NGO officials conducting the survey.

#### 'Sudan' the Rhino is Dead

- Sudan, the world's last male northern white rhino, has died.
- For nearly a decade, Sudan lived in a 700-acre enclosure at the Ol Pejeta Conservancy, against the backdrop of the hulking Mount Kenya.
- Armed guards protected him 24 hours a day because he belonged to a subspecies on the verge of extinction from poachers.

#### World's Longest Sandstone Cave Found

- The world's longest sandstone cave called 'Krem Puri', which is 24,583 metres long has been discovered in Meghalaya.
- This underground cave is more than 6,000 metres longer than the world record-holder, the 'Cueva Del Saman' in Edo Zulia, Venezuela — a quartzite sandstone cave measuring 18,200 metres.
- The cave system has fossils of dinosaurs, that lived 66-76 million years ago.

#### New Fish Species identified in Manipur

- A new freshwater fish species has been identified in the north-eastern state of Manipur.
- The new fish species, "Pethia Poiensis", was found by a research team of Manipur University Life Sciences Department and a researcher from the Zoological Survey of India in the Challou River in Manipur.
- These fish species are locally known as "Ngakha Macha" in Manipur.

### India's first offshore wind turbines

- The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) will set up India's first offshore wind turbines at Arichamunai near Dhanushkodi in Tamil Nadu.
- This region was selected based on the quality and speed of the wind which was found to be good.
- The MNRE will install 4 to 5 wind turbines, each with the capacity to generate a minimum of 6 MW of power.

### New species of Water Strider found

- Scientists from the Zoological Survey of India have discovered a new species of the water strider.
- The species, named Ptilomera Ngalanda Jehamalar and Chandra, was found in the river Intanki in Peren district of Nagaland.
- Water striders are a group of insects adapted to life on the surface of water.
- Their presence serves as an indicator of the water quality.

### Clean-up drive initiated at Mount Everest

- A clean-up drive has been initiated at the Mount Everest in Nepal.
- It aims at airlifting 100 tonnes of waste left behind by tourists & climbers of the World's Highest Mountain.
- This year's clean-up campaign is focused on items that could be recycled in Kathmandu.

- Clean-up programmes is being run by local guides for decades but are now coordinated by Sagarmatha Pollution Control Committee.

### Maharashtra bans Plastic

- Maharashtra has decided to ban the use of plastic from "Gudi Padva", the Maharashtrian New Year, which is on 18 March, this year.
- The ban would cover the production, use, storage, sale, import and transportation of plastic.
- The plastic used to cover medicines, forest and horticulture products, the use of plastic in special economic zones for export purposes are exempted from the ban.

### EIB to invest in clean energy projects

- European Investment Bank (EIB) will be signing a new loan for large and small clean energy projects all over India.
- The EIB is the world's biggest financier of climate action and clean energy projects. In 2017 the EIB invested EUR 19.6bn in climate action projects.
- The EIB signed a partnership with the International Solar Alliance aimed at supporting the initiative.

## Government Policies & Schemes

### UP Passes Stringent Crime Control Bill

- The Uttar Pradesh Assembly has passed a stringent bill to curb organised crime and deal strictly with terrorism.
- The UPCOC Bill seeks to act against those using explosives or firearms or any other violent means or damaging life and property or involved in anti-national or destructive activities.
- The bill provides punishments from minimum 3 years' imprisonment to Capital Punishment.

### Ministry of Power partners with Skill India

- Ministry of Power partnered with Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship to train the manpower in six states for speedy implementation of its Saubhagya Scheme.
- The scheme aims to achieve universal household electrification in all parts of the country.
- To support the scheme, the training program has been launched in Assam, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Odisha and Uttar Pradesh.

### IM-PDS approved for implementation

- A new central sector scheme namely "Integrated Management of Public Distribution System" has been approved for implementation during 2018-19 and 2019-20.
- The key objectives of the scheme are to integrate PDS systems of States/UTs with Central System, the introduction of National Portability etc.

- The new scheme will bring more transparency and efficiency in distribution of the food grains.

### NITI Aayog Signs SOI with SAP

- NITI Aayog's Atal Innovation Mission signed a Statement of Intent with SAP to promote a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship.
- SAP will adopt 100 Atal Tinkering Laboratories for 5 years to nurture the science, technology, engineering and maths learning among school children.
- This will enable students to learn advanced topics relevant to digital transformation and the Internet of Things.

### 3.21 lakh houses under PMAY(U)

- The Centre has approved construction of over 3.21 lakh houses for urban poor under its flagship Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban).
- Haryana was sanctioned the highest number of houses for construction, followed by West Bengal, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat and Mizoram.
- The projects were sanctioned across 523 cities in various states.

### "E-Tribes India" Launched

- The Ministry of Tribal Affairs launched The Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India's (TRIFED) websites-www.tribesindia.com, www.trifed.in and Retail Inventory Software and M-commerce app.
- TRIFED has developed its own website i.e., tribesindia.com for sale of all its products and to tap m-commerce.
- 'Tribes India' Banners at Amazon, Snapdeal, Paytm & GeM will be launched.

### Mission Sambhav launched in Assam

- Assam Chief Minister launched the 'Mission Sambhav' campaign, which aims at spreading the message of toilet construction in 33 districts of the state.
- The central theme of the campaign is to reach out to more than 1 lakh families without a toilet, on a single day.
- The scheme aims to promote mass mobilisation through public representatives, local units of security forces, NGOs, and colleges.

### High Courts to have 'Justice Clocks'

- The Centre will soon install 'Justice Clocks' — LED message display boards — in all 24 High Courts.
- The clocks will display the daily rate of disposal of cases, the number of pending cases and the individual rank of each of these courts.
- A model of this 'clock' was first installed in the Delhi office of the Justice Department.
- The aim is also to create a competition among the courts.

### UIDAI to Roll Out Face Recognition for AADHAR

- The Unique Identification Authority of India has announced to roll-out face authentication feature by July 1, 2018, to add another layer of security for inclusive authentication of Aadhaar card holders.
- It will provide additional choice to those facing issues with their fingerprint or iris authentication.
- Face authentication will only be used along with the previous authentication tool.

### MHRD has Approved 'Study in India' programme

- Ministry of Human Resource Development has approved 'Study in India' programme.
- The 'Study in India' programme's primary objective is to target foreign students by branding India as an attractive education destination.
- The move is aimed to improve the global ranking of Indian educational institutes.
- Under the programme, meritorious students will be provided with fee waiver and scholarship.

### MEA's 'Videsh Aaya Pradesh ke Dwaar' launched

- The External Publicity and Public Diplomacy Division of the External Affairs ministry launched an initiative, "Videsh Aaya Pradesh ke Dwaar" in Hyderabad.
- The initiative is part of the enhanced public diplomacy outreach to take the objectives of the foreign policy to the common people.
- The initiative involves MEA's engagement with the regional media based in different cities across India.

### AAP govt presented its first 'Green Budget'

- The AAP government presented its Rs 53,000 crore budget for 2018-19 in the Assembly, which laid emphasis on environment, health, education and water.
- This is the first "Green budget" of the government for effective containment of pollution in the city.
- They also proposed to set aside Rs 1000 crore for repair and maintenance of smaller roads owned by the municipal corporations of the city.

### Govt. to Fully Fund Education of Martyrs' Children

- The government will now fully fund the education of martyrs' children.
- Before this, the education of these children was funded, but only up to Rs 10,000 a month.
- The concession applies to the children of officers from the armed forces, 'persons below officer rank' missing in action, and those disabled or killed in action.
- This scheme covers around 3,400 children.

### 'Indian Sign Language Dictionary' Launched

- "First Indian Sign Language Dictionary of 3000 words" was launched by Government of India on 23rd March.



- The dictionary has been developed by Indian Sign Language Research & Training Centre under Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment.
- The basic aim of developing the Indian Sign Language Dictionary is to remove communications barriers between the deaf and hearing communities.

#### Assam to Start NRC Verification from April 2

- The verification of citizenship documents of 29 lakh married women for updating the 1951 National Register of Citizens, will begin in Assam on April 2.
- Each woman will be asked to produce whatever evidence she can gather, oral or written.
- The other major process of verifying the family tree of those yet to be included in NRC had begun on February 17.

#### One app, 1000 services: mKeralam

- Kerala government has launched "mKeralam", an app that will serve as a single window for accessing thousands of government services.
- The app has been developed by the Kerala State Information Technology Mission and will initially offer 100 citizen-oriented public services of 20 departments.
- The services accessible via mKeralam are available through 'www.kerala.gov.in'.

#### Payment of Gratuity Amendment Bill Passed

- The Rajya Sabha passed the Payment of Gratuity (Amendment) bill.
- The bill would enhance the ceiling of tax-free gratuity to Rs 20 lakh from existing Rs 10 lakh for employers under the Payment of Gratuity Act.
- It is applicable to employees, who have completed at least five years of continuous service in an establishment that has 10 or more persons.

#### Govt Launches Free wi-fi service in Udvada

- The government has launched free wi-fi service for Sansad Adarsh Gram, Udvada in Valsad district of Gujarat.
- The village has been adopted by Information and Broadcasting (I&B) Minister Smriti Irani under Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana.
- The free wi-fi service will be provided by BSNL in partnership with QuadGen.
- The wi-fi service will cover nearly 90% of the village.

#### India to open 18 Missions in Africa

- The Union Cabinet on 21st March has approved the opening of 18 new Indian Missions in 18 African countries.
- This will enhance India's diplomatic outreach in the African continent and allow India to engage with Indian diaspora in African countries.
- The 18 missions will be opened over a four-year period between 2018 to 2021.

#### IRCTC introduces Billing through PoS in Train

- Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) has introduced billing through Point of Sale (POS) hand-held machines in trains to check overcharging by vendors.
- IRCTC has already introduced POS machines in New Delhi-Karnataka Express on a pilot basis.
- The POS billing machines will be introduced in trains in a phased manner.

#### Integrated Scheme for Silk Industry Approved

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) approved the Integrated Scheme for Development of Silk Industry.
- The core objective of the scheme is to improve the productivity and quality of silk through R&D intervention.
- The approved proposal includes provision for the brand promotion of Indian silk through quality certification by "Silk Mark".

#### Cabinet Approves Ayushman Bharat – NHPM

- The Union Cabinet has approved the launch of a new Centrally Sponsored Ayushman Bharat -National Health Protection Mission (AB-NHPM).
- The scheme has the benefit cover of Rs. 5 lakhs per family per year.
- The target beneficiaries of the proposed scheme will be more than 10 crore families belonging to poor and vulnerable population based on SECC database.

#### Cabinet Approves NEIDS 2017

- The Union Cabinet has approved the North East Industrial Development Scheme (NEIDS), 2017.
- To promote employment in the North East States, Government is incentivizing primarily the MSME Sector through this scheme.
- The newly introduced scheme shall promote industrialization in the States of the North Eastern Region and will boost employment and income generation.

#### Delhi Launched app to find Singing Talent

- The Delhi government launched a mobile app called "Delhi's Date with Democracy".
- Its aim is to allow applicants from all parts of the city to showcase their talent.
- "There is no age limit and interested candidates can start sending their entries in both categories- singing and dancing, from tomorrow onwards," Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said.

#### Govt extends Fixed Term Employment Facility

- The government has extended the facility of hiring workers on fixed-term employment to all sectors for improving the ease of doing business for companies.

- This facility was available only to the apparel manufacturing sector as per the Industrial Establishment (Standing Order) 1946.
- The fixed term employment was defined as a workman who is employed on a contract basis for a fixed period.

#### Plastic Park in Jharkhand Approved

- The Government of India has approved the setting up of a 'Plastic Park' in Deoghar District in Jharkhand.
- A range of polymer products including woven sacks, moulded furniture, water tanks, bottles, pipes mosquito nets, etc. would be manufactured in this plastic park.
- A plastic recycling unit will also be set up at Deoghar to tackle the menace of plastic waste.

#### Kerala to get Tribal Instructors for Literacy

- In a first, Kerala government will rope in qualified tribal instructors to impart literacy in their respective settlements in a bid to improve literacy rates among tribal populations.
- The instructors will teach people who are above 15 years of age, Director of Kerala literacy mission PS Sreekala said.
- Around 370 instructors for 100 villages have been appointed for the initiative.

#### First National Workshop on POSHAN Abhiyaan

- The first National workshop on POSHAN Abhiyan involving all the states and union territories was held at Pravasi Bharatiya Kendra, New Delhi.
- The Ministry of Women and Child Development is organising the day-long workshop with participation from all the states/UTs.
- POSHAN Abhiyaan was launched on 8th March 2018 by the Prime Minister in Jhunjhunu.

#### Odisha to Collaborate with RIMES

- The Odisha State Disaster Mitigation Authority (OSDMA) will collaborate with the Thailand-based Regional Integrated Multi-Hazard Early Warning System (RIMES) for strengthening its early warning services and enhancing preparedness for management of hazards in the State.
- OSDMA and RIMES would forge a partnership in the field of drought monitoring.
- RIMES is already working with the Tamil Nadu.

#### LaQshya Programme Launched

- The Union Health Ministry announced the launch of LaQshya, a programme aimed at improving quality of care in labour room and maternity operation theatre.
- The programme will improve the quality of care maternity operation theatres, and obstetrics Intensive Care Units and High Dependency Units.
- The programme aims at implementing 'fast-track' interventions for achieving results within 18 months.

#### NITI Aayog to Release SATH-E Roadmaps

- NITI Aayog will release comprehensive roadmaps and detailed timelines for its initiative 'Sustainable Action for Transforming Human Capital in Education' project at NITI Aayog.
- SATHE will introduce System-wide Governance Transformation in School Education.
- These roadmaps present customized, action-oriented programmes, outlining interventions at the individual, district and State level.

#### Urea Subsidy to Continue till 2020

- The Cabinet has approved the continuation of the urea subsidy till 2020. The government also approved the implementation of direct benefit transfer (DBT) for disbursement of fertiliser subsidy.
- The Centre subsidises the difference between the cost of delivered fertilisers at the retail store and the MRP paid by farmers.
- The subsidy scheme will ensure that urea is available to the farmers.

#### HRD Ministry to set up 'Innovation Cell'

- The Human Resource Development Ministry would soon set up "innovation cell" that would explore ideas to strengthen innovation efforts in education.
- The "Innovation Cell" would be headed by a scientist and would be comprised of a senior ministry official and young professional.
- The move comes after India's ranking in the Global Innovation Index Ranking moved up to 60 in 2017 from 66 in 2016.

#### NCRB launches Mobile App useful for Citizens

- The National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB) has introduced Citizen Services Mobile App, which is a bouquet of 9 police related services.
- These services will provide a smooth interface between Citizens and Police.
- Another feature of the App also enables a complainant to download FIR.
- States/UTs can host this App on their platform through which citizens can register Police Complaint.

#### Switch to e-vehicles: Govt to all departments

- The Power Ministry has directed all central government departments and PSUs in the National Capital Region to switch to e-vehicles for local use.
- The move comes as the government plans to have 30% of the total vehicle fleet in the country running on batteries by 2030.
- Charging facilities for such vehicles are being installed at various locations, the ministry added.



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#### Delhi Women Safety App Fail to Serve Purpose

- The women safety App 'Himmat' has failed to serve its purpose as it has only 30,821 registered users out of Delhi's population of 1.9 crore, a parliamentary panel said.

- The panel identified the App's complex registration process and non-availability in Hindi as the reasons for its limited number of users.
- 'Himmat' App was launched by the Delhi Police in 2015.

#### M.P. to map 'Happiness Quotient'

- Madhya Pradesh will carry out a study to find how happy people are.
- The 'happiness quotient' of people became a global talking point when Bhutan came out with a 'happiness index' and linked it to development, which is otherwise based on GDP numbers.
- The Shivraj Singh Chouhan-led BJP government had set up the 'Anand Vibhag', or the happiness department, in 2016.

#### National e-Mobility Programme launched

- The objective of the National e-Mobility Programme is to provide an impetus to the entire e-mobility ecosystem including vehicle manufacturers, charging infrastructure companies, fleet operators etc.
- The Programme will be implemented by Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL) which will procure electric cars.
- The electric cars will replace existing diesel and petrol vehicles.

#### Karnataka Flag Unveiled

- The Karnataka Chief Minister unveiled the State flag (nada dhwaja) for Karnataka.
- The yellow-white-red flag has the State emblem "*Gandaberunda*" at the centre.
- If approved by the Centre, Karnataka will be the second State to have a flag after Jammu and Kashmir.
- The proposal will be now sent to the Union Home Ministry for approval since a State has no powers to announce its own flag.

#### Union govt to set up Arbitration Council

- To make India a global hub for arbitration, the government will set up an Arbitration Council that will grade institutions that offer alternative dispute resolution mechanism for commercial disputes.
- The proposal to set up council is a part of the Arbitration and Conciliation Amendment Bill, 2018.
- The proposed council will be headed by a retired Supreme Court judge.

#### 'Freight village' in Varanasi

- The government is planning to develop a "freight village" in Varanasi.
- The freight village to be developed by the Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) would reduce logistics cost in the eastern transport corridor and its influence zone.

- It envisages the establishment of multimodal logistics hub in Varanasi to promote the use of waterway transport on river Ganga.

#### Government launches 'SUVIDHA'

- The government announced the launch of 'Suvidha', the 100% Oxo-biodegradable Sanitary Napkin, under the Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP).
- SUVIDHA napkins would be physically available at all Janaushadhi Kendras in the country by May 28, 2018 – World Menstrual Hygiene Day.
- It would ensure '*Swachhta, Swasthya and Suvidha*' for the underprivileged Women of India.

#### 'WINGS INDIA 2018' Event

- The four-day biennial event from 8<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> March - 'WINGS INDIA 2018', jointly organized by Ministry of Civil Aviation and Airport Authority of India and FICCI took off in Hyderabad.
- WINGS INDIA 2018 is a platform for interactions, forging alliances, investments and air connectivity between the States and the global aviation players & stakeholders.
- The theme of the event is 'India-Global Aviation Hub'.

#### Udyam Sakhi Portal Launched for women

- The Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) launched Udyam Sakhi Portal for women entrepreneurs of India on International Women's Day.
- The portal's aim is to nurture entrepreneurship and create business models for low-cost products and services to empower women.
- The portal aids with entrepreneurship learning tools, providing mentors etc.

#### Coastal Berth Scheme

- The Government has extended the period of Coastal Berth Scheme beyond 12th Five Year Plan i.e. from 1st April 2017 to 31st March 2020.
- The scope of the scheme has also been enlarged to cover the cost of preparation of Detailed Project Report (DPR) and capital dredging at Major Ports.
- The Scheme provides financial assistance to Major/Non-Major Ports/State Maritime Board/State Governments.

#### PM expands Beti Bachao Beti Padhao

- On International Women's Day, the PM expanded "National Nutrition Mission" (NNM), and *Beti Bachao Beti Padhao* (BBBP), at Jhunjhunu in Rajasthan.
- The BBBP programme has been expanded from the existing 161 to 640 districts of India.
- NNM aim is to reduce under-nutrition, low birth weight, anaemia among young children, women and adolescent girls.

#### DA hiked to 7% for central govt employees

- The Cabinet approved a hike in Dearness Allowance to central government employees and Dearness Relief to pensioners from 5% to 7%, with effect from January 1, 2018.
- It represents an increase of 2%.
- The hike is expected to benefit 48.41 lakh central government employees and 61.17 lakh pensioners.
- The impact on the exchequer over the DA hike will be ₹6,077 crores per annum.

#### Women SHGs to be Trained in Making LED Lights

- Uttarakhand CM Trivendra Singh Rawat launched a programme for women self-help groups at Thanos.
- The 5-day programme named LED Gram Light Training programme will train 50 women from 10 SHGs in making LED bulbs, tube lights and chandeliers and help them stand on their own feet.
- It will boost the sale of local products and will also help in stopping sale of Chinese items of home decor.

#### Delhi's Women's Day gift: Panic Buttons

- On the International Women's Day, the Delhi government has announced a project under which state-run buses would be installed with Panic Alarm Systems.
- Each bus is equipped with 4 panic buttons that cover the entire length of the vehicle.
- A loud beeping alarm will be activated for 40 seconds on pressing the button.
- On hearing the alarm, the driver would stop the bus and identify the problem.

#### Fighting Air Pollution

- To support the efforts of the Governments of Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh and NCT of Delhi to address air pollution.
- Cabinet approved a scheme for the promotion of agricultural mechanisation for in-situ management of crop residue.
- The key component of this scheme is to establish a Farm Machinery Bank for Custom Hiring of in-situ crop residue management machinery.

#### Swachh Shakti 2018

- The Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, in association with the Government of Uttar Pradesh, is organizing a Women's Convention – called *Swachh Shakti 2018* on International Women's Day on 8th March at Lucknow.
- Uttar Pradesh will be hosting *Swachh Shakti 2018* as the largest State in the country.
- *Swachh Shakti 2018* will provide momentum to the sanitation coverage in Uttar Pradesh.

#### Kollam to Bring all Food Biz under FSSAI



- Kollam will become the first district in India to bring all food business operators under the provisions of the Food Safety and Standards Act (FSSA).
- Bakeries, auditoriums, hospitals, schools, charity organisations, public distribution chains, hostels have been included.
- Factories operating in the cashew sector and ice plants in the fishing sector have been put through the license process.

#### Rs. 5600 Cr Sanctioned Under Darshan Scheme

- Rs. 5638.87 cr was sanctioned since 2014-15 till date under the *Swadesh Darshan* Scheme of Min of Tourism.
- Under the scheme, 13 thematic circuits have been identified for development.
- Under PRASHAD scheme, 23 projects have been sanctioned to 15 States for a total amount of Rs.687.92 cr.
- The objective of the PRASHAD is of holistic development of identified pilgrimage and heritage destination.

#### MP announces ₹12,000 on Childbirth for Poor

- On his 59th birthday, Madhya Pradesh CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan announced the state government will give ₹12,000 on the birth of a child in a poor family.
- Chouhan said ₹5,000 will also be provided for the last rites of a poor person.
- Government will also provide Rs 2 lakh through insurance to people who died a natural death before reaching 60 years of age.

#### Karnataka Unveils 'Arogya Karnataka'

- Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah unveiled a healthcare scheme named 'Arogya Karnataka' aimed at benefiting about 1.43 crore households in the state.
- It will provide quality primary, secondary and tertiary treatment to both BPL and above-poverty-line (APL) families in the state.
- Through the scheme, all the BPL households will get free treatment at government hospitals while for APL households.

#### Odisha launches 'Ama Gaon, Ama Vikas' Prog

- Odisha has launched a Ama Gaon, Ama Vikas (Our Village, our development) to reach out to the people in rural areas and involve themselves in the developmental activities.
- CM flagged off wi-fi enabled mobile video wall vans through which people can send their grievances directly to the CM's office.
- With this initiative the administration will solve the the grievances of the people quickly.

#### 1st Mega Food Park Inaugurated In Maharashtra

- The first Mega Food Park in the state of Maharashtra, Satara Mega Food Park Pvt. Ltd. at

Village Degaon, District Satara was inaugurated by Harsimrat Kaur Badal, Union Minister of Food Processing Industries.

- This is the 10th Mega Food Park being operationalized in the country.
- Satara Mega Food Park has been set up in 64 acres of land at a cost of Rs. 139.30 crore.

#### e-com portal, Mobile App for Fishermen

- CMFRI has come up with a solution to help fishermen fetch better price for their catch without depending on middlemen.
- The institute has developed a multi-vendor e-commerce website & mobile app to help fish farmers & fishermen sell their catch directly to customers online.
- The website, [www.marinefishsales.com](http://www.marinefishsales.com), and mobile app, marine fish scales, were developed under NICRA project of the CMFRI.

#### Cops Eye: New app to help Police

- Madurai police have come up with a new app "Cops Eye."
- Based on face recognition feature, it would help them detect people with criminal backgrounds by clicking photographs.
- The data of 2,000 criminals has their names, photographs and details of criminal cases. Taking photograph of any person whose data is available with the centralised criminal analysing system will give all particulars.

#### Art & Culture

##### Famous Madhavpur Mela Held in Gujarat

- The famous 'Madhavpur Mela' began at Madhavpur Ghed of Porbandar district in Gujarat on 25th March.
- In a unique initiative, the four-day-long Mela saw its first-ever cultural integration with the North-East with which it is said to share its roots.
- This Mela of Gujarat shares its connection with the Mishmi Tribe of Arunachal Pradesh.

##### Silver Jubilee of Losar Festival

- Buddhist Community of Itanagar celebrated the silver jubilee of the Losar Festival.
- The festival was full of cultural presentations from across the state, including the colourful Bhutanese and Gorkha cultural programs.
- For the Buddhist community, this festival is termed as the 'New Year' in accordance with the Buddhist Calendar.

##### World's 1st Hand-Painted Film

- 'Loving Vincent' is the world's 1st animated feature film entirely painted by hand.
- The film is based on a probe into Van Gogh's untimely death.

- With 65,000 frames to be exact, all paintings are in the distinct style of Dutch Post-Impressionist painter Vincent Van Gogh.
- Shot with a shoestring budget of 5.5 million dollars, *Loving Vincent* was made with the help of 125 artists.

## Science & Technology

### ISRO's GSAT-6A Placed in Orbit

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) successfully placed a communication satellite GSAT-6A in a geosynchronous transfer orbit.
- The GSAT-6A is a communication satellite that will complement the GSAT-6, which is already in orbit.
- The satellite will be placed at a height of 36,000 km in a geostationary orbit.

### New organ found in Human Body

- Scientists have identified a new organ "interstitium" in the human body, which could help in understanding the spread of cancer within the body.
- "Interstitium" is a series of fluid-filled compartments, found beneath the skin, as well as lining of gut, lungs, blood vessels and muscles.
- These compartments join to form a network supported by a mesh of strong, flexible proteins.

### Hot, Metallic Earth-sized planet Discovered

- Scientists have discovered a hot, metallic, Earth-sized planet-"K2-229b"- orbiting a dwarf star located 260 million light-years away.
- The planet is almost 20% larger than Earth but has a mass which is over two-and-a-half times greater.
- K2-229b is also the innermost planet in a system of at least three planets, though all three orbits much closer to their star than Mercury.

### NASA to Launch Planet Hunting Probe in April

- NASA's Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS) which aims to find alien worlds with capacity to harbour life is scheduled to launch on April 16 aboard a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket.
- The spacecraft will be looking for a phenomenon known as a transit, where a planet passes in front of its star.
- TESS will discover several planets whose atmospheric compositions.

### Biggest Space Telescope Launch Delayed

- NASA has delayed the launch of its much awaited, \$8 billion James Webb Space Telescope - set to be the world's biggest space observatory - until at least May 2020.
- The James Webb Space Telescope will be complementing the scientific discoveries of NASA's Hubble Space Telescope and other science missions.
- The observatory will solve mysteries of our solar system, according to NASA.

### NASA to focus on Earth's frozen regions

- NASA will launch two new satellite missions to know more about the Earth's ice sheets, glaciers, sea ice, snow and permafrost.
- NASA and the German Research Centre for Geosciences are scheduled to launch the Gravity Recovery and Climate Experiment Follow-On (GRACE-FO) mission in this spring.
- And in autumn, NASA is scheduled to launch the Ice, Cloud and land Elevation Satellite-2 (ICESat-2).

### IOC, Tata Motors Flag off Hydrogen Fuel Bus

- Indian Oil Corporation Ltd and Tata Motors have launched the trial demonstration of the country's first hydrogen fuel cell bus.
- The project is being executed with financial support from the Department of Science & Industrial Research, Ministry of Science & Technology and the Ministry for New and Renewable Energy.
- The vehicle will be fuelled at the hydrogen dispensing facility at Indian Oil.

### India's Largest Wind Turbine Generator

- Renewable solution provider Suzlon Group announced the installation and commissioning of its new product "S128" claiming it to be the largest wind turbine generator in India.

- The first prototype of S128 has been commissioned at the Sanganeri site in Tamil Nadu.
- This has the country's largest single rotor blade measuring 63 metres and reduced levelised cost of energy.

#### Chandrayaan-2 Launch Postponed

- The launch of India's second lunar mission 'Chandrayaan-2' has been postponed from April to October 2018 as the experts have suggested some tests.
- Chandrayaan-2, a totally indigenous mission costing about Rs.800 crore, would orbit around the moon.
- It will collect scientific information on lunar topography, mineralogy, elemental abundance, lunar exosphere & signatures of hydroxyl & water-ice.

#### Device for Measuring Uranium Traces in Water

- An instrument to measure traces of uranium in water has been developed by a unit of the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE).
- The instrument, "Fluorimeter", has been developed by the Raja Ramanna Centre for Advanced Technology (RRCAT), an Indore-based unit of the DAE.
- It will be helpful in areas like Punjab where uranium traces in water sources have been found to be at dangerous levels.

#### Indian Firm among Finalist in a Competition

- Indian start up 'Uravu' that has developed a technology to create water from the air is among the 5 finalists in a global competition.
- The 2-year competition is to create a device that extracts a minimum of 2,000 litres of water per day from using air by 100% renewable energy.
- Los Angeles-based XPRIZE is running the water abundance prize with the support of Tata Group and Australian Aid.

#### UK-US firms create Largest Genomics Project

- A UK-based genomics data platform and an American genetics company collaborated to create the world's largest project to study Indian population.
- The genomic data will help understand Indian genes and find therapies for rare diseases.
- Genomic data generated will be paired with de-identified medical records from patients to examine links between human genetic variations and diseases.

#### NASA to Build 'HAMMER' Spacecraft

- NASA has drawn up plans to build a huge nuclear spacecraft that is capable of shunting or blowing up dangerous space rocks and safeguarding life on Earth.

- The spacecraft named Hammer (Hypervelocity Asteroid Mitigation Mission for Emergency Response) is an eight-tonne spaceship which could deflect a giant space rock.
- The 1,600-foot-wide asteroid Bennu is circling the sun at 63,000 mph.

#### India's First Cloned Assamese Buffalo Born

- A cloned Assamese buffalo male calf, Sach-Gaurav, born for the first time at Central Institute for Research on Buffaloes in Hisar.
- The calf was born to a Murrah buffalo. It was also the first to be born in the field, 100 km from the cloning laboratory at Hi-Tech Sach Dairy Farm.
- This was the second cloned male buffalo after Hisar-Gaurav.

#### AYUSH Drug QOL-2C for Cancer Patients

- Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences (CCRAS) has undertaken the development of a coded drug AYUSH QOL-2C for cancer patients.
- The clinical studies were conducted at St. John's Medical College, Bengaluru and AIIMS, New Delhi in breast cancer patients.
- The study was also conducted at Bhagwan Mahaveer Cancer Hospital and Research Centre, Jaipur in lung cancer patients.

#### Scientists Find Ultra-Rare Ice-VII on Earth

- Scientists have found the first-ever samples of naturally occurring ice-VII on Earth. The samples were found in a diamond.
- Ice-VII is unique in that it remains stable even as pressure increases dramatically. It's 1.5 times more dense than normal ice.
- The formation of ice-VII doesn't require freezing temperatures - if the pressure is high enough, ice-VII can form at room temperature.

#### NASA probe set to explore 'Relic Galaxy'

- NASA's Hubble Space Telescope will uncover a rare ancient "relic galaxy" hidden in the cosmic backyard that has remained unchanged for the past 10 billion years.
- The relic galaxy has twice as many stars as our Milky Way, but physically it is as small as one quarter the size of our galaxy.
- The wayward stellar island may provide valuable insights into the origin and evolution of galaxies.

#### NASA to search for Interstellar Water

- NASA's James Webb Space Telescope will get into interstellar reservoirs to know about the origin and evolution of water and key building blocks for habitable planets.
- This will help the scientists to know the conditions required for formation of the new habitable planets.

- Molecular clouds hold most of the water in the universe and serve as nurseries for new-born stars and their planets.

#### Laboratory launched to monitor Loktak Lake

- Manipur forest and environment minister, Thounaojam Singh launched a floating research laboratory of Institute of Bio-Resources and Sustainable Development at Sendra.
- Keibul Lamjao National Park, the only floating park in the world, is in the lake.
- A water quality machine has been installed inside the boat to collect necessary data to check deteriorating eco-system of Loktak Lake.

#### Fuel Oil from Plastic Waste

- Researchers from IIT Guwahati have successfully converted packaging plastic waste to plastic-derived oil (PDO), which has characteristics like diesel.
- Using a semi-batch reactor, the different wastes were heated for six to seven hours at 300-400 degree Celsius.
- Only hydrocarbon gases such as methane, ethane and propane were produced and there was negligible amount of carbon dioxide.

#### Rare Mineral inside Diamond discovered

- Geologists have discovered a mineral known as Calcium Silicate Perovskite (CaSiO<sub>3</sub>) trapped inside a tiny diamond that was mined from less than a kilometre of the earth's surface at the Cullinan Mine in South Africa.
- Calcium silicate perovskite is in abundance in Earth's mantle.
- Humans have never seen it before because it becomes extremely unstable above a depth of about 650 kilometres.

#### China to launch "Long March-5B Rocket"

- China's heavy-lift "Long March-5B carrier rocket", which is capable of carrying a payload of 25,000 kg in low earth orbit, will be launched into space in 2019.
- It will help carry the core module and experimental modules to China's space station.
- The carrier rocket will undergo testing this month in preparation for the first launch mission.

#### Prevention of Food Loss by Radiation

- Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) & Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) is engaged in extensive research on the use of radiation processing for extending shelf life of food products.
- Irradiation is very effective in treating agricultural produce to enhance its shelf life.
- Application of nuclear techniques has helped in increasing productivity and production in agriculture.

#### Net Neutrality preserved by Washington

- Washington State has signed a law that bars service providers from blocking websites or offering fast lane net access to companies willing to pay.
- Net neutrality is the principle that all internet traffic should be treated equally.
- At least 20 other states are considering similar legislation.

#### Microsoft inks Renewable Energy Deal

- Tech giant Microsoft has inked its first renewable energy deal in India for powering its new facility in Bengaluru.
- The agreement will see Microsoft purchase 3 MW of solar-powered electricity from Atria Power for its new office building in Bengaluru.
- The project will bring Microsoft's total global direct procurement in renewable energy projects to nearly 900 MW.

#### New Malware threat looms over Cyberspace

- The cybersecurity agencies have detected a new malware called 'Saposhi', which can take over electronic devices and turning them into bots.
- Bots can be then used for any purpose, including a Distributed Denial of Service attack which can cripple entire industries.



- Depending on the size of the botnet, malware can execute multiple DDOS attacks at the same time.

### Bengaluru Maps its Solar Wealth

- BESCOM sends a helicopter to collect data on the solar energy potential of its rooftops
- The web-based rooftop photovoltaic tool using aerial LIDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) project is executed by the Centre for Study of Science, Technology and Policy (CSTEP) for the Bangalore Electricity Supply Company (Bescom).
- Bescom will move to achieve the 1 GW solar target for 2021-22.

### New study on Avian Evolution

- Scientists have discovered a tiny fossil of a prehistoric baby bird, which can help them understand how early avians came into the world in the age of dinosaurs.
- The fossil, which dates to the Mesozoic Era (250-65 million years ago), is a chick from a group of prehistoric birds called Enantiornithes.
- It is according to researchers at the University of Manchester in the UK.

### A Robot to Eradicate Manual Scavenging

- The Bandicoot Robot, developed by a start-up in Kerala, GenRobotics, is a semi-automatic robotic system for manhole and sewer line cleaning.
- Kerala Startup Mission (KSUM), a start-up incubator under the Kerala government, funded the project proposed by GenRobotics to find a solution for manual scavenging.
- Kerala will become the first state in India to be manual scavenging-free.

### Nasa Launching TESS for the planets discovery

- Launching in April on a two-year primary mission, the observatory could ultimately discover 20,000 planets.
- Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS) will operate as a kind of exoplanet surveillance camera, making its journey around Earth every 13.7 days.
- The target area for the TESS mission doesn't exceed 300 light-years distant from Earth.

### Light from First Stars of Universe Detected

- A team of astronomers including an Indian graduate student Nivedita Mahesh from Arizona State University have discovered for the first-time signals from "cosmic dawn" - the moment when the universe's earliest stars emerged.
- This is a significant breakthrough in our understanding of the evolution of cosmos.
- The universe was formed in the Big Bang event 13.8 billion years.

### NASA launches advanced weather satellite

- NASA launched another of the world's most advanced weather satellites, this time to safeguard the western U.S.
- The GOES-S satellite thundered toward orbit aboard an Atlas V rocket.
- GOES-S is the second satellite in an approx. \$11 billion effort that's already revolutionising forecasting with astonishingly fast, crisp images of hurricanes, wildfires, floods, mudslides and other natural calamities.

### Anti-Tank Guided Missile Nag tested

- The Anti-Tank Guided Missile (ATGM) Nag was successfully flight-tested in desert conditions against two tank targets at different ranges and timings, Defence Ministry officials said.
- As the developmental trials of the missile have been completed, it is now ready for induction in the Army, the officials added.
- It is the third-generation fire-and-forget ATGM developed by the DRDO.

### Hetero launches HIV Treatment Drug in India

- Hetero Healthcare Ltd. said it had launched generic anti-retroviral fixed-dose combination of 'Emtricitabine & Tenofovir Alafenamide in India.
- The medication is indicated in combination with other anti-retroviral agents for the treatment of HIV-1 infection in adults and pediatric patients 12 years of age & older.
- The product will be marketed and distributed under the brand name 'TAFERO-EM'.

### Bacteria survives for years in Desert

- Mars could harbour life, scientists believe after finding bacteria in Chile's Atacama Desert that can lie dormant without rain for a decade before being 'reactivated'.
- Atacama, which gets less than 20 millimetres of rainfall annually, is considered Earth's Driest Place.

## Places in News

### India's First Insect Museum Opened

- An insect museum which is fully dedicated to insects and is claimed to be the first of its kind in the country was opened in Tamil Nadu.
- It displayed insects preserved as specimens as also live ones depicting their different developmental stages, images, videos and models of their unique behaviour, habits and habitats.
- Theme of the museum is 'BUGS ARE KINGS'

### Bilaspur's Stone Age Tools Link to Sivaliks

- Researchers from the Anthropological Survey of India have discovered several Acheulian artefacts (dated to about 1, 500,000–1,50,000 years ago)

along with Soanian ones from an unexplored site at Ghumarwin in Bilaspur district of Himachal Pradesh.

- The Soanian Stone Age cultures dates to 6,00,000 years ago.
- The oldest dated Acheulian sites in India are those at Attirampakkam in Tamil Nadu.

#### Jackfruit to be Kerala's State Fruit

- Kerala is all set to declare jackfruit as its 'official fruit'. Jackfruit is the largest tree-borne fruit known for its distinctive taste and aroma.
- The state government made an official declaration in this regard on March 21, 2018.
- Government plans to promote the 'Kerala Jackfruit' as a brand in markets across the country and abroad due to its nutritious and organic value.

#### India's 1st Coastal Policing Academy

- Country's 1st national academy to train police forces in effectively safeguarding the Indian shoreline will start functioning from the next month.
- National Academy of Coastal Policing will be launched from a campus of Gujarat's Fisheries Research Centre located in coastal Okha in the newly created Devbhoomi Dwarka district.
- It will be created and run by a team of paramilitary defence forces.

#### Academy of Adventure Sports at Gandikota Soon

- Andhra Pradesh government is establishing an Academy of Adventure Sports at Gandikota village on the banks of river Pennar in Kadapa district.
- The Academy is being established to empower unemployed youth in taking up adventure sports /adventure tourism centres as career building.
- The government also aims to attract tourists apart from employment generation and promoting adventure sports.

### Books & Authors

#### Namaste Shalom, a magazine launched

- Dr Jitendra Singh launched the social media of "Namaste Shalom", a magazine devoted to India-Israel relations.
- It states the festive occasion of Holi coinciding with the Jewish festival of Purim.
- The magazine is edited by former MP Shri Tarun Vijay.
- Israeli Ambassador to India, Mr. Daniel Carmon and other dignitaries were also present.

### Committees & Recommendations

#### Committee to Redress FinTech Grievances

- Centre has announced the formation of a steering committee to examine issues faced by the FinTech industry in India.
- Committee will be chaired by Subhash Chandra Garg, Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs.
- Decision follows an announcement made by Arun Jaitley on setting up of a group under Finance Ministry that will help devise institutional measures to spur growth of FinTech firms.

### Business & Economy

#### Govt Approves Guarantee for IRFC Bonds

- Ministry of Finance has approved Government guarantee of ₹5,000 crore in the current financial year for Indian Railway Finance Corporation (IRFC) bonds to be subscribed by Life Insurance Corporation, LIC.
- The guarantee fee for the aforesaid amount has also been waived by Ministry of Finance.
- The decision will ease the flow of borrowed funds for Ministry of Railways to undertake projects.

#### Microsoft Opens Garage Innovation Site

- Microsoft inaugurated Garage facility, a makerspace for employees, its first in Hyderabad and the 2nd largest in the world after its Redmond Garage Facility.
- Microsoft Garage provides a platform to employees who want to explore ideas, build prototypes or experiment with existing products.
- India is Microsoft's 2nd largest work location after Redmond, which employees close to 45,000 people.

#### Department of Posts Launched Cool EMS Service

- Department of Posts has launched the "Cool EMS Service" which will come into force from 29th March.
- Cool EMS service is one-way service from Japan to India which allows customers in India to import Japanese food items for personal use which is allowed under Indian Regulations.
- Initially, Cool EMS Service will be available in Delhi only.

#### India is the 4th Largest Automobile Market

- India's automobile sales, including passenger and commercial vehicles, grew 9.5 percent and more than 4 million units in 2017 were sold, making the country world's fourth-largest automobile market.
- India beat Germany to take the 4th position.
- Maruti Suzuki India, which makes up 80 percent of the market, continues with its lead in passenger vehicles.

#### AAI Signs MoU with Assam Govt

- The Airport Authority of India (AAI) signed a MoU with Assam government under its Corporate Social Responsibilities (CSR) initiative for sustainable

development of human settlements at villages in Kamrup district.

- The AAI would provide financial assistance under its CSR initiative for the Kamrup District.
- The AAI through its CSR policy supports such initiatives for promoting infrastructure.

#### MCX Launches First Brass Futures Contracts

- Multi Commodity Exchange of India (MCX) launched futures trading in brass for the first time globally.
- The country's largest commodity exchange will start futures trading in brass on 26th 2018.
- MCX Brass futures is the first non-ferrous contract with the compulsory delivery option.
- Brass is an alloy, which primarily contains around 55-60% Copper and the rest is Zinc.

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#### UCO Bank to Merge Branches in Hong Kong

- Following RBI's ban on letters of undertaking, UCO Bank is planning to merge its two branches in Hong Kong.
- The ban on LoUs has affected the business of foreign branches & the bank says one branch is enough to cater for customers' needs.
- With almost zero capital needed for opening a branch in Hong Kong, the country has the 2nd highest number of foreign branches by Indian banks after the UK.

#### Draft Policy on Defence Production

- Defence Ministry has come out with a draft policy which envisages achieving a turnover of ₹1.7 lakh crore in military goods & services by 2025.
- The policy aims to make India 1 of the top 5 manufacturers of defence platforms with participation of public & private sectors.
- Govt has identified 12 military platforms & weapons systems for production in India to achieve the aim of self-reliance.

#### HDFC Signed MoU with Government E-Marketplace

- HDFC Bank has signed an agreement with Government e-Marketplace under which the bank will facilitate a host of services for the portal.

- GeM provides an end-to-end online marketplace for central & state govt ministries for procurement of common use goods /services.
- MoU is significant as it will bring transparency & efficiency in procurement process with assured & timely payment to sellers.

#### Bank Fraud Loss Already More Than 2017 Mark

- The total amount involved in bank fraud cases this year has reached nearly ₹19,194 crores, which is 63% more than the total loss on all frauds in 2017.
- The CBI has registered 12 major cases of suspected bank fraud this year.
- The amount involved in 31 bank fraud cases registered by the investigating agency in 2017 stood at ₹11,777 crores.

#### Jio, Saavn to Create Digital Music Platform

- Reliance Jio Director Akash Ambani, has signed an agreement for merging the digital music service Saavn with JioMusic to create a digital media platform with global reach.
- The total value of the deal will be over \$1 billion.
- As part of the deal, additionally, Reliance will be acquiring a partial stake from the existing shareholders of Saavn for \$104 million

#### Vodafone and Birla Announce Leadership Team

- Vodafone Group and Aditya Birla Group have appointed Balesh Sharma as Chief Executive Officer of an entity created by the merger of their local telecom units.
- It will become India's largest Mobile Phone Operator by subscriber and revenue market share and be better placed to compete in a market savaged by price competition.
- Akshaya Moondra will be appointed as Chief Financial Officer (CFO).

#### ABFL's to Merge with Allahabad Bank

- Ministry of Corporate Affairs has allowed the merger of Allahabad Bank with its wholly own subsidiary - All Bank Finance Ltd (ABFL).
- The ABFL offers fee-based financial services such as trusteeship services, investment advisory and portfolio management services, distribution of Mutual Funds schemes.
- The bank's board had approved the proposed merger in December 2016.

#### BHEL Inks Pact with Korea-based HLB Power

- BHEL has entered into a technology collaboration agreement (TCA) with HLB Power, Republic of Korea.
- This TCA will help in establishing the capability for in-house design, manufacture and testing of very large size gates and dampers.

- BHEL has been supplying conventional Gates and Dampers manufactured at its Boiler Auxiliaries Plant.

#### MoU Signed Between SBI and IMGC

- SBI and India Mortgage Guarantee Corporation (IMGC) signed a pact to offer mortgage guarantee scheme for prospective non-salaried and self-employed home loan customers.
- The offering will help increase home loan eligibility up to 15% within the regulatory norms.
- The applicant can avail higher finance based on risk grade of the borrower, by opting for IMGC default guarantee cover.

#### Axis Bank Opens Representative Office

- Axis Bank opened a representative office in Sharjah, to better serve its customers in the emirate and to expand its retail offerings to customers in the neighbouring northern emirates.
- The representative office is the 3rd Axis Bank office in the UAE after Dubai and Abu Dhabi.
- The new office will service the NRI community in the emirate and will also provide service in the other emirates.

#### Airbnb Inks MoUs with North Eastern Council

- Airbnb has inked MoUs with the North Eastern Council, the North East Tourism Development Council, North East Rural Livelihood Project and North Eastern Region Community Resource Management Society.
- The aim is to create micro-entrepreneurs across key destinations in the North East of India.
- The partnership will boost tourism in Northeast India.

#### IRCTC Ties Up with Ola

- To provide first-and-last-mile connectivity, IRCTC announced a partnership with cab aggregator Ola, giving commuters an option book taxi on its app.
- The Ola cab facility will provide all the services directly on the IRCTC Rail Connect App.
- The tie-up, a six-month pilot project, will give customers access to Ola booking services when they visit the IRCTC Rail Connect App.

#### SEBI Raises Currency Derivative

- Capital markets regulator SEBI raised the exposure limit under exchange-traded currency derivatives trading for residents and FPIs to USD 100 million across all currency pairs involving the Indian rupee.
- The move will help entities engaged in forex transactions to maintain their currency risks in a better manner.
- Earlier, there were two different sets of limits based on currency pairs.

#### RBI Issues Corrective Framework for PSBs

- The Reserve Bank of India has issued a Prompt Corrective Action framework to maintain the sound financial health of banks.
- The framework facilitates banks in breach of risk thresholds for identified areas of monitoring, such as capital, asset quality and profitability, to take corrective measures.
- The RBI, through corrective framework, encourages banks to abstain from riskier activities.

#### Cabinet Approved India-Iran MoU on Health

- Cabinet has given its ex-post facto approval for the MoU b/w India & Iran on cooperation in the field of Health & Medicine.
- The MoU also covers the exchange experience in training of medical doctors and other health professionals.
- It also includes regulation of pharmaceuticals, medical devices and cooperation in the field of medical research, new technologies and knowledge-based initiatives.

#### 'Digital Export Import' Payments by Yes Bank

- Yes Bank has launched a robotics-based 'Digital export Import' payments solution as a part of its Yes Transact Smart Trade product suite.
- It aims to bring over 1 lakh trade transactions going entirely digital, across major geographies including China, US.
- The product uses robotics process automation & helps in eliminating the requirement of documents submission for import & export payments.

#### Karnataka Bank's All-Woman Branch

- Karnataka Bank opened its first all-woman branch at Bull Temple Road in Bengaluru.
- This is the 36th branch opened by the Bank during the current financial year 2017-18 and the 800th branch of the bank.
- Karnataka Bank is a major Private Sector Banking institution headquartered at Mangalore in Karnataka.

#### ICICI Bank Launches Online Overdraft Facility

- ICICI Bank has launched instant overdraft 'Insta OD' facility for MSME (Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises) customers in a completely online and paperless manner.
- Customers can get overdraft facility up to Rs 15 lakh for a year anytime, anywhere using the bank's Internet and mobile banking app.
- The overdraft is renewable on an annual basis depending on the repayment track records.

#### Wholesale Inflation Eases to 2.48% in Feb

- Inflation based on wholesale prices eased to a seven-month low of 2.48% in February on cheaper food articles, including vegetables.



- According to government data released, inflation in food articles slowed to 0.88% in February from 3% in January.
- Inflation in pulses remained in the negative zone at (-)24.51% and cereals, wheat and items like egg, fish and meat were in the negative zone.

#### **RBI Discontinues LOUs/LOCs Issuance**

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has scrapped the issuance of Letters of Undertaking (LOUs) and Letters of Comfort (LOCs) for trade credit for imports with immediate effect.
- Banks will continue to issue guarantees and letter of credit for trade purposes which are the international norm.
- A letter of credit is secure because it has the details of the expiry date and the material purchase.

#### **IBBI and RBI Sign MoU**

- The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India signed MoU with the Reserve Bank of India for enhancing cooperation between the two regulators to ensure better implementation of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code.
- RBI is the banking regulator, the IBBI regulates insolvency professionals and agencies and information utilities.
- RBI and IBBI will share data and resources with each other.

#### **SBI Slashes Minimum Balance Charges**

- State Bank of India, SBI has cut down the charges for non-maintenance of average minimum balance in its savings accounts by up to 75 percent.
- The new charges, which will benefit about 25 crore bank customers, comes into effect from 1st of next month.
- Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana, basic savings bank deposit account, and accounts of pensioners and minors are exempted from these charges.

#### **Eight Sectors Added 1.36 Lakh Jobs**

- Employment in eight key sectors, rose by 1.36 lakh on the net basis in July-September this fiscal compared to the previous quarter.
- The manufacturing sector added 89,000 jobs, education sector added 21,000 jobs while transport sector saw an addition of 20,000 jobs.
- Out of the total estimated change in employment of 1.36 lakh, female workers accounted for 74,000 and 62000 male workers.

#### **Retail Inflation Eases to 4.44%**

- Retail inflation for the month of February cooled off to a four-month low of 4.4% as compared to 5.07% in January 2018.

- Inflation in vegetables was 17.57% in February, down from 26.97% in January, and for fruits, it was 4.80% (as against 6.24%).
- Fuel and light inflation stood at 6.8%, compared with 7.58% in January, while housing inflation stood at 8.28%

#### **India's Industrial Production Grew to 7.5%**

- India's factory production grew in January to 7.5% over the same month last year, and marginally over the 7.1% recorded in December 2017.
- The recovery in factory output in January was driven by a revival in manufacturing activity (8.7%) as well as electricity generation (7.6%).
- The sharp improvement in IIP is a positive trigger for the March quarter GDP which will be announced on 31 May.

#### **GST E-way Bill Must from April 1**

- Goods and Services Tax Council has mandated the use of electronic way (e-way) bills from April to track inter-state movement of goods.
- From April 1, transporters of goods worth over ₹ 50,000 will have to generate e-way bills.
- For intra-State movement, the e-way bill will be rolled out in a phased manner beginning 15th April 2018, and will cover all the States by 1st June 2018.

#### **TCS Fastest Growing IT Services Brand in 2018**

- Tata Consultancy Services has been named as the fastest growing IT services brand in the world in an assessment done by leading brand valuation firm, Brand Finance.
- According to the report, TCS has a total brand value of USD 10.391 billion.
- Over past 2 years, TCS has strengthened its portfolio of global brand sponsorships by forging new partnerships in UK, Sweden, India, Japan & Australia.

#### **Pact to Promote Solar Energy Deployment**

- Asian Development Bank & International Solar Alliance have signed a cooperation arrangement to promote solar energy deployment in Asia & Pacific.
- Cooperation envisages solar power generation, solar based mini-grids & transmission systems for integrating solar energy into grids.
- The two would also cooperate on knowledge sharing & developing technology roadmaps for promotion of solar energy.

#### **Airtel Bank Fined 5 Crore by RBI**

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has imposed a fine of Rs 5 crores on Airtel Payments Bank for flouting Know Your Customer (KYC) norms and operating guidelines.
- Airtel Payments Bank had opened customer accounts without a clear/specific consent of the customers.

- Know your customer is the process of the banks identifying and verifying the identity of its account holders.

### Direct Tax Mop Up Rises 19.5% in Apr-Feb

- Direct tax collections have risen 19.5% to ₹7.44 lakh crore in the April-February period of the current fiscal.
- The net direct tax collection represents 74.3% of the ₹10.05 lakh crore target as per the revised estimates given in Union Budget 2018-19.
- The growth rate for net corporate tax collections stood at 19.7% while for personal income tax is 18.6%.

### Paytm Now Registered Investment Advisor

- Financial services platform Paytm's wholly-owned subsidiary, Paytm Money has received approval from market regulator SEBI to become a Registered Investment Advisor.
- The nod from the SEBI will allow the company to roll out investment and wealth management products to consumers across the country.
- The platform has planned to start with direct plan mutual funds' investments with zero commission.

### Indian Startups Raise Funds Via Bitcoins

- Initial Coin Offerings (ICOs) are emerging as a new way of raising funds for startups. An ICO is based on cryptocurrencies and is a mix of an Initial Public Offer (IPO) and crowdfunding.
- Startups have managed to raise as much as \$200 million in a single round of funding through ICOs.
- Instead of granting shares in the company, the issuer will create crypto-tokens to give out to investors.

### RBI Imposes Penalty on SBI

- The Reserve Bank of India has imposed a monetary fine of ₹40 lakhs on the country's biggest lender the State Bank of India over counterfeit notes.
- After Inspection RBI found a violation of its instructions issued on the detection and impounding of counterfeit notes.
- The RBI had imposed a fine on Axis Bank and Indian Overseas Bank for not complying with the "known your customer" regulation

### RBI Fines Axis Bank & Indian Overseas Bank

- The Reserve Bank of India imposed a penalty of ₹3 crore on Axis Bank for non-compliance of Income Recognition and Asset Classification (IRAC) norms.
- The central bank also imposed a penalty of ₹2 crore on Indian Overseas Bank for non-compliance with Know Your Customer norms.
- RBI concluded that the charges of non-compliance with RBI directions and guidelines were substantiated.

### Iraq Becomes India's Top Oil Supplier

- Iraq has overtaken Saudi Arabia by a wide margin to become India's top crude oil supplier.
- Iran was India's second biggest supplier of crude oil after Saudi Arabia till 2010-11 but western sanctions relegated it to the 7th spot in the subsequent years.
- Venezuela is India's fourth largest supplier with 15.5 MT during April-January, followed by Nigeria with 14.9 MT

### Jeff Bezos is now the Richest Person

- Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos has become the first person to amass a fortune surpassing \$100 billion and richest man on earth.
- Mukesh Ambani, the energy and petrochemicals magnate, is the richest Indian.
- The world now holds more than 2,200 billionaires with a combined fortune of \$9.1 trillion.

### RBI Tightens PSL Norms for Banks

- RBI has tightened priority sector lending norms for foreign banks by directing them to create sub-targets so that they lend a portion of their loans to small & marginal farmers as well as MSMEs.
- Move is directed at foreign banks with over 20 branches & will come into force from next financial year.
- PSL norms mandate foreign banks to lend 40% of their total loan book to the priority sector.

### IDBI Bank Cuts Stake in Punjab Alkalies

- IDBI Bank has cut its stake in Punjab Alkalies & Chemicals (PAC).
- In 2018, so far IDBI Bank has sold ₹18.11 lakh shares of PAC.
- Recently on 28th February 2018, IDBI sold 9.65 lakh shares at an average price of ₹25.35 and the shares were bought by Dayawati Dahiya.
- At the end of December 2017, IDBI Bank was holding ₹47.10 lakh shares, or 17.35% stake in PAC.

### RBI Lifts Per-borrower Loan Cap for MSMEs

- RBI has decided to do away with the per borrower loan limits to Micro/ Small and Medium Enterprises for classification under priority sector lending.
- It is done for increasing the importance of the services sector and to encourage banks to lend more to this sector.
- So far, loans to Micro/ Small and Medium Enterprises up to ₹5 crores and ₹10 crore, respectively, were classified as PSL.

### Paytm Contributed 40% of Total UPI Trans.

- Out of total 171.4 mn UPI transactions in February, Paytm contributed 68 million, or 40% of the total transactions, a report by National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) has revealed.
- Paytm had recorded 37 million UPI transactions in December 2017, and 51.2 million in January 2018.
- Further, total UPI (Unified Payment Interface) transactions in Feb went up by 13.5% as compared to Jan.

### PNB and ICICI Bank Increases MCLR Rates

- The Punjab National Bank (PNB) and ICICI Bank hiked the MCLR rates for loan borrowers.
- Taking a cue from SBI, country's second-largest private sector lender ICICI Bank also raised the one-year MCLR from 8.2% to 8.3%.
- The PNB, which is at the centre of Nirav Modi fraud also increased one-year MCLR to 8.3% from 8.15%.

### SBI Hikes Lending Rate to 8.15%

- The State Bank raised its lending rates by 20 basis points to 8.15%, with immediate effect, setting the tone for the industry to follow suit.
- This is likely to make home and car loans costlier.
- This is the first lending revision by the bank since April 2016 and comes a day after it massively raised the retail and bulk deposit rates.

### IndusInd Bank and Ripple Tie-up

- IndusInd Bank announced its partnership with Ripple to facilitate payments into and out of India.
- With this affiliation, RippleNet can now provide instant access in emerging markets such as India, Brazil and China.

- In 2017, India saw a total of \$65 billion move into the country.

### Corporation Bank Reports Fraud of ₹6.77 Cr

- The CBI has booked an auto dealer in Jamshedpur, Jharkhand for allegedly siphoning off the loan amount and causing a loss of ₹6.77 crore to Corporation Bank.
- The agency has booked Ramnandi Estate and its directors along with the bank's valuer, Sanjay Kumar.
- Corporation Bank alleged that Kumar filed enhanced valuation reports based on which the loan was sanctioned.

### April-Jan Fiscal Deficit Hits 113.7%

- India's fiscal deficit for April-January reached 113.7% of the budgeted target for the current fiscal year that ends in March 2018.
- The fiscal deficit stood at ₹6.77 trillion and net tax receipts in the first ten months were ₹9.7 trillion, government data showed.
- Earlier, the fiscal deficit target for the current year was raised to 3.5% of GDP from 3.2%.

### India Back as World's Fastest-growing Economy

- India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth surged to 7.2% in the December quarter of 2017-18, restoring its status as the world's fastest-growing major economy.
- The economy grew at 6.7% in Gross Value Added (GVA) terms.
- The GDP growth rebounded from 6.5% in the previous quarter, reportedly indicating that the economy has moved past disruptions due to demonetisation and GST rollout.

### Aircel Files for Bankruptcy

- India's sixth-largest telecom operator Aircel filed for bankruptcy at the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) claiming that it has a debt of ₹15,500 crore.
- This comes after the Ananda Krishnan-owned Malaysian parent Maxis Communications refused to infuse more funds into Aircel.
- Notably, Aircel's proposed merger with Anil Ambani's Reliance Communications had failed last year.

### SBI Steeply Hikes Deposit Rates

- SBI steeply raised the retail and bulk deposits rates for various maturities by up to 0.75% with immediate effect.
- This is the third pricing revision in past four months by the bank.
- For retail deposits, below ₹1 crore, rates have been increased by up to 0.50%, while for deposits maturing in one year to less than two years, the pricing has been raised by 0.15% to 6.40% from 6.25% earlier.

### EPFO Makes Online Claims Necessary

- EPFO has made it mandatory to file online claims for provident fund withdrawals above ₹10 lakhs, taking another step towards becoming a paperless organisation.
- The EPFO has also made it mandatory to file online claims for withdrawals of above ₹5 lakhs under the Employees' Pension Scheme 1995.
- The EPFO has over 6 crore subscribers and manages a corpus of ₹10 lakh crore.

## Sports

### Muskan Bhanwala wins Gold in Shooting

- Indian shooter Muskan got Gold Medal in women's 25m pistol event at the ISSF Junior World Cup in Sydney.
- The team gold was won by Muskan, Manu Bhaker and Devanshi Rana, adding to India's rich medal haul.
- Muskan's medal was India's fourth individual gold in the prestigious tournament.
- Anantjeet Singh Naruka, Ayush Rudraraju and Gurnilal Singh Garcha got team silver in men's junior skeet.

### Manu Bhaker-Anmol wins Air Pistol Mixed Gold

- Manu Bhaker and Anmol secured the gold medal in the ISSF Junior World Cup by winning the mixed 10m air pistol event.
- The Silver and Bronze medals were both awarded to China.
- Genemat Sekhon bagged an individual bronze medal in the junior women's shooting.
- Overall, India occupied the second placed with 17 medals, including seven gold.

### Anish Bhanwala won Gold in Shooting

- Anish Bhanwala secured an individual gold medal at the ISSF Junior World Cup in Sydney.
- The bronze medal was awarded to another Indian team comprising Sandhu, Japtyesh Singh Jaspal and Mandeep Singh.
- India is now placed second in the overall standings with 15 medals, comprising 6 Gold, 3 Silver and 6 Bronze.
- China secured the gold medal and set a new junior world record with 1733 points.

### Rashid Khan fastest to pick 100 ODI Wickets

- Afghanistan leg spinner Rashid Khan has become the fastest bowler to reach the milestone of 100 ODI wickets.
- The previous record was by Australian left-arm pacer Mitchell Starc who broke the record in 2016.
- Khan achieved the feat in just 44 ODI matches, surpassing Australian pacer Mitchell Starc who reached the landmark in 52 matches.

### India U-16 won Hong Kong Football Tournament

- The India U-16 team emerged champions in the "Jockey Cup International Youth Invitational Football Tournament" with a 4-2 victory over Hong Kong U-17 in the final in Hong Kong on 25th March.
- The tournament was a U-17 event where India fielded their U-16 National Team.
- This was the team's third consecutive victory in as many days. The Indians had earlier defeated Chinese Taipei and Singapore.

### Punjab crowned National Hockey Champion

- Punjab won its first National title in five years, after winning against Petroleum Sports Promotion Board (PSPB) in the final of the "8th men's National hockey championships" on 25th March.
- In the Bronze medal match, Railway Sports Promotion Board (RSPB) defeated Air India Sports Promotion Board.
- Hockey Punjab defeated Petroleum Sports Promotion Board by 2-1.

### Fastest fifty for India in women's T20 cricket

- Smriti Mandhana created history after smashing the fastest fifty by an Indian player in women's T20I cricket.
- Mandhana, who was opening the innings for India, achieved the feat in just 25 balls bettering her previous best in 30 balls.
- The overall record for the fastest fifty in women's T20Is belongs to Sophie Devine (18 balls) of New Zealand.

### Vettel won Australian Grand Prix

- Ferrari's Sebastian Vettel pipped the defending Formula One champion Lewis Hamilton to win the season-opening Australian Grand Prix.
- It was the 100th podium of Vettel's career and it came in his 200th Formula One race.
- He becomes the fourth driver to claim 100 podium finishes, joining Lewis Hamilton, Michael Schumacher and Alain Prost.

### Ball Tampering Scandal

- Australian skipper Steve Smith & batsman Cameron Bancroft have admitted to charges of ball-tampering during the 3rd day of the third Test match against South Africa in Cape Town.
- Bancroft was caught on television cameras appearing to rub a yellow object on the ball during the match.
- Australia captain Steve Smith and vice-captain David Warner have decided to relinquish their leadership duties

### Pankaj Advani retained his Asian title

- Pankaj Advani defended his Asian Billiards Championships title in by demolishing his partner B Bhaskar 6-1.



- With this win, Advani remains the reigning Indian, Asian & world champion in billiards for 2017-18.
- This is Advani's 11th gold medal at Asian level of cue sports.
- His continental billiards title tally has gone up to 7, in addition to back-to-back Asian Games gold medals in 2006 & 2010

#### **PV Sindhu to be India's flag-bearer**

- Olympic silver-medalist PV Sindhu will be the flag-bearer of Indian contingent for the opening ceremony of the Commonwealth Games in Gold Coast, Australia.
- It would be the first time in last 3 editions of Commonwealth Games that a badminton player would don the flag-bearer's hat.
- At 2014 Glasgow CWG, Olympics silver medallist shooter Vijay Kumar was handed the responsibility of flag-bearer.

#### **Manu Bhaker secures 10m Air Pistol Gold**

- Manu Bhaker secured India's second individual gold at the ISSF Junior World Cup.
- India tasted success in the 10m air pistol men's event too with Gaurav Rana winning a silver medal.
- Bhaker, Rana and Mahima Turhi Agrawal also brought India on top of the team podium

#### **Vivaan Kapoor bagged Two Bronze Medals**

- Vivaan Kapoor got his 1st Bronze medal in the men's trap event at International Shooting Sport Federation Junior World Cup Rifle/Pistol/Shotgun in Sydney, Australia.
- He got his 2nd Bronze after winning the Team Bronze medal in the event along with Lakshay Sheoran and Ali Aman Elahi.
- India has two gold and three bronze medals in the competition and is placed second behind China.

#### **Elavenil Valarivan won Gold for 10m Air Rifle**

- Indian shooter Elavenil Valarivan won the gold medal in 10m women's air rifle event of the season's first junior ISSF World Cup in Sydney.
- Elavenil also combined with Shreya Agrawal and Zeena Khitta to claim the team gold medal.
- Elavenil had also won a bronze medal at the FISU World Shooting Sports Championship.

#### **Naomi Osaka won her first WTA Title**

- Naomi Osaka became the first Japanese player to win the Indian Wells final, beating Russian Daria Kasatkina for her first WTA Tour title.
- Osaka was only the fourth unseeded player to reach 'The Indian Wells' final.
- Osaka captured the title on her first match point by blasting a backhand into the open side of the court.

#### **Purva Barve wins Title at Israel Junior 2018**

- Purva Barve won the women's singles (Under-19) title at the Israel Junior badminton tournament 2018 held in Rishon LeZion.
- The title is her first in 2018 and third overall.
- Earlier she won the Israel Junior 2017, Italian Junior International 2017 apart from a bronze at the Russian Junior White Nights 2017.

#### **Juan Martin bags Indian Wells Masters Title**

- Juan Martin del Potro ended world number one Roger Federer's 17-match unbeaten run to claim the BNP Paribas Open title at Indian Wells.
- Del Potro is the first player to beat Federer in 2018.
- Naomi Osaka won her First Women's Tennis Association Title at Indian Wells.

#### **Vidarbha clinched maiden Irani Cup Title**

- Vidarbha has lifted their maiden Irani Trophy at Nagpur on 18th March after they beat 'Rest of India' by virtue of their massive first innings lead.
- It is their second title in the domestic cricket season after they won Ranji Trophy.
- Rest of India were bowled out for 390, falling short of Vidarbha's first-innings total by 410 runs.

#### **Nepal Cricket Team gets ODI status**

- Nepal cricket team was given One-Day International (ODI) status for the first time ever after its six-wicket win over Papua New Guinea in the World Cup Qualifiers.
- Nepal was given the Affiliate status by the ICC first in 1988 and was later promoted to the Associate rank in 1996.
- In 2008, Nepal was included in World Cricket League Division 5, where it finished on the third spot.

#### **Chennaiyin FC won the second ISL Title**

- Chennaiyin FC crushed Bengaluru FC 3-2 in the finals to clinch the Indian Super League title.
- This was Chennaiyin FC's second title triumph in the ISL, tying them with ATK as the most successful team in the tournament.
- The franchise is owned by Vita Dani, Abhishek Bachchan and Mahendra Singh Dhoni.
- The Indian Super League (ISL) is a men's professional football league in India.

#### **FIFA lifted 30-year ban on Iraq**

- FIFA has lifted its three-decade ban on Iraq hosting international football with the cities of Arbil, Basra and Karbala given the go-ahead to stage matches.
- The three cities selected are among the more secure in Iraq.
- Iraq will host Qatar and Syria for a friendly tournament starting March 21 in Basra.
- Iraq has not played full internationals on home turf since its 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

#### **India lost bid to host 2019 U-20 World Cup**

- Poland pipped India in the race to host 2019 FIFA U-20 World Cup after the members of FIFA Council voted in its favour.
- With the tournament scheduled to be held around May to June, Poland emerged as the preferred choice as it will be difficult for the players to play in the scorching Indian summer.
- India had submitted their bid after successfully hosting the U-17 FIFA World Cup last year.

#### **KL Rahul is the 'Cricketer of the Year'**

- KL Rahul is the 'Cricketer of the Year' in the sixth edition of Wisden India Almanack.
- The Almanack pays a tribute to India's women cricketers, with a wonderful cover picture of celebration at the World Cup.
- Shantha Rangaswamy, India's first woman superstar, has been inducted into the Wisden India Hall of Fame.
- Priyank Panchal, Hasan Ali and Tamim Iqbal are the other Cricketers of the Year.

#### **Sanjivani Jadhav won Bronze in China**

- India's long-distance athlete Sanjivani Jadhav bagged a bronze medal at the 14th Asian Cross-Country Championship held at Guiyang in China.
- Sanjivani clocked 28 minutes 19 sec in the senior women's 8 km event to finish 3rd.
- In the team ranking, India finished 3rd in senior women's event and bagged bronze medal with 28 points, finishing behind 1st placed Japan (12) and 2nd placed China (14).

#### **Tommy Haas announced his Retirement**

- Former world number two tennis player Tommy Haas officially announced his retirement from tennis.
- Haas, who won the silver medal for Germany at the 2000 Sydney Olympics, finished his career with 569 wins.
- His most recent singles titles came in 2013 when he won in Vienna and Munich.
- Haas reached a career-high number two ranking in 2002, and finished eight seasons ranked in the top 20.

#### **Nepal gains ODI status**

- A six-wicket win over Papua New Guinea has rewarded Nepal with One-Day International (ODI) status for the first time ever.
- Nepal was awarded Affiliate status by the ICC in 1988 and was promoted to Associate rank in 1996.
- After Afghanistan, Nepal are taking quick strides in terms of developments.

#### **Baskaran Adhiban won Reykjavik Open**

- India's Baskaran Adhiban clinched the title in the 33rd Reykjavik Open with an impressive performance that saw him win five of the nine games.

- Adhiban became only the second Indian after Abhijeet Gupta (in 2016) to win the prestigious Reykjavik Open.
- He was the 2008 World Under-16 Champion and the 2009 Indian champion.

#### **PM Modi to inaugurate Mary Kom's Academy**

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the 'Mary Kom Regional Boxing Foundation' in Imphal on March 16.
- Mary Kom was christened 'Magnificent Mary' by the International Boxing Association (AIBA) a few years ago for her stellar career, which also includes an Asian Games gold medal.
- Mary Kom is country's only woman boxer with an Olympic medal.

#### **Chandigarh to host Sports Literature Festival**

- Chandigarh will host Play Write 2018, India's first of its kind "Sports Literature Festival" on March 17-18.
- The "Sports Literature festival" will feature ten interesting sessions covering games like Hockey, Cricket, Marathon running, Soccer, Boxing, Women's Rugby and Kabaddi etc.
- Play Write is being organised under the ambit of the Vibrant Networking Forum.

#### **Wallace won Indian Open**

- Briton Matt Wallace won his second European Tour title at the Indian Open.
- He beat compatriot Andrew Johnston in the first hole of their play-off.
- Wallace attacked the first extra hole, the par-five 18th, and birdied to win the tournament after Johnston took a more conservative approach to finish on par.

#### **Navjot Kaur climbs to World No. 2**

- Navjot Kaur became World No. 2 in the 65 kg category as per the latest rankings released by United World Wrestling.
- The top position belongs to 2015 World Championship silver medallist Petra Olli of Finland though both have 18 points each.
- Vinesh Phogat is No. 2 in the 50kg category behind Lei Chun of China, while Sakshi Malik is No. 4 in the 62 kg category.

#### **Akhil Sheoran won Gold in shooting**

- Akhil Sheoran clinched the gold medal in men's 50m rifle 3-position after he shot 455.6 in the final to pip Austria's Bernhard Pickl in second place with 452.
- Sheoran, thus, became the fourth young Indian shooter to win a medal on ISSF World Cup debut.
- This was India's fourth gold medal at this World Cup and they sit at the top of the medals with a total of nine medals.

#### **Australia lifted Sultan Azlan Shah Cup**

- World champions Australia has lifted the coveted Sultan Azlan Shah Hockey title by outplaying England 2-1 in the finals.
- Australia has now won the prestigious tournament for the 10th time.
- England had to settle with the silver medal while Argentina claimed the bronze medal.
- India finished a disappointed fifth in the six-nation tournament.

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### Winter Paralympics officially Begin

- The largest ever Winter Paralympics were officially inaugurated in freezing conditions at the Olympic Stadium in Pyeongchang, South Korea.
- Record 567 athletes from 48 different nations paraded into the Pyeongchang Olympic Stadium to officially commence the 10-day festival that runs till March 18.
- A neutral Paralympic athletes team consisting of Russian competitors is also participating.

### Anjum Moudgil won Silver in shooting

- Anjum Moudgil won her first International Shooting Sports Federation (ISSF) World Cup Silver medal in the Women's 50m Rifle 3 Positions (3P) event at the Guadalajara, Mexico.

- This was India's eighth medal of the competition and the first silver after having won three Golds and four Bronze medals.
- India still leads the medals tally with eight medals while China is in second place.

### Gora Ho gets Gold at Asia Cup in Bangkok

- Gora Ho, a teenager from the tribal belt of Jharkhand, won gold partnering Akash and Gaurav Lambe in the team recurve event at the Asia Cup.
- The trio beat Mongolia's Adiyasuren Baasankhuu, Otgonbold Baatarhuyag and Gantugs Jantsan by 27-26 in a tiebreaker match.
- With this India finished with three gold and two bronze medals at the Asia Cup Archery Stage 1 meet in Bangkok.

### Dharun breaks National record in hurdles

- Ayyasamy Dharun broke the men's 400m hurdles national record and in the process grabbed a Commonwealth Games ticket on the concluding day of the 22nd Federation Cup National Senior Championships.
- Dharun erased Joseph G Abraham's over 10-year-old earlier national record of 49.94 made in August 2007 in Osaka.
- Dharun got his last medal at an Indian Grand Prix event in Bengaluru.

### Tejaswin Shankar smashes National Record

- Tejaswin Shankar broke his own national record to claim the high jump gold at the 22nd Federation Cup Senior National Athletics Championships.
- Shankar crossed over the bar at 2.28m to beat his own national mark of 2.26m which he achieved in Coimbatore in 2016 at the junior level.
- Shankar had earlier cleared 2.28m at a collegiate event but this was his first athletic federation of India event

### Muskan, Promila won gold at Archery

- India's Muskan Kirar and Promila Daimary clinched gold medals in the women's compound and recurve events respectively at the Archery Asia Cup in Bangkok.
- Kirar got the better of Malaysia's Zakaria Nadhirah 139-136 in the compound final.
- Madhu Vedwan and Gaurav Trambak Lambe also added to India's tally by winning bronze medals in the women's and the men's recurve events.

### Rashid became Youngest Captain

- The leg-spinner from Afghanistan, Rashid Khan (19-year-old) has become the youngest captain in international cricket history.
- He now holds the ICC No. 1 rank for bowlers in both the ODIs and T20Is and also became the youngest

player ever to hold the top spot for any form of ICC men's ranking.

- England's Arran Bindle is the youngest woman player at the age of 19 years.

#### Viswanathan Anand won Rapid event

- Viswanathan Anand won the rapid event at the 11th Tal Memorial chess in Moscow.
- Anand finished with six points out of a possible nine, scoring four wins and four draws.
- Anand defeated Ian Nepomniachtchi, Alexander Grischuk and Daniil Dubov of Russia and Hikaru Nakamura of United States en route to his final score.

#### Shahzar Rizvi sets World Record

- India's Shahzar Rizvi clinched the gold medal with a world record score in his maiden ISSF World Cup appearance.
- Rizvi shot a world record 242.3 in the 10-metre air pistol event's final to beat reigning Olympic champion Christian Reitz to win the top prize.
- The International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) World Cup 2018 is being held at Guadalajara in Mexico.

#### India won Snooker Team World Cup

- India defeated Pakistan in the inaugural IBSF Snooker Team World Cup in Doha.
- The Indian combine of Pankaj Advani and Manan Chandra came back from 0-2 down in the best-of-five final to clinch it with a margin of 3-2.
- The Indian team was awarded \$15,000 (nearly ₹10 lakh) for winning the tournament.

#### Venkatesh quits as BCCI selection chairman

- Former India pacer Venkatesh Prasad submitted his resignation from the post of chairman of the junior national selection committee.
- Prasad, who cited personal reasons for stepping down, has worked as the head of the committee for 30 months.
- Acting president CK Khanna said that he tried convincing Prasad to stay but he had made up his mind.

#### Azlan Shah Cup Hockey Tournament Begins

- The 27th Sultan Azlan Shah Cup Hockey tournament begins in the Malaysian city of Ipoh.
- Six nations – India, hosts Malaysia, defending champions England, Australia, Argentina and Ireland – are taking part in the tournament.
- India, currently the world number six side, will take on world number two Argentina in their opening round-robin match.

#### Navjot Kaur wins 65kg Asian Gold

- Navjot Kaur became the first Indian woman to claim a gold medal in the Asian wrestling championships.

- She defeated Imai Miyu of Japan in the final to win the 65kg title in the Kyrgyzstan capital.
- Navjot, bagged Asian bronze (2011) and silver (2013) medals and a Commonwealth Games bronze medal (2014).

#### Vinesh bags Silver in Wrestling Championships

- Indian wrestler Vinesh Phogat won a silver medal at the ongoing Asian Wrestling Championships in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.
- Phogat lost to Chinese wrestler Chun Lei by a margin of 2-3 in the women's 50kg freestyle final.
- This is Phogat's second consecutive silver at the annual event, following her podium finish at the tournament in New Delhi in 2017.

#### Mascot chosen by children for 2020 Olympics

- The mascots for the Tokyo 2020 Olympics and Paralympics selected by elementary school kids were unveiled.
- The Olympics mascot is a blue-checked, doe-eyed character with pointy ears and "special powers", while the Paralympics mascot sports pink checks and can "talk with stones and the wind".
- A total of 6.5 million children cast their vote to select the mascots.

## Defence

#### U.S., India hold Naval Training

- Indian Navy's Talwar class frigate INS Tarkash carried out a "greeting and training" exercise with the U.S. Navy's Theodore Roosevelt Carrier Strike Group (TRCSG).
- During the exercise, personnel from both the sides "practised working together and strengthened their crews' ship handling".
- The TRCSG will now be responsible for counter-piracy, freedom of navigation operations and training.

#### Navy Decommissioned 3 Minesweepers

- The Indian Navy has decommissioned 3 Karwar-class minesweepers 'Konkan', 'Cannanore' and 'Cuddalore'.
- These minesweepers 'retired' as operational ships after three decades of service in the Indian Navy.
- Each of these minesweepers sailed nearly 30,000 nautical miles during their operational life, which is comparable to circumnavigating the globe four and a half time.

#### INS Ganga decommissioned in Mumbai

- INS Ganga, an indigenously built frigate of the Indian Navy, was decommissioned on 22 March 2018 in Mumbai, after over three decades of service.
- The ship was retired from active service on May 28, 2017.



- INS Ganga was a Godavari-class guided-missile frigate of the Indian Navy.
- The Godavari class was the first significant indigenous warship design and development initiative of the Indian Navy

#### India Successfully Flight-tests BrahMos

- India successfully flight-tested its precision strike BrahMos weapon, which is called the world's fastest supersonic cruise missile.
- The BrahMos hit its designated target with pin-point accuracy in Pokhran, Rajasthan.
- The sleek supersonic cruise missile flies at almost three times the speed of sound, at Mach 2.8.

#### CISF Launched Lost and Found App for Airports

- CISF launched its lost and found mobile app for passengers at 59 airports across India.
- The app, named UMANG (Unified Mobile Application for New-age Governance), offers three facilities – lost and found items at airports, tracking complaints or request status and technical consultancy in security and fire services.
- The CISF had in 2015 launched a lost and found section on its website.

#### Indo-French Naval Exercise Varuna 2018

- The first phase of Indo-French joint naval exercise Varuna 2018 began on March 19, 2018, at the Mormugao Port Trust (MPT) in Vasco da Gama, Goa.
- The exercise was held in the Arabian Sea, off the Goa coast.
- The 2nd and 3rd phases of the exercise will be held at the Chennai coast in April 2018 and in La Reunion Island in May 2018, respectively.

#### Coast Guard Commissions Interceptor Boat

- The Coast Guard commissioned an Interceptor Boat, C-437 at Porbandar to strengthen the security umbrella of the Indian West Coast.
- The boat is provided with advanced navigational and communication equipment which gives it the capability to respond to any maritime situation.
- The boat would be based at Jakhau under the administrative and operational control of the Commander Coast Guard Region.

#### US is India's 2nd Biggest Arms Supplier

- The US has rapidly increased its arms sales to India, emerging over the last five years as its second-biggest supplier by providing 15% of its weapons imports.
- Washington increased its sales by more than 5 times compared to the previous 5 years.
- Russia remained by far India's biggest arms seller while Israel moved up to the third spot.
- India is the world's biggest importer of major arms.

#### IAF lands its heaviest aircraft in Arunachal

- The Indian Air Force (IAF) for first time flawlessly landed its largest transport US-manufactured aircraft, C-17 Globemaster at strategic Tuting Advanced landing ground in Arunachal Pradesh.
- The landing of this aircraft is seen as part of IAF's move to strengthen its overall operations in the border state.
- The aircraft is used for airlift missions, transporting troops and cargo.

#### CISF to offer Consultancy to 5-star Hotels

- CISF has decided to offer security consultancy to 5-star hotels so that they can be prepared to deal with 26/11 type terror attacks.
- Central paramilitary force which is celebrating its 49th raising day has already prepared a blueprint in this regard.
- It soon plans to write to hotels proposing to render services of its special unit & experts and provide specific consultancy on security issues

#### Multi-nation Naval Exercise 'MILES-18'

- The first-ever multi-nation naval exercise at sea, MILES-18, began at the Andaman sea.
- The exercise aimed to hone search and rescue procedures, maritime interdiction operations, core operational skills and exercise a variety of maritime security scenarios.
- 11 naval ships of 8 countries and nine Indian ships participated in this three-day exercise.

#### India, France signed strategic pact

- India and France inked a strategic pact providing for the use of each other's military facilities including opening naval bases to warships.
- The agreement comes amid China's growing military expansionism in the Indo-Pacific region.
- The two countries also signed a pact on exchange and reciprocal protection of classified or protected information.

#### Multilateral Air Force exercise 'Samvedna'

- A Multilateral Air Force exercise, 'Samvedna', was held from March 12 to 17, 2018.
- The exercise was spearheaded by Indian Air Force and will be conducted by Southern Air Command.
- It is the first composite HADR Air exercise in the South Asian region.
- Air Forces of Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, UAE and Myanmar have already committed resources and personnel for the exercise.

#### Israel-US held joint military drill

- US and Israeli had launched the so-called "Juniper Cobra 2018" military drill that simulates a missile attack on Israel.
- It is the largest combat exercise between Israel and the US.

- Since 2001, Israeli and US forces have conducted a total of eight Juniper Cobra joint combat exercises, including the most recent exercise in February 2016.

#### Bharti Defence delivers C-162 to Coast Guard

- Bharati Defence and Infrastructure Ltd., Mangaluru, delivered an interceptor boat, C-162, to the Indian Coast Guard on its premises.
- Sixth in a series of 15 high-speed interceptor boats being procured by the ICG, C-162 was launched on January 31 at BDIL.
- The Indian Coast Guard protects India's maritime interests and enforces maritime law. It is headquartered in New Delhi.

#### Paschim Lehar Exercise concluded

- Paschim Lehar, a three-week tri-service maritime exercise off India's western coast, in which several ships, submarines and fighter aircraft participated, has concluded.
- The objective of the exercise, which commenced on February 12, was to build interoperability.
- Over 40 naval assets including the aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya, participated in it.

#### INSV Tarini reached Cape Town

- An all-women crew leading the INSV Tarini docked at a port in Cape Town in South Africa, in the last phase of its maiden voyage to circumnavigate the globe.
- This was the first-ever Indian circumnavigation of the globe by an all-women crew.
- The vessel was skippered by Lieutenant Commander Vartika Joshi.
- Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman flagged-off the expedition from Goa on September 10.

### Polity

#### Lingayats Community gets Minority Status

- The Karnataka Government declared minority status to the Lingayats community.
- This comes days after the CM Siddaramaiah-led government accepted the suggestions of Nagamohan Das Committee to grant a separate religion status to the Lingayats community.
- The decision was criticised by the Veerashaiva Lingayat Samanvaya Samiti and termed as a politically motivated move.

#### Malik gets additional charge of Odisha

- Bihar Governor Satya Pal Malik got additional charge of Odisha after S.C. Jamir completed his five-year term.
- Chief Justice of Orissa High Court administered the Oath of Office to the Governor.
- Mr Jamir has earlier served as CM of Nagaland for five times, was a Union Deputy Minister in the

Cabinet of Jawaharlal Nehru and Governor of Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Goa.

#### Govt can't charge over ₹50 for RTI

- Supreme Court ruled that government authorities cannot charge more than ₹50 as application fee for those seeking information under the Right to Information (RTI) Act.
- The Supreme Court also said authorities cannot charge more than ₹5 per page for photocopy.
- The applicants also do not have to mention the "motive" in the RTI application.

#### Foreign poll funding won't be scrutinised

- The Lok Sabha has passed a bill that will exempt political parties from the scrutiny of funds they have received from abroad since 1976.
- Through Finance Bill 2016 passed earlier, the government had amended the FCRA to make it easier for parties to accept foreign funds.
- The Representation of People's Act bars political parties from accepting foreign funds.

#### Arunachal to have 2-tier Panchayati Raj

- Arunachal Pradesh Assembly passed a bill to remove Anchal Samiti, intermediate level of the three-tier Panchayati Raj System and set up a two-tier system in the state.
- In a two-tier system, the strength of elected members would be reduced.
- In a two-tier system, planning and execution of schemes would be faster as there would be a direct connection between Gram Panchayats and Zilla Parishad.

#### Arunachal prescribes death for raping minors

- Arunachal Pradesh has become the fourth state after Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Haryana to prescribe the death penalty for those convicted of raping girls under 12 years.
- The State Assembly on 16th March passed the Criminal Laws (Arunachal Pradesh) Amendment Bill 2018.
- The bill seeks to amend, among others, section 354, 354 (B), 354 (D) of Indian Penal Code for harsher punishment.

#### Finance Bill passed in Lok Sabha

- With the passage of the Finance Bill and the Appropriation Bill, the budget exercise is complete in the lower house.
- A Finance Bill is presented in Parliament along with the Annual Financial Statement in lieu of fulfilling the requirement of Article 110 (1)(a) of the Constitution.
- The Finance Bill also contains other provisions related to the Budget can be classified as a Money Bill.

#### Centre Constitutes Mahanadi River Tribunal

- The Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation has issued a notification for constituting the Mahanadi Water Disputes Tribunal.
- The Tribunal will have its headquarters at Delhi and will have the members nominated by the Chief Justice of India.
- Union Government formed the Tribunal under the provisions of the Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956.

#### Panel asks govt to define 'shell companies'

- A Parliamentary Panel has asked the government to define "shell company", and to differentiate between those non-compliant with filing norms and those guilty of fraud.
- This comes after the government recently deregistered 2.26 lakh companies for failing to comply with regulatory requirements.
- The panel said some of these companies may have been merely dormant without any fraudulent intent.

#### Neiphiu Rio to be new Nagaland CM

- Senior NDPP leader Neiphiu Rio was appointed the new chief minister of Nagaland by Governor P B Acharya.
- The governor said he had received letters of support in Rio's favour from 12 legislators of the BJP, one letter from the JD(U) and another from an Independent MLA, besides the 18 legislatures of the NDPP.
- The new ministry will be sworn in on March 8.

#### Cabinet Approves Anti-Trafficking Bill Draft

- The Union Cabinet okayed the draft Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection and Rehabilitation) Bill.
- National Investigation Agency (NIA) will be the nodal authority for probing cases of human trafficking.
- It also proposes a punishment of life imprisonment for repeat offenders.
- The draft Bill divides various offences into "trafficking" and "aggravated trafficking".

#### New law for Rape Offenders in Haryana

- Haryana government gave its nod to a proposal to bring in a legislation that would have a provision awarding Death Penalty to those guilty of raping girls aged 12 years or less.
- Existing Criminal Laws related to sexual offences will be made more stringent.
- In case of rape of a girl up to 12 years of age, there will be a punishment of death or rigorous imprisonment of not less than 14 years.

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