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MAGAZINE

1. BUDGET 2019-20 HIGHLIGHTS

Budget 2019-20 Highlights:

1. Individual tax payers earning income up to Rs 5 Lac will get full tax rebate, ensuring if you invest in 80C like PPF etc you won't be taxed up to Rs 6.5 Lacs. Around 3 crore middle class taxpayers will get tax exemption due to this measure
2. Standard Deduction for salaried class increase from Rs 40,000/- to Rs 50,000/-
3. TDS threshold on interest on bank and post office deposits raised from 10,000 to 40,000 rupees
4. No TDS on House Rent up to Rs 2.4 Lakhs
5. Benefit of rollover of capital tax gains to be increased from investment in one residential house to that in two residential houses, for a taxpayer having capital gains up to 2 crore rupees; can be exercised once in a lifetime
6. Gratuity limit increased from 10 lakh to 30 lakh rupees for all
7. MSME registered under GST will get of 2 per cent interest subvention on the incremental loan of 1 Crore
8. NPS has been more liberalised. The government has increased its share to 14 per cent from the existing 10 per cent,
9. GST has been continuously reduced, resulting in relief of 80,000 crore rupees to consumers; most items of daily use for poor and middle class are now in the 0%-5% tax bracket
10. Computerised system to be in place in next 2 years eliminating direct interference of officers and clients in Scrutiny of Income Tax Cases
11. Businesses with less than Rs. 5 crore annual turnover, comprising over 90% of GST payers, will be allowed to return quarterly returns
12. India will become a \$5 trillion economy in 5 years
13. Govt announces assured structural income support for farmers, naming it PM Kisan Samman Nidhi.
14. The Kisan yojana will be effective December 1, 2018, and the money will be directly transferred into their account. Expect spend of Rs 75,000 crore on this scheme. To provide assured income support for small and marginal farmers, Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi scheme has been approved
15. Under Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi, 6000 rupees per year for each farmer, in three installments, to be transferred directly to farmers' bank accounts, for farmers with less than 2 hectares land holding. This initiative will benefit 12 crore small and marginal farmers, at an estimated cost of Rs. 75,000 crore, this will enable farmers to earn a respectable living
16. 2018-19 Revised Fiscal deficit at 3.4% Current account deficit to be contained to 2.5%:
17. Rs 3 lakh crore recovered by banks through IBC, says Goyal. Now bigger businessmen also concerned about repaying debt
18. India is the fastest growing major economy in the world today. From being 11th largest economy, we are today the 6th largest economy
19. Rs 3 lakh crores loan defaults have already been recovered - We brought transparency to auction and tender process - Steps to crack whip on Economic Offenders - India has achieved 98% rural sanitation
20. More than 98% rural sanitation coverage has been achieved; more than 5.45 lakh villages declared Open Defecation Free(ODF)
21. During 2014-18, 1.53 lakh houses have been constructed under PM Awas Yojana.
22. 1,70,000 crore spent for bringing food at affordable rates to poor people
23. Close to 3 lakh crore already recovered in favour of banks and creditors, big defaulters are not spared by our government. Recapitalization of banks amounting to 2.6 lakh crore has been done
24. Budget allocation of Rs 60,000 crore for National Rural Employment Guarantee Act in 2019-'20.
25. FY19 Food Subsidy Spend Was Rs 1.7 Lakh Crore:
26. Rs 60,000 cr set aside for MGNREGA this year.
27. The world's largest healthcare programme, launched to provide medical care to nearly 50 crore people, resulting in 3,000 crore savings by families of poor sections:
28. Electricity for all households will be a reality by March 2019 & achieved 98% rural sanitation coverage

29. 21 AIIMS operating in India now, 14 of which were announced from 2014 and 22nd AIIMS will be created at Haryana.
30. 10 lakh people have been treated under Ayushman Bharat scheme and have seen massive scale-up in healthcare over last 5 years
31. Pradhan Mantra Gram Sadak Yojana allocation is set at Rs 19,000 crore.
32. Increased allocation for Rashtriya Gokul Mission to 750 crore in current year
33. 2% interest subvention to farmers pursuing animal husbandry and fisheries
34. 50% of the GDP comes from sweat and toil of 42 crore workers in unorganized sector:
35. Mega Pension Yojana, namely Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Mandhan, to provide assured monthly pension of 3000 rupees per month, with contribution of 100 rupees per month, for workers in unorganized sector after 60 years of age
36. Rs 143 crore LED bulbs distributed which will save 50,000 crores of rupees
37. Rashtriya Kamdhenu Ayog to look after effective implementation of policies and schemes for welfare of cows
38. Nearly 8 crore free LPG connections were planned to be provided to relieve women from use of woodfire for cooking. So far 6 crore connections have already been provided.
39. For workers and labourers, a new pension scheme will come up to ensure an increase in Centre's contribution by four percent. The pension has been increased from Rs 3,500 to Rs 7,000:
40. Welfare department board to be set up under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.
41. 75% of woman beneficiaries under PM Mudra Yojana, 26 weeks of maternity leave and Pradhan Mantri Matritva Yojana, are all empowering women:
42. A national programme on Artificial Intelligence has been envisioned by the government. Nine priority areas have been identified:
43. Committee under NITI Aayog to be set up to for denotified nomadic & semi nomadic community
44. 1 crore loan can now be obtained under 59 minutes:
45. Our defence budget this year is over 3 lakh crore
46. India is the fastest highway developer in the whole world, 27 kms of highways built each day, projects stuck for decades completed;
47. Vande Bharat Express will provide speed, service and safety to citizens and will give a boost to #Make in India:
48. Single window clearance for filmmaking to be made available to Indian filmmakers, anti-camcording provision to be introduced to Cinematography Act to combat film piracy
49. Allocation for the north eastern region has been proposed to be increased to Rs 58,166 crore in this year, it will be a 21% rise over the previous year
50. Direct tax collections from 6.38 lakh crore rupees in 2013-14 to almost 12 lakh crore rupees; tax base up from 3.79 crore to 6.85 crore:

Note:

Detailed Facts and Analysis of Interim Budget-2019 released on February 1, 2019 will be published in March issue

2. ISSUES IN FOCUS - ANALYSIS

1. How debt recast move will affect MSMEs, lenders

The central bank has allowed lenders to recast debts of stressed micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), provided the total fund and non-fund based exposure to a borrower doesn't exceed ₹ 25 crore as on 1 January.

The Reserve Bank of India has allowed a one-time restructuring of existing loans to small businesses that have defaulted, but are not non-performing as on 1 January. Such a debt restructuring, would not lead to a downgrade in asset classification. To be eligible for the debt restructuring scheme, the aggregate exposure, including non-fund based facilities of banks and non-banking financial companies (NBFCs), to a borrower should not exceed ₹ 25 crore as on 1 January. Also, the restructuring has to be implemented by 31 March 2020.

The government has been pushing RBI to provide relief to the stressed MSME sector. The central bank's board on 19 November advised RBI to consider a scheme to recast loans of those MSMEs that were hurt by the demonetization of high-value currency notes in November 2016 and, subsequently, the implementation of the goods and services tax in July 2017. A study by RBI in August 2018 found that credit growth in the MSME sector, which had started slowing even before demonetization, declined further after note ban was implemented.

A Kotak Institutional Equities report said MSMEs form close to 25% of commercial lending in India as of FY18. The segment recorded an 18% year-on-year growth in Q1 FY19.

How will the scheme affect lenders?

Under this scheme, lenders have to set aside 5% of the outstanding loan as provision, over and above the current outstanding amount. All standard loans (being regularly repaid) attract 0.4% provision. The recast scheme ensures that MSME loans do not slip into the non-performing asset category, requiring 15% provision. RBI has also asked each bank and NBFC to formulate a policy for the scheme, with board approval for viability assessment of the stressed accounts and regular monitoring of the restructured accounts.

In March 2016, RBI notified a mechanism for resolving stressed MSME loans of up to ₹ 25 crore. Under this, banks classify stress in such loans into three categories—special mention account (SMA) 0, SMA 1 and SMA 2—depending on the delay in repayment. RBI data for the six months ended March 2017 show that 137,282 MSME loan accounts were referred for resolution. Of these, banks used rectification in 80,905 cases and made recoveries in 54,180 others. Only 2,197 accounts were recast.

2. What CSO's 7.2% growth forecast means for India

The Central Statistics Office (CSO) recently released the first advance estimates of gross domestic product (GDP) for 2018-19, which showed the Indian economy is likely to grow at 7.2% in the current fiscal ending 31 March.

When viewed annually, CSO data suggests the economy is likely to accelerate to a three-year high of 7.2% in 2018-19 after decelerating to 6.7% in 2017-18. However, the quarterly data signals a sequential slowdown in the economy. After GDP decelerated faster than anticipated in the second quarter (July-September) to 7.1% from 8.2% in the first quarter (April-June), CSO's full-year estimate suggests the economy may grow at 6.75% in the second half (October-March), against 7.75% in the first half (April-September). While farm and industrial sectors are likely to grow faster in FY19 than in FY18, the services sector may slow down.

While most of the slowdown in the second half of the current fiscal will be due to the fading base effect of the first half, a sluggish increase in rural wages and low farm prices despite a hike in minimum support prices are likely to hamper rural demand. Limited scope for government spending and worsening prospects of global growth will add to the worries in the second half. However, election-related political spending, targeted mostly at the rural economy, and an increase in disposable income from softening oil prices observed in the December quarter, may provide the upside to rural demand.

On 28 February, CSO will release the third quarter (October-December) GDP data and the second advance estimates. CSO will revise its annual growth projection after incorporating the third quarter data.

CSO usually releases the estimates a month before the Union budget. In FY18, the Narendra Modi government advanced the budget presentation to 1 February. So this time, CSO released the estimates in January as sought by the finance ministry. Since third quarter GDP data is not available so soon, it took into account other lead indicators such as factory output and government expenditure, which were available after the second quarter GDP data was released, to project the full-year growth.

The data will help the government evaluate the growth outlook, tax buoyancy and calculate deficits for budgetary purposes. The higher-than-budgeted nominal GDP growth of 12.2% estimated for FY19 against the budget estimate of 11.5% will help it show better fiscal deficit and revenue deficit numbers in a revenue-scarce year. Last year, the government did put aside the CSO estimate of 9.5% nominal GDP growth for FY18 and assumed 10.5% nominal GDP growth, as was suggested by the Economic Survey.

3. ASER Report on quality of learning in India

The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2018 published by education non-profit "Pratham" shows the prevalence of learning deficit and the poverty of basic reading and arithmetic skills among students in Indian schools.

The report shows that Indian students, especially those in elementary school (Classes I-VIII), are not learning enough. To cite one metric, only half (50.3%) of all students in Class V can read texts meant for Class II students. There seems to have been some improvement in learning levels, especially among students of Class III and Class V, in 2018 compared with those of the previous five years. However, the improvement is not visible at a higher level, for example among students of Class VIII. The latest report collected data from 596 districts by surveying 546,527 students from 354,944 homes.

The deficit is across government and private schools. Traditionally, students in private schools have fared better than their government school counterparts, but that's a relative situation. For example, while 40% of Class VIII students in government schools can do

simple division, the figure is 54.2% in private schools. But this success rate is three percentage points below that of 2012 and the same as in 2014. "Private school students are believed to have better family background, both in economic and education front. That's a key differentiator," said Pratham chief executive Rukmini Banerjee.

The quality of the learning level bears directly on India's future workforce, its competitiveness and the economy. India's demographic dividend depends on the learning level of students.

There is gradual improvement in some segments and in some states. The reading ability among Class V students in Kerala jumped 10 percentage points in 2018 from that in 2016. In Himachal Pradesh, the growth is nearly 8 percentage points and in Chhattisgarh and Odisha it is around 7 percentage points between 2016 and 2018. Still, data from states such as Jharkhand, West Bengal, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu shows a marginal dip in the same criterion for the same cohort.

The situation has been almost static in the last five years. While 30.9% of students in the 6-14 age group were in private schools in 2018, the figure was 30.6% in 2016 and 30.8% in 2014. This is less than a percentage point growth since 2014. In Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, there is a two percentage point drop in private school enrolment. In Gujarat, Bihar, Jammu and Kashmir, it has risen by a similar margin. Private school dependence in Manipur (70.4%) and Haryana (55.3%) is much higher than the national average.

4. RBI's draft norms on Retail payments System-Analysis

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) recently issued a policy paper on retail payment systems that proposes to ease norms for the entry of new players in a bid to boost competition and innovation.

RBI, in its monetary policy review in June last year, announced that it would publish a policy paper on retail payment systems. The paper throws light on the concerns of increasing concentration of a single operator for retail payments. It also discusses the need for competition and innovation and the resultant impact on economic efficiency and financial stability. Payment systems in India are currently characterized by a few operators such as the National Payment Corporation of India (NPCI). The rationale for this paper is to encourage more players to participate in and promote panIndia payment platforms.

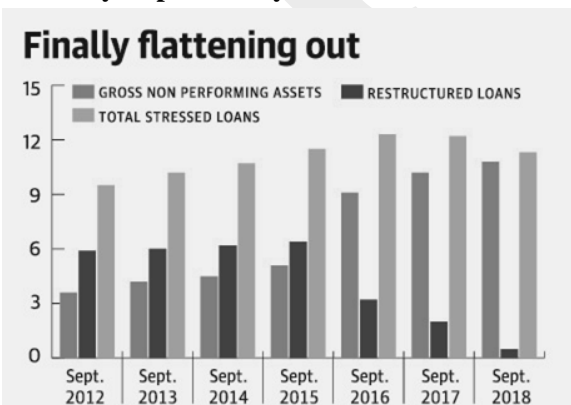
NPCI was set up in 2008 under the aegis of RBI and the Indian Banks' Association. It has a diversified shareholding with 56 banks and a 51% stake held by public sector banks. NPCI operates retail payment systems such as National Financial Switch, Immediate Payment Service, Unified Payments Interface including Bharat Interface for Money, National Unified USSD Platform and RuPay. It processes nearly 48% of transactions by volume, aggregating 15% in terms of value. RBI manages and operates the National Electronic Funds Transfer system and the Electronic Clearing Service.

The policy paper proposes an open and keep-on-tap window for making applications to all payment systems. It also seeks to review entry-point norms for payment operators.

The concentration of payment system operations with one entity enables standardization of processes and leads to better oversight and governance. It also ensures economies of scale by putting less pressure on capital and infrastructure. However, the RBI paper warns of systemic risks involved if all network participants are dependent on a single supplier for payment processing. A single operator leads to inefficiencies, operational risks and lack of innovation and upgrade, it adds.

The payment system is managed by 89 retail operators, with the National Payment Corporation of India as the umbrella organization for all transactions. There are five card payment and ATM networks, eight non-banks that are classified as white-label ATM operators, 48 non-banks and 60 banks that are prepaid payment instrument issuers, three entities under the Trade Receivables Discounting System and nine banks in charge of the Money Transfer Service Scheme.

5. Bad Loans Scenario from RBI's latest financial stability Report-Analysis



RBI's latest financial stability report indicates that Indian banks' bad loan crisis could be peaking out

In the last five years, investors and depositors in India have become accustomed to banks springing unpleasant surprises on them every time they thought the worst was over on the bad loan crisis.

The Reserve Bank of India's (RBI's) half-yearly Financial Stability Reports, which take stock of the strength and stability of Indian banks, had turned into chronicles of gloom tracing the steady worsening of the crisis.

But the RBI's latest report for December 2018 breaks away from the trend to offer glimmers of hope to these stakeholders. Here are the takeaways from this report.

Dip in proportion

For the first time since the bad loan saga began to play out six years ago, Indian banks have reported a decline in the proportion of loans gone bad for the half-year ended September 2018.

Their aggregate Gross Non-Performing Asset (GNPA) ratio dipped from 11.5% in March 2018 to 10.8% in September 2018. The GNPA ratio captures the proportion of loans in a bank's books on which borrowers haven't repaid dues for more than 90 days. The trend started tamely enough, with banks reporting a GNPA ratio of 3.4% in March 2013. But more skeletons began tumbling out of the closet after RBI initiated an asset quality review of individual banks to ferret out their problematic accounts in March 2015. The GNPA ratio more than doubled over the next three years to peak at 11.5% by March 2018.

Even now, the fact that well over a tenth of all loans given out by Indian banks have gone bad is not cause for cheer. But, for banks and their stakeholders, the recent flattening out of the GNPA ratio is to be welcomed because they can finally have a fix on the size of the problem that they're dealing with, instead of chasing a moving target.

The bulk of bad loans remains concentrated with public sector banks (GNPA ratio of 14.8%), while private sector banks are much better off (3.8%). Of the 55 banks, 23 had ratios below 5% as of September 2018, 10 featured GNPA's in the 5-10% bracket and 21 banks sat on over-the-top GNPA's of 10% to 30%.

Better accounting

If the peaking of GNPA is good news, even better news is the proportion of restructured advances lurking in bank books falling to 0.5% by September 2018. This shows that most of the doubtful loans in bank books are now accounted for.

One of the most disturbing aspects of the ongoing bad loan saga was that GNPA's officially recognised by the banks were only the tip of the iceberg. In 2013, for every bad loan that banks had recognised as NPA, there was another dicey one hidden from public view because of a cosy arrangement with the borrower to restructure the loan.

In March 2015, while banks reported a GNPA ratio of 4.6%, their restructured advances were far larger at 6.5%. Today, the GNPA ratio is at 10.8%, but restructured loans are down to 0.5%.

Again, it is RBI's asset quality reviews and its February 2018 circular asking banks to wind up all their restructuring schemes that have hastened this recognition.

The total proportion of 'stressed' loans on bank books (NPAs plus restructured loans) peaked at 12.3% in September 2016 and has steadily declined to 11.3% now.

Pending provisions

The spring cleaning of banks' books seems to be almost over when it comes to recognizing NPAs. But

the pain for investors and depositors will be at an end only when the banks have provided for (set aside their profits) all their irrecoverable loans.

On this score, we are just over the halfway mark. The provision coverage ratio for all banks stood at 52.4% at the end of September 2018.

This suggests that the dent to bank profitability from bad loan provisions will continue over the next many quarters. But public sector banks with a provision coverage of 51.4% have much more pain ahead of them, than private sector banks (56.2%) or foreign banks (87.1%).

Rising provisions were the reason why even as their overall bad loan position improved, five banks saw their capital positions dip below RBI-mandated levels of 9% in the half year ended September 2018, compared to just one bank in March.

The average capital adequacy ratio for all banks was at a comfortable 13.4% as of September 2018.

RBI's stress testing shows that 9 of these banks could fall short of the critical 9% mark by March 2019, even with best-case assumptions on GDP growth, deficits, lending rates and inflation.

Therefore, demands from the distressed public sector banks for capital infusions from the government may continue to tax the fisc and taxpayers in the coming quarters.

3. NATIONAL ISSUES

Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (Amendment) Act, 2019

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (Amendment) Act, 2019 has received the assent of the President of India.

The bill mainly seeks to do away with the “no-detention policy” in schools.

The legislation is significant as it brings accountability in the elementary education system. The proposal received the support of a majority of state governments.

RTE amendment Bill- Key features:

The Bill seeks to amend the Right to Education (RTE) Act to abolish the “no-detention” policy in schools. Under the current provisions of the Act, no student can be detained up to class VIII.

As per the amendment, it would be left to the states to decide whether to continue the no-detention policy.

The bill provides for regular examination in classes V and VIII, and if a child fails, a re-examination will be conducted within 2 months.

Such children will be provided with 2-month remedial teaching to perform better in the re-examinations. If the students still do not pass the exam, the state government may decide to detain them.

Right to Education (RTE) Act:

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 (the Act) provides for free and compulsory education to all children of the age of 6 to 14 years.

What is no detention policy?

According to this provision “no child admitted in a school shall be held back in any class”. This translates into automatic promotions to the next class every year until Class VII. Instead of exams, schools are supposed to hold Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluations (CCE) for every child.

The TSR Subramanian committee for formulation of the National Policy on Education has also suggested that ‘no detention’ policy should be discontinued after Class V. It had recommended restoration of detention provision, remedial coaching and two extra chances to each student such to move to a higher class.

Regional Conference on “Deendayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme (DDRS)” held at Mumbai

DDRS is a Central Sector Scheme of Government of India which is being implemented since 1999 for providing financial assistance to NGOs working for education and rehabilitation of persons with disabilities.

This scheme was revised in 2018 and the revised scheme is being implemented since 1st April 2018.

Agri-Vision 2019

It is a two-day conference on ‘Envisioning Agro Solutions for Smart and Sustainable Agriculture’ at Hyderabad

Silver Jubilee Celebrations of Small Farmers’ Agri-Business Consortium (SFAC)

The Government established Small Farmers’ Agri-Business Consortium (SFAC) as a Society in 1994 to facilitate agri-business ventures by catalyzing private investment through Venture Capital Assistance (VCA) Scheme in close association with financial institutions. The setting up of State level SFAC as counterpart agency of Central SFAC for agribusiness projects was part of the Scheme.

The role of State SFACs is to aggressively promote agribusiness project development in their respective States. The main functions of SFAC are:

- (i) Promotion of development of small agribusiness through VCA scheme;
- (ii) Helping formation and growth of Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) / Farmer Producer Companies (FPCs);
- (iii) Improving availability of working capital and development of business activities of FPOs/FPCs through Equity Grant and Credit Guarantee Fund Scheme;
- (iv) Implementation of National Agriculture Market (e-NAM) Electronic Trading platform.

Various programs such as professional training, professional handholding, Delhi Kisan Mandi, FPO-Buyer e-interface portal and strengthening of basic infrastructure etc. are being implemented by the SFAC to make FPOs more sustainable. Equity Grant, Credit Guarantee Fund scheme and Venture Capital Assistance schemes are being implemented with the objective of making FPOs financially self-reliant.

551 Farmers Produce Organisation (FPOs) have been constituted during 2014-18 by the SFAC, 147.09% more than 223 FPOs set up during 2011-2014. About 7.52 lakh small, medium and marginal farmers have been connected with FPOs.

Diffo bridge

Raksha Mantri Smti. Nirmala Sitaraman inaugurated the 426.60 m long Pre Stressed Concrete Box Girder type Diffo bridge over Diffo river on Roing – Koronu- Paya road in Arunachal Pradesh.

Built under Project Udayak by Border Roads Organisation (BRO).

The Dippo bridge will provide for uninterrupted access between Dibang Valley and Lohit valley region of Eastern Arunachal Pradesh together with providing an all-weather road to our troops deployed on the China border.

Project Udayak :

Project Udayak of the Border Roads Organisation was raised on June 1990 at Doomdooma Assam. The name of the project Udayak is synonymous to the land of rising sun which fits appropriately to the area it operates. It consists of two border road taskforces undertaking construction activities in the northeastern region.

Border Roads Organisation:

Border Roads Organisation (BRO) develops and maintains road networks in India's border areas and friendly neighbouring countries.

Formation : 7 May 1960

Headquarters : New Delhi

Director General : Lt. Gen.Harpal Singh

Country's second defence innovation hub to come up in Maharashtra

- Nashik in Maharashtra will be the site of the country's second defence innovation hub after Coimbatore in Tamil Nadu.
- The defence innovation hub at Nashik will help local industries and entrepreneurs and further the Centre's Make in India push in the country's defence sector.
- The Ministry of Defence had set a target of making the country among the top five arms exporters by 2025.

Women to comprise 20% of military police

Women will be inducted into the military police in a graded manner, and will eventually comprise 20 percent of its total strength.

The decision to induct women in the military police with an aim to enhance their representation in the armed forces was announced by Army Chief General Bipin Rawat last year.

Accordingly, the Army chalked out induction of approximately 800 women in military police with a yearly intake of 52 personnel per year. Currently, women are allowed in select areas such as medical, legal, educational, signals and engineering wings of the Army.

The role of the military police includes policing cantonments and army establishments, preventing breach of rules and regulations by soldiers, maintaining movement of soldiers as well as logistics during peace and war, handling prisoners of war and extending aid to civil police whenever required.

At present the Army has 3.80% of its work force as women, the Air Force has 13.09% and the Navy 6%

L&T's howitzer gun-manufacturing unit in Surat

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Armoured Systems Complex of Larsen and Toubro (L&T) in Gujarat, the first private facility in the country where the K9 Vajra self-propelled Howitzer guns will be manufactured.

The company has set up the Armoured Systems Complex at Hazira, around 30km from Surat, to manufacture and integrate advanced armoured platforms, such as self-propelled artillery Howitzers, future infantry combat vehicles, future-ready combat vehicles and future main battle tanks.

L&T had signed a transfer of technology contract for guns with South Korean company Hanwha Corporation.

Health Ministry bans 80 more fixed-dose combination drugs

The Union Health Ministry has banned 80 more fixed-dose combination (FDC) drugs which include antibiotics, painkillers, medicines used for treating fungal and bacterial infections, hypertension and anxiety.

The ban has come into force since January 11 2019.

With this, the total number of banned FDCs now stand at 405. Another 325 drugs were banned in September 2018 out of which the Supreme Court allowed the sale of three drugs, including Saridon..

A fixed-dose combination contains two or more drugs combined in a fixed ratio of doses, available as a single dose.

According to the notification, some of the drugs that have been banned include antibiotics like Cefglobe OZ, Taxim -OZ, drugs used for treating bacterial and fungal infections like Orflaz kitand Vaginobact, hypertension drugs like Telipril H and Loram H and anti anxiety drug Resta (combination of Paracetamol+ Alprazolam).

These drugs were banned on the recommendation of the Drugs Technical Advisory Board (DTAB), which examined the rationality and safety of these FDCs.

National Museum of Indian Cinema

National Museum of Indian Cinema (NMIC) was established in Mumbai.

The state-of-the-art Museum, built at a cost of Rs. 140.61 crore, aims to take its visitors through an absorbing journey of over a century of Indian cinema in a story telling mode with the help of visuals, graphics, artifacts, interactive exhibits and multimedia expositions.

The creation of the Museum has been guided by the Museum Advisory Committee headed by Shri

ShyamBenegal. An innovation Committee headed by Shri Prasoon Joshi was also constituted to provide an upgrade to NMIC.

The Museum is housed in two buildings – the New Museum Building and the 19th century historic palace Gulshan Mahal – in the Films Division campus in Mumbai.

1. Gandhi & Cinema: it not only depicts the movies made on the life Mahatma Gandhi but also showcases the deep impact his life had on cinema.
2. Children's Film Studio: it gives visitors, particularly children, an opportunity to explore the science, technology and art behind filmmaking. It offers hands on experience on various facets associated with making cinema like camera, light, shooting, experience of acting, etc. – presented in an interactive format. The exhibits displayed include chroma studio, immersive experience zone, stop-motion animation studio, virtual makeover studio, etc.
3. Technology, creativity & Indian cinema: it showcases the creative use of technology by Indian film makers over the years to produce cinematographic impact on the silver screen.
4. Cinema across India: it showcases the charismatic kaleidoscopic presence of the vibrant cinematographic culture across India.

Gulshan Mahal is an ASI Grade-II Heritage Structure which has been restored as part of the NMIC project. The displays present here showcase the journey of over a hundred years of Indian cinema. It is divided into 9 sections viz. The Origin of Cinema, Cinema comes to India, Indian Silent Film, Advent of Sound, The Studio Era, The impact of World War II, Creative Resonance, New Wave and Beyond and Regional Cinema.

Pradhan Mantri Rozgar Protsahan Yojana Achieves 1 Crore Milestone

Pradhan Mantri Rozgar Protsahan Yojana (PMRPY), the flagship scheme of the Central Government for employment generation has crossed the milestone of one crore beneficiaries as on January 14, 2019.

PMRPY was announced on August 07, 2016 and is being implemented by Ministry of Labour and Employment through the Employees' Provident Fund Organization (EPFO).

Under the scheme, Government is paying full employers' contribution of 12% (towards Employees' Provident Fund and Employees' Pension Scheme both), for a period of 3 years in respect of new employees who have been registered with the EPFO on or after 1st April 2016, with salary up to Rs. 15,000 per month.

The number of establishments who have benefitted during the implementation of the scheme is 1.24 lakh till date.

The entire system is online and AADHAR based with no human interface in the implementation of the scheme.

The terminal date for registration of beneficiaries through an establishment under the PMRPY is March 31, 2019.

Numaligarh refinery capacity to be tripled

Govt. of India approved tripling the capacity of the Numaligarh Refinery in Assam to 9 million metric tonnes per annum (mmtpa) at a cost of Rs. 22,594 crore.

Govt also approved the setting up of a crude oil pipeline from Paradip to Numaligarh and a product pipeline from Numaligarh to Siliguri.

The project is to be completed within 48 months, after approval and receipt of the statutory clearances.

The Centre will provide the project Rs. 1,020 crore of the VGF.

The expansion of the refinery will meet the deficit of petroleum products in the northeast.

Group of Ministers (GoM) constituted on issues relating to lottery

In pursuance of decision in the 32nd Meeting of GST Council held on 10th January, 2019 at New Delhi, a Group of Ministers (GoM) on issues relating to lottery has been constituted.

Shri Sudhir Mungantiwar, Finance Minister, Government of Maharashtra will be the head and Convener of GoM.

The Terms of Reference (ToR) for the GoM for lottery shall be as follows:

- Whether the disparity in tax structure on the same product/commodity be continued or a uniform rate be prescribed for both;
- Whether private persons authorized by the States are misusing the lower rate and getting enriched themselves at the cost of the State and suggest measures to curb it;
- Examine any other issue related to enforcement including the legal frame work, so as to prevent evasion of tax on lottery and suggest appropriate tax rate to address the problem;
- The GoM on issues relating to lottery shall be assisted by a Committee of officers from the Centre and the States as convened by the GoM;
- Secretary of the GoM on issues relating to lottery shall be Shri Manish Sinha, Joint Secretary (TRU-II), CBIC;
- The GoM for lottery shall submit its report to GST Council in next Meeting for consideration of the GST Council.

Sangeet Natak Akademi launches second phase of the Web Campaign 'SĀNJHI-MUJH MEIN KALĀKĀR'

- Sangeet Natak Akademi (SNA) the National Academy of Music, Dance and Drama will launched the second phase of the Web Campaign 'SĀNJHI –MUJH MEIN KALĀKĀR' an initiative to document and promote the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) and diverse cultural traditions of the country by direct public-participation.
- This is a unique talent search where the participant will showcase their talent in the fields of music, dance, drama, puppetry, folk and tribal arts, culinary skills, painting, sculpture etc. The literal meaning of the term SĀNJHI is "to share" and "to partner", and the cultural traditions of our country has developed and prospered on the notions of harmony.
- The second phase of this campaign, SĀNJHI – MUJH MEIN KALĀKĀR, has its main focus area- the folk, traditional, customary, socially events and ritualistic art forms- woven as a cultural fabric around the harvest festival season of January. It is celebrated all across the country, known as various nomenclatures like Makar Sankranti, Pongal, Lohri, Bhogali Bihu, Torgya, Uttarayan, Attukkal Pongal etc.

List of pilgrim sites under Deendayal Matri Tirthatan scheme expanded

- The Uttarakhand Tourism Development Council has expanded the list of pilgrim centres under the Deendayal Matri Tirthatan scheme which earlier included the three holy sites of Badrinath, Gangotri and Ritha Sahib.
- Under the scheme, persons above the age of 60 years can avail free lodging, food and transport to these pilgrim sites.
- An official release here on Tuesday said the tourism development council has included 10 other holy sites under the Deendayal Matri Tirthatan scheme.
- The new additions to the list include Kaliyar Sharif (Haridwar), Tadkeshwar (Pauri), Kalimath (Rudraprayag), Jageshwar (Almora), Baijnath (Bageshwar), Gairad Golu (Bageshwar), Gangoli Hat (Pithoragarh), Mahasu Devta Mandir Hanol (Dehradun), Kalinka (Pauri) and Jwalpa Devi (Pauri).

13-km, two-lane Kollam bypass

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi officially declared open the much-awaited Kollam bypass on National Highway-66.
- The 13 km-long two-lane bypass, with a project cost of Rs 352 crore, will cut travel time between Alappuzha and Thiruvananthapuram districts of

Kerala and is expected to decongest the traffic in Kollam town.

- The bypass includes three major bridges over the Ashtamudi Lake, having a total length of 1540 metres.

Womaniya on GeM

Government eMarketplace (GeM) has launched an initiative to enable women entrepreneurs and self-help groups to sell different products at the platform.

GeM is an online platform of commerce ministry for procurement of goods and services by government departments, public sector units, and other agencies.

The initiative - Womaniya on GeM - seeks to develop women entrepreneurship on the margins of society to achieve gender-inclusive economic growth.

The initiative would enable women entrepreneurs and women self-help groups to sell handicrafts and handloom, jute and coir products, home dcor and office furnishings, directly to various government ministries, departments and institutions,.

So far, 1,80,862 sellers and service providers are registered with the portal to sell 7,31,431 products and services.

Gujarat set to become first state to implement new 10% quota law

Gujarat is set to become the first state to provide 10 per cent reservation in jobs and educational institutions to the economically weaker sections in the general category.

Commemorative coin of Rs 350 to mark birth anniversary of Guru Gobind Singh

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has released a commemorative coin of Rs 350 to mark the birth anniversary of Guru Gobind Singh, the ten preachers of the Sikh religion.

On January 5, 2017, he released commemorative postage during the 350th birth anniversary celebrations of Guru Gobind Singh.

Four more projects of Rs. 190.46 crore sanctioned under Swadesh Darshan and PRASHAD schemes of M/o Tourism

The Ministry of Tourism has sanctioned four new projects for Rs. 190.46 Crores under the tourism infrastructure development schemes, Swadesh Darshan and PRASHAD in the states of Meghalaya, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh recently. Following are the sanctioned projects and the details.

1. 'Development of West Khasi Hills (Nongkhlaw-Krem Tiro - Khudoi & Kohmang Falls – Khri River- Mawthadraishan, Shillong), Jaintia Hills (Krang Suri Falls- Shyrmang- Iooksi), Garo Hills (Nokrek Reserve, Katta Beel, Siju Caves)' in Meghalaya for Rs. 84.95 crore.

2. Development of Gorakhnath Temple (Gorakhpur), Devipattan Temple (Balrampur) and Vatvashni Temple (Domariyagunj) has also been sanctioned for Rs. 21.16 Crores under Spiritual Circuit of Swadesh Darshan Scheme.
3. Under the PRASHAD scheme, the Ministry has sanctioned the project 'Development of Govardhan' in District Mathura in Uttar Pradesh for Rs. 39.74 Crores.
4. 'Development of Pilgrimage Amenities at Somnath – Phase II' for Rs. 44.59 Crores.

The Ministry of Tourism has launched the schemes of Swadesh Darshan - Integrated Development of Theme-Based Tourist Circuits and PRASHAD-Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual, Heritage Augmentation Drive in the year 2014-15 for the development of tourism infrastructure in the country.

Atal Tinkering Lab Handbook & 10 Month Student Entrepreneurship Programme with Dell EMC announced

- NITI Aayog's Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) released the "Atal Tinkering Lab Handbook – Nayee Dishayen, Naye Nirman, Naya Bharat" on the eve of the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda, also celebrated as the National Youth Day.
 - The Atal Tinkering Lab Handbook captures the experiences of the young innovators of the country with the Atal Tinkering Lab. The book is a compendium of guidelines, resources, methodologies, key learning, case studies of the ATL ecosystem and the outcome and impact that is being created by the Atal Tinkering Labs has been showcased, including some case examples of celebrating and rewarding innovation, over the last two years.
- They also announced the 10 Month Student Entrepreneurship Programme, which is a fully-funded initiative to help the Top Six innovations of the Atal Tinkering Marathon 2017 to transform their innovative prototypes into functioning, scaled and Go-to-Market products.

2 high-speed interceptor boats inducted into navy

- The Indian Navy inducted two Fast Interceptor Craft (FIC) into its fleet at Nagapattinam in an effort to beef up coastal security.
- The high-speed vessels, capable of operating in shallow waters, were acquired for Sagar Prahari Bal, a unit of the Navy created post-26/11 Mumbai terror attacks as part of the coastal security construct, said a defence press release here.

Six States to Sign Agreement for Renukaji Multipurpose Dam Project Tomorrow

- An agreement for Renukaji Dam Multipurpose Project was signed among six states- Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Delhi, Rajasthan and Uttarakhand

Renukaji Multi Purpose Project:

- 3 storage projects are proposed to be constructed on the river Yamuna and two of its tributaries - Tons and Giri in the hilly regions of Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh of Upper Yamuna Basin. These include
 1. Lakhwar project on river Yamuna in Uttarakhand,
 2. Kishau on river Tons in Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh and
 3. Renukaji on river Giri in Himachal Pradesh.
- These three projects were identified as National Projects in 2008 under which 90% funding of the cost of irrigation & drinking water component will be provided by the Govt. of India as central assistance and the rest 10% cost of the irrigation and drinking water component will be borne by the beneficiary states.

Centre aims for 20% cut in air pollution by 2024

- The Centre has launched a programme to reduce particulate matter (PM) pollution by 20-30% in at least 102 cities by 2024.
- The National Clean Air Programme (NCAP), is envisaged as a scheme to provide the States and the Centre with a framework to combat air pollution Long-term process
- Project Cost is Rs. 300-crore.
- The NCAP will be a mid-term, five-year action plan with 2019 as the first year.
- In the past year, the 102 cities, identified as hotspots of pollution, were asked to submit a plan for how they would address the problem.
- For achieving the NCAP targets, the cities will have to calculate the reduction in pollution keeping 2017's average annual PM levels as the base year.
- The World Health Organization's database on air pollution over the years has listed Tier I and Tier II Indian cities as some of the most polluted places in the world. In 2018, 14 of the world's 15 most polluted cities were in India. A study in the journal *Lancet* ranked India as No.1 on premature mortality and deaths from air pollution.

Cabinet Approves 5 New AIIMSs

Govt. of India gave approval for establishment of three new AIIMS at Samba in Jammu, Pulwama in Kashmir Rajkot in Gujarat, Tamilnadu and Telangana.

These All India Institutes of Medical Sciences or AIIMSs will be set up under Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY).

The objective is to establish the new AIIMS as Institutions of National Importance for providing quality tertiary healthcare, medical education, nursing education and research in the region, the statement added.

Establishment of new AIIMS involves creation of Hospital, Teaching Block for medical and nursing courses, residential complex and allied facilities/services, broadly on the pattern of AIIMS, New Delhi and other six new AIIMS taken up under Phase-I of PMSSY.

Strengthening of Northeast Autonomous councils

- The Union Cabinet approved a constitutional amendment to Article 280 of the constitution and 6th Schedule to increase the financial and executive powers of the 10 autonomous councils in the Sixth Schedule areas of the northeast.
- The amendment would impact a population of about 1 crore tribals living in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram, according to the Centre.
- The Finance Commission would be mandated to recommend devolution of financial resources to the councils.
- Till now, the autonomous councils have depended on grants from Central Ministries and the State governments for specific projects.
- As per the proposed amendment, at least one third of the seats would be reserved for women in the village and municipal councils in the Sixth Schedule areas of Assam, Mizoram and Tripura.
- The amendment also provides for transfer of additional 30 subjects, including the departments of Public Works, Forests, Public Health Engineering, Health and Family Welfare, Urban Development and Food and Civil Supply to Karbi Anglong Autonomous Territorial Council and Dima Hasao Autonomous Territorial Council in Assam.

India set to get fourth air base in the Andamans

INS Kohassa will be India's 4th air base and the third naval air facility in the Andamans that overlooks key sea lanes of communication and strategic points.

These islands dominate the Bay of Bengal and the Six Degree and Ten Degree channels with more than 60,000 commercial vessels passing through each year.

Named after a White-Bellied Sea Eagle, which is a large bird of prey endemic to Andaman and Nicobar Islands, INS Kohassa will become the third Naval Air Base in the region after INS Utkrosh at Port Blair and INS Baaz at Campbell Bay.

Saab, AAI sign MoU over air traffic management solutions

Swedish aerospace and defence company Saab has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Airports Authority of India (AAI) to explore air traffic management (ATM) solutions for airports operating under the UDAN Regional Connectivity Scheme(RCS).

Saab and the AAI will jointly explore potential avenues for co-operation for ATM solutions in India.

In the sector of ATM solutions, Saab has a portfolio ranging from Advanced-Surface Movement Guidance & Control System (A-SMGCS) and Surface Movement Radar (SR- 3), to Remote Towers which can be deployed at all types of airports.

ATM solutions from Saab can support both single and multiple runway airfields, as well as remote operations and deployable systems.

Saab's ATM solutions are now deployed in Ahmedabad, Amritsar, Guwahati, Jaipur, Lucknow, Chennai, Kolkata, Mumbai, New Delhi, Cochin and Bhubaneswar.

Indian Army to hold military exercises with African nations in Pune

The focus will be training in anti-terror operations, humanitarian mine action and joint peace operations.

The Indian Army will conduct military exercises with African nations at the Aundh Military station and College of Military Engineering in Pune.

Nigeria, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, South Africa, Senegal, Sudan, Tanzania, Zambia, Namibia, Mozambique and Uganda will be participating in the joint military exercise.

The joint exercise named 'India-Africa Field Training' is being conducted with an aim to synergise United Nations peacekeeping operations.

Subhas Chandra Bose Museum At Red Fort

Subhas Chandra Bose museum was inaugurated at Red Fort today to mark the leader's 122nd birth anniversary.

The museum on Subhas Chandra Bose and the Indian National Army showcases different artefacts, including a wooden chair and sword used by the leader, medals, badges and uniforms.

India-set short film 'Period. End of Sentence' gets Oscars nomination

A film on menstruation, set in rural India, titled "Period. End of Sentence," has earned a nomination in the Documentary Short Subject category for the 91st Academy Awards.

Award-winning filmmaker Rayka Zehtabchi has directed the short film, which has been produced by Guneet Monga's Sikhya Entertainment.

The film came to being as a part of The Pad Project, started by students at the Oakwood School in Los Angeles and their teacher, Melissa Berton.

Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) launches all-women squad for safety of women rail passengers

To ensure security of women train passengers, the Railway Protection Force (RPF) of Lumding division has launched a dedicated RPF Women Squad named as Joymati Bahini.

The squad will comprises women sub-inspectors and constables of the Railway Protection Force.

Sea Vigil 2019

- The Navy in coordination with the Coast Guard and others conducted a two-day defence exercise along the coastline to test the country's preparedness against any attack through the sea route.
- It is codenamed "Sea Vigil 2019" and it is the first exercise on such a large scale.
- It will aim to test the country's preparedness to thwart any attempt by anti-national elements to carry out an attack on its territory or against its citizens by infiltrating through the sea route, the statement said.

Jallikattu event enters world record

A grand "jallikattu" (bull-taming) event entered the world record for the maximum number of bulls released into the sporting arena which was over 1,354 bulls and 424 tamers.

Two of the participants were killed in the event while 31 men including some spectators were injured, according to the district police.

The number of 1,354 bulls that participated was almost double (than the previous record) of 647 two years ago and it is an amazing record for Tamil Nadu.

2,300-year-old artefacts in Odisha

- Archaeologists have unearthed artefacts believed to be 2,300-year-old while carrying out excavation at the Asurgarh Fort in Odisha's Kalahandi district.
- A 9 member team of Archaeological Survey of India led by Dibishada B. Garnayak, Superintending Archaeologist, Excavation Branch-IV, Bhubaneswar, excavated the items dating from Mauryan to Kushan period.
- Other discovered artefacts include, glass bangle pieces of different designs and colours, sling balls, pestle, iron equipment like small wheel, ring, and arrow head.

Defence Industrial Corridor in Tamilnadu

- In a major move to boost indigenisation of defence manufacturing, a mega corridor to link leading military manufacturing units in five cities in South India, with an investment of Rs Rs 3,038 crore.

- The project, named as Tamil Nadu Defence Industrial Corridor, will link Chennai, Hosur, Coimbatore, Salem and Tiruchirappalli.
- It is the second defence corridor being set up by the government to support various defence manufacturing units. The first one is being established in Uttar Pradesh.
- Majority stakeholders of the corridor are Ordnance Factory Board, Bharat Electronics Limited and Bharat Dynamics Limited.
- Private companies TVS, Data Patterns and Alpha Designs are also investing.

Private FM channels allowed to carry All India Radio news

- Govt of India launched 'Sharing of All India Radio News with Private FM broadcasters'.
- Private FM channels can now carry All India Radio News free of cost on trial basis up to 31st May this year.
- News Services Division of All India Radio has permitted its news bulletins in English and Hindi to be carried in unaltered form by Private FM Channels as per certain terms and
- Prasar Bharti Chairman- Dr A Suryaprakash

Raisina Dialogue held in New Delhi

- The Raisina Dialogue is a multi-stakeholder, cross-sectoral discussion, involving heads of state, cabinet ministers and local government officials, as well as major private sector executives, members of the media and academics.
- It is co-hosted by the ministry of external affairs (MEA) and the Observer Research Foundation.
- It takes its name from the Raisina Hills, where India's seat of power ie.Parliament, Rashtrapati Bhawan etc.
- It is designed on the lines of Singapore's Shangri-La Dialogue.
- The first edition of the Dialogue took place in March 2016. The overarching theme of that inaugural edition was 'Asia: Regional and Global Connectivity'.
- The theme of the 2019 dialogue is "A World Reorder: New Geometries; Fluid Partnerships; Uncertain Outcomes."
- This year Norway Prime Minister Erna Solberg attended the dialogue and both signed agreement on "Blue Economy"

AAI imposes ban on single-use plastic items at 129 airports across country

The Airports Authority of India (AAI) imposed a ban on single-use plastic items at its 129 airports across the country.

Single-use plastic items are used only once and then thrown in the trash.

On the basis of a third-party assessment carried out by Quality Council of India (QCI), 16 of its airports have been declared as "Single-Use Plastic Free".

HRD starts 70-point grading index to assess state school education

The Ministry of Human Resource Development (HRD) has introduced a 70-point grading index i.e., states will be marked out of 1,000 scores on 70 parameters to assess the quality of school education offered by states.

This will give the correct picture of where every state stands. There will be a fair competition to improve each other's performances.

The ministry has also decided to print more books of the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) as it said there were only 2 crore books two years ago.

AAI signs MoU with SAMEER for boosting communication

Airports Authority of India (AAI) has signed MoU with Society for Applied Microwave Electronics Engineering and Research (SAMEER) for joint research programs in the field of Communication Navigation and Surveillance (CNS).

AAI and SAMEER, an autonomous research and development (R and D) institute under MeitY have entered into an overarching MOU that will provide a platform for Collaborative Research for both the Organizations to work together.

Swami Haridas Tansen Sangeet Nritya Mahotsav

The 18th edition of the Swami Haridas Tansen Sangeet Nritya Mahotsav will seek to revive and promote the interest of the youth in traditional Indian art forms.

It is dedicated to 16th century poets and musicians Swami Haridas and Mian Tansen.

The festival, organised by Bharatiya Sangeet Sadan and Sri Ram Centre For Performing Arts in collaboration with HCL, and Modern School, also celebrates the guru-shishya parampara.

5,000 additional seats for Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas

Union HRD Ministry approved an increase of 5,000 seats at Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas across the country.

In the last four years there has been an addition of 9,000 seats in the residential schools for talented rural children.

With the Human Resource Development (HRD) Ministry approving the addition of 5,000 more seats, the number of seats has increased from 46,600 to 51,000 at the Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas (JNVs).

The admission to the additional seats will start in the 2019-20 academic session.

LS passes bill to remove leprosy as ground for divorce

A bill seeking to remove leprosy as a ground for divorce "The Personal Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2018 was passed by Lok Sabha.

The bill seeks to remove leprosy as a ground for divorce in five personal laws -- Hindu Marriage Act, Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act, Divorce Act (for Christians), Special Marriage Act and the Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act.

The Bill was introduced in Lok Sabha in August 2018.

All districts covered under Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme

All the districts of the country have been covered under the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme (BBBP) since 2018-19, the ministry of women and child development said Friday.

Launched on January 22, 2015, the scheme is aimed at addressing the declining Child Sex Ratio and enabling girl child education. It is a tri-ministerial effort of ministries of women and child development, health & family welfare and human resource development.

Out of 640 districts, 405 districts were covered through multi-sectoral intervention, media & advocacy and 235 districts covered through alert media & advocacy outreach.

Under the scheme, multi-sectoral interventions are carried out in selected BBBP districts. This includes effective enforcement of Pre Conception & Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PC&PNDT) Act, Pre-Natal/ Post Natal care of mothers, improve enrolment of girls in schools, community engagement/ training/ awareness generation etc.

Govt. amalgamates three regional rural banks

- The government has amalgamated three Regional Rural Banks - Punjab Gramin Bank, Malwa Gramin Bank and Sutlej Gramin Bank -- into a single RRB with effect from January 1.
- In a filing to the BSE, Punjab and Sind Bank said the central government, after consulting the sponsor banks of the three RRBs, felt that in the interest of the banks and the areas served by them, they should be amalgamated into a single RRB.
- The sponsor banks of the RRBs are National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), the Government of Punjab and Punjab National Bank, State Bank of India and Punjab and Sind Bank.

ASI declared 6 monuments of national importance in 2018

1. The 125-year-old Old High Court Building in Nagpur, Maharashtra,
2. Haveli of Agha Khan, Agra
3. Hathi Khana, Agra
4. The ancient Neemrana Baori, Rajasthan
5. Group of Temples, Odisha; and
6. the Vishnu Temple, Uttarkhand

There were 3,686 centrally protected monuments/sites under the ASI in the country; the number has now increased to 3,693. Uttar Pradesh (745 monuments/sites), Karnataka (506) and Tamil Nadu (413) have the highest number of ASI-maintained sites.

Parliament approves NCTE amendment bill

- Parliament approved a bill to provide retrospective recognition to central and state government funded institutions offering B.Ed and related courses that are not recognised under the National Council for Teacher Education Act.
- The National Council for Teacher Education (Amendment) Bill would help over 17,000 students who have obtained B.Ed degrees from those institutions which do not have NCTE approval for the course under the 1993 law.
- The bill would provide post-facto approval to the students from several state and central universities, whose degree have no recognition under the 1993 law.
- Lok Sabha has already passed this bill on July 23, 2018.

Swachh Survekshan

- Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry started Survekshan 2019, the fourth edition of the annual cleanliness survey of urban India.
- The objective of the Swachh Survekshan survey, which is conducted by an independent third party, is to encourage large-scale citizen participation, ensure sustainability of initiatives taken towards garbage free and open defecation free cities, and to provide credible outcomes.
- The survey will cover 40 crore people across over four thousand towns and cities.
- The completely digital and paperless survey will be completed in a record time of 28 days and it will be larger than the previous ones.
- In the survey, people's engagement is being given top priority.
- For the first time ever, inspection will be conducted without giving any prior information to the concerned official for real-time check and survey will be based on people's feedback.

Regional testing laboratory of CPRI at Nashik

- Government of India laid the foundation stone of Regional testing laboratory of Central Power Research Institute (CPRI) at Nashik, Maharashtra with an outlay of Rs 115.3 Cr.
- The unit at Nashik will have On Line Short Circuit test facilities for Transformers, miniature circuit breakers, contactors, switch fuse unit, panels, busducts and Current Transformers. In addition state of the art facilities are being established for Energy Meter (Both Smart Meter & Conventional Meter) and Transformer Oil.

About CPRI:

- It serves as an Independent third party testing laboratory to Govt of India
- CPRI has been serving for the past five decades in the field of Testing and Certification, Research, Consultancy, Third Party Inspection services, Training & Vendor Analysis.

New campus of National Museum Institute

- The new Campus of the National Museum Institute was inaugurated Noida.
- Four new courses i.e., (i) Archaeology; (ii) Palaeography, Epigraphy and Numismatics; (iii) Structural Conservation and (iv) Cultural & Heritage Management, are expected to be commenced.
- In addition to these regular courses, short-term courses of five-months duration i.e. Art Appreciation and Bhartiya Kalanidhi (Hindi), which are very popular, are also conducted by the Institute to disseminate the knowledge about the country's tangible and intangible heritage.

Central assistance of Rs 7,214.03 crore to States affected by natural disasters

Govt. of India approved the additional Central assistance from National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF) of Rs 7214.03 crore to 6 States and one Union Territory, viz.

1. Rs 317.44 crore to Himachal Pradesh (floods & landslides),
2. Rs 191.73 crore to Uttar Pradesh (floods),
3. Rs. 900.40 crore to Andhra Pradesh (drought),
4. Rs. 127.60 crore to Gujarat (drought),
5. Rs. 949.49 crore to Karnataka (drought),
6. Rs. 4,714.28 crore to Maharashtra (drought) and
7. Rs. 13.09 crore to UT of Puducherry (cyclone).

India bags the Award of Excellence for 'Best in Show'

India received the Award of Excellence for 'Best in Show' at the recently concluded New York Times Travel Show 2019, the largest travel show in North America, held from 25th – 27th January in New York, USA.

The Ministry of Tourism, Government of India participated as the 'Presenting Partner' in the New York Times Travel Show (NYTTS 2019) organised at Jacob K Javits Centre, New York.

Union Steel Ministry announces to set up Safety Directorate new Scrap Policy

- The Union Ministry 2019 announced to set up the 'Safety Directorate'.
- The Safety Directorate will oversee the safety standards in steel industry.
- The Iron and Steel production is a complex and hazardous activity. The production of steel needs prevention of injuries and accidents, and provision of a healthy working environment against all possible hazards and risks.
- Steel Ministry also plans to draft National Scrap Policy
 - The Policy is expected to make available nearly 7 MT scrap in the country.
 - Presently, the requirement of scrap is around 8.3 MT and most of it is met with scrap imports. The steel produced out of scrap is of good quality and is environment friendly.

Train 18 named Vande Bharat Express

- India's first indigenously built engineless semi-high speed train, Train 18, has been named Vande Bharat Express.
- The train is set to run between Delhi and Varanasi at a maximum speed of 160 kmph.
- The 16-coach train, built in 18 months at a cost of Rs 97 crore by the Modern Coach Factory, Rae Bareilly, is regarded as a successor to the 30-year-old Shatabdi Express.
- It's also the first locomotive-less train in the country.
- The fully air-conditioned train will stop at Kanpur and Allahabad and will have two executive chair cars.

'Nari Shakti' as Hindi word for the year 2018

- Oxford dictionaries declared "Nari Shakti" as the Hindi word for the year 2018.
- The announcement was made during a session at the ongoing Jaipur Literature Festival (JLF) at the Diggi Palace.
- Oxford had named 'Aadhaar' as its Hindi word for the year 2017.

Anti-Radiation Missile by DRDO

- Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) successfully conducted the maiden test of New Generation Anti-Radiation Missile (NGARM) from a fighter plane.

- The indigenously developed air-to-surface missile was successfully launched from the Sukhoi-30 MKI, the main fighter jet of the Indian Air Force off Wheeler Islands, Odisha coast
- The missile is capable of destroying the enemy radars, tracking system and communication facilities.
- The NGARM has a strike range of over 100 kms.

Govt awards 235 routes under UDAN-III

- The announced awarding 235 routes under the third round of the UDAN-III /Regional Connectivity Scheme to 11 operators.
- SpiceJet, IndiGo, Jet Airways, Air India subsidiary Alliance, and Turbo Aviation are among the operators that have bagged the routes.
- The ministry has also approved operation of seaplanes by SpiceJet and Turbo Aviation under the scheme.
- Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik (UDAN) or the regional air connectivity scheme seeks to connect unserved and underserved airports as well as make flying affordable.

Numaligarh Refineries receives 'Best Miniratna PSU' award

Numaligarh Refinery Limited (NRL) has been awarded the best Strategic Performance (Financial Category) at the 6th edition of Governance Now PSU Awards.

Coast guards of India, Japan undertake disaster control exercise in Yokohama

Coast Guards of India and Japan conducted disaster control, search and rescue exercises off the coast of Yokohama in Japan here.

Both the forces have huge experience in disaster management as Japan regularly faces earthquakes and sea storms while the Indian Coast Guard round the year manages the over 7,000-kilometre coastline of the country.

New BIS standards for Bio-Jet Fuel

- To use bio-jet fuel on all military and civilian aircraft, BIS has in collaboration with IAF, research organizations and the industry brought out a new standard for Aviation Turbine Fuels (Kerosene Type, Jet A-1).
- These specifications will align Indian standards with current international standards.
- This standard would enable the oil companies to manufacture bio-jet fuel for the Indian aviation industry.
- Given the advent of Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSIA) by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) by 2027, this is a significant development which could reduce the carbon emissions and help India become a green fuel production hub.

4. ECONOMY AND BANKING

Credit Guarantee Fund for Start-UPS

The Government is planning to set up a Credit Guarantee Fund (CGF) for encouraging start-up companies with a view to providing funding facilities in the country. The scheme has yet to be made operational.

Incentives being provided to Startups under Startup India initiative are:

1. Self-Certification under 6 Labour Laws & 3 Environmental Laws
2. Relaxations in Public Procurement Norms
3. Faster exit under the Bankruptcy Code
4. Rebates on Patent & Trademark filing fees, support from facilitators and expedited examination of Patent application
5. Income Tax exemption
6. Exemption from Income Tax on investments received above fair market value
7. Funding support under the Fund of Funds for Startups
8. Guidance and facilitation support from Startup India Hub

Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion hosted Startup India Global Venture Capital Summit 2018 on 7th December 2018 in Goa.

8,993 startups were recognised by Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion during the year 2018.

Recapitalization of Export-Import Bank of India

The Union Cabinet has approved the recapitalization of EXIM Bank. The details are as follows:

1. Issuance of Recapitalization Bonds by Government of India to the tune of Rs.6,000 crore for capital infusion in Export Import Bank of India (Exim Bank).
2. The equity will be infused in two tranches of Rs. 4,500 crore in FY 2018-19 and Rs.1,500 crore in FY 2019-20 respectively.
3. The Cabinet also approved an increase in the authorized capital of Exim Bank from Rs. 10,000 crore to Rs. 20,000 crore. The recapitalisation bonds will be on the lines issued to Public Sector Banks.

Benefits:

1. Exim Bank is the principal export credit agency for India.
2. The infusion of capital into Exim Bank will enable it to augment capital adequacy and support Indian exports with enhanced ability.

3. The infusion will give an impetus to anticipate new initiatives like supporting Indian textile industries, likely changes in Concessional Finance Scheme (CFS), likelihood of new LoCs in future in view of India's active foreign policy and strategic intent.

Exim Bank:

Exim Bank of India (Exim Bank) was established in 1982 under an Act of Parliament as the apex financial institution for financing, facilitating and promoting India's international trade.

The Bank primarily lends for exports from India including supporting overseas buyers and Indian suppliers for export of developmental and infrastructure projects, equipment, goods and services from India. It is regulated by RBI.

EXIM Bank Head: David Rasquinha

National Bench of the Goods and Services Tax Appellate Tribunal (GSTAT)

- Govt. of India has approved the creation of National Bench of the Goods and Services Tax Appellate Tribunal (GSTAT).
- The National Bench of the Appellate Tribunal shall be situated at New Delhi.
- GSTAT shall be presided over by its President and shall consist of one Technical Member (Centre) and one Technical Member (State).
- The creation of the National Bench of the GSTAT would amount to one time expenditure of Rs.92.50 lakh while the recurring expenditure would be Rs.6.86 crore per annum.

Other features:

- Goods and Services Tax Appellate Tribunal is the forum of second appeal in GST laws and the first common forum of dispute resolution between Centre and States.
- The appeals against the orders in first appeals issued by the Appellate Authorities under the Central and State GST Acts lie before the GST Appellate Tribunal, which is common under the Central as well as State GST Acts.
- Being a common forum, GST Appellate Tribunal will ensure that there is uniformity in redressal of disputes arising under GST, and therefore, in implementation of GST across the country.
- Chapter XVIII of the CGST Act provides for the Appeal and Review Mechanism for dispute resolution under the GST Regime.

- Section 109 of this Chapter under CGST Act empowers the Central Government to constitute, on the recommendation of Council, by notification, with effect from such date as may be specified therein, an Appellate Tribunal known as the Goods and Services Tax Appellate Tribunal for hearing appeals against the orders passed by the Appellate Authority or the Revisional Authority.

BHEL and LIBCOIN to Build India's First Lithium Ion Giga Factory

Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) and Libcoin are planning to form a world class consortium to initially build 1GWh lithium ion battery plant in India.

Its capacity will be scaled up to 30GWh in due course. With this, India has finally taken steps into its energy security and clean energy commitment to the world.

India's Debt Up 49% To 82 Lakh Crore

Compared to the latest data available till September 2018 the total debt of the Central government stood at Rs. 82,03,253 crore compared to June 2014 was Rs. 54,90,763 crore according to Finance ministry's "8th Edition of the Status Paper on Government Debt".

The huge surge in government's debt has been increased by 51.7 per cent growth in public debt from Rs. 48 lakh crore to Rs. 73 lakh crore in the 4.5 year period, which in turn was driven by 54 per cent rise in internal debt to about Rs. 68 lakh crore.

Dependence on market loans show a similar rise of 47.5 per cent to more than Rs. 52 lakh crore during the period. While debt raised through gold bonds was nil at the end of June 2014, it stood at Rs. 9,089 crore including the gold monetisation scheme.

The fiscal deficit in the first eight months till November stands at Rs. 7.17 lakh crore, or 114.8 per cent of the Rs. 6.24 lakh crore full year's target.

Rs 1 crore fine on Bank of Maharashtra

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) imposed a Rs 1-crore penalty on state-owned Bank of Maharashtra (BoM) for non-compliance of Know Your Customer guidelines and fraud-classification norms.
- This penalty has been imposed taking into account the failure of the bank to adhere to directions issued by the RBI.
- Last year, the RBI had imposed a penalty of Rs 1 crore on BoM on account of delay on the part of the bank to detect and report fraud in an account.

RBI eases norms for external commercial borrowing

- In a bid to improve ease of doing business, the Reserve Bank of India has decided to liberalise

external commercial borrowing (ECB) norms, allowing all companies that are eligible for receiving foreign direct investment, to raise funds through the ECB route.

- The RBI has decided to keep the minimum average maturity period at 3 years for all ECBs, irrespective of the amount of borrowing, except for borrowers specifically permitted to borrow for a shorter period.
- Earlier, the minimum average maturity period was five years. The ceiling for borrowing remains at \$750 million.
- All eligible borrowers can now raise ECBs up to \$750 million or equivalent per financial year under the automatic route replacing the existing sector-wise limits.
- Any entity who is a resident of a country which is financial action task force compliant, will be treated as a recognised lender. This change increases lending options and allows various new lenders in ECB space while strengthening the [anti money laundering / combating the financing of terrorism] framework.

SBI, other banks agree to finance Nagpur-Mumbai Samruddhi Corridor

- A consortium of banks led by State Bank of India has agreed to provide finance for Nagpur-Mumbai 'Samruddhi Corridor' expressway project.
- SBI has agreed to lend the highest amount, Rs 8,500 crore. Other lenders include Punjab National Bank, Bank of Baroda, Bank of Maharashtra as well as the Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) of India.
- The estimated cost of the project, being constructed by the Maharashtra State Road Development Corporation, is around Rs 50,000 crore, of which around Rs 26,000 crore are required for the construction of the expressway.
- Acquisition in some stretches in Amravati and Aurangabad regions is yet to be done.
- The corridor will have 25 toll plazas, and the toll will be collected for 40 years.

FinMin starts 'Know Your Budget' series to educate people on Twitter

- Seeking to educate general public about the budgetary process, the finance ministry started a series on Twitter providing definitions of various terms used in the budget.
- The 'Know Your Budget' series, which explains the importance of Union Budget and its making, would continue for about a fortnight.

- The government on February 1 would unveil the interim Budget for 2019-20 as the general elections are due in the next couple of months. The final Budget for the next fiscal would be presented by the new government.

New National Air Cargo Policy

- The government released national air cargo policy, which seeks to make India among the top five air freight markets by 2025, besides creating air transport shipment hubs at all major airports over the next 6 years.
- The policy document released during the two-day Global Aviation Summit 2019 held in Mumbai. It stated that the policy will encourage code sharing/inter-line agreements between foreign and Indian carriers.
- The potential in the new markets needs to be explored with long-term infrastructure creation in order to sustain cargo growth in the next 10-15 years at least.
- The cargo policy also seeks to establish agreements between national carriers/ freighters and integrators to improve domestic connectivity as well as encourage the establishment of agreements between national and international carriers/freighters and other airline operators to provide access to key global cargo hubs.
- It also aims to promote the development of a last mile/first mile connectivity program at international/regional gateways, as per the document.
- As part of the security strategy under the policy, the strategy will address security related to the physical cargo, people handling the cargo, data and information related to shipments within and across all chains of custody transfers.
- To increase process transparency while decreasing shipment delays, costs and dwell time, a fully automated paperless trade environment with minimum face-to-face interactions will be implemented.
- The policy covers all three categories of air cargo transport - domestic cargo to ensure efficient flow of goods across India; international cargo facilitating all indigenous export and import of goods; and transit international cargo by making India the transit cargo hub of choice to and from other parts of the globe.

Govt fixes Rs 3,214 per gram price for next series of gold bonds

- The government has fixed the price at Rs 3,214 per gram for the new series of sovereign gold bonds opening Monday.

- The Sovereign Gold Bonds 2018-19 (Series V) opened for the period January 14-18.
- Government of India, in consultation with the Reserve Bank of India, has decided to offer a discount of Rs 50 per gram less than the nominal value to those investors applying online and the payment against the application is made through digital mode.
- For such investors, the issue price of gold bond will be Rs 3,164 per gram of gold.
- The bonds are being sold through banks, Stock Holding Corporation of India Limited (SHCIL), designated post offices, and stock exchanges NSE and BSE.

Sovereign gold bond scheme

- Launched in November 2015
- Objective: to reduce the demand for physical gold and shift a part of the domestic savings into financial assets.
- The bonds are denominated in units of one gram of gold and multiples thereof.
- Minimum investment in the bonds is one gram with a maximum limit of 500 grams per person per fiscal year.
- The maximum limit of subscription is 4 kg for individual and HUF and 20 kg for trusts and similar entities per fiscal (April-March).

GST burden on small businesses eased

- The GST Council in its 32nd meeting took a slew of decisions aimed at reducing the tax and compliance burden on small and medium enterprises.
- The Council also raised the annual turnover limit under which companies would be exempt from GST to Rs. 40 lakh for most States and Rs. 20 lakh for the North Eastern and hill states, from the earlier limit of Rs. 20 lakh and Rs. 10 lakh, respectively.
- The limit for eligibility for the Composition Scheme would be raised to an annual turnover of Rs. 1.5 crore from April 1, 2019 (earlier up to Rs. 1 crore only). Companies opting for the Composition Scheme would be allowed to file annual returns and pay taxes quarterly from April 1.
- So far, only manufacturers and traders were eligible for this scheme and now extends to small service providers with an annual turnover of up to Rs. 50 lakh, at a tax rate of 6%.

Kerala cess

- The GST Council also decided to allow Kerala to levy a cess of up to 1% for up to two years on intra-State supplies to help finance the disaster relief efforts following the recent floods in the state.

Status Paper on Government Debt for 2017-18

- According to the Status Paper on Government Debt for 2017-18, the Centre's total debt as a percentage of GDP reduced to 46.5% in 2017-18 from 47.5% as of March 31, 2014.
- The total debt of the States, however, has been rising over this period, to 24% in 2017-18, and is estimated to be 24.3% in 2018-19.
- In absolute terms, the Centre's total debt increased from Rs. 56,69,429 crore at the end of March 2014 to Rs. 82,35,178 crore in 2017-18, representing a 45% increase. The total debt of the States increased from Rs. 24,71,270 crore to Rs. 40,22,090 crore over the same period, an increase of almost 63%.
- The N.K. Singh-headed FRBM (Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management) Review Committee report had recommended the ratio to be 40% for the Centre and 20% for the States, respectively, by 2023.
 - It said that the 60% consolidated Central and State debt limit was consistent with international best practices, and was an essential parameter to attract a better rating from the credit ratings agencies.

Group insolvency: UK Sinha Committee**Recommendations**

- The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) has set up a 11-member working group under the Chairmanship of former SEBI chief UK Sinha to go into the concept of 'Group Insolvency' and suggest a suitable framework.(complete regulatory framework to facilitate insolvency resolution and liquidation of corporate debtors in a Group)
- The idea is to have a framework that allows insolvency proceedings over companies within a corporate group to be concentrated under a single insolvency court and/or administered by one insolvency administrator.
- 'Group Insolvency' framework will help prevent corporate groups from uncontrollably falling apart in insolvency and thereby thwart the chances of their restructuring. This could be achieved through

a group venue for corporate group insolvencies and by enabling co-ordination and co-operation support, sources said.

- The other members of the Working Group include
 1. Anshula Kant, Managing Director, State Bank of India;
 2. Shardul Shroff. Executive Chairman, Shardul Amarchanf Mangaldas & Co;
 3. Shubhashis Gangopadhyay, Founder and Research Director, India Development Foundation;
 4. Koushik Chatterjee, Executive Director and Chief Financial Officer, Tata Steel Ltd, and
 5. Siby Antony, Chairman, Edelweiss Asset Reconstruction Company Ltd.

SEBI constitutes panel to link research to policy making

- Market regulator Security and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has constituted a "Research Advisory" committee which will assist in formulating policy to undertake research relevant for development and regulation of capital markets.
- It will be headed by Sankar De.
- Among the other functions of the committee will be defining objectives, scope and direction of research relevant for development and regulation of capital markets in the country with focus on "linkage of research to policy making".

India's GDP to grow at 7.3% in FY19, 7.5 % in next two years: World Bank

India's GDP is expected to grow at 7.3 per cent in the fiscal year 2018-19, and 7.5 per cent in the following two years, the World Bank has forecast, attributing it to an upswing in consumption and investment.

According to WB, India will continue to be the fastest growing major economy in the world.

China's economic growth is projected to slow down to 6.2 each in 2019 and 2020 and 6 per cent in 2021, according to the January 2019 Global Economic Prospects report released by the World Bank .

In 2018, the Chinese economy is estimated to have grown by 6.5 per cent as against India's 7.3 per cent. In 2017, China with 6.9 per cent growth was marginally ahead of India's 6.7 per cent, mainly because the slowdown in the Indian economy due to demonetisation and implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST)d.

HDFC arm Gruh Finance to merge with Bandhan Bank

- Gruh Finance, the affordable housing finance arm of mortgage lender HDFC, will be merged with Bandhan Bank — the newest commercial bank. The move would help the latter to cut promoter stake from 82.3% to 61%.
- The combined entity is valued at Rs. 84,000 crore.
- Post-merger, Bandhan Bank's loan book's assets under management will be Rs. 50,036 crore. Loan book will consist of micro loans (58%), retail home loans (28%) and other loans (14%).
- The combined distribution network would comprise 4,182 banking outlets and 476 ATMs across India.

Agriculture, manufacturing to push GDP grow to 7.2% in 2018-19: CSO

- Indian economy is expected to grow at 7.2% in 2018-19, a tad higher from 6.7% in the previous fiscal, mainly due to improvement in the performance of agriculture and manufacturing sectors, according to Central Statistics Office (CSO).
- The CSO estimate is, however, a bit lower than 7.4% growth projected by the Reserve Bank for the current fiscal.
- The gross domestic product (GDP) had expanded by 7.1% in 2016-17 and 8.2% in 2015-16.
- Real GVA (Gross Value Added) is anticipated to grow at 7% in the current fiscal as against 6.5% in 2017-18.
- According to the CSO data, the expansion in activities in 'agriculture, forestry and fishing' is likely to increase to 3.8% in the current fiscal from 3.4% in the preceding year.
- The growth of the manufacturing sector is expected to accelerate to 8.3% this fiscal, up from 5.7% in 2017-18.
- However, the mining and quarrying sector growth rate is estimated to decline from 2.9% in 2017-18 to 0.8% in current fiscal. Trade, hotels, transport, communication and services related to broadcasting will too witness deceleration to 6.9% from 8% in the previous fiscal.
- The growth rate of public administration, defence and other services will also dip to 8.9% from 10% last fiscal.
- According to the CSO estimates, the per capita net national income during 2018-19 will be ₹1,25,397, showing a rise of 11.1% as compared to ₹1,12,835 during 2017-18 with the growth rate of 8.6%.

- Gross Fixed Capital Formation (GFCF), a barometer of investment, at current prices is estimated at ₹55.58 lakh crore in 2018-19 as against ₹47.79 lakh crore in 2017-18.
- At Constant (2011-12) Prices, the GFCF is estimated at ₹45.86 lakh crore in 2018-19 as against ₹40.88 lakh crore in 2017-18.

Govt. relaxes norms for fertiliser exports

- The government relaxed norms for exports of fertilisers, including urea, potassic and phosphatic.
- Export policy of fertilisers have been revised and items under 'restricted' category moved to 'free' category..
- These exports, however, are subject to prior permission/no objection certificate to be obtained by the manufacturers/exporters from the Department of Fertiliser, it said.
- India is a net importer of these fertilisers - phosphatic and potassic and urea.
- Urea is the only fertiliser under statutory price control and its import for direct agriculture use is permitted through state trading enterprises (STEs) namely MMTC, STC under the foreign trade policy of the government.
- According to the data, the country imported 42.03 lakh tonne of urea for USD 1,048.59 million till November of this fiscal.
- During 2017-18 fiscal, imports stood at 59.75 lakh tonne at a value of USD 1,295.72 million. Urea imports were 54.81 lakh tonne worth USD 1,047.28 million in 2016-17 and 84.73 lakh tonne worth USD 2,087.61 million in 2015-16.
- In case of phosphatic and potassic (P&K) fertilisers, the country imported 52.2 lakh tonne of diammonium phosphate (DAP), 4.04 lakh tonnes of nitrogen-phosphorus-potassium (NPK) and 27.53 lakh tonne of muriate of potash (MOP) till November of this fiscal.
- In entire 2017-18 financial year, India imported 42.17 lakh tonne of DAP, 4.99 lakh tonnes of NPK and 47.36 lakh tonne of MOP.

NABARD sets up company to provide venture capital

- NABVENTURES Ltd, incorporated by NABARD under the Companies Act, will launch its maiden fund offer by the middle of February.
- The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) will provide early stage support for agriculture and rural enterprises and fill the gap of adequate institutional support to them, it said in a statement.

- The development bank would leverage its long experience in rural space and promote various enterprises to create more sustainable employment.

RBI limits customer liability in fraudulent PPI transactions

- The Reserve Bank of India has decided to limit the liability of customers in case of unauthorised electronic payment transactions in Prepaid Payment Instruments (PPIs) issued by non-banks.
- Under new norms on customer liability, the regulator said frauds due to third-party breach where neither the customer nor the PPI issuer is at fault, there cannot be any liability for the customer, in case the incident is reported within three days.
- If the fraud is reported between three and seven days, customer liability will amount to the transaction value or Rs. 10,000, whichever is lower.
- For over seven days, the liability of the customer will be according to the board-approved policy of the PPI issuer.
- After the customer reports the fraud, the PPI issuer has to credit the amount involved in the unauthorised transaction to the customer's PPI within 10 days.
- The burden of proving customer liability in case of unauthorised electronic payment transactions shall lie on the PPI issuer.
- There will be no liability to the customer if fraud is due to negligence or deficiency of the PPI issuer, irrespective of whether or not the transaction is reported by the customer.
- In cases where the loss is due to negligence by a customer, such as where he / she has shared the payment credentials, the customer will bear the entire loss until he / she reports the unauthorised transaction to the PPI issuer. Any loss occurring after the reporting of the unauthorised transaction shall be borne by the PPI issuer.

Syndicate Bank & SBI Life Insurance sign a bancassurance pact

- Syndicate Bank and SBI Life Insurance announced that they have signed a bancassurance pact to offer a comprehensive financial planning solution to its customers.
- Syndicate Bank will now offer SBI Life's diverse range of protection, wealth creation and savings insurance products to its customers in all its 3000 branches across the country.

ICICI Bank, Small Business FinCredit join hands to provide loans to MSMEs

ICICI Bank has signed a memorandum of understanding with Small Business FinCredit India Pvt Ltd (SBFC) to jointly provide credit to micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs).

The partnership has been forged under the aegis of RBI's circular dated September 21, 2018, that permits banks to engage with a non-banking financial company (NBFC) to co-originate loans for the creation of priority sector assets.

It is the first-of-its-kind programme by a bank and an NBFC adding the loans of up to Rs 1 crore is for a tenure of 15 years per customer.

Under this arrangement, ICICI Bank will co-originate loan against property with SBFC at a mutually agreed ratio. The flow of funds from ICICI Bank will help customers aid their businesses in a seamless manner.

Aseem Dhru- MD and CEO, SBFC

RBI to inject Rs 37,500 crore through OMO in February

- The Reserve Bank of India on Tuesday said that it will inject Rs 37,500 crore into the system through purchase of government securities in February to increase liquidity.
- The apex bank would inform about the auction dates in the due course.

5. INTERNATIONAL AND BILATERAL

India signs agreement with OECD for participation in PISA 2021

- The Union Human Resources Development Ministry on January 28, 2019 signed an agreement with Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) for India's Participation in Programme for International Student Assessment-PISA 2021.
- PISA is a triennial international survey that aims to evaluate the education system worldwide by testing the skills and knowledge of 15-year-old students.
- It is a competency-based assessment which unlike content-based assessment, measures the extent to which students have acquired key competencies that are essential for full participation in modern societies.
- The survey will assess the students in reading, mathematics, science and collaborative problem-solving.
- Its objective is the student assessment by PISA will ensure learning outcome through education. It would lead to an improvement in the learning levels of the children and enhance the quality of education in the country.
- It would also indicate the health of the education system of the nation and would motivate other schools and states in the subsequent cycles.

Important provisions:

- The students will be selected by PISA through random sampling. The schools run by Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS), Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti (NVS) and schools in the UT of Chandigarh would be participating.
- The OECD has agreed to ask some of the questions based on Indian context.
- Within the country or specific geography to be covered in case of large countries, PISA will cover a sample of 15-year-old students representing all forms of schooling including public, private and private aided.
- The learnings from participation in PISA will help to introduce competency-based examination reforms in the school system and help move away from rote learning.
- The CBSE and NCERT will be a part of the process and activities leading to the actual test.
- More than 80 countries, including 44 middle-income countries, have participated in the assessment since the first round of testing in 2000.

- The next round of PISA is going to be held in 2021. The list of registered countries includes Brazil, China (certain areas like Shanghai and Beijing) and countries from South-East Asia such as Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam.

7th ASEAN-India Tourism Ministers meeting

Union Minister for Tourism, Shri. K. J. Alphons attended the Seventh Meeting of Tourism Ministers of ASEAN and India held in Ha Long City, Vietnam.

2019 was declared as ASEAN-India Tourism Cooperation Year 2019.

Loan Agreement between India and Japan-India Cooperative Actions (JICA)

The Loan Agreements were signed between the Government of India and JICA, under Japanese Official Development Assistance Loan Program for

1. Project for the Construction of Chennai Peripheral Ring Road (Phase 1) for JPY 40.074 billion (Rs.2470 Crore approx.), and
2. Program for Japan-India Cooperative Actions towards Sustainable Development Goals in India for JPY 15.000 billion (Rs.950 Crore approx.).

India, Uzbekistan sign agreement on uranium import

India and Uzbekistan signed an agreement on importing uranium from the Central Asian nation following a bilateral meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev on the sidelines of the Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit 2019.

The two sides also signed an agreement for a line of credit of \$200 million from India for financing housing and social infrastructure projects in Uzbekistan.

To attract investments in the pharmaceutical sector, an Uzbek-Indian Free Pharmaceutical Zone is being developed in the Andijan region, which is on the southeastern side of Uzbekistan, near its border with Kyrgyzstan.

Pharmaceutical products, mechanical equipment, vehicles, services, optical instruments and equipment are India's major exports to Uzbekistan.

India imports fruit and vegetable products, services, fertilisers, juice products, extracts and lubricants from the Central Asian nation.

India to host UN conference on land degradation, desertification this year

India will host the 14th session of the Conference of Parties to United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) in 2019 to address the issue of land degradation and desertification.

It will have participation from over 100 countries and is likely to be held in October.

The UNCCD, established in 1994, has 197 parties working towards maintaining and restoring land and soil productivity and mitigating the effects of drought.

SDG (Sustainable Development Goals) 15 addresses land issues is concomitant to climate change, poverty, food security, clean water and sanitation and gender equality, livelihood.

Cabinet approves MoU between India and Australia on the safety in Mines, Testing and Research Station

The Union Cabinet has given its approval for signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Directorate General of Mines Safety (DGMS), Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India and Department of Natural Resource Mines and Energy, Queensland Government, Australia through the Safety in Mines, Testing and Research Station (SIMTARS).

Impact:

The MoU will help in establishing a partnership between DGMS and SIMTARS for:

- implementation of risk based safety management system, providing training,
- organizing, conference, seminar and other technical meetings, setting up occupations safety and health academy and national mine disaster centre, and
- modernizing R&D laboratory of DGMS.

The memorandum of understanding will become operative from the date of signing and remain in effect for three years.

First human rights TV channel to 'lend voice to the voiceless'

- The world's first television channel dedicated to human rights was launched in London with a promise to deliver hidden stories ignored by mainstream media into people's living rooms.
- The International Observatory of Human Rights (IOHR) said its web-based channel would bring human rights issues to audiences in over 20 countries across Europe, Latin America and the Middle East.
- Programmes in the pipeline will look at China 30 years after the crackdown on the Tiananmen Square pro-democracy protests, the positive and negative impacts of technology on women, and the human rights implications of Brexit, Britain's departure from the European Union in March.

- Broadcasts can be viewed via the netgem.tv interactive platform and will shortly be available via a mobile app. Programming is in English, but IOHR eventually hopes to broadcast in other languages including Farsi, Turkish, Arabic and Russian.

'IMBEX 2018-19'

- The second India-Myanmar bilateral Army exercise 'IMBEX 2018-19' commenced at Chandimandir military station, Haryana.
- The aim of this joint training event is to train the Myanmar delegation for participation in UN peacekeeping operations.

India- Swaziland Tax Assistance Agreement

Govt. of India has approved the Signing of Terms of Reference (TOR) governing the engagement of the designated Indian Expert to provide tax assistance to Swaziland (now known as Eswatini) under the Tax Inspectors without Borders Programme between India and Eswatini.

1. An Indian Expert has been mutually selected by the Government of India and the Government of the Kingdom of Eswatini under the TIWB programme.
2. The Terms of Reference will formalize the conditions of the engagement of the designated Indian Expert to provide tax assistance to Eswatini under the TIWB Programme.

Tax Inspectors Without Borders (TIWB)

The Tax Inspectors Without Borders (TIWB) Programme which is jointly launched by UNDP and OECD is intended to support developing countries to strengthen national tax administrations through building audit capacity and to share this knowledge with other countries.

Indo-Japan Relations

1. Advanced Model Single Window

- Government of India approved a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and Japan on the development of an "Advanced Model Single Window" to accelerate India's effort to promote Ease of Doing Business in India.
- The 'Advanced Model Single Window' is based on the best practices in and outside India, with measurable parameters and identifies possible obstacles for the establishment of the single window in India.
- It is aimed at furthering investments.

2. Currency swap deal with Japan

- Government of India approved a \$75 billion currency swap deal between India and Japan to assist each other "in times of difficulty".

- Government authorised the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to sign the deal with the Bank of Japan for a maximum amount of \$75 billion.
- It is signed for the purpose of maintaining an appropriate level of balance of payments for meeting short-term deficiency in foreign exchange.
- The objective of a currency swap is to hedge exposure to exchange rate risks as at the end of the deal the local currencies are again swapped using the same exchange rate. It also helps in saving the cost of borrowing a foreign currency.

3. Food Processing Industry

- Signed Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) between India and Japan in the field of food processing sector.
- It will help in increasing food processing in the country by getting access to best practices and better markets
- The MoC will lead to betterment of the food processing sector in the country by introducing innovative techniques and processes.

India and Denmark: MoU on Maritime

Government of India has approved the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Maritime issues between India and Denmark.

Benefits:

Signing of the MoU will pave way for both countries for exploration of areas for bilateral collaboration:

- Facilitating cross-border cooperation and investments between the maritime sectors of India and Denmark;
- Enabling both the countries to exchange expertise, publications, information, data and statistics to improve mutual capabilities for ensuring quality shipping; cooperation in the field of green maritime technology and shipbuilding, granting the Indian Register of Shipping (IRS) the status of Recognized Organization (RO), cooperation in the fields of maritime training and education;
- Research and development for sustained cooperation in the field of merchant shipping and maritime transport related matters; and

India-France: Cooperation in the field of new and renewable energy

- Govt. of India approved the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and France on technical bilateral cooperation in the field of new and renewable energy.

- The technical cooperation will cover joint research working groups, pilot projects, capacity building programs, study tour, case studies and the sharing of experience/expertise.

New Prime Minister of Taiwan

President Tsai Ing-wen appointed Su Tseng-chang, a two-term former chairman of her Democratic Progressive Party (DPP).

India- Kuwait: MoU on Recruitment of Domestic Workers

- Government of India approved the signing Memorandum of Understanding between India and Kuwait for cooperation on the Recruitment of Domestic Workers.
- It provides a structured framework for cooperation on domestic workers related matters and provides strengthened safeguards for Indian domestic workers including female workers deployed in Kuwait.
- The MOU is initially valid for a period of five years and incorporates provision for automatic renewal.
- Under this MOU, a Joint Committee will be set up to follow up the implementation of this MOU.
- Around 3,00,000 Indian domestic workers deployed in Kuwait. This includes around 90,000 female domestic workers.

Currency swap framework for SAARC countries

- The Union Cabinet gave its ex-post facto approval for amendment to the "Framework on Currency Swap Arrangement for SAARC Member Countries" to incorporate a 'standby swap' amounting to \$400 million out of total \$2 billion.
- It will help in reducing financial risk and volatility in global economy, and brings in flexible mechanisms in trade.
- Under the facility, RBI offers swaps of varying sizes to each SAARC member country depending on their two months import requirement and not exceeding \$2 billion in total.
- The swap amount for each country has been defined, subject to a floor of \$100 million and a maximum of \$400 million.

Nigeria's new outbreak of Lassa fever

- Nigerian health authorities declared a new outbreak of Lassa fever that has killed 16 people since early January.
- The virus has been detected in seven of Nigeria's 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory of Abuja.
- A Lassa fever outbreak in 2018 killed 171 people in one of the nation's worst outbreaks of the disease and affected 23 states.

Lassa fever

- Lassa fever, also known as Lassa hemorrhagic fever (LHF), is a type of viral hemorrhagic fever caused by the Lassa virus.
- The disease is usually initially spread to people via contact with the urine or feces of an infected multi-mammate rat.
- When symptoms occur they typically include fever, weakness, headaches, vomiting, and muscle pains. Less commonly there may be bleeding from the mouth or gastrointestinal tract.
- The risk of death once infected is about 1% and frequently occurs within two weeks of the onset of symptoms. Among those who survive about a quarter have hearing loss, which improves over time in about half.
- The name comes from the town of Lassa in northern Nigeria where it was first identified in 1969.

India, China sign protocol for export of Indian tobacco to Chinese market

- India and China signed a protocol to export Indian tobacco leaves to China, which is the largest consumer and producer of the tobacco with over 350 million smokers - the world's highest.
- Quality tobacco on par with international standards is available in India at competitive prices and there is good potential for export of Indian tobacco to China.

Nepal's Central bank announces ban of Indian notes above Rs 100

- Nepal's central bank has banned the use of Indian currency notes of Rs 2,000, Rs 500 and Rs 200 denominations which are above Rs.100.
- This could affect Indian tourists visiting the Himalayan nation where Indian currency is widely used.
- Nepal Rastra Bank issued a circular prohibiting Nepali travellers, banks and financial institutions from holding or carrying and trading Indian bank notes higher than Rs 100.
- The ban has been criticised by travel traders and entrepreneurs, saying that it would hurt the country's burgeoning tourism at a time when the government has announced 'Visit Nepal' campaign with an objective to draw at least 2 million tourists in 2020.
- Since a majority of Indians come to Nepal over land from bordering towns, it is difficult for them to convert their currency to dollar or Euro, they said.

- The overland Indian visitors' survey showed that 1.2 million Indians came to Nepal through the surface route while 160,132 travelled via air. The average length of stay of Indian tourists coming overland was 5.8 days.
- Average expenditure per visitor was as much as Rs 11,310.

Indians under 15, over 65 can now use Aadhaar to visit Nepal, Bhutan

- Ministry of Home Affairs announced that Aadhaar cards are now valid travel documents for Indians under 15 and over 65 travelling to Nepal and Bhutan.
- Earlier, persons over 65 and under 15 could show their PAN card, driving licence, Central Government Health Service (CGHS) card or ration card, but not the Aadhaar, to prove their identity and visit the two countries.
- Indians other than those in the two age brackets will not be able to use Aadhaar to travel to the two neighbouring countries.
- Teens between 15 to 18 years will be allowed to travel between India and Nepal on the basis of an identity certificate issued by the principal of their school in a prescribed form.
- In case of a family (like husband, wife, minor children and parents) travelling together, all persons will not be required to carry relevant documents (such as a passport or an election ID) if one of the adult members has valid travel papers.
- However, the other family members must have some proof of their identity with a photograph and their relationship as a family, such as a CGHS card, ration card, a driving licence or an ID card issued by school/college, the official explained.
- About 6 lakh Indians live in Nepal, according to data by the Ministry of External Affairs.
- Indian nationals travelling to Bhutan need to have either an Indian passport with minimum validity of six months or a voter identity card issued by the Election Commission of India.
- has about 60,000 Indian nationals, employed mostly in the hydroelectric power and construction industry.
- About 6 lakh Indians live in Nepal, according to data by the Ministry of External Affairs.
- Nepal shares a border of over 1,850 km with five Indian states - Sikkim, West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand.
- Bhutan, which shares borders with the Indian states of Sikkim, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and West Bengal.

India-Sri Lanka MoU on Vipulananda Institute of Aesthetic Studies

- India and Sri Lanka signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to provide modern infrastructural facilities to Swami Vipulananda Institute of Aesthetic Studies of Eastern University in Batticaloa district of Sri Lanka.
- The project involves refurbishment of the auditorium and construction of a modern building complex with recording cum editing facilities and supply vehicles to the institute through a grant of over 27 crore Sri Lankan rupees from the Government of India.
- This project is part of Government of India's continued efforts to assist and cooperate with Government of Sri Lanka in people-oriented development projects.
- India's overall commitment of development assistance to Sri Lanka stands at a total of around 3 billion US dollars, out of which 560 million is pure grant assistance.

New PM in Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso President Roch Marc Christian Kabore appointed Christophe Dabire as new prime minister, part of a reshuffle coinciding with a rising wave of jihadist attacks.

Dabire was previously Burkina's representative at the eight-nation West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) and in the 1990s served as minister to former president Blaise Compaore, partly at a time when Kabore himself was premier.

Dabire's portfolios were for health, followed by secondary and higher education, and then scientific research.

He takes over from Paul Kaba Thieba who was an economist.

Rio de Janeiro will be World Capital of Architecture for 2020: UNESCO

- The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has announced that the Brazilian city of Rio de Janeiro will be the World Capital of Architecture for 2020.
- Having defeated Paris and Melbourne, Rio will be the first city to receive the title under a program launched together by UNESCO and the International Union of Architects (UIA) in November last year. The city will host the World Congress of UIA, in July 2020, an event that occurs every three years.

- According to UNESCO, the World Capital of Architecture is intended to become an international forum for debates about pressing global challenges from the perspectives of culture, cultural heritage, urban planning and architecture.

Iranian bank allowed to open Mumbai branch: Nitin Gadkari

- India has allowed an Iranian bank Pasargad Bank to open a branch in Mumbai
- It aimed at circumventing US trade and investment sanctions as India builds a strategic port in the West Asian country.
- The bank will open its branch in the next three months.
- Iran's Pasargad Bank has received the necessary clearances to open its branch in Mumbai.
- Alongside, India's UCO Bank will open a branch in Iran.
- The two banks will facilitate transactions relating to operation of berths at Iran's Chabahar Port that India is developing
- India has started its commercial activities in Chabahar within the framework of a 2016 trilateral deal that also includes Afghanistan and is aimed at developing the southern Iran port into a regional trade hub.
- India has taken over operations of the Chabahar port in the Sistan-Balochistan province of Iran, the first time India will operate a port outside its territory.
- The heads of the Indian, Iranian and Afghanistan delegations jointly inaugurated the office of the India Ports Global Chabahar Free Zone at Chabahar last month.

Sri Lanka Central Bank gets \$400 million from RBI under Saarc Swap facility

Sri Lanka Central Bank announced that the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has agreed to provide \$400 million under a swap arrangement to boost the island nation's reserves.

It said that a further request to the RBI for another SWAP arrangement of \$1 billion is "under consideration". These are to be made available under the Saarc swap facility.

The RBI has agreed to provide the funds under its Saarc (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) swap facility.

Sri Lanka Central Bank governor- Indrajith Coomaraswamy.

Due to the political crisis, the big three credit rating agencies—Fitch Ratings, Standard & Poor's (S&P) and Moody's Investor Service—downgraded Sri Lanka's sovereign rating.

First India-Central Asia Dialogue to be held in Uzbekistan

- The first India-Central Asia Dialogue was held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan .
- The participants of the conference discussed on developing viable connectivity options between India and Afghanistan and Central Asia to further facilitate trade and economic activity in the region.
- The event was expected to strengthen India's engagement with all the Central Asian nations, taking it to a "new level".
- This comes after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to all the five Central Asian nations - Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan - in 2015 and the EAM's tour across the region in August 2018.

India, Norway ink MoU to boost blue economy

- Norwegian Prime Minister Erna Solberg, had a three-day visit to India, to give address at the Raisina Dialogue in New Delhi.
- The two sides signed a MoU on India-Norway Ocean Dialogue and the establishment of the Joint Task Force on 'Blue Economy' under aegis of the MoU, in order to promote multi-sectoral cooperation in various aspects of Blue Economy.
- The two sides also discussed cooperation in the areas of security, counter-terrorism, higher education, research and innovation, energy, ICT, climate and environment, maritime sector, fisheries and aquaculture.
- India expressed its appreciation for Norway's support towards India's accession to the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), the Wassenaar Arrangement (WA) and the Australia Group (AG).

Bangladesh: Sheikh Hasina to take oath as PM on Monday

Sheikh Hasina sworn in as the new Prime Minister of Bangladesh on January 7, following her party's sweeping victory in the 11th Parliamentary elections, which were held across the country on December 30.

It's her third term.

Bangladesh's President Abdul Hamid

China tests its 'Mother of All Bombs'

- China has tested its most powerful non-nuclear weapon, dubbed the "Mother of All Bombs" by

official media in a reference to a U.S. munition used in Afghanistan.

- In a short video published on the website of state arms manufacturer Norinco, the massive bomb drops on to a plain and produces a gigantic ball of fire and black smoke.
- The bomb — whose strength is only second to that of a nuclear weapon as dropped by a Chinese H-6K bomber.
- The bomb is five to six metres long (16 to 20 feet), but weighs less than the American version.

Pak declares Panj Tirath Hindu religious site as national heritage

- The provincial Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government in northwest Pakistan has declared the ancient Hindu religious site of Panj Tirath in Peshawar as national heritage.
- Panj Tirath, which got its name from the five pools of water present there, also contains a temple and a lawn with date palm trees.
- The five pools of the heritage site now come under the ambit of Chacha Yunus Park and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chamber of Commerce and Industry.
- The KP Directorate of Archaeology and Museums issued a notification under the KP Antiquities Act 2016 declaring the land in the Panj Tirath park as a heritage site.
- It is believed that Pandu, a mythical king in the Mahabharata, belonged to this area and Hindus used to come to these pools for bathing during the month of Karteek and worship for two days under the trees.
- The site was damaged during the reign of the Afghan Durrani dynasty in 1747, however it was restored by local Hindus during the period of Sikh rule in 1834 and worship started again.
- The government also announced a fine of up to Rs 2 million and five years' imprisonment for anyone found guilty of damaging the historic site.

China's probe lands on far side of moon

A Chinese space probe Chang'e-4 lunar probe touched down on the far side of the moon

The moon is tidally locked to Earth, rotating at the same rate as it orbits our planet, so most of the far side — or "dark side" — is never visible to us. Previous spacecraft have seen the far side, but none has landed on it.

The probe touched down at a targeted area near the moon's south pole in the Von Karman Crater, after entering its orbit in mid-December.

The tasks of the Chang'e-4 include astronomical observation, surveying the moon's terrain, land form and mineral make-up, and measuring the neutron radiation and neutral atoms to study the environment of its far side.

Trump Signs Asia Reassurance Initiative Act Into Law

- On December 2018, U.S. President Donald J. Trump signed into law the Asia Reassurance Initiative Act (ARIA), which passed the U.S. Senate earlier that month.
- The act establishes a multifaceted U.S. strategy to increase U.S. security, economic interests, and values in the Indo-Pacific region.
- Specifically, the ARIA will authorize \$1.5 billion in spending for a range of U.S. programs in East and Southeast Asia .
- The ARIA includes multiple provisions and largely supports the Trump administration's own National Security Strategy and National Defense Strategy documents, both of which have identified the Indo-Pacific as a strategic region of particular priority.
- ARIA draws attention to U.S. relations with China, India, the ten member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and Northeast Asian allies Japan and South Korea.
- Additionally, the act addresses U.S. policy toward North Korea.
- North Korea has made clear that it seeks sanctions relief from the United States for the limited disarmament gestures it offered in 2018, including the closure of its one known nuclear testing site and the partial dismantlement of a test stand for missile engines associated with its intercontinental-range ballistic missiles capable of striking the United States.
- The ARIA devotes considerable energy to reasserting U.S. support for Taiwan .
- The law calls for the president to “develop a diplomatic strategy in the Indo-Pacific region, including the East China Sea and the South China Sea, in support of a rules-based international system benefiting all countries.

Germany, France and UK set up transactions channel with Iran

- Germany, France and the UK have set up a payment channel with Iran called INSTEX, to help continue trade and circumvent US sanctions.

- The three countries have launched the device at a meeting of EU foreign ministers in Bucharest.
- While, the new institution, called INSTEX is a project of the three governments, it will receive the formal endorsement of all 28 EU members.

UNSC adopts resolution to extend sanctions against CAR for another year

- The United Nations Security Council has adopted a resolution to extend sanctions against the Central African Republic (CAR) for another year.
- Resolution 2454, adopted unanimously yesterday by the 15-member council, decides to renew the sanctions regime - an arms embargo, travel ban and asset freeze till January 31, 2020.
- It also decides to extend the mandate of the panel of experts, which helps the Security Council with the implementation of the sanctions, until Feb 29, 2020.
- The resolution envisages the establishment of key benchmarks in various sectors that could help the Security Council review the arms embargo on the CAR government by April 30, 2019.

UAE, Saudi Arabian central banks launch common digital currency called 'Aber'

- The central banks of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia have launched a common digital currency called ‘Aber’, which will be used in financial settlements between the two countries through Blockchains and Distributed Ledgers technologies.
- The key objective of the pilot project is studying the practical application of modern technologies and determining their impact on the reduction of remittance costs and assessment of technical risks and how to deal with them.

PaK govt declares sugarcane juice as 'national drink' after Twitter poll

Pakistan government has declared sugarcane juice as the "national drink" of the country after a poll on Twitter.

The government conducted a poll on Twitter at which people were asked to decide the national drink of Pakistan.

Options including orange juice, sugarcane juice and carrot juice were given in the poll.

In the poll, 7616 people cast their votes. Around 81 per cent selected the option of sugarcane juice, 15 per cent voted in favour of the orange juice while 4 per cent chose the option of carrot juice.

6. SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Space Technology in Border Management

The Union Home Ministry has approved report of its Task Force to identify areas for use of Space Technology in improving Border Management. The Task Force headed by B R SHARMA, Joint Secretary (Border Management).

Following areas have been identified for use of space technology:

1. Island development
2. Border Security
3. Communication and Navigation
4. GIS and Operations Planning System
5. Border Infrastructure Development

To execute the project in a timebound manner, a short, medium and long term plan has been proposed for implementation in five years in close coordination with ISRO and Defence Ministry.

1. In short term, immediate needs of BGFs will be met by procurement of high resolution imagery and hiring of bandwidth for communications.
2. In midterm, one satellite is being launched by ISRO for exclusive use of MHA.
3. Over the long term, MHA will develop ground segment and network infrastructure to share satellite resources by user agencies, develop a Central Archival Facility for storing various imagery resources and dissemination of the same to user agencies.

Deployment of Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) in remote areas will be also coordinated by satellite communications. Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS) -based GPS will provide navigation facilities for operational parties in high altitude, remote and difficult borders and Naxal areas. BSF has been designated as lead agency for implementation of ground segment and network infrastructure including establishment of Archival Facility.

Launch window for Chandrayaan-2 and other updates of ISRO

- The launch window for Chandrayaan-2 is March 25 - April 30 this year according to Chairman, Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO)
- ISRO has planned 32 missions this year.
- This year ISRO has initiated 'Samvad with students' programme where ISRO chairman meets the students during his outstation visits and address their queries and quench the scientific thrust.

- For the first time, ISRO has announced the 'Young Scientists Programme' to encourage the scientific talent and increase scientific pool in the country. Under this programme 3 students from each state and UT will be selected for ISRO programme for one month during which they will visit ISRO centres, interact with senior scientists and will have access to Research and Development facilities. All the expenses of travelling and boarding will be borne by ISRO.
- 6 incubation centres will be established in various parts of the country - North, South, East, West, Centre and North-East. First such Centre has been established in Agartala. Dr Sivan also announced the establishment of six R&D centres. The students will be able to conduct R&D at these centres as well as incubation centres.
- ISRO has inaugurated UNNATI (UNISpace Nanosatellite Assembly & Training by ISRO)
- Programme to train participants on nano satellite assembly.
- First unmanned space flight will be launched by December 2020, second unmanned mission by July 2021 and first manned mission by December 2021.
- Reusable Launch Vehicle Technology which will be demonstrated this year where the helicopter will take shuttle to a height and then will be dropped and will land automatically on runaway. This will help in saving][[[First flight will be in July 2019, which can carry payload upto 500 kg.
- 10 student satellites have been launched by ISRO till date including KALAMSAT.
- The year-long Centenary Celebrations of Dr Vikram Sarabhai will commence from 12th August 2019. Satish Dhawan Centre for Space Sciences was inaugurated in Jammu & Kashmir.

ISRO launches Young Scientist programme for school students

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) on Friday announced the Young Scientist programme for the young minds who want to explore themselves in space research.
- Under Young Scientist programme at ISRO, three students from each state will be selected. They will be given lectures and they will be given access to R&D labs and practical experience of building a small satellite.

- Mostly 8th standard passed out students will be selected for the one-month programme
- For 2019 we ISRO planned 32 missions, out of which 14 launch vehicle mission, 17 spacecraft mission and 1 demonstration mission.

JAPAN LAUNCHES SATELLITE TO CREATE ARTIFICIAL METEOR SHOWER

- Japan's space agency has launched a rocket carrying a satellite capable of delivering an artificial meteor shower into the Earth's atmosphere.
- The Epsilon-4 rocket lifted off from the JAXA Uchinoura Space Center, carrying the first of two micro-satellites built by Tokyo-based startup Astro Live Experiences (ALE).
- The aim is to release tiny balls from the micro-satellites in the hope of mimicking shooting stars in the night sky above Hiroshima in 2020.
- It works by releasing the balls into the Earth's atmosphere to prompt a process known as plasma emission that simulates a meteor shower for people on the ground up to 200km away.
- Once they have lit up the sky, the balls burn up completely to not pose a risk to people on the ground.

ISRO's UNNATI (UNISpace Nanosatellite Assembly & Training by ISRO) programme launched

- It is launched to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the first United Nations conference on the exploration and peaceful uses of outer space (UNISPACE 50).
- The programme aims to provide opportunities to the participating developing countries to become stronger in assembling, integrating and testing nanosatellites, said a release.
- The UNNATI programme will be conducted for three years by the U.R. Rao Satellite Centre of ISRO in three batches. It will benefit officials of 45 countries. The first batch, which started on January 17, has 30 delegates from 17 countries participating.

Streaming platforms Netflix, Hotstar, 7 others sign self-regulation code

- Netflix, Hotstar and a clutch of other streaming services have voluntarily signed a self-regulatory code vowing they would not show content that disrespects the national emblem or flag, promotes terrorism or outrages religious sentiments of any community.
- The self-regulatory Code of Best Practices -- whose other signatories include Voot, Zee5, Arre, SonyLIV, ALT Balaji, Jio Digital Life and Eros

Now -- has been signed under the aegis of industry body Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI).

- Amazon Prime, however, has not signed up for the voluntary pact.
- Under the code, the players will ensure that they do not deliberately and maliciously make available any content which disrespects the national emblem or national flag; or shows a child engaged in real or simulated sexual activities.
- Also prohibited is content which outrages religious sentiments of any class, section or community; which promotes or encourages terrorism; and content that has been banned for distribution by online video service under law or by any court.
- The signatories, it said, will adopt the best practices to ensure a clear and transparent disclosure system informing viewers about the nature of content and advise viewer discretion so consumers are informed about the content that they are accessing.
- This would be done by classifying content into distinct categories like general/universal viewing, content requiring parental guidance and content which is solely meant for age-appropriate audiences.
- The nine players have also pledged to display a content descriptor or guidance message informing viewers about nature of the content, particularly around age-inappropriate content for minors.
- The code also involves a strong complaint redressal mechanism.

Doordarshan's channel 'DD Science' & internet-based channel 'India Science'

Ministry of S & T launched DD Science and India Science channels.

DD Science is Doordarshan's first ever daily slot on Science and Technology, while India Science is an internet-based channel.

Prasar Bharati CEO-Shashi Shekhar Vempati

Prasar Bharati Chairman- Surya Prakash

ISRO starts Human Space Flight centre

- Gaganyaan, the great Indian human leap to space by 2022, will soon get cracking under a new Human Space Flight Centre at Bengaluru.
- A team of 800 to 900 people is to be deployed over time to carry it out.
- Gaganyaan, India's mission to send astronauts to space, is slated to happen before December 2021.
- Unnikrishnan Nair, who led Advanced Space Transportation Programme at the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre, appointed as the director of the new centre.

App to help the visually impaired

- Indian Institute of Technology at Ropar in Punjab has developed an Android App “Roshni”, using image processing and analytics to assist visually impaired people to easily determine denomination of currency notes.
- The Seeing AI App by Microsoft is the only other App that facilitates recognition of both old and new Indian currency notes, but it is an iOS App and not available for school for visually impaired recently and performed the App testing there.

IIT Hyderabad becomes India’s first Institute to launch BTech in Artificial Intelligence

Indian Institute of Technology Hyderabad is launching a full-fledged BTech Program in Artificial Intelligence (AI) from the coming Academic Year (2019-2020).

It has become the first Indian Educational Institution to offer such a full-fledged BTech program in AI and likely the third institute globally - after Carnegie Mellon University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), both of which are in the US.

The Course will have an intake of around 20 students who can take the program through the JEE-Advanced.

Exhibitor of the Year Award for DRDO at 106th Indian Science Congress

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) pavilion received ‘Exhibitor of the Year Award’ at 106th Indian Science Congress held at Lovely Professional University (LPU), Phagwara, Punjab.

The pavilion narrated the saga of self-reliance & national pride with the ‘Make in India’ spirit was a big attraction among people, especially students visiting the pavilion and getting opportunity to interact with DRDO scientists.

Mobile app to alert police on traffic violators

- The Coimbatore city police launched a mobile application which will enable the public take photographs of traffic rule violators and upload them to the police.
- The 'Police-E-Eye' is available on Google Playstore and the public can take pictures which, with time and location.
- Based on this, the traffic department would issue photo challans to the violators' place to collect the fine amount.

Bill to allow use of DNA technology to identify persons in LS

- A bill to allow use of DNA technology for establishing identity of certain persons, including victims, offenders and missing persons was introduced in.
- The DNA Technology (Use and Application) Regulation Bill, 2018, was introduced by Science and Technology Minister Harsh Vardhan in the Lower House.

Provisions of bill

- It allow use of DNA technology for establishing identity of persons like victims, offenders, suspects, undertrials, missing persons and unknown deceased persons.
- It seeks to set up a DNA regulatory board to give accreditation to the laboratories and also frame guidelines.
- Six ministries, including those of Home, Defence, MEA and Women and Child Welfare, as well as institutions like the CBI and NIA would benefit with the passage of the Bill.
- The utility of DNA based technologies for solving crimes and to identify missing persons is there is 60 countries, including US, UK, Norway, New Zealand, Finland and Bangladesh.
- Currently there are 3,000 cases of DNA profiling, which is just 2-3 per cent of the total need. Also the laboratories do not have specific standards and there is no data bank to store the.

Mobile app launched to help devotees, tourists of Kumbh Mela

The North Central Railway (NCR) has launched a mobile application that will help those arriving in Allahabad for the Kumbh Mela starting from January 15 to navigate through the city and the mela grounds.

The 'Rail Kumbh Seva Mobile App' will also provide information regarding all the 'Mela special' trains that will be run during the period.

Additionally, the app will provide a link to the user to buy both unreserved and reserved train tickets.

"The issue of privacy, confidentiality and data protection has been taken care of very meticulously," the Minister said, adding the DNA profile will be stored only after obtaining consent except that of convicts and relatives of missing persons.

Monkey fever in Karnakata

At least six people have died due to Kyasanur forest disease (KFD), also known as ‘monkey fever’, in Shivamogga district of Karnakata.

According to reports, as many as 15 people have also tested positive for the fatal viral infection, triggering fears among residents.

➤ ***What is Kyasanur forest disease? What causes monkey disease?***

Kyasanur forest disease (KFD) is a re-emerging zoonotic disease endemic in Karnataka. It is caused by Kyasanur Forest disease virus (KFDV), a member of the virus family Flaviviridae.

First identified in 1957 from Kyasanur forest area, Shimoga district of Karnataka, India, the disease derives its name from the forest range where the virus was first isolated. The disease is also referred to as monkey fever by local people due to its association with monkey deaths.

➤ ***How is Kyasanur forest disease transmitted?***

The disease can be transmitted to human by the bite of infected ticks or via contact with a sick or recently dead monkey. Human to human transmission has not been reported yet.

➤ ***What are the signs and symptoms of Kyasanur forest disease?***

After an incubation period of 3-8 days, the symptoms of KFD start with chills, frontal headache, and fever. Other symptoms include severe muscle pain with vomiting and diarrhoea, mental disturbances, etc. According to CDC, patients may also experience abnormally low blood pressure, low platelet, red blood cell, and white blood cell counts.

In most cases, patients can recover without complication after 1-2 weeks - but the convalescent period is typically long, lasting for several months. The estimated fatality rate is from 2% to 10% for KFD, as per National health Portal, India.

How is Kyasanur forest disease treated?

Unfortunately, there is no specific treatment for KFD, however, early medical care and supportive therapy - such as maintenance of hydration and management of neurological symptoms - is important.

Can Kyasanur forest disease be prevented?

A vaccine does exist for KFD and is used in endemic areas - of a disease or condition occurs regularly in a particular area. Additional preventative measures include using insect repellents, wearing protective clothing in areas particularly where ticks are endemic, and avoiding contact with dead monkeys.

'Telescope to detect cosmic X-rays launched from Antarctica'

➤ US successfully launched a telescope from Antarctica that analyses X-rays arriving from distant neutron stars, black holes and other exotic celestial bodies.

➤ The X-Calibur instrument, launched by Washington University in the US from the McMurdo Station in Antarctica, is carried aloft on a helium balloon intended to reach an altitude of 130,000 feet.

➤ At this height, X-Calibur will travel at nearly four times the cruising altitude of commercial airliners, and above 99 per cent of the Earth's atmosphere.

Scientists develop artificial pancreas smartphone app for diabetics

Scientists have developed an artificial pancreas smartphone app that will help in regulating blood sugar levels in diabetes patients.

This app is capable of interfacing wirelessly with glucose monitors, insulin pump devices, and decision-making algorithms.

A clinical trial showed that the artificial pancreas system (iAPS) app is safe. The app is effective in regulating glucose levels under challenging conditions and is suitable for use in unconstrained environments.

LRSAM missile successfully test-fired

The long-range surface-to-air missile -- LRSAM "successfully" test-fired from a warship off the coast of Odisha against an aerial target, a significant milestone in enhancing the Navy's anti-air warfare capability.

LRSAM has been jointly developed by Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO), India and M/s Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) for the Indian Navy.

PSLV-C44 successfully launches Microsat-R and Kalamsat-V2

India's Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV-C44) in its 46th flight successfully injected Microsat-R and Kalamsat-V2 satellites into their designated orbits from Satish Dhawan Space Centre SHAR, Sriharikota.

Kalamsat-V2- The satellite designed and built by students who work with a private organisation called "Space Kidz India" in Chennai weighs less than a wooden chair at only 1.26 kg. It is the world's lightest satellite.

Microsat-R, an imaging satellite, is meant for military purposes.

7. STATES

Uttar Pradesh government renames Mughalsarai tehsil

The Uttar Pradesh cabinet gave approval to rename Mughalsarai tehsil in Chandauli district of Uttar Pradesh after Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyay.

Uttar Pradesh has witnessed a several changes in names of places in the recent past since the Adityanath-led government assumed charge in 2017.

- In August 2018, the Mughalsarai railway station was renamed after Upadhyay.
- The state government had, in October last year, also renamed Allahabad as Prayagraj and Faizabad division and district as Ayodhya.

Haryana students to get 'Shaurya Award' in the name of police martyrs

- Haryana announced 'Shaurya Award' to students in the name of 71 personnel of the state police force who laid down their lives while protecting society and maintaining law and order in the state.
- Under this award, a prize money of Rs 11,000 in memory of a police martyr will be given to a student for courageous deeds every year in a village block where the school is located and where a martyr studied during his childhood.
- Govt of Haryana also announced construction of a state-level police memorial in the state.
- A book titled 'Martyrs of Haryana police' highlighting heroic deeds of the police personnel was also released.

Tripura CM launches Rs 1,000cr forest management project

- Tripura govt. launched a Rs 1,000-crore Sustainable Catchment Forest Management (SCATFORM) project for local communities living in and around forest areas in the state.
- The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) would bear 80 per cent of the cost and the rest would be funded by the state and central governments.
- A total of 1,447 check dams will be set up in hilly areas in 7 districts out of the total 8 districts of Tripura within a timeframe of 10 years.

MP CM launches Rs 50,000 cr farm loan waiver scheme

- Madhya Pradesh govt. launched his government's Rs 50,000-crore farm debt-waiver scheme named 'Jai Kisan Rin Mukti Yojana'.
- The state cabinet on January 5 gave its nod to waive crop loans of 55 lakh farmers, while extending the eligibility cut-off date to December 12, 2018 from March 31, 2018.
- Farmers who have registered themselves to pay GST and are paying income tax, cannot avail benefits under this scheme.

Development of Spiritual Circuit: Sree Padmanabha Swamy Temple

Development of Spiritual Circuit: Sree Padmanabha Swamy Temple-Aranmula-Sabarimala is being implemented under the Swadesh Drashan Scheme of Ministry of Tourism.

The project 'Development of Spiritual Circuit: Sree Padmanabhaswamy Temple-Aranmula-Sabarimala' was sanctioned by the Ministry of Tourism in 2016-17 for Rs. 92.22 Crores. Majority of work under this project has been carried out at the Sree Padmanabhaswamy Temple.

The Sree Padmanabhaswamy Temple is one of the 108 divyadesams of Lord Vishnu.

Swadesh Darshan scheme

- It is one of the flagship schemes of Ministry of tourism for development of thematic circuits in the country in a planned and prioritised manner. Under this scheme the Government is focussing on development of quality infrastructure. The scheme was launched in 2014 -15 and as on date the Ministry has sanctioned 77 projects worth projects for Rs.
- 6131.88 Crore to 30 States and UTs. 30 projects / major components of projects are expected to be completed during the current financial year, of which 10 projects worth Rs.834.22 crore, covering the states of Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh have already been inaugurated.

- The Ministry of Tourism recognizing the tourism potential of the State has sanctioned 7 projects in Kerala under the Swadesh Darshan and PRASHAD schemes for an approximate amount of Rs. 550 crores.

Green nod for Rs 13,384 cr Sita Ram Irrigation project in Telangana

Telangana government has been given the green nod for its Rs 13,384.80 crore Sita Rama Lift Irrigation Project that aims to divert Godavari river water to irrigate 2.72 lakh hectare in three districts.

The project, which is expected to be completed in three years.

It submerge about 1,930 hectare area and 157 villages consisting of 9,696 families are likely to be affected.

An Expert Appraisal Committee has already given approval for the Sita Rama Lift Irrigation Project. Based on the EAC recommendation, Union Environment Ministry has given the final environment clearance (EC).

The EC is valid for 10 years. After five years of the commissioning of the project, the state government should undertake a study by an independent agency to assess the impact on environment and downstream ecology, the official added.

As per the proposal, the lift irrigation project will divert Godavari river water from upstream of existing Dummugudem Anicut to irrigate 2,72,921 hectare of Bhadradi Kothagudem, Khammam and Mahabubabad districts of Telangana.

Sikkim launches 'One Family, One Job' scheme

The scheme envisions employment to a member of every family which does not have a government job in the state.

Under this scheme, all loan debts in the farming and agriculture sector would be revoked.

At present recruitments are being made for Group C and Group D posts in 12 government departments.

Pawan Kumar Chamling, the longest serving Chief Minister in independent India, personally handed out temporary appointment letters to two beneficiaries from each of the 32 Assembly constituencies in the state.

Chamling's Sikkim Democratic Front government earlier announced that 20,000 youths would immediately be given temporary jobs under the scheme.

Puducherry to Ban Single-Use Plastic From March 1

Puducherry government has decided to ban the production, sale and use of single-use plastic products in the Union Territory from March .

Neighbouring Tamil Nadu government had announced in June, 2018 that it would ban the use of plastic items including non-biodegradable carry bags from January 1, 2019

India's largest startup ecosystem inaugurated in Kerala

India got its largest startup ecosystem inaugurated a 1.8-lakh-square-foot facility housing incubation set-ups across a string of segments in modern technology.

The Integrated Startup Complex under the Kerala Startup Mission (KSUM) includes the ultra modern facilities of Maker Village that promotes hardware startups, the BioNest that promotes medical technologies.

BRINC is the country's first international accelerator for hardware startups.

Overall the Kerala Government is working for the state to have a total area of 2.3 crore sq ft of IT space (up from 1.3 crore sq ft last year). The opening of the new complex at the Technology Innovation Zone (TIZ) is a major step towards achieving the objective.

Chennai Traffic Police introduces robots for traffic management

- A robot ROADEO will help police in traffic management and assist pedestrians in [Chennai](#) roads. The Chennai Traffic.
- The robot will make the pedestrians, especially children, feel safe while crossing the roads.
- It will also ease the work of traffic police, as these robots can be integrated with the traffic signals, as well as can be operated manually, through a Bluetooth app.
- The robot has been developed by schoolchildren of a private robotics lab in Chennai. With this introduction, Chennai is the second city after Mumbai to deploy robots in traffic management.

Telangana to set up 'Save Tiger Protection Force'

The Telangana government has decided to form a 'State Tiger Protection Force' to save the Big Cat population in the State.

The 112-member-armed STPF will be headed by an Assistant Conservator of Forests to protect tiger population in Amarabad and Kawal Tiger Reserves.

The State and Central government will share the cost of the force on 40:60 basis, it said.

Arunachal govt declares Pakke Hornbill Fest as 'state festival'

The government of Arunachal Pradesh on January 20 declared the Pakke Paga Hornbill Festival (PPHF)– the state's only conservation festival, as a "state festival".

The first-ever PPHF was held on January 16–18, 2015

Odisha hikes social security pension for 48 lakh people

The Odisha government announced a hike in the social security pension under Madhu Babu Pension Yojana (MBPY) for 48 lakh beneficiaries.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik announced the hike during Ama Gaon Ama Vikas programme here.

As per the new announcement, the pension holders will get a revised pension of Rs 500 per month against Rs 300 while people aged over 80 years will get Rs 700 per month instead of Rs 500.

About 48 lakh beneficiaries, including old men, women, physically challenged, widows and destitute women in the state, would receive the increased old-age amount with effect from February 15.

Microsoft launches e-commerce portal for Telangana's handloom weavers

- In a bid to empower handloom weavers in Telangana, Microsoft India on Saturday announced the launch of a new e-commerce portal that will help the weavers optimise operations and engage better with customers.
- The "re-weave.in" will host signature collections created by the weaver communities, and showcase traditional designs and products created from natural dyes.
- "ReWeav"e ties very well into Microsoft's mission to empower every person and every organisation in the communities we work in by using Project Sangam -- our Azure-based technology solution and expertise to democratise opportunities and bridge the digital divide.
- The first batch of 100 handloom weavers at NIFT have been awarded certificates for successful design course completion.

First inter-state bridge in J-K

- 1.2 km-long Keediyani-Gandiyanal bridge on the Ravi river in Kathua district of Jammu and Kashmir was inaugurated on January 22.

- The inter-state bridge was built at a cost of nearly Rs 150 crore in a span of three and a half years linking secluded areas of Kathua district with Punjab, the officials said.
- The bridge would strengthen the inter-state connectivity besides giving a boost to the social as well as economical development of the people living in the adjoining areas.

Andaman to be first Island to operate seaplanes under UDAN-3

India could soon see seaplanes being used to fly passengers with the government giving approval to 13 water aerodromes under UDAN-3. The very first seaplane could run within Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Approximately four different islands from Andaman and one island from Nicobar have been selected to fly seaplanes.

These are

1. Havelock,
2. Long Island,
3. Neil Island and
4. Hutbay Island

Arunachal CM inaugurates longest steel cable suspension bridge over Siang

- Country's longest single lane steel cable suspension bridge was inaugurated over River Siang (also known as Byorung Bridge) at Yingkiong near India-China border.
- Yingkiong the headquarters of state's Upper Siang district, in around 389 kms from the state capital Itanagar.
- The 300-meter-long Byorung Bridge was built at a cost of Rs 48.43 crore funded by the Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) ministry under Non-Lapsable Central Pool of Resources.

AP's seventh airport at Orvakallu

- Andhra Pradesh's seventh airport at Orvakallu near Kurnool city inaugurated by chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu, setting the stage for transforming the region into a more developed area.
- The airport has been categorized as '3C' and is capable of handling turboprop aircraft like ATR-72 and Bombardier Q-400.
- Developed on a 1,010 acre site at a cost of Rs 110 crore, the Orvakallu airport has a 2000-metre runway with four aprons for parking of aircraft.
- Flight services from Orvakallu airport are expected to begin from April.

SMART project to transform agri business

- The Maharashtra Cabinet cleared a proposal to implement the 'State of Maharashtra's Agribusiness and Rural Transformation (SMART)' project assisted by the World Bank.
- The project will have an investment of ₹2,200 crore, of which 70% (₹1,554 crore) will be from the World Bank, while the State government's share will be of 26.67% (₹592 crore).
- The remaining 3.33% (₹74 crore) will come from the Maharashtra Village Social Transformation Foundation (VSTF).
- The Cabinet also approved setting up a project management cell, for which 37 posts — 14 government and 23 on contract — will be created. The Agriculture Department will act as a nodal agency, while a project coordination committee under the VSTF managing director will coordinate between Agriculture, Marketing, Cooperation, Animal Husbandry and Rural Development departments.
- A steering committee under the chief secretary will take policy decisions for SMART.

First Swadesh Darshan project in Meghalaya inaugurated

Meghalaya govt. inaugurated the project "Development of North East Circuit: Umiam (Lake View) - U Lum Sohpetbneng- Mawdiangdiang - Orchid Lake Resort" implemented under Swadesh Darshan Scheme of Ministry of Tourism.

This is the first Swadesh Darshan project of Union Tourism Ministry in the state of Meghalaya.

Total cost of the project was Rs. 99.13 Crores.

Under this project the Ministry has developed facilities like Traditional Healing Centre, Tribal Rejuvenation Centre, Tourist Information Centre, Multipurpose Hall, Log Huts, Cafeteria, Sound and Light show, Souvenir Shops, Water Sports Zone, Zip Line, Canopy Walk, Trekking Routes, Cycling Track, Last Mile Connectivity, Caravan Parking, Public Toilets, and Solid Waste Management.

Polavaram project enters Guinness Book of World Record

- The Polavaram project in Andhra Pradesh entered the Guinness Book of World by pouring 32,100 cubic metres of concrete in 24 hours.

- The concrete work to make the spillway began at 8 am on Sunday and concluded at 8 am this morning.
- The project beat the existing record of 21,580 cubic metres which was achieved by Abdul Wahed Bin Shabib, RALS Contracting LLC and Alfa Eng. Consultant (all UAE), in Dubai between May 18 and 20 in 2017.

Vadodara to host 8th international marathon

Vadodara is all geared up to host the 8th international marathon .

Around 1,02,000 participants have registered themselves for this mega event compared to 2018's total of 92,000 participants.

The marathon will be held across four categories: 42 km, 21 km, 10 km and 5 km.

Other categories include "divyang paralympic run", "swachhata run", "pledge run" and "jawan run".

"Accredited to the Association of International Marathon and Distance Races, the Vadodara

Salem among top 12 districts in World Toilet Day contest

Salem District is one among the top 12 winners of the World Toilet Day Contest 2018.

The Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation organised contests from November 9 to 19 last year to encourage the districts to re-intensify the sanitation movement, with a special focus on open defecation free (ODF) sustainability.

A total of 412 districts from 25 States and Union Territories took part in the contest. The winners were announced in two categories -- top 12 districts and top 30 districts. Salem figured in top 12 districts while Namakkal figured in the 30-districts list. Rankings were based on Information.

Meghalaya Told To Pay Rs. 100-Crore Fine For Failing To Curb Coal Mining

National Green Tribunal (NGT) panel headed by Retired Justice BK Katakey found largescale violations of a coal mining ban in Meghalaya and imposed a fine Rs. 100 crore to pay to the central pollution control board towards restoring the environment.

The order comes even as rescue workers fervently pump out water from a 370-foot illegal coal mine in East Jaintia Hills, where at least 15 miners were trapped on December 13

Odisha to participate as partner state in 'Indus Food 2019'

- Odisha will participate as a partner state in the upcoming mega international food and beverage show 'Indus Food 2019'.
- The Indus Food meet is a mega international food exposition organized at India Exposition Mart, Greater Noida in Uttar Pradesh on January 14 and 15.
- The event is organized jointly by Trade Promotion Council of India (TPCI) and Department of Commerce.

Arunachal: East Siang declared as fully electrified district

Arunachal Pradesh Power department has declared East Siang as 100 percent electrified district after it has achieved the target under Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana- Saubhagya Scheme being implemented in the state.

According to report, Pasighat Electrical Division fall under Pasighat Electrical Circle-II in East Siang district has achieved power connection to as many as 2,662 household till December 2018, which earlier left uncovered.

Madras HC extends permission given for online sale of medicine till March 20

- The Madras High Court has extended the permission given for the online sale of pharmaceuticals till the 20th of March.
- The court earlier banned the sale of drugs online, pending the framing of regulations by the Centre for such sale.

First Swadesh Darshan project in Sikkim

First Swadesh Darshan project in Sikkim "Development of North East Circuit: Rangpo-Rorathang- Aritar- Phadamchen- Nathang-Sherathang-Tsongmo- Gangtok-Phodong- Mangan- Lachung-Yumthang- Lachen- Thangu-Gurudongmer- Mangan-Gangtok-Tuminlingee- Singtam" inaugurated under Swadesh Darshan Scheme of Ministry of Tourism.

India's 1st Geographical Indication Store opened in Goa

- India's 1st Geographical Indication (GI) Store was inaugurated at Goa International Airport in Dabolim.
- The store is located on the first floor on Departure Terminal, and jointly set up by Airports Authority of India and The Cashew Export Promotional Council of India.

- Products from the self-help groups, artisans and farmers' produce will be also displayed on the airport at a concessional rate.

Nagaland's first Astro Turf Football Pitch

- Nagaland got its first Astro Turf Football Pitch at Indira Gandhi Stadium in Kohima on the occasion of 100th Birth Anniversary of the legendary footballer, Dr. T. Ao.
- The project was conceived in the year 2013-14 with a total cost of 498 lakh rupees. The Astro turf has been installed following specifications and norms of FIFA. The size of the play field is 105x66 meters.

'Atal Setu' on Mandovi river in Goa

- A 5.1-km long cable-stayed "Atal Setu" on the Mandovi river in Goa, a third such bridge to connect the state capital with North Goa was opened to public.
- It is a four-lane bridge which at 2.5 lakh tonnes is equivalent to the weight of 570 Boeing aircraft.
- The bridge is made of 1 lakh cubic metres of high strength, high performance concrete enough to fill 40 Olympic size swimming pools, an official had said.
- The bridge has 88 high tensile strength cables in the state-of-art single place harp type cable stay system, and a real-time force monitoring mechanism.
- The bridge is constructed by the GIDC (Goa Infrastructure Development Corporation) and engineering and construction major Larsen and Toubro.
- The link will decongest Panaji to a great extent, as approximately 66,000 vehicles enter the capital city every day.

Kerala to launch NRI pension scheme

- The Kerala government will soon launch a 'Pravasi Dividend Pension Scheme' to provide regular pension to Non Resident Keralites on a one-time payment of Rs 5 lakh.
- The one-time payment of Rs 5 lakh will be deposited with KIIFB (Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board) for financing infrastructure projects.
- There are 2.1 million migrants from Kerala across the world whose estimated total annual remittances to the state has been found to be Rs 85,092 crore.
- Of these, close to 90 per cent are in the Middle East.

8. AWARDS AND HONOURS

Rosa Parks Trailblazer award to Indian-American Sikh

- An Indian-American philanthropist and entrepreneur, Gurinder Singh Khalsa, has been presented with the prestigious Rosa Park Trailblazer award for his campaign that forced US authorities change their policy towards headgear of the Sikh community.
- Indianapolis-based Khalsa, 45, was presented the award for his continued demonstration of courage and compassion.
- In 2007, Khalsa was refused access to board an airplane because of his turban, organisers of the event said.
- Thereafter Khalsa mobilised more than 67,000 people nationwide for petitions and took the issue to all the way to the US Congress, which forced Transportation and Security Administration (TSA) to change its headgear policy towards the Sikh community.
- As a result, Sikhs can now wear their turban through airport security in the US.

2019 Japan Prize to Indian

The Japan Prize Foundation announced the laureates of the 2019 Japan Prize, who have pushed the envelope in their respective fields of "Materials and Production" and "Biological Production, Ecology".

Two scientists are being recognized with the 2019 Japan Prize for original and outstanding achievements that not only contribute to the advancement of science and technology, but also promote peace and prosperity for all mankind.

1. India born, Dr. Rattan Lal, Distinguished University Professor of Soil Science at The Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio, U.S.A. (Materials and Production)
 - Lal was born in Gujranwala in West Punjab, Pakistan, and his family came to India as refugees in 1948.
 - He studied in India and later came to the US to work on his doctorate in soils, which he completed in 1968.
 - He has been listed among the World's Most Influential Scientific Minds (2012) and among the top one per cent of all researchers in agriculture.

2. Dr. Yoshio Okamoto, Professor Emeritus at Nagoya University in Nagoya, (Biological Production)

Each laureate will receive a certificate of recognition and a commemorative gold medal.

A cash award of 50 million Japanese yen (approximately \$450,000 USD) will also be given to each prize field.

Gandhi Peace Prize for 2015,2016,2017 and 2018.

The Gandhi Peace Prize for the years 2015,2016,2017 and 2018 has been conferred on the following

1. Vivekananda Kendra, Kanyakumari for the year 2015 for their contribution in Rural Development, Education, Development of natural resources.
2. For 2016 jointly to AkshayaPatra Foundation for its contribution in providing mid-day meals to millions of children across India and Sulabh International for its contribution in improving the condition of sanitation in India and emancipation of manual scavengers.
3. EkalAbhiyan Trust for the year 2017 for their contribution in providing Education for Rural and Tribal Children in remote areas pan India, Rural Empowerment, Gender and Social Equality
4. Shri YoheiSasakawa for the year 2018 for his contribution in Leprosy Eradication in India and across the world.

The jury under the Chairmanship of Prime Minister ShriNarendraModi and comprising the Chief Justice of India, Justice RanjanGogoi, Speaker of LokSabha Smt. Sumitra Mahajan, Leader of the single largest Opposition Party in LokSabha Shri. MallikarjunaKharge and Member of Parliament, Shri L.K. Advani after detailed discussions on 16th January, 2019 unanimously decided to select the above organisation/persons in recognition to their outstanding contributions in the fields mentioned above.

The annual award was instituted by the Government of India in 1995 during the commemoration of 125th Birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. The award carries an amount of Rs 1Crore, a Citation in a scroll, a plaque as well as an exquisite traditional handicraft/handloom item.

Bharat Ratna Award-2019

The President has awarded Bharat Ratna to the following:

1. Shri Nanaji Deshmukh (posthumously)
2. Dr Bhupen Hazarika (posthumously)
3. Shri Pranab Mukherjee

Padma Vibhushan 2019:

1. Ms. Teejan Bai-Art-Vocals-Folk — Chhattisgarh
2. Shri Ismail Omar Guelleh (Foreigner) — Public Affairs — Djibouti
3. Shri Anilkumar Manibhai Naik — Trade & Industry-Infrastructure — Maharashtra
4. Shri Balwant Moreshwar Purandare — Art-Acting-Theatre — Maharashtra

Padma Bhushan 2019

1. Shri John Chambers (Foreigner) — Trade & Industry-Technology — USA
2. Shri Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa — Public Affairs — Punjab
3. Shri Pravin Gordhan (Foreigner) — Public Affairs — South Africa
4. Shri Mahashay Dharam Pal Gulati — Trade & Industry-Food Processing — Delhi
5. Shri Darshan Lal Jain — Social Work — Haryana
6. Shri Ashok Laxmanrao Kukade — Medicine-Affordable Healthcare — Maharashtra
7. Shri Kariya Munda — Public Affairs — Jharkhand
8. Shri Budhaditya Mukherjee — Art-Music-Sitar — West Bengal
9. Shri Mohanlal Viswanathan Nair — Art-Acting-Film — Kerala
10. Shri S Nambi Narayan — Science & Engineering-Space — Kerala
11. Shri Kuldip Nayar (Posthumous) — Literature & Education (Journalism) — Delhi
12. Ms. Bachendri Pal — Sports-Mountaineering — Uttarakhand
13. Shri V K Shunglu — Civil Service — Delhi
14. Shri Hukumdev Narayan Yadav — Public Affairs — Bihar

Padma Shri -2019

1. Shri Rajeshwar Acharya — Art-Vocal-Hindustani — Uttar Pradesh
2. Shri Bangaru Adigalar — Others-spiritualism — Tamil Nadu

3. Shri Illias Ali — Medicine-Surgery — Assam
4. Shri Manoj Bajpayee — Art-Acting-Films — Maharashtra
5. Shri Uddhab Kumar Bharali — Science & Engineering-Grassroots Innovation — Assam
6. Shri Omesh Kumar Bharti — Medicine-Rabies — Himachal Pradesh
7. Shri Pritam Bhartwan — Art-Vocals-Folk — Uttarakhand
8. Shri Jyoti Bhatt — Art-Painting — Gujarat
9. Shri Dilip Chakravarty — Others-Archaeology — Delhi
10. Shri Mammen Chandy — Medicine-Hematology — West Bengal
11. Shri Swapan Chaudhuri — Art-Music-Tabla — West Bengal
12. Shri Kanwal Singh Chauhan — Others-Agriculture — Haryana
13. Shri Sunil Chhetri — Sports-Football — Telangana
14. Shri Dinyar Contractor — Art-Acting-Theatre — Maharashtra
15. Ms. Muktaben Pankajkumar Dagli — Social Work-Divyang Welfare — Gujarat
16. Shri Babulal Dahiya — Others-Agriculture — Madhya Pradesh
17. Shri Thanga Darlong — Art-Music-Flute — Tripura
18. Shri Prabhu Deva — Art-Dance — Karnataka
19. Ms. Rajkumari Devi — Others-Agriculture — Bihar
20. Ms. Bhagirathi Devi — Public Affairs — Bihar
21. Shri Baldev Singh Dhillon — Science & Engineering-Agriculture — Punjab
22. Ms. Harika Dronavalli — Sports-Chess — Andhra Pradesh
23. Shri Joravarsinh Jadav — Art - Dance (folk) — Gujarat
24. Ms. Godawari Dutta — Art-Painting — Bihar
25. Shri Gautam Gambhir — Sports-Cricket — Delhi
26. Ms. Draupadi Ghimiray — Social Work-Divyang Welfare — Sikkim
27. Ms. Rohini Godbole — Science & Engineering-Nuclear — Karnataka
28. Shri Sandeep Guleria — Medicine-Surgery — Delhi

29. Shri Pratap Singh Hardia — Medicine-Ophthalmology — Madhya Pradesh
30. Shri Bulu Imam — Social Work-Culture — Jharkhand
31. Ms. Friederike Irina (Foreigner) — Social Work-Animal Welfare — Germany
32. Shri Joravarsinh Jadav — Art-Dance Folk — Gujarat
33. Shri S Jaishankar — Civil Service — Delhi
34. Shri Narsingh Dev Jamwal — Literature & Education — Jammu & Kashmir
35. Shri Fayaz Ahmad Jan — Art-Craft-Papier Mache — Jammu & Kashmir
36. Shri K G Jayan — Art-Music-Bhakti — Kerala
37. Shri Subhash Kak (Foreigner) — Science & Engineering-Technology — USA
38. Shri Sharath Kamal — Sports-Table Tennis — Tamil Nadu
39. Shri Rajani Kant — Social Work — Uttar Pradesh
40. Shri Sudam Kate — Medicine-Sickle Cell — Maharashtra
41. Shri Waman Kendre — Art-Acting-Theatre — Maharashtra
42. Shri Kader Khan (Posthumous-Foreigner) — Art-Acting-Films — Canada
43. Shri Abdul Gafur Khatri — Art-Painting — Gujarat
44. Shri Ravindra Kolhe (Duo)* — Medicine-Affordable Healthcare — Maharashtra
Ms. Smita Kolhe (Duo)* — Medicine-Affordable Healthcare — Maharashtra
45. Ms. Bombayla Devi Laishram — Sports-Archery — Manipur
46. Shri Kailash Madbaiya — Literature & Education — Madhya Pradesh
47. Shri Ramesh Babaji Maharaj — Social Work-Animal Welfare — Uttar Pradesh
48. Shri Vallabhbbhai Vasrambhai Marvaniya — Others-Agriculture — Gujarat
49. Ms. Gita Mehta (Foreigner) — Literature & Education — USA
50. Shri Shadab Mohammad — Medicine-Dentistry — Uttar Pradesh
51. Shri K K Muhammed — Others-Archaeology — Kerala
52. Shri Shyama Prasad Mukherjee — Medicine-Affordable Healthcare — Jharkhand
53. Shri Daitari Naik — Social Work — Odisha
54. Shri Shankar Mahadevan Narayan — Art-Vocals-Films — Maharashtra
55. Shri Shantanu Narayen (Foreigner) — Trade & Industry-Technology — USA
56. Nartaki Natraj — Art-Dance-Bharatnatyam — Tamil Nadu
57. Shri Tsering Norboo — Medicine-Surgery — Jammu & Kashmir
58. Shri Anup Ranjan Pandey — Art-Music — Chhattisgarh
59. Shri Jagdish Prasad Parikh — Others-Agriculture — Rajasthan
60. Shri Ganpatbhai Patel (Foreigner) — Literature & Education — USA
61. Shri Bimal Patel — Others-Architecture — Gujarat
62. Shri Hukumchand Patidar — Others-Agriculture — Rajasthan
63. Ms. Madurai Chinna Pillai — Social Work-Microfinance — Tamil Nadu
64. Ms. Tao Porchon-Lynch (Foreigner) — Others-Yoga — USA
65. Ms. Kamala Pujhari — Others-Agriculture — Odisha
66. Shri Bajrang Punia — Sports-Wrestling — Haryana
67. Shri Jagat Ram — Medicine-Ophthalmology — Chandigarh
68. Shri R V Ramani — Medicine-Ophthalmology — Tamil Nadu
69. Shri Devarapalli Prakash Rao — Social Work-Affordable Education — Odisha
70. Shri Anup Sah — Art-Photography — Uttarakhand
71. Ms. Milena Salvini (Foreigner) — Art-Dance-Kathakali — France
72. Shri Nagindas Sanghavi — Literature & Education-Journalism — Maharashtra
73. Shri Sirivennela Seetharama Sastry — Art-Lyrics — Telangana
74. Shri Shabbir Sayyad — Social Work-Animal Welfare — Maharashtra
75. Shri Mahesh Sharma — Social Work-Tribal Welfare — Madhya Pradesh
76. Shri Mohammad Hanif Khan Shastri — Literature & Education — Delhi
77. Shri Brijesh Kumar Shukla — Literature & Education — Uttar Pradesh

78. Shri Narendra Singh — Others-Animal Husbandry — Haryana
79. Ms. Prashanti Singh — Sports-Basketball — Uttar Pradesh
80. Shri Sultan Singh — Others-Animal Husbandry — Haryana
81. Shri Jyoti Kumar Sinha — Social Work-Affordable Education — Bihar
82. Shri Anandan Sivamani — Art-Music — Tamil Nadu
83. Ms. Sharada Srinivasan — Others-Archaeology — Karnataka
84. Shri Devendra Swarup (Posthumous) — Literature & Education-Journalism — Uttar Pradesh
85. Shri Ajay Thakur — Sports-Kabaddi — Himachal Pradesh
86. Shri Rajeev Tharanath — Art-Music-Sarod — Karnataka
87. Ms. Saalumarada Thimmakka — Social Work-Environment — Karnataka
88. Ms. Jamuna Tudu — Social Work-Environment — Jharkhand
89. Shri Bharat Bhushan Tyagi — Others-Agriculture — Uttar Pradesh
90. Shri Ramaswami Venkataswami — Medicine-Surgery — Tamil Nadu
91. Shri Ram Saran Verma — Others-Agriculture — Uttar Pradesh
92. Shri Swami Vishudhananda — Others-Spiritualism — Kerala
93. Shri Hiralal Yadav — Art-Vocals-Folk — Uttar Pradesh
94. Shri Venkateswara Rao Yadlapalli — Others-Agriculture — Andhra Pradesh

Sushila Devi Literature Award

Writer Namita Gokhale has won the Sushila Devi Literature Award for her novel "Things to Leave Behind".

She was awarded in the 'Best Book of Fiction Written by a Woman Author' category at the inaugural edition of Bhopal Literature and Art Festival (BLF).

Sushila Devi Literature Award is constituted by Ratanlal Foundation. The award recognises the Best Book of Fiction Written by a woman author. It is a newly constituted award and comes with a cash prize of Rs 2 lakh.

Honorary rank of General of Indian Army on Nepal Army Chief

President Ram Nath Kovind conferred the honorary rank of General of the Indian Army to General Purna Chandra Thapa, the Army Chief of Nepal.

Thapa assumed the command of the Nepal Army in September last year.

Commissioned into the Nepali Army in 1980, the general is a graduate of the National Defence College, India and Army Command and Staff College, Nepal.

His overseas assignments include serving at the Golan Heights, Lebanon and former Yugoslavia under the United Nations banner.

Adi Godrej conferred ICSI lifetime award

Industrialist and Godrej Group Chairman Adi Godrej was conferred the ICSIs Lifetime Achievement Award for 'Translating Excellence in Corporate Governance into Reality' at a function here on Thursday.

The awards were instituted by The Institute of Company Secretaries of India (ICSI), which is celebrating its golden jubilee.

The 18th ICSI National Awards for Excellence in Corporate Governance were bagged jointly by Cipla Ltd and Dabur India Ltd and five others: ACC Ltd, Hindustan Unilever Ltd, Indian Oil Corp, Tata Metaliks Ltd and Indian Hotels Co Ltd.

The 3rd CSR Excellence Awards went to GMR Hyderabad International Airport Ltd, Tata Power Co Ltd and Ambuja Cements Ltd in Emerging, Medium and Large categories respectively.

Government institutes Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar

For the year 2019, 8th Battalion of National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) located at Ghaziabad has been selected for the Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar for its commendable work in Disaster Management.

The award is to be announced every year on 23rd January on the birth anniversary of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose.

All Indian Citizens and organizations, who have excelled in areas of Disaster Management; like Prevention, Mitigation, Preparedness, Rescue, Response, Relief, Rehabilitation, Research/ Innovations or Early Warning are eligible for the Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar.

The award scheme for the year 2019 was given wide publicity and nominations of the award were solicited from 19th Dec 2018 onwards.

The Award recipient will receive a certificate and a cash prize of Rs. 51 lakh:

Lance Naik Nazir Ahmad Wani to be conferred with Ashok Chakra

Lance Naik Nazir Ahmad Wani, who laid down his life during an anti-terror operation at Shopian in Kashmir in November last year, will be conferred with the Ashoka Chakra, India's highest peacetime gallantry award,.

Wani, 38, hailed from Ashmuji in Kulgam. He died on November 25 during a fierce gunfight.

He was a militant, but later came into the mainstream. He joined the Army in 2004.

Wani was part of a number of anti-terror operations in South Kashmir.

Ashok Chakra is the highest peacetime military decoration for valour, courageous action or self-sacrifice away from the battlefield.

Wani was also awarded Sena Medal for his indomitable spirit in fighting terrorists.

He was the first recipient of the Ashok Chakra award in the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir.

Gujarati poet Sitanshu Yashaschandra presented Saraswati Samman for 2017

Gulzar presented the 27th Saraswati Samman awarded by the KK Birla Foundation for 2017 to Yashaschandra for his poetic work Vakhar, published in 2009.

Yashaschandra, a recipient of the Sahitya Akademi award in 1987 and the Padma Shri in 2006, has authored 10 books of plays and three books of criticism.

He was born in 1941 in Gujarat's Bhuj and has Ph.Ds in Gujarati and Sanskrit.

The award carries a citation, a plaque and a cash purse of ₹15 lakh.

It is conferred annually to an outstanding literary work by an Indian citizen for work published during the last 10 years in any language included in Schedule 8 of the Constitution.

Past awardees include poet and writer Harivansh Rai Bachchan, Odia poet Ramakanta Rath and Marathi playwright Vijay Tendulkar, among others.

Chhatra Vishwakarma Awards and Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY) Awards

The Vice President of India Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu presented the 2nd Chhatra Vishwakarma Awards to students and their mentors and Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY) Awards to institutions at an event organized by All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE).

Chhatra Vishwakarma Awards -

The Chhatra Vishwakarma Awards are inspired by the spirit of engineering and creation patronized by Lord Vishwakarma, the ruling deity of construction practices in India. The Awards are aimed for motivating young individuals, inspiring leaders and institutions/organizations to recognize and applaud the innovations and achievements of individuals as well as institutions.

This year AICTE in association with Engineering Council of India (ECI) and the Indian Society for Technical Education (ISTE) announced the 2nd AICTE-ECI-ISTE Chhatra Vishwakarma Awards 2018 under the theme **“Empowerment of Villages through Technologies”**. The projects presented by the team, were assessed by eminent jury of domain experts and following teams/institutions are awarded 1st position in the following categories:

Category: Any other Rural Appropriate Technologies

Army Institute of Technology, Maharashtra

Category: Education, Skill Initiative & Startups

Gokaraju Rangaraju Institute of Engineering and Technology, Telangana

Category: Rural Craft & Livelihood, Rural Infrastructure, Tourism

Sri Venkateswara College of Engineering, Andhra Pradesh

Category: Agriculture & Food

Sri Krishna College of Technology, Tamil Nadu

Category: Water & Irrigation

Aditya Engineering College, Andhra Pradesh

Category: Sanitation & Solid Liquid Waste Management

Kalasalangam Academy of Research and Education, Tamil Nadu

Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY) Awards -

Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY) was launched in October 2014 with the aim to translate the comprehensive vision of Mahatma Gandhi of an ideal Indian village.

AICTE has instituted the SAGY Award with an aim to motivate, recognize and honor the institutions under the theme “**Developed Village-Developed Nation**” Out of the 24 shortlisted applications, the following institutions were recommended for the Awards:

Sl. No.	Name of the Institution	Award/Rank
1	College of Technology and Engineering Udaipur, Rajasthan	First
2	Seethi Sahib Memorial Polytechnic College, Tirur, Kerala	Second
3	Indian Institute of Food Processing Technology, Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu	Third

BJP MP Anurag Thakur honoured with Sansad Ratna Award

Anurag Thakur, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader and party's chief whip in the Lok Sabha, was on Saturday bestowed with Sansad Ratna Award for distinguished performance as a parliamentarian.

He is the first MP from the BJP, besides being the only Member of Parliament from north India, to have been awarded the Jury Committee Special Award.

The Sansad Ratna Awards was set up in 2010 upon the suggestion of former President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, who himself launched the first edition of awards in May 2010, with the purpose of celebrating the performers of Indian Parliamentarians.

Tamil Nadu Governor Banwarilal Purohit presented the award to Thakur here.

For 2019, Bhartruhari Mahtab of Biju Janata Dal, Nationalist Congress Party's Supriya Sule and Congress' Rajiv Satav were honoured with Sansad Ratna Awards.

Ranjani Murali wins 'Womans Voice Award' at AKLF 2019

- US-based Indian poet Ranjani Murali received the 'Woman's Voice Award' at the Apeejay Kolkata Literary Festival (AKLF).
- The award carries a cash prize of Rs 1 lakh apart from a citation.
- The objective of the award - 'Prabha Khaitan Womans Voice Award' - is to recognise and encourage creative writing by women in India, to create a forum for their work and to support the publication of their writing, AKLF Director Anjum Katyal said.
- Murali's first book of poems 'Blind Screens' was published in July 2017 while her second book of poems 'Clearly you are ESL' had earlier won 'The Great Indian Poetry Collectives (GIPCs) Editors Choice award.

C N R Rao chosen for Sheikh Saud International Prize for Materials

Eminent scientist and recipient of Bharat Ratna C N R Rao has been chosen for the first Sheikh Saud International Prize for Materials Research, given by the Centre for Advanced Materials of the UAE.

The prize committee unanimously decided to award this to Professor Rao of the Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research, JNCASR.

It said, the award involves a plaque, a medal and a cash prize of USD 100000.

The award will be presented to Rao during the International Workshop on Advanced Materials in Ras Al Khaima, UAE, on February 25.

Professor Rao is the National Research Professor, Linus Pauling Research Professor and Honorary President of Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research.

He was awarded the Bharat Ratna, the highest civilian award of India in 2014.

Golden Globe Winners 2019: The Complete List

The 76th Annual Golden Globe Awards were announced on January 7, 2019 at the Beverly Hilton Hotel in Beverly Hills, California, the United States of America.

These annual awards honour the best in Motion Pictures and Television for the year 2018.

This year's event was hosted by actors Andy Samberg and Sandra Oh.

Movies:

Best Motion Picture, Drama: “Bohemian Rhapsody”

Best Motion Picture, Musical or Comedy: “Green Book”

Best Director, Motion Picture: Alfonso Cuarón, “Roma”

Best Performance by an Actress in a Motion Picture, Drama: Glenn Close, “The Wife”

Best Performance by an Actor in a Motion Picture, Drama: Rami Malek, “Bohemian Rhapsody”

Best Performance by an Actress in a Motion Picture, Musical or Comedy: Olivia Colman, “The Favourite”

Best Performance by an Actor in a Motion Picture, Musical or Comedy: Christian Bale, “Vice”

Best Performance by an Actress in a Supporting Role in Any Motion Picture: Regina King, “If Beale Street Could Talk”

Best Performance by an Actor in a Supporting Role in Any Motion Picture: Mahershala Ali, “Green Book”

Best Screenplay, Motion Picture: Nick Vallelonga, Brian Currie and Peter Farrelly, “Green Book”

Best Motion Picture, Animated: “Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse”

Best Motion Picture, Foreign Language: “Roma”

Best Original Score, Motion Picture: Justin Hurwitz, “First Man”

Best Original Song, Motion Picture: “Shallow” — “A Star Is Born”

Television

Best Television Series, Drama: “The Americans,” FX

Best Performance by an Actress in a Television Series, Drama: Sandra Oh, “Killing Eve”

Best Performance by an Actor in a Television Series, Drama: Richard Madden, “Bodyguard”

Best Television Series, Musical or Comedy: “The Kominsky Method,” Netflix

Best Performance by an Actress in a Television Series, Musical or Comedy: Rachel Brosnahan, “The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel”

Best Performance by an Actor in a Television Series, Musical or Comedy: Michael Douglas, “The Kominsky Method”

Best Television Limited Series or Motion Picture Made for Television: “The Assassination of Gianni Versace: American Crime Story,” FX

Best Performance by an Actress in a Limited Series or a Motion Picture Made for Television: Patricia Arquette, “Escape at Dannemora”

Best Performance by an Actor in a Limited Series or a Motion Picture Made for Television: Darren Criss, “The Assassination of Gianni Versace: American Crime Story”

Best Performance by an Actress in a Supporting Role in a Series, Limited Series or Motion Picture Made for Television: Patricia Clarkson, “Sharp Objects”

Best Performance by an Actor in a Supporting Role in a Series, Limited Series or Motion Picture Made for Television: Ben Whishaw, “A Very English Scandal”

Ramnath Goenka award for The Hindu scribe

S. Vijay Kumar, Senior Deputy Editor with The Hindu in Chennai was presented the Ramnath Goenka Excellence in Journalism Award for Investigative Reporting (Print category).

It was instituted by the Ramnath Goenka Memorial Foundation.

The award for Investigative Reporting in the broadcast category was won by Anand Kumar Patel of India Today TV .

The awards for Political Reporting went to Brajesh Rajput of ABP News Network and Sushant Kumar Singh of the Indian Express.

M. Gunasekaran with News18 Tamil Nadu (broadcast) and Nishant Dattaram Sarwankar and Sandeep Ashok Acharya both with LokSatta (print) , bagged the awards in the Regional Languages category.

The award in the Environmental Reporting category were presented to Sushil Chandra Bahuguna of NDTV and Sandhya Ravishankar of the online magazine The Wire .

Awards were presented to 29 journalists across India in various categories

AP govt bags CBIP award for Polavaram project

The Andhra Pradesh government on Friday bagged the Central Board of Irrigation and Power (CBIP) award for speedy execution of Polavaram multipurpose project on the Godavari river.

It received the award in the category of "**Best Implementation of Water Resources Project**" for better planning, implementation and monitoring.

The Polavaram project is a lifeline of Andhra Pradesh and the state government is implementing it on a mission mode.

4th annual Carnot Prize to Shri Piyush Goyal

Carnot Prize is awarded to Shri Piyush Goyal is a recognition of the pathbreaking transformations in India’s energy sector under the visionary leadership of Hon’ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi

Carnot Prize is the Kleinman Center for Energy Policy at the University of Pennsylvania’s annual recognition of distinguished contributions to energy policy through scholarship or practice. Carnot Prize is the most prestigious award in the energy sector.

Award money received will be donated to the International Solar Alliance to institute the Diwakar Award

Diwakar award will recognise, every year, an outstanding organisation that has been working for special children and maximising the use of solar energy.

Sahitya Akademi Awards 2018 presented to 24 writers

India's national academy of letters, Sahitya Akademi on January 29, 2019 presented the Sahitya Akademi Award 2018 to 24 writers. The awards were given for 24 different Indian languages.

Sahitya Akademi President, Chandrasekhar Kambar.

Complete list of winners of Sahitya Akademi Awards 2018

SAHITYA AKADEMI AWARD 2018		
Language	Title and Genre	Name of the Author
Assamese	Kailoir Dinto Amar Hobo (Poetry)	Sananta Tanti
Bengali	Srikrishner Sesh Kata Din (Story)	Sanjib Chattopadhyay
Bodo	Dwngse Lama (Short Stories)	Rituraj Basumatary
Dogri	Bhagirath (Novel)	Inderjeet Kesar
English	The Blind Lady's Descendants (Novel)	Anees Salim
Gujarati	Vibhajanni Vyatha (Essays)	Sharifa Vijitwala
Hindi	Post Box No. 203--Naala Sopara (Novel)	Chitra Mudgal
Kannada	Anushreni-Yajamanike (Literary Criticism)	K.G. Nagarajappa
Kashmiri	Aakh (Short Stories)	Mushtaq Ahmad Mushtaq
Konkani	Chitralipi (Poetry)	Pareesh Narendra Karnat
Maithili	Parineeta (Short Stories)	Bina Thakur
Malayalam	Gurupournami (Poetry)	S. Ramesan Nair
Manipuri	Ngamkhegee Wangmada (Short Stories)	Budhichandra Heisnamba
Marathi	Sarjanprerana ani Kavithashodh (Literary Criticism)	Ma. Su. Patil
Nepali	Kina Royeu Upamaa (Short Stories)	Lok Nath Upadhyay Chapagain
Odia	Prasanga Puruna Bhabana Nua (Literary Criticism)	Dasarathi Das
Punjabi	Kone Da Suraj (Poetry)	Mohanjit
Rajasthani	Kavita Devai Deeth (Poetry)	Rajesh Kumar Vyas
Sanskrit	Mama Janani (Poetry)	Rama Kant Shukla
Santali	Marom (Novel)	Shyam Besra 'Jwi Rarec'
Sindhi	Jia Mein Taandaa (Poetry)	Khimani U. Mulani
Tamil	Sanchararam (Novel)	S. Ramakrishnan
Telugu	Vimarshini (Essays)	Kolakaluri Enoch
Urdu	Rohzin (Novel)	Rahman Abbas

Romain Rolland Book Prize for literary translation

The Tamil translation of Andrei Makine's "La vie d'un homme inconnu" (The Life of an Unknown Man) was awarded the second Romain Rolland Prize for literary translation at Jaipur Literature Festival.

Translated by S R Kichenamoury, former head of the French department of Pondicherry University, the book is published by Kalachuvadu, a publisher of Tamil modern classics and contemporary fiction writing.

The award consists of an invitation to the Paris Book Fair 2019 in March for the publisher of the work and an invitation for the translator to attend a one-month residency in France.

India will attend the fair as the Guest of Honour.

The winning title - "The Life of an Unknown Man" is the story of Shutov, a disenchanted writer, who revisits Saint Petersburg after twenty years of exile in Paris, hoping to recapture his youth.

Kaikini wins DSC prize

Kannada author Jayant Kaikini, along with translator Tejaswini Niranjana, won the prestigious DSC Prize for South Asian Literature for the book *No Presents Please: Mumbai Stories* for 2018.

The award was presented to the duo at the Kolkata Literary Meet.

The award carries a cash prize of \$25,000 at the event.

Param Vishisht Seva Medal & Kirti Chakra

• Army chief General Bipin Rawat is among 19 senior army officials who have been conferred the Param Vishisht Seva Medal, the highest military medal awarded in recognition of peace-time services not relating to gallantry.

The defence ministry also announced **Kirti Chakra** -- India's second highest peacetime gallantry award for

- Major Tushar Gauba from the Jat Regiment and
- Sowar Vijay Kumar ((posthumously)) from 22 Rashtriya Rifles. Nine army men have been awarded Shaurya Chakra, the third highest peacetime gallantry award after the Ashoka Chakra and the Kirti Chakra.

The **Shaurya Chakra** awardees included

- Lieutenant Colonel Vikrant Prasher of 10 Parachute Regiment (Special Forces),
- Major Amit Kumar Dimri from 14 Rashtriya Rifles,
- Major Imliakum Keitzar from 4th Gorkha Rifles,
- Major Rohit Lingwal of 9th battalion, Parachute Regiment and
- Captain Abhay Sharma, first battalion, Parachute Regiment.
- Captain Abhinav Kumar Choudhary from 21 Rashtriya Rifles,
- Lance Naik Ayyub Ali from 9th battalion of Rashtriya Rifles,
- Sepoy Ajay Kumar, 42nd battalion of Rashtriya Rifles and
- Sapper Mahesh HN, 44th battalion of the Rashtriya Rifles.

Nao Sena Medal for Navy's Commander Tomy Abhilash

9. PERSONS IN NEWS & APPOINTMENTS

V Vaidyanathan -new MD & CEO of IDFC First Bank

The Reserve Bank has approved the appointment of V Vaidyanathan as MD and CEO of IDFC First Bank for a period of three years.

His tenure is effective from December 19, 2018.

Prior to this, Vaidyanathan was the founder and chairman of Capital First.

Aqeel Ahmed new chairman of Council for Leather Exports

- P R Aqeel Ahmed has been appointed as its new chairman of Council for Leather Exports(CLE).
- The new vice-chairman will be Sanjay Leekha.
- The council is a trade promotion organisation of leather and leather products industry.
- It works under the aegis of Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

Sweden's Prime Minister Stefan Lofven wins second term

Sweden's parliament has elected Prime Minister Stefan Lofven to a second four-year term.

Prabhat Singh appointed DG in NHRC

- Senior IPS officer Prabhat Singh has been appointed as Director General (Investigation) in the National Human Rights Commission.
- Singh is at present Special Director, Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF).
- He has been appointed to the post for a period up to April 30, 2020, the date of his superannuation.
- S N Pradhan has been appointed Director General of National Disaster Response Force (NDRF).
- Pradhan, a 1988 batch IPS officer of Jharkhand cadre, is Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region.

Satyarup Sidhanta –record in Mountaineering

- Kolkata's renowned mountaineer Satyarup Siddhanta recently added another feather to his hat by conquering Antarctica's highest point Mount Sidney.
- He became the youngest man in the world to have climbed 7 highest peaks and volcanic summits across continents.

10th edition of India Rubber Expo 2019

The 10th edition of the India Rubber Expo - 2019 was held in Mumbai.

New Additional Solicitor Generals (ASGs)

President Ram Nath Kovind has appointed senior advocates Sanjay Jain and K M Nataraj as Additional Solicitor Generals of India for the Supreme Court.

Manu Sawhney named as ICC Chief Executive

The International Cricket Council announced Manu Sawhney as the new Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

He will formally take over from David Richardson after the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup in July.

Rajendra Prabhu passes away

- Veteran journalist Rajendra Prabhu, who was at the forefront of media trade union movement, passed away after a brief illness. He was 85.
- He played a key role in the formation of the National Union of Journalists (India) in 1972 and moulded three generations of leaders in the Union.

New speaker of Rajasthan Assembly

- C P Joshi was elected unopposed the speaker of the 15th Rajasthan Legislative Assembly.
- C.P. Joshi was former Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways and Panchayati Raj from 2009 to 2013.

Renowned director Lenin Rajendran dies at 67

Eminent Malayalam filmmaker and chairman of the Kerala Film Development Corporation, Lenin Rajendran, Monday died at a private hospital in Chennai following liver related ailments, hospital sources said.

Rajendran, 67, recently underwent liver transplantation surgery.

He died at 8.45 pm, the sources said.

Known for his unique style of filmmaking, Rajendran had entered tinsel town by directing the movie 'Venal' during the early 1980s.

A multiple state award winner, Rajendran helmed a number of critically acclaimed movies including "Swathi Thirunal", "Daivathinte Vikrithikal", "Mazha", "Kulam" and "Idavapathi".

Rajendran is survived by wife and two children.

ICICI Bank appoints B Sriram, Rama Bijapurkar independent directors

Private sector ICICI Bank Monday inducted former SBI Managing Director B Sriram on its board as independent director.

Besides, management consultant Rama Bijapurkar was also appointed director.

Both were appointed for 5 years, subject to the approval of shareholders, ICICI Bank said in a regulatory filing on stock exchanges.

Sriram retired as the managing director of IDBI Bank in September 2018. Prior to IDBI Bank, he was the managing director of SBI.

Former chief statistician TCA Anant assumes charge as UPSC member

- Former chief statistician TCA Anant assumed charge as a member of the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), which conducts the prestigious civil services examination.
- The commission has a strength of 10 members, besides a chairperson.
- After Anant's appointment, the commission still has one more vacancy of a member.
- Former Delhi Police Commissioner Bhim Sain Bassi, Prof. Pradeep Kumar Joshi, Air Marshal A S Bhonsle (retired), Sujata Mehta, Manoj Soni, Smita Nagaraj, M Sathiyavathy and Bharat Bhushan Vyas are members of the UPSC.

Sushil Modi to head GoM on GST revenue shortfall faced by states

- Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Sushil Kumar Modi will head the seven-member Group of Ministers (GoM) to look into the revenue shortfall being faced by states following the roll out of Goods and Services Tax (GST).
- It will undertake data analysis and suggest measures for course correction.
- Several states, including Bihar, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Jammu and Kashmir, Odisha and Gujarat are facing revenue shortfall.
- Of the 31 states, only Andhra Pradesh and five north eastern states -- Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Sikkim and Nagaland -- have recorded revenue increase post the GST roll out.

RBI approves appointment of Brahm Dutt as Yes Bank non-executive chairman

The Reserve Bank of India has approved the appointment of Brahm Dutt as non-executive part time Chairman of the board of private sector lender Yes Bank.

The appointment is till July 2020 as Dutt will then attain the age of 70 years.

Dutt has been on the Board of Yes Bank since July 2013 as an Independent Director. He is a former IAS officer and was Secretary in the Cabinet Secretariat and in the Ministry of Road Transport & Highways.

Footballer Zulfiqar passes away

Former India footballer Mohammed Zulfiqaruddin, who was part of the fourth place finishing team in the 1956 Olympics in Melbourne, passed away here Sunday.

HC forms committee to weed out invasive plant species from Western Ghats

The Madras High Court has set up an expert committee to find a solution to root out invasive species of plants from the Western Ghats while observing that such species were the second largest cause of biodiversity loss in the world.

It has also directed the panel to file a report on the ways to weed out such species within two months.

The committee shall be headed by Cherukuri Raghavendra Babu, the chairman of the expert committee on invasive species in Chennai National Biodiversity Authority.

Jaideep Govind appointed Secretary General, NHRC

Senior bureaucrat Jaideep Govind was appointed Secretary General, National Human Rights Commission.

Aparna Kumar Becomes First Female IPS Officer To Reach South Pole

Aparna Kumar has become the first woman IPS DIG and Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) officer to successfully complete the South Pole expedition.

Aparna Kumar is a 2002 batch UP Cadre IPS officer, who has been posted at the Northern Frontier Headquarters of ITBP in Dehradun.

Power Grid CMD I S Jha becomes CERC member

Power Grid Corporation of India (PGCIL) Chairman I S Jha joined as a member of the Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (CERC).

The member of the CERC can serve till the age of 65 years.

Lingayat seer Shivakumara left the body

Shivakumara Swami, a much revered seer in Karnataka, died. Shivakumara Swami, who was a seer at the Siddaganga Mutt, was on life support at the mutt, which is located in Tumakuru.

Shivakumara Swami was a renowned Lingayat seer who was known as a "walking god" among his followers.

Nagendra Jamatia, TNV peace accord initiator, passes away

Nagendra Jamatia, the veteran tribal leader who brokered peace with insurgent outfit Tripura National Volunteers in 1988, passed away on Monday.

He was 71.

World's oldest man dies in Japan aged 113

- Masazo Nonaka the world's oldest man has died , at the age of 113.
- He is from hot springs inn on Japan's northern main island of Hokkaido.
- Born on 25 July 1905.
- Today Japanese centenarian population edges towards 70,000

N. Ram appointed President of Alliance for Media Freedom

- N. Ram, chairman, THG Publishing Private Limited, has been appointed president of the Alliance for Media Freedom (AFMF), a cross-media advocacy and action group of media organisations, promoters and journalists.
- The Alliance, is dedicated to work for the cause of media freedom, media independence and the safety of the last journalist, adopted a charter that underlines the importance of creating enabling conditions to safeguard free speech guaranteed by the Indian Constitution.

Mohamed Salah: Caf African Player of the Year

- Liverpool's Mohamed Salah is the 2018 Confederation of African Football Player of the Year - the second consecutive year he has won the award.
- Egypt forward Salah, 26, beat Liverpool team-mate Sadio Mane of Senegal and Arsenal and Gabon striker Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang to the title.
- **Youth player of the Year:** Achraf Hakimi (Morocco)

- **Coach of the Year:** Herve Renard (Morocco)
- **Women's coach of the Year:** Desiree Ellis (South Africa)
- **National team of the year:** Mauritania
- **Women's national team of the year:** Nigeria
- **Goal of the Year:** Chrestinah 'Thembi' Kgatlana (for South Africa v Nigeria in Group B game at Women's Africa Cup of Nations)

Pranav R Mehta becomes first Indian to Head Global Solar Council

- Pranav R Mehta, has taken over as the president of Global Solar Council (GSC) from January 1, 2019. The GSC has its headquarters in Washington D.C., USA.
- The Global Solar Council (GSC) was launched on December 6, 2015, following the historic United Nations Climate Change Conference (UN COP 21).
- The GSC came into being as International Coalition of more than 30 nations, utilising maximum solar energy, decided to harness the renewable energy for the greater good.

RBI appoints Nandan Nilekani as chairman of panel on digital payments

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has appointed Nandan Nilekani, co-founder of Infosys, as the chairman of a five-member high-level committee that will work towards deepening digital payments in India.

The committee's major role will be to review the existing status of digitisation of payments in the country, identify the current gaps in the ecosystem and suggest ways to bridge them, according to the RBI.

Sanjiv Arora appointed Secretary of overseas Indian affairs

- Senior diplomat Sanjiv Arora has been appointed as Secretary, overseas Indian affairs.
- He replaced Dnyaneshwar Mulay.

World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim to step down on February 1

- In a surprise move, World Bank President Jim Yong Kim on Monday announced that he will step down from his position on February 1 - much before the end of his term in 2022.
- Kim, 58, has been in this position for over six years now.
- Kristalina Georgieva, World Bank CEO, will assume the role of interim President effective February 1.

Civil Aviation Security chief appointed as Sashastra Seema Bal DG

- Civil Aviation Security head and senior IPS officer Kumar Rajesh Chandra was appointed as the director general of the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB).
- Chandra, a 1985-batch IPS officer of Bihar cadre, is at present the director general of the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS).
- He has been appointed as SSB DG up to December 31, 2021.
- The SSB, which has about 80,000 personnel, guards India's borders with Nepal and Bhutan.

Gita Gopinath joins IMF as its first female chief economist

Mysore-born Gita Gopinath has joined International Monetary Fund as its chief economist, becoming the first woman to occupy the top IMF post.

Gopinath is the 11th chief economist of IMF.

Panel on quota for Assamese

The Centre has set up a high-level committee headed by former IAS officer M.P. Bezbaruah to assess the appropriate level of reservation of seats in the Assam Assembly and local bodies for the Assamese people, besides providing employment opportunities.

Vijay Mallya First Tycoon To Be Named "Fugitive Economic Offender"

Vijay Mallya became the first tycoon to be charged under a new anti-fraud law, with a court in Mumbai naming him as an offender under the Fugitive Economic Offenders Act, 2018.

The anti-corruption court was hearing an application by the Enforcement Directorate, seeking a direction to declare Mr Mallya a fugitive economic offender.

Arunima Sinha becomes world's first woman amputee to scale Mount Vinson

Arunima Sinha, the Indian mountaineer who became the world's first woman amputee to climb Mount Everest in 2013, has now become the first woman amputee to climb Mount Vinson (highest peak of Antarctica).

Sinha is a national level volleyball player who had one of her legs amputated in 2011 after she was pushed from a running train by dacoits she had resisted.

A Padmashri awardee, Sinha had earlier scaled five peaks including Mt Everest, Mt Kilimanjaro, Mt Ebrus, Mt Kosciuszko and Mt Aconcagua.

Shri Chhabilendra Roul takes charge as Secretary, Department of Fertilizers

Shri Chhabilendra Roul has assumed the charge of Secretary, Department of Fertilizers, Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers

Bengali writer Dibyendu Palit passes away

- Renowned Bengali writer and Sahitya Akademi awardee Dibyendu Palit died Thursday due to age-related ailments, his family said.
- Palit, who was conferred the Sahitya Akademi for his novel 'Anubhab' in 1998.
- Chhandopatan, Sindhu Baroan, Mukhabhinoy, Dheu, Sahojodha were some his works.
- Film maker Tapan Sinha's 'Antardhan' was also based on a short story by Palit.

LT Gen Rajeev Chopra takes over as DG NCC

Lt Gen Rajeev Chopra assumed the appointment of Director General of NCC (DGNCC).

Commissioned in the Madras Regiment in December 1980, Lt Gen Chopra is an alumnus of the National Defence Academy, Khadakwasla and Indian Military Academy, Dehradun.

Shri Rajiv Nayan Choubey takes Oath of Office and Secrecy as Member, UPSC

Shri Rajiv Nayan Choubey, took the Oath of office and Secrecy as Member, Union Public Service Commission.

The oath was administered by Shri Arvind Saxena, Chairman, UPSC.

Malaysia crowns Sultan Abdullah as 16th king

Sultan Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah of central Pahang state was crowned as Malaysia's 16th king under a unique rotating monarchy system, nearly a month after the sudden abdication of Sultan Muhammad V.

King's term will be for five-year terms which is world's only such system, which has been maintained since Malaysia's independence from Britain in 1957.

Sultan Muhammad V (49), of northeast Kelantan state, abruptly resigned Jan. 6 as Malaysia's king after just two years on the throne in the first abdication in the nation's history.

ICICI Bank sacks Chanda Kochhar

- The ICICI Bank has decided to terminate the contract of former managing director and CEO, Chanda Kochhar after the B.N. Srikrishna panel found that she violated the bank's code of conduct.

- The bank also said there would be a clawback of bonuses paid between 2009 and 2019.
- According to a bank statement, the Srikrishna panel report concluded that primarily on account of ineffectively dealing with conflict of interest and due disclosure or recusal requirements, Ms. Kochhar was in violation of the ICICI Bank Code of Conduct, its framework for dealing with conflict of interest and fiduciary duties, and in terms of applicable Indian laws, rules and regulations.
- The Enquiry Report also concluded that her lack of diligence .
- Ms. Kochhar, who assumed charge as MD and CEO on May 1, 2009, resigned in October last year.

Pakistan's first Hindu woman judge

- Suman Kumari has become the first Hindu woman in Pakistan to be appointed as a civil judge.
- She hails from Qambar-Shahdadkot, will serve in her native district.
- She passed her LLB. examination from Hyderabad and did her masters in law from Karachi's Szabist University..
- The first judge from the Hindu community was Justice Rana Bhagwandas, who served as the acting chief justice for brief periods between 2005 and 2007.
- Hindus make up nearly 2 per cent of Pakistan's total population and Hinduism remains the second largest religion in Pakistan after Islam.

Lakshmi Vilas Bank reappoints Parthasarathi Mukherjee as its MD for two more years

Private sector lender Lakshmi Vilas Bank has reappointed Parthasarathi Mukherjee as its managing director for two more years.

Mukherjee's extended term will begin January 25. The bank's board took the decision on the reappointment on Wednesday.

The reappointed has received the final approval from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

Ronojoy Dutta named new Indigo CEO

InterGlobe Aviation Limited (Indigo), has named global aviation professional Ronojoy Dutta as its new CEO.

The position was lying vacant since the resignation of the former CEO Aditya Ghosh in April 2018. IndiGo co-founder Rahul Bhatia was holding charge as interim CEO during the period.

Krishna Sobti passed away

Legendary Hindi writer Krishna Sobti passed away at the age of 93.

Sobti was a Sahitya Akademi Award and Jnanpith award winner.

97-year-old Kerala student made Commonwealth Learning's Goodwill Ambassador

Karthyayani Amma, 97, who had bagged the first rank in the 'Aksharaksham' literacy exam conducted by the Kerala government in November last year, has been honoured by the Commonwealth of Learning.

The Canada-based organisation which works for the promotion of education in Commonwealth countries declared her as their goodwill ambassador.

10. REPORTS AND INDICES

India Ranks 79th in List of Most Powerful Passports: Report

According to the Henley Passport Index, which periodically measures the access each country's travel document affords, India jumped two positions from 81st in 2018 to 79th this year.

Japan retained its top spot as the world's most travel-friendly passport due to the document's access to 190 countries.

Henley & Partners' Group Chairman Christian Kalin, created the Passport Index.

The Henley Passport Index is based on data provided by the International Air Transport Authority (IATA) and covers 199 passports and 227 travel destinations.

India to remain fastest-growing economy in 2019, 2020: UN report

India will continue to remain the world's fastest-growing large economy in 2019 as well as in 2020, much ahead of China..

According to the UN's World Economic Situation and Prospects (WESP) 2019, India's GDP growth is expected to accelerate to 7.6 per cent in 2019-20 from an estimated 7.4 per cent in the current fiscal ending March 2019. The growth rate may come down to 7.4 per cent a year later.

In the case of China, the growth is estimated to decelerate to 6.3 per cent in 2019 from 6.6 per cent in 2018. It may further go down to 6.2 per cent in 2020.

Referring to China, it said the growth is expected to moderate from 6.6 per cent in 2018 to 6.3 per cent in 2019, with policy support partly offsetting the negative impact of trade tensions.

The report further said the global economy would continue to grow at a steady pace of around 3 per cent in 2019 and 2020 amid signs that global growth has peaked.

Pune-Secunderabad Shatabdi is India's cleanest train

➤ The results of the first-ever 'Total Cleanliness Survey' of the Railways are now out, and the winners are North Western Railway (NWR), which topped the zonal rankings in the 'Premium'

category trains, and Southern Railway, which came out on top in the 'Other than Premium' category' trains.

- The survey covered 209 trains and was conducted by the Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation. Its aim was to assess the progress of the 'Swachh Rail-Swachh Bharat' mission and promote healthy competition among trains.
- IRCTC survey asked passengers about toilets, linen, housekeeping to rank trains. A total of 15,360 passengers from 16 zones, took part in the survey.
- While the NWR got an average score of 860 out of 1,000 in the 'Premium' category, South Central Railway finished at the bottom with an average of 658. Southern Railway topped the 'Other than Premium' category', with the highest average of 736 among the 16 railway zones, while the East Central Railway was the dirtiest in this group, with an average of 572. The 'Premium' trains included the Rajdhani, Shatabdi, Duronto, Tejas and Gatiman while Sampark Kranti, Intercity, Jan Shatabdi and other Mail and Express trains were in the 'Other than Premium' category.
- The overall score of the Rajdhani trains was 787. This included separate scores for process audit, direct observation, and passenger feedback. Out of the 23 Rajdhani surveyed, the Mumbai Rajdhani emerged on top with 875, followed by those linking Bhubaneswar and Sealdah.
- Among 26 Shatabdi trains, the Pune-Secunderabad Shatabdi, with 916, finished on top, followed by the Howrah-Ranchi and Delhi-Kanpur Shatabdis. The Kochuveli-Chandigarh Sampark Kranti was the cleanest among the 20 Sampark Kranti trains, with a score of 754. The KSR Bengaluru-Ernakulam train topped among 20 Intercity services.

JNPT only Indian port to be listed amongst the world's top 30 container ports

The Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (JNPT), listed amongst the top 30 container ports globally, as per the latest Lloyds Report.

JNPT notched up five spots, to be 28th on the list, compared to its previous ranking.

Various new processes activated under the 'ease of doing business' initiative have not only helped in overall growth of the port business, but also allowed the EXIM trade to save time and cost which in turn have accentuated the growth story.

India ranks 80th on Global Talent Competitive Index 2019

Switzerland followed by Singapore, the US, Norway and Denmark were the top five on the list

At 80th rank, India moves up one position on the Global Talent Competitive Index (GTCI) 2019, according to a report released by INSEAD business school in partnership with Tata Communications and Adecco Group.

According to the report, India's biggest challenge is to improve its ability to attract and retain talent. It further added, there is a need to address its poor level of Internal Openness in particular with respect to weak gender equality and low tolerances towards minorities and immigrants—and its disappointing showing in lifestyle indicators.

China emerged as the best performer among the BRICS countries, with an overall position of 45th. However, India performed better than its lower-income peers when it comes to growing talent and access to growth opportunities.

7.5%, 7.7% India to be top growing economy in 2020: IMF

- According to IMF's growth projection for the country is 7.5 per cent for 2019-20 and 7.7 per cent in 2020-21.
- This comes on a day when China announced that its GDP recorded its lowest growth rate in 28 years at 6.6 per cent (for 2018). This is lower than the IMF's estimate of 6.6 per cent in 2018 and 6.2 per cent in 2019 and 2020.
- With the latest outlook, India will remain the fastest-growing economy in the world, at least for the next two years.
- The IMF report says that India's economy is poised to pick up in 2019, benefiting from low oil prices and a slower pace of monetary tightening than previously expected as inflation pressures ease.

India among most trusted nations globally, brands among least-trusted: Report

- India is among the most trusted nations globally when it comes to government, business, NGOs and media but the country's brands are among the least-trusted, according 2019 Edelman Trust Barometer report.

- China topped the Trust Index among both the informed public and the general population segments, with scores of 79 and 88 respectively.
- India was at the second place in the informed public category and third place in the general population category.
- In terms of trust in companies headquartered in each market, the most trusted are those from Switzerland, Germany and Canada. The brands from these countries have a trust score of 70 each while that of Japan is 69 per cent.

'Bihar outgrew others in FY18 GDP'

Bihar and Andhra Pradesh led the pack among States in terms of GDP growth in financial year 2017-18, clocking 11.3% and 11.2% growth, respectively, compared with the national GDP growth of 6.7% for the year, according to a report by Crisil.

According to the report, 12 of the 17 general category States grew faster than the national growth rate.

However, it noted that this growth was not equitable, with the gap between the per capita incomes in low-income and high-income States widening over the last five years.

The analysis found that between the financial years 2012-13 and 2016-17, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka were the fastest growing states, on average.

India likely to surpass UK in world's largest economy rankings: Report

India is likely to cross the United Kingdom in the world's largest economy rankings in 2019, a report published by global consultancy firm PwC stated.

PwC's Global Economy Watch monitors trends and issues affecting the global economy and details its latest projections for the leading nations.

It also mentions that UK and France have regularly switched places owing to similar levels of development and roughly equal populations, and India's rise in the rankings is likely to be permanent.

The global consultancy firms' report also projects real GDP growth of 1.6 per cent for the UK, 1.7 per cent for France and 7.6 per cent for India in 2019.

UN human trafficking report: Record number of girls reported as victims

- Girls account for 23% of all trafficking victims detected globally, according to the 2018 Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, produced by the UN Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC).
- The figure, which is based on data from 2016, is up from 21% in 2014, and 10% in 2004, the year when the UNODC began collecting data on children.
- Boys account for 7% of reported trafficking victims, down from 8% in 2014, and up from 3% in 2004.
- The report shows that women and girls account for almost three quarters of all detected victims of trafficking in 2016. Females make up 94% of the total victims trafficked for sexual exploitation, and 35% of those trafficked for forced labour.

Andhra tops ACI's Ease of Doing Business index

Andhra Pradesh emerged on top of Asia Competitiveness Institute (ACI), Singapore's 2018 Ease of Doing Business (EDB) Index ABC rankings for economies of 21 states of India, while Maharashtra and Delhi came in second and third place, respectively.

EDB index is based upon three parameters called ABC - Attractiveness to Investors, Business Friendliness and Competitiveness Policies.

Andhra Pradesh jumped from the 7th rank in 2016 to the 3rd rank in 2018 in Attractiveness to Investors.

The state rose from the 6th to the 1st position in Business Friendliness. However, the state dipped from the 2nd to the 4th rank in Competitiveness Policies. In total, Andhra Pradesh rose from the 5th rank in 2016 to the top spot in 2018.

India improves its global corruption ranking in 2018: Study

- India has improved its ranking on a global corruption index in 2018 by three points and moved to 78th position with a score of 41.
- In the list of 180 countries, China and Pakistan lagged far behind at 87th and 117th position, respectively.
- According to the rankings released by an anti-corruption watchdog, Denmark is the least corrupt country followed by New Zealand while Somalia, Syria and South Sudan are the most corrupt countries in the world.

Tata among 100 most valuable global brands

- 'Tata' has entered the list of top 100 most valuable brands, according to the Brand Finance Global 500 2019 report released at the World Economic Forum in Davos.
- Climbing [up] from the 104th position to 86 this year, the Tata brand is the only Indian brand in the top 100
- The total value of brand 'Tata' increased 37% to \$19.5 billion in 2019 from \$14.2 billion a year ago.

11. SUMMITS AND CONFERENCES

Global Aviation Summit 2019

Global Aviation Summit 2019 was held in Mumbai.

It was a two-day summit, with a theme 'Flying for all-especially the next 6 Billion', is being organised by Ministry of Civil Aviation in association with FICCI.

Minister of State for Civil Aviation Jayant Sinha.

Civil Aviation secretary R N Choubey

9th International Conference on Micro Irrigation

9th International Micro Irrigation Conference on Modern Agriculture at Aurangabad, Maharashtra

It was organised by Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation.

It was held in association with International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage (ICID), Indian National Committee on Surface Water (INCSW) and WAPCOS Limited, a CPSE under the Union Ministry of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation.

Shri Nitin Gadkari, Union Minister for Road Transport & Highways, Shipping and Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation

Shri U.P. Singh, Secretary, Ministry of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation.

Fish Fest begins to aware people of govt achievement

The three-day 'Bengal Fish Fest 2019', organised by state Fisheries Department, to make the people aware the achievement of the state government in this area where the state was a front-runner.

West Bengal has a tremendous potential in the fisheries sector ranking second in fish and first in fish seed production in the country.

Odisha to host International Dam Safety conference

- Odisha will host the two-day International Dam Safety conference starting February 13.
- Experts from over 20 countries are expected to participate in the conference.
- The dam safety conference assumes significance for Odisha as several important aspects relating to Hirakud dam will also be taken up for discussion.
- The conference will be organised by Union Ministry of Water Resources in collaboration with the Odisha government and the World Bank.

15th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas

➤ The 15th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas 2019 was held was held at Varanasi.

➤ The theme of PBD 2019 is "Role of Indian Diaspora in building a New India."

➤ Government of Uttar Pradesh is the Partner State for the Convention.

➤ It is organised from 21 to 23 January 2019 instead of 9th January due to Kumbh Mela Celebrations.

After the Convention, participants visited Prayagraj for Kumbh Mela on 24th January, 2019 and witnessed the Republic Day Parade at New Delhi on 26th January 2019.

Mr. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, Prime Minister of Mauritius, will be the Chief Guest of the Convention. Mr. Himanshu Gulati, Member of Parliament of Norway, will be the Special Guest and Mr. Kanwaljit Singh Bakshi, Member of Parliament of New Zealand will be the Guest of Honor at the Youth Pravasi Bharatiya Divas on 21st January, 2019.

PM launches Pravasi Teerth Darshan Yojana

Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the Pravasi Teerth Darshan Yojana under which a group of Indian diaspora will be taken on a government-sponsored tour of religious places in India twice a year.

The first batch of 40 Indian-origin people are at the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas and from here they will begin their tour.

They will be taken to religious places of all major religions in India and the government will bear all the expenses including the airfare from their country of residence.

All people of Indian-origin aged 45 to 65 can apply and a group will be selected out of them with first preference given to people from 'Girmitiya countries' such as Mauritius, Fiji, Suriname, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, and Jamaica.

AIR Chennai to host 'Kavi Sammelan' on Jan 10

- All India Radio will be organising a poetry fest, All India Kavi Sammelan, on January 10 in Chennai.
- Poets from all over the country would present composition in their respective languages on the occasion.

29th Indian Paint Conference - 2019 to be held in Agra

The Indian Paint Association (IPA), the apex body of the country's paint industry announced that the 29th biennial Indian Paint Conference was held in Agra.

This would be the largest trade show of the estimated INR 500 billion (50,000 Crore) Indian Paints & Coatings industry.

"The theme of the Conference is 'Paints Pe Charcha - Naye Aayaam'

25TH edition of Partnership Summit in Mumbai

The 25th edition of Partnership Summit 2019, a global platform for dialogue, debate, deliberation and engagement among Indian and global leaders on economic policy and growth trends in India was held in Mumbai.

Global Investors Summit

The two-day Global Investors Summit, was organised by Tamil Nadu government in Chennai.

It is being participated by about five thousand delegates from industries in India and abroad.

World Economic Forum's annual meeting

- The World Economic Forum's (WEF) annual meeting was held in the winter resort village of Davos, Switzerland.
- Theme was "Globalization 4.0: Shaping a Global Architecture in the Age of the Fourth Industrial

2nd World Integrated Medicine Forum 2019

- 2nd World Integrated Medicine Forum 2019 on the 'Regulation of Homeopathic Medical Products; Advancing global collaboration' was held at Goa.
- The organizers of the forum are the Central Council for Research in Homeopathy, under the Ministry of AYUSH.
- International drug regulators dealing with homeopathic/traditional medicines from various countries like France, Switzerland, Germany, Belgium, Spain, Russia, Brazil, Cuba, South Africa, United Arab Emirates, Thailand, Malaysia, Oman, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Nepal, etc. are expected to participate.
- The themes of the forum are: Regulatory collaborations, Converging on minimum regulatory & legal standards, Advancing safety and quality standards, Regulatory trend towards standardization and minimizing complexity, Recognizing homeopathy as distinct holistic medical system and Veterinary homeopathy.

Vibrant Gujarat Summit 2019 Highlights:

9th edition of Vibrant Gujarat Summit 2019 at

Mahatma Mandir in Gandhinagar

More than 30,000 national and international delegates, including CEOs of major firms from India and abroad, are expected to attend the biennial three-day event in Gandhinagar.

1. 30th International Kite Festival: Kite fliers from 45 different countries of the world participated.
2. PM Modi inaugurates 3D laser projection show at Dandi Kutir in Gujarat
3. Heads of following countries – Shavkat Mirziyoyev(Uzbekistan), Lars Løkke Rasmussen(Denmark), Andrej Babis(Czech Republic) and Joseph Musca(Malta) have participated in the Summit.
4. Adani Group to invest Rs 55,000 crore in next five years in Gujarat projects including world's largest solar park, a copper plant, a cement unit, and a lithium battery manufacturing complex.
5. Aditya Birla Group plans to invest Rs. 15,000 crore in Gujarat in the next three years on capacity expansion and setting up of new units, Chairman Kuman Mangalam Birla said at the event on Friday.
6. Japanese auto maker Suzuki Motor Corporation Friday said it will commission its third plant at Gujarat by 2020 and will introduce new hybrid vehicles in India with technical support from Toyota.

The 6th 'Women of India Organic Festival' to begin next week at Leisure Valley, Chandigarh

- The Ministry of Women and Child Development hosted the 6th 'Women of India Organic Festival' at Leisure Valley in Chandigarh, to celebrate and promote women farmers and entrepreneurs in the organic sector from the remotest parts of India.
- The festival aims to encourage Indian women entrepreneurs and farmers to connect with more buyers and thus, empower them through financial inclusion, while promoting organic culture in India.

PETROTECH-2019, the 13th International Oil & Gas Conference & Exhibition

PETROTECH-2019, the 13th International Oil & Gas Conference & Exhibition, organised under the aegis of the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas.

It is India's flagship hydrocarbon international conference.

Over 95 Energy Ministers from partner countries have been invited by the Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas to participate in the Conference.

The three-day mega event will showcase the recent market and investor friendly developments that have taken place in the India's oil and gas sector. It is expected to see participation of over 86 eminent speakers and 7000 delegates from around 70 countries, including technologists, scientists, planners, policy-makers, management experts, entrepreneurs, service-providers and vendors.

Bharat Parv 2019

- The celebration of 'Bharat Parv' held at Red Fort, New Delhi.
- The Parv was organized by the Ministry of Tourism from 26th to 31st January, 2019.
- The major attractions this year included the replica of the Statue of Unity created by sculptor Shri. Ram Vanji Sutar and, also a Gandhi Gram in which 10 painting artists created paintings on the theme 'Ideology of Mahatma Gandhi'. The daily highlights of events were Display of Republic Day Parade Tableaux, Performances by the Armed Forces

Bands (Static as well as dynamic), a Multi-Cuisine Food Court, Crafts Mela, Cultural Performances from different regions of the country, exhibition-cum-sale of crafts items, Yoga demonstrations and live Kitchen demonstrations. The Parv at the Red Fort, New Delhi witnessed a large number of visitors.

- Another attraction this year was the stall on the 'Adopt a Heritage' project of the Tourism Ministry, where the Monument Mitras are arranging Video walkthroughs/Project awareness videos/Segway experience on the projects they have taken up under Adopt a Heritage.
- 27 States participated by setting up of Stalls, Showcasing their food, handicrafts and tourism products. The Central Ministries/ agencies who participated in the event include Ministry of Culture, Ministry of AYUSH, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, Development Commissioner Handicrafts (Ministry of Textile), IRCTC, Rail Museum, TRIFED, Development Commissioner Handloom
- The Ministry of Tourism has been designated as the nodal Ministry for Bharat Parv.

12. SPORTS

1st Ekalavya Model Residential Schools Sports Meet 2019

“1st Ekalavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) Sports Meet 2019” was held from 14th to 16th January 2019 at GMC Balayogi Stadium, Gachibowli, Hyderabad.

1735 participants from 20 States across the country exhibited their talent in various Events in the Meet.

There were be 13 events including Athletics and in Athletics there will be 13 different competitions such as various Runs, Jumps and Walks.

Eklavya Model Residential Schools

Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRSs) for ST students are set up in States / UTs with provisioning of funds through “Grants under Article 275(1) of the Constitution”.

As per the budget 2018-19, every block with more than 50% ST population and at least 20,000 tribal persons, will have an Eklavya Model Residential School by the year 2022. Government of India is planning to establish more than 400 Eklavya model schools by 2022.

Across the country, as per census 2011 figures, there are 564 sub-districts, i.e. blocks/taluka/tehsils, having more than 50% ST population and at least 20,000 tribal persons.

Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has approved a financial cost of Rs. 2242.03 crore during 2018-19 and 2019-20 for these schools.

Vinesh Phogat becomes first Indian to be nominated for Laureus World Sports Award

- Star wrestler Vinesh Phogat became the first Indian to be nominated for the prestigious Laureus World Sports Award.
- Vinesh has been nominated in “Laureus World Sporting Comeback” category for the year 2019 and will be competing for the award with golf great Tiger Woods, Canadian snowboarder Mark McMorris, American alpine ski racer Lindsey Vonn, Japanese figure skater Yuzuru Manyu, and Dutch para-snowboarding star Bibian Mentel-Spee.
- Vinesh won gold at the 2018 Commonwealth Games, a silver in the 2018 Asian Championships in Bishkek and a gold at the Asian Games in Jakarta.

D Gukesh - world's second youngest grand master

- Tamil Nadu lad D Gukesh became the second youngest Grand Master in the world and the youngest Indian to achieve the feat at 12 years, seven months and 17 days, erasing the mark set by his state-mate R Praggnanandhaa in June last year.
- He achieved his third and final GM norm at the ongoing 17th Delhi International Open Chess tournament in Delhi after beating compatriot D K Sharma in the ninth round.
- Gukesh becomes India's 59th Grand Master.
- Ukraine's Sergey Karjakin remains the youngest-ever GM, having achieved the feat at the age of 12 years and seven months in 2002.

Khelo India Youth Games 2019 Medal Tally

ABOUT

Rank	State	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
1	Maharashtra	85	61	81	228
2	Haryana	62	56	60	178
3	Delhi	48	37	51	136
4	Karnataka	30	28	19	77
5	Tamil Nadu	27	36	25	88
6	Uttar Pradesh	23	25	40	88
7	Punjab	23	19	30	72
8	Gujarat	15	9	15	39
9	West Bengal	13	15	16	44
10	Kerala	12	16	30	58
11	Rajasthan	10	16	18	44
12	Manipur	9	9	14	32
13	Madhya Pradesh	8	8	15	31
14	Telangana	5	8	9	22

Rank	State	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
15	Andhra Pradesh	5	6	9	20
16	Mizoram	4	4	5	13
17	Chandigarh	3	7	9	19
18	Odisha	3	6	6	15
19	Jharkhand	3	6	1	10
20	Jammu And Kashmir	3	4	1	8
21	Uttarakhand	3	2	10	15
22	Assam	3	2	10	10
23	Himachal Pradesh	3	1	11	11
24	Chattisgarh	2	4	10	10
25	Tripura	1	3	6	6
26	Goa	0	8	17	17
27	Arunachal Pradesh	0	6	14	14
28	Bihar	0	1	5	5
29	Daman and Diu	0	0	3	3

Maharashtra touched a new milestone of 200 medals. Haryana defeated Delhi and is currently securing the second position.

Haryana, who topped the medals tally at last year's Games, bagged an incredible 10 gold medals along with eight silver and 15 bronze yesterday.

Stephen Constantine steps down as India Football head coach

Indian football team head coach Stephen Constantine has resigned after the team's shock 0-1 defeat to Bahrain which led to India's exit from the Asian Cup.

Ali Qamar named women's chief coach

- Mohammed Ali Qamar, the man who won India's first Commonwealth Games gold medal in boxing, has taken over as chief coach for the country's women Boxing, becoming the youngest ever to get the top job.
- He was a Arjuna awardee.

Shakil Ahmed sets world record in Indoor rowing

Asian Cup Gold medallist Shakil Amed set up a world record in indoor rowing by completing 1,00,000 (one lakh) metres in above-40 years category here on Sunday.

A FISA level one coach, Shakil began his record-setting indoor rowing feat in Salt Lake stadium complex, West Bengal.

Bengaluru Raptors win Premier Badminton League

Bengaluru Raptors edged the Mumbai Rockets 4-3 to win their maiden Premier Badminton League title on Sunday.

Birendra Prasad Baishya Ched de Mission for Tokyo Olympics

Birendra Prasad Baishya, President of the Indian Weightlifting Federation (WIF) was named Chef de Mission for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

Baishya is also one of the IOA Vice Presidents besides holding several other positions like Executive Board Member - International Weightlifting Federation, Vice President of Asian Weightlifting Federation and Vice President of Commonwealth Weightlifting Federation.

Kohli and Shastri receive honorary membership of SCG

- India skipper Virat Kohli and coach Ravi Shastri received the honorary membership of the Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG) for their contribution to the sport of cricket.
- The Indian team defeated Australia 2-1 in the four-match Test series, ending the country's 71-year-old wait for a rare series win Down Under.
- Apart from Kohli and Sashtri, the only other international cricketers to be granted the honorary membership of the SCG are iconic Sachin Tendulkar and Brain Lara of the West Indies.

Virat Kohli Named Captain Of ICC's Test, ODI Teams Of The Year

Virat Kohli, the Indian run-machine, was named captain of International Cricket Council's (ICC) Test and One-day International (ODI) teams of the year 2018.

The ICC award, selected by the Voting Academy comprising of former players, members of the media and broadcasters.

The 30-year-old, with 1,322 runs, five centuries in 13 Tests and 1,202 runs at an astounding average of 133.55 with six hundreds in 14 ODIs.

ICC Men's Test Team of the Year (in batting order):

1. Tom Latham (New Zealand)
2. Dimuth Karunaratne (Sri Lanka)
3. Kane Williamson (New Zealand)
4. Virat Kohli (India) (capt)
5. Henry Nicholls (New Zealand)
6. Rishabh Pant (India) (wk)
7. Jason Holder (Windies)
8. Kagiso Rabada (South Africa)
9. Nathan Lyon (Australia)
10. Jasprit Bumrah (India)
11. Mohammad Abbas (Pakistan)

ICC Men's ODI team of the year (in batting order):

1. Rohit Sharma (India)
2. Jonny Bairstow (England)
3. Virat Kohli (India) (capt)
4. Joe Root (England)
5. Ross Taylor (New Zealand)
6. Jos Buttler (England) (wk)
7. Ben Stokes (England)
8. Mustafizur Rahman (Bangladesh)
9. Rashid Khan (Afghanistan)
10. Kuldeep Yadav (India)
11. Jasprit Bumrah (India)

1956 Olympics gold medallist Raghbir Bhola passes away

Raghbir Bhola, represented India in the 1956 Melbourne and 1960 Rome Olympics, winning a gold and silver medals respectively for the country has passed away aged 92.

Shami becomes fastest Indian to reach 100 ODI wickets

- Seamer Mohammed Shami became the fastest Indian to claim 100 wickets in One-day Internationals, reaching the mark in the opening match against New Zealand.
- This was his 56th game in the 50-over format.
- Shami' wicket number 100 was New Zealand opener Martin Guptill.
- Before Shami, Irfan Pathan reached the 100-wicket mark in 59 ODIs, while Zaheer Khan (65 matches), Ajit Agarkar (67) and Javagal Srinath (68) are the other Indian bowlers to complete a century of wickets in the quickest time.

Mary Kom tops AIBA rankings

- The celebrated M C Mary Kom's unprecedented sixth world title triumph has propelled her to the number one position in the International Boxing Association's (AIBA) latest world rankings.
- The Manipuri became the most successful boxer in world championships' history when she claimed the 48kg category top honours in November last year in Delhi.
- In the updated rankings put out by AIBA, Mary Kom is placed top of the charts in the weight division with 1700 points.
- The 36-year-old will have to jump to 51kg in pursuit of her 2020 Olympic dream as 48kg is not yet included in the Games roster.
- Pinki Jangra is placed eighth in the 51kg category list. Asian silver-medallist Manisha Maun holds the same position in the 54kg category.
- Former world silver-medallist Sonia Lather was placed at the second spot in the 57kg division despite enduring a disappointing 2018, during which she finished medal-less at the Asian Games.
- World bronze-medallist Simranjit Kaur (64kg), who was crowned the national champion a few days back, took the fourth position in her weight category. Following her was former world champion L Sarita Devi at the 16th spot.
- India Open gold-medallist and world bronze-winner Lovlina Borgohain took the fifth position in the 69kg category. The men's rankings have not been updated as yet.

Hopman Cup: Roger Federer & Belinda Bencic retain title for Switzerland

- Switzerland's Roger Federer and Belinda Bencic secured a 2-1 victory over Germany's Angelique Kerber and Alexander Zverev to win the Hopman Cup for the second year in a row.
- Twenty-time Grand Slam champion Federer is the first player to win three Hopman Cups - twice with Bencic and once with Martina Hingis, in 2001.

Sydney will host inaugural ATP Cup men's team finals in 2020

- Sydney is set to host the finals of the inaugural ATP Cup men's team competition next January.
- Sydney, Brisbane and one other Australian city will co-host the tournament, featuring 24 national teams in three groups of eight and is expected to involve more than 100 players from the men's tour.

India Captain Mithali Raj becomes 1st female cricketer to play 200 ODIs

- India captain Mithali Raj became the first female cricketer to play 200 ODIs, adding another achievement to her illustrious career.
- She is also the highest run-getter in ODIs with 6622 runs at an average of 51.33, including seven hundreds.
- Mithali made her ODI debut way back in 1999 and has featured in 200 games out of the 263 ODIs India have played.
- She has also played 10 Tests and 85 T20s.

India's Ambati Rayudu banned from bowling by ICC over suspect action

- India's Ambati Rayudu has been banned from bowling in international cricket because of a suspect action.
- He failed to submit to a test of his action within the stipulated 14 days.
- Primarily a batsman and part of the India ODI team currently playing a five-match series in New Zealand, Rayudu bowled two overs for 13 runs in the match in Sydney.

Gurgaon boy wins New South Wales men's Amateur Golf Championship

- India's Kartik Sharma won the New South Wales men's Amateur Golf Championship held at the Terrey Hills Golf and Country Club in Australia.
- Kartik notched up a magnificent win over Australia's Nathan Barberie in the scheduled 36-hole final to emerge as champion.

Saina Nehwal won Indonesia Masters

- Saina Nehwal has been declared the winner of Indonesia Masters after Carolina Marin was forced to retire with a knee injury.
- The Spaniard was leading 10-4 in the first game when she developed an injury in the knee.
- Saina had won a gold medal at the 2018 Commonwealth Games, a bronze at the Asian Games, besides reaching finals at the Denmark, Indonesia Masters and Syed Modi International.

Novak Djokovic won Australian title

- Novak Djokovic defeated Nadal 6-3, 6-2, 6-3 and won his 7th Australian Open championship and a third consecutive Grand Slam title, raising his count to 15 overall.

13. BOOKS AND AUTHORS

1. The Great March of Democracy – Seven Decades of India's Elections : S.Y. Quraishi (former EC of India)
2. India Unmade-How the Modi Government Broke the Economy : Yashwant Sinha & Aditya Sinha
3. The British in India-Three Centuries of Ambition and Experience : David Gilmour
4. Being Reshma : Reshma Qureshi (Acid Attack Survivor) with Tania Singh
5. On Leaders and Icons- From Jinnah to Modi : Kuldip Nayar
6. Listen to Me : Shashi Deshpande
7. Masala Shakespeare : Jonathan Gil Harris
8. Ganga-The Many Past of a River : Sudipta Sen
9. Bridging East & West-Rabindranath Tagore and Romain Rolland Correspondence (1919-1940) : Chinmoy Guha
10. Leapfrogging to Pole-Vaulting : Raghunath Mashelkar & Ravi Pandit
11. We are Displaced : Malala Yousafzai
12. Early Indians : Tony Joseph
13. The Line of Control-Travelling with the Indian and Pakistani Armies : Happymon Jacob
14. Every Vote Counts-The Story of India's Elections : Navin Chawla (former EC of India)
15. Time Pieces-A Whistle-Stop Tour of Ancient India : Nayanjot Lahiri
16. Insider/ Outsider-Belonging and Unbelonging in North-East India : Preeti Gill & Samrat

PRACTICE BITS (CURRENT AFFAIRS)

1. As per the report titled 'Trends & Progress of Banking in 2017-18', the number of ATMs has declined marginally to 1 lakh in FY18 from 2.08 lakh in FY17.
(a) 2.07 (b) 2.06 (c) 2.05 (d) 2.04
2. Which of the following was awarded Best Capital City in the Solid Waste Management in the Swachh Survekshan 2018 rankings?
(a) North Delhi Municipal Corporation
(b) Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation
(c) Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai
(d) Greater Chennai Corporation
3. Who has been appointed as the Chief Information Commissioner in the Central Information Commission on 30 December 2018?
(a) Sudhir Bhargava
(b) Yashwardhan Kumar Sinha
(c) Vanaja N. Sarna
(d) Neeraj Kumar Gupta
4. Portuguese airline_ introduced single use plastic free flight on 29 December 2018.
(a) EuroAtlantic (b) Hi Fly
(c) Tap (d) Luxair
5. The MNJ Institute of Oncology and Regional Cancer Centre of which state has entered the Guinness Book of World Records?
(a) Karnataka (b) Gujarat
(c) Maharashtra (d) Telangana
6. Where was an exhibition titled 'Dandi Yatra' inaugurated on 29 December 2018?
(a) New Delhi (b) Gujarat
(c) Uttar Pradesh (d) Rajasthan
7. ESAF Small Finance Bank Ltd has received the RBI's approval for inclusion in the second schedule of the RBI Act, 1934. This bank is headquartered in
(a) Karnataka (b) Kerala
(c) Maharashtra (d) Gujarat
8. Which state government decided to form a new Spiritual Department on 29 December 2018?
(a) Odisha (b) Jharkhand
(c) Rajasthan (d) Madhya Pradesh
9. In which state Dharmendra Pradhan launched "Ujjwala Sanitary Napkins' on 30 December 2018?
(a) Madhya Pradesh (b) Odisha
(c) Gujarat (d) Rajasthan
10. Who among the following took the command of the Indian Army's Gajraj Corps on 30 December 2018?
(a) Lt Gen S K Upadhyaya
(b) Lt Gen Gurpal Singh Sangha
(c) Lt Gen Manoj Pande (d) Lt Gen Ranbir Singh
11. Kader Khan passed away on 31 December 2018. He was a
(a) Actor (b) Politician (c) Dancer (d) Journalist
12. Which state has announced two welfare initiatives for farmers as a part of Krishi Krishak Bondhuon scheme 31 December 2018?
(a) Maharashtra (b) West Bengal
(c) Odisha (d) Karnataka
13. The government of India extended the Credit Link Subsidy Scheme (CLSS) on home loans for the Middle Income Group (MIG) under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana till March
(a) 2020 (b) 2021 (c) 2022 (d) 2023
14. Who has been appointed as the Chairman of Railway Board (Ministry of Railways) on 31 December 2018?
(a) Vinod Kumar Yadav (b) Ashwani Lohani
(c) Sanjay Kishan Kaul (d) Vineet Saran
15. As per the RBI, the balance sheet size of Non, Bank Financial Companies (NBFCs) grew by ___% in September 2018 from Rs 22.2 trillion in September 2017.
(a) 6.8 (b) 17.2 (c) 17.8 (d) 18.2
16. Which bank has signed a bancassurance pact with SBI Life Insurance on 31 December 2018?
(a) Allahabad (b) YES (c) ICICI (d) HDFC
17. The Core sector growth slowed to _% in November from 4.8% in October 2018, due to a slowdown in the coal, cement, and electricity sectors.
(a) 4.6 (b) 4.2 (c) 3.8 (d) 3.5
18. Who will the head of the committee constituted by Gol to suggest recommendations to strengthen the 'Real Estate Regulatory Authority' (RERA) and to remove difficulties in its implementation?
(a) Prasanth Nair (b) Poma Tudu
(c) Surendra Kumar Solanki (d) Shiv Das Meena
19. As per the Financial Stability Report, banks showed improvement with Gross NonPerforming Assets' (GNPAS) ratio declining to ___% in September 2018.
(a) 11.2 (b) 11.0 (c) 10.8 (d) 10.6
20. Who among the following took over as the first Chief Justice of the Telangana High Court?
(a) N. V. Ramana (b) Sharad Arvind Bobde
(c) B Radhakrishnan (d) Uday Umesh Lalit

21. According to Government of India's recent data total number of Aadhar cards issued till Nov 30, 2018 are ____.
(a) 6.71 Cr (b) 122.90 Cr (c) 120 Cr (d) 82.60 Cr
22. According to Climate change Performance Index ____ country is the rank no.1.
(a) Morocco (b) Lithuania (c) Sweden (d) India
23. Juno, NASA's space craft to Jupiter recently sent photos of ____ Jupiter's moon.
(a) Io (b) Gynamede (c) Europa (d) Metis
24. Famous toy Barbie is turning to ____ yrs this year.
(a) 30 years (b) 40 years (c) 50 years (d) 60 years
25. According to recent data of RBI, as on March 31, 2018 ____ value of banknotes are in circulation.
(a) Rs. 20 trillion (b) Rs. 18 trillion
(c) Rs. 14 trillion (d) Rs. 25 trillion
26. RBI appointed an 8-member expert committee headed by former SEBI chairman on MSME revival?
(a) O. P. Bhatt (b) U. K. Sinha
(c) Ajay Tyagi (d) Gaurav Kumar
27. Recently Odisha state announced that it reduced the cases of Malaria by ____.
(a) 80% (b) 60% (c) 40% (d) 100%
28. "Asia Reassurance Initiative Act" was recently passed by ____ country.
(a) UK (b) Russia (c) Canada (d) USA
29. Scientist from ____ have developed a paper kit to test fresheners of pasteurised milk.
(a) IICT, Hyderabad (b) IIT-Kharagpur
(c) IIT-Guwahati (d) IIT-Kanpur
30. Krishak Bandhu Scheme to address farmers problems was recently launched by ____ state?
(a) Odisha (b) West Bengal
(c) Uttar Pradesh (d) Haryana
31. The printing of Rs. 2,000 banknotes, introduced post-demonetisation, has been reduced to ____ by the Reserve bank
(a) Maximum (b) Reserve (c) Minimum (d) Marginal
32. ____ will seek hundreds of millions of Euros in aid from Brussels if Britain Crashes out of the European Union.
(a) France (b) Ireland (c) Finland (d) Germany
33. The government expects a recovery of about ____ from 12 big companies that were identified for bankruptcy proceedings under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, by March 31, 2019.
(a) 50,000 Crore (b) 60,000 Crore
(c) 70,000 Crore (d) 80,000 Crore
34. The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) plans to raise ____ through Bharatmala Taxable Bonds in the current fiscal year.
(a) 5,000 Crore (b) 10,000 Crore
(c) 15000 Crore (d) 20,000 Crore
35. _____, the flagship portal of Ginnarsoft said that it has raised \$110 million from various Investors.
(a) CarWale (b) Cars24
(c) CarTrade (d) CarDekho
36. India has planned ____ missions including the most complex "Chandrayaan-2" during 2019.
(a) 25 (b) 30 (c) 32 (d) 38
37. "Gita Intelligence" exhibition will be held in ____ which will be organized as a part of 150th birth anniversary celebrations of Mahatma Gandhi.
(a) Dubai (b) USA
(c) Singapore (d) South Africa
38. ____ has been appointed as the chairman of Ordnance Factory Board.
(a) Saurabh Kumar (b) Akash Sen
(c) VK Sharma (d) Bhargava
39. Ramakant Achrekar, who passed away recently is a ____.
(a) Film Maker (b) Cricket Coach
(c) Politician (d) Writer
40. United States and ____ officially quit the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).
(a) Iraq (b) Iran
(c) Israel (d) Afghanistan
41. Ramnath Goenka Award is awarded in which field?
(a) Journalism (b) Music
(c) Arts and Literature (d) Social Service
42. According to recent data of finance ministry ____ % of Rs.2000 notes are in circulation?
(a) 23% (b) 35% (c) 18% (d) 40%
43. India Pharma 2019 & India Medical Device 2019 to be held in ____?
(a) New Delhi (b) Hyderabad
(c) Kolkata (d) Bengaluru
44. ISRO is planning set up Space Galleries to disseminate the knowledge about space science and technology amongst the citizens in various locations in the country starting with ____ and ____?
(a) Chennai & Bengaluru (b) Hyderabad & Bengaluru
(c) New Delhi & Hyderabad (d) Bengaluru & New Delhi
45. Ministry of Railways has planned to setup 1000MW solar power by ____?
(a) 2020-21 (b) 2021-22 (c) 2022-23 (d) 2023-24
46. India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway is being constructed with the length of ____?
(a) 2150 kms (b) 1360 kms (c) 3290 kms (d) 1750 kms
47. During the recent visit of French Foreign Minister to India, both the Governments signed a pact on ____?
(a) Education (b) Cleaning of Ganga
(c) Sustainable Development (d) National Highways

48. Ministry of Road Transport & Highways has recently launched the BhoomiRashi portal for the purpose of ____?
 (a) Maintain all projects database
 (b) Fully digitalise land acquisition process
 (c) Web portal to apply for Highway contracts
 (d) Fund management for National Highways
49. The government recently launched 'e-Sahaj' portal. It is related to
 (a) For MSME Sector to access market/ credit
 (b) For security clearances in certain sensitive sectors
 (c) To assist Startups in getting cheaper loans
 (d) To offer insurance coverage to dairy farmers
50. National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) plans to raise _____ through Bharatmala Taxable Bonds in the ongoing financial year?
 (a) Rs10,000 crore (b) Rs 20,000 crore
 (c) Rs. 5000 Crore (d) Rs. 15,000 Crore
51. Playback singer _____ has been chosen for the Harivaram award instituted by the Kerala government
 (a) S. Janaki (b) P. Suseela
 (c) L. R. Eswari (d) P. Leela
52. The government has projected the GDP growth for the full year 2018-19 to grow at _____
 (a) 6.8% (b) 7% (c) 7.2% (d) 7.6%
53. _____ has taken steps to bring uniformity in commodity derivatives segment.
 (a) RBI (b) NABARD (c) IRDA (d) SEBI
54. Gruh Finance, the affordable housing finance arm of HDFC, will be merged with which bank?
 (a) SBI (b) ICICI
 (c) IDBI (d) Bandhan Bank
55. World Bank President _____ announced that he would step down next month.
 (a) Kristalina Georgieva (b) Jim Yong Kim
 (c) Richard Branson (d) Paul Farmer
56. Japan has introduced a _____ departure tax on each person leaving the country.
 (a) \$5 (b) \$9 (c) \$10 (d) \$15
57. Researchers at _____ have experimentally shown that Methane and Carbon dioxide (CO₂) can exist as gas hydrates at room temperature and pressures seen in interstellar atmosphere
 (a) IIT-Madras (b) IIT-Bombay
 (c) IIT-Delhi (d) IIT-Kharagpur
58. The Polavaram irrigation project has entered a Guinness World Record for pouring _____ cubic meters of concrete non-stop in 24 hours
 (a) 30,100 (b) 32,100 (c) 32,200 (d) 34,000
59. _____ will host 2nd edition of Khelo India Youth Games
 (a) Madhya Pradesh (b) Telangana
 (c) Maharashtra (d) Andhra Pradesh
60. The Union Cabinet has approved a constitution Amendment Bill to provide _____ reservation to the Economically Backward sections in the general category.
 (a) 5% (b) 8% (c) 10% (d) 12%
61. The 4th edition of Raisina Dialogue started in which city?
 (a) Mumbai (b) Noida
 (c) New Delhi (d) Hyderabad
62. As per the first advance estimates of National Income released by Central Statistics Office (CSO) the income earned by an average Indian doubled in how many years?
 (a) 5 years (b) 7 years (c) 10 years (d) 12 years
63. _____ is reinstated as CBI Chief by Supreme Court?
 (a) Vivek Ranjan (b) Rajesh Asthana
 (c) Vineet Narain (d) Alok Verma
64. India born _____ has joined International Monetary Fund as its chief economist, becoming the first woman to occupy the top IMF post.
 (a) Gita Gopinath (b) Rohini Pande
 (c) Anjali Chetty (d) Reetika Khera
65. The RBI has set up a five member committee headed by _____ to suggest a strategy for deepening of digital payments in the country.
 (a) Vishal Sikka (b) Nandan Nilekani
 (c) N. S. Raghavan (d) Anand Sharma
66. NMDC will buy back upto _____ equity shares at Rs. 98 each, according to the regulatory filing made by the company.
 (a) 5 Crore (b) 12 Crore (c) 15 Crore (d) 20 Crore
67. _____ had received 9,100 patents in 2018 in areas such as artificial Intelligence, cloud computing and Cyber Security, with India being the second highest contributor to global record tally.
 (a) IBM (b) Infosys (c) TCS (d) HCL
68. _____ has discovered a new world outside our solar system, orbiting a dwarf star 53 light years away.
 (a) ISRO (b) NASA
 (c) ESA (d) ROSCOSMOS
69. The Lok Sabha has passed the contentious citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019, that seeks to provide citizenship to non-muslims from which country?
 (a) Bangladesh (b) Pakistan
 (c) Afghanistan (d) All the above
70. _____ has announced that it has been granted NBFC-P2P certificate from RBI.
 (a) Faircent (b) LenDenClub
 (c) i2iFunding (d) IndiaMoneyMart
71. The World Bank has forecasted, India's GDP to grow at _____ in the fiscal year 2018-19 and 7.5% in the following two years.
 (a) 7% (b) 7.1% (c) 7.2% (d) 7.3%

72. The Parliament has cleared the constitutional Amendment Bill guaranteeing _____ quota in education and employment to economically weaker sections in the general category.
(a) 5 % (b) 8% (c) 10 % (d) 15%
73. Kumar Rajesh Chandra has been appointed as the Director General of _____.
(a) Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB)
(b) Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF)
(c) Border Security Force (BSF)
(d) Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP)
74. Passengers can avail a free of cost travel insurance of for air travelers if they book tickets through IRCTC.
(a) 10 Lakh (b) 15 Lakh (c) 25 Lakh (d) 50 Lakh
75. _____ has developed an advanced compact size maritime radar which can maintain constant surveillance over the area of the size of India.
(a) USA (b) China
(c) Pakistan (d) Afghanistan
76. _____ has emerged as the largest stock broker in India.
(a) ICICI Securities (b) HDFC Securities
(c) Zerodha (d) Sharekhan
77. Royal Dutch Shell acquired _____ equity interest in Hazira LNG and port from Total.
(a) 15% (b) 26% (c) 30% (d) 36%
78. Pranav R Mehta has been appointed as the President of Global Solar Council (GSC). The headquarters of GSC is located in _____.
(a) Paris (b) Brussels
(c) Washington D.C (d) New Delhi
79. The Lok Sabha has passed the citizenship (Amendment) Bill. The bill seeks to amend the _____.
(a) Citizenship Act, 1950 (b) Citizenship Act, 1955
(c) Citizenship Act, 1960 (d) Citizenship Act, 1965
80. International Cricket Council (ICC) announced that USA Cricket became its _____ member.
(a) 101st (b) 103rd (c) 105th (d) 108th
81. Who is the author of the book "We Are Displaced: My Journey and Stories from Refugee Girls Around the World"?
(a) Kailash Satyarthi (b) Malala Yousaf Zai
(c) Anita Desai (d) Arundhati Roy
82. The GST Council will ease the tax and compliance burden for small companies with turnover upto _____ will stay out of the GST.
(a) 1 Crore (b) 50 Lakh (c) 40 Lakh (d) 30 Lakh
83. The centre has launched a programme to reduce Particulate Matter (PM) pollution by 20-30% in at least 102 cities by _____.
(a) 2020 (b) 2022 (c) 2024 (d) 2030
84. What is the name of the new planet that NASA's Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS) found?
(a) HB 21749a (b) HB 21749b
(c) HA 21749b (d) HD 21749b
85. The budget session of Parliament is likely to held from _____ and interim budget is expected to be presented on February 1st.
(a) Jan 30th to Feb 10th (b) Jan 30th to Feb 11th
(c) Jan 31st to Feb 12th (d) Jan 31st to Feb 13th
86. The World Hindi Day is observed every year on _____.
(a) January 8th (b) January 9th
(c) January 10th (d) January 11th
87. The first India-central Asia Dialogue will be held in _____, Uzbekistan on 12th and 13th January 2019.
(a) Samarkand (b) Tashkent
(c) Bukhara (d) Khiva
88. _____ became the World No. 1 Woman Boxer in light fly category 45-48 kg.
(a) Sarita Devi (b) Mary Kom
(c) Katie Taylor (d) Hanna Okhota
89. Which state has withdrew the general consent accorded to CBI to probe cases in the state.
(a) Gujarat (b) Maharashtra
(c) Chhattisgarh (d) Telangana
90. _____ has emerged as the top celebrity endorser in 2018 according to Duff & Phelps celebrity brand valuation report.
(a) Shahrukh Khan (b) Deepika Padukone
(c) Virat Kohli (d) Akashy Kumar
91. The Pandalam Royal family belongs to which of the following states?
(a) Tamil Nadu (b) Karnataka
(c) Kerala (d) Andhra Pradesh
92. A MoU was signed for Renukaji Multipurpose Dam Project among how many states?
(a) 4 (b) 5 (c) 6 (d) 7
93. ISRO Chief K. Sivan Said that the Gaganyaan mission aims to send Indians to space by _____.
(a) July 2020 (b) December 2020
(c) July 2021 (d) December 2021
94. _____ has been ranked second among the must-see global destinations as per New York Times list of "52 places To Go In 2019".
(a) Taj Mahal (b) Hampi
(c) Qutub Minar (d) Puerto Rico
95. Which city will host the 25th edition of Partnership Summit, 2019?
(a) New Delhi (b) Hyderabad
(c) Noida (d) Mumbai

96. TCS appointed _____ as additional and independent Director for a period of five years.
(a) Daniel Hughes Callahan (b) N Chandrasekaran
(c) Rajesh Gopinathan (d) P. Narendran
97. Which bank will offer financing and banking solutions to Kia car dealers with products such as term loans, cash credit and inventory finding?
(a) ICICI Bank (b) SBI
(c) Yes Bank (d) Axis Bank
98. _____ tops the "product" category list in the Global airline product rating chart with a score of 7/7 in the full-service carrier category.
(a) Indigo (b) SpiceJet
(c) Jet Airways (d) Air India
99. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has slapped a penalty of Rs. _____ on foreign lender Citibank India for not complying with "fit and proper" criteria for directors.
(a) 1 Crore (b) 2 Crore (c) 3 Crore (d) 5 Crore
100. Who has been appointed as the director of ISRO's Human space Flight Centre?
(a) Unnikrishnan Nair (b) R. Hutton
(c) V. R. Lalithambika (d) A. S. Kiran Kumar
101. The World's first television channel dedicated to Human Rights was launched in _____ by the International Observatory of Human Rights (IOHR).
(a) Paris (b) London (c) Sydney (d) New York
102. The National Rural Employment Guarantee (N REGA) scheme has been given an additional allocation of _____ tide over the next three months.
(a) 4,034 Crores (b) 5,326 Crores
(c) 6,084 Crores (d) 7,214 Crores
103. _____ said that it would tighten rules for political ads in countries such as India where elections are scheduled in the first half of the year.
(a) Twitter (b) Whatsapp (c) Instagram (d) Facebook
104. India has committed to purchase \$ 5 billion worth oil and gas from _____ annually.
(a) US (b) Australia
(c) Iraq (d) Saudi Arabia
105. _____ has completed the formalities to be the country's 59th Youngest Grand Master.
(a) R. Praggnandhaa (b) Gukesh
(c) Dinesh Sharma (d) C. Aravindh
106. Cabinet has given its approval for signing a MoU between India and _____ on the safety in Mines, Testing and Research station.
(a) Maldives (b) Singapore (c) Australia (d) Myanmar
107. The first Ekalavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) National Sports Meet is held in which city?
(a) Hyderabad (b) Amravati
(c) Noida (d) New Delhi
108. The 10% quota for the economically weaker sections in the general category will be implemented in all colleges and universities, including private institutions from _____.
(a) 2019-20 (b) 2020-21 (c) 2021-22 (d) 2022-23
109. The RBI has decided to keep the minimum average maturity period at _____ for all external commercial borrowings.
(a) 1 year (b) 2 year (c) 3 years (d) 5 years
110. _____ has acquired US-based company OSMO, for \$120 million.
(a) Byju's (b) Unacademy
(c) Educomp (d) MT educare
111. _____ has been appointed as a member of congressional committee on intelligence, becoming the first South Asian to serve U.S National Security.
(a) Pramila Jayapal (b) Tulsi Gabbard
(c) Raja Krishnamoorthi (d) Ro Khanna
112. The National Green Tribunal directed Volkswagon India to deposit _____ with the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB).
(a) 50 Crores (b) 100 Crores
(c) 200 Crores (d) 500 Crores
113. _____ along with Sports Technology firm Funngage.com launched a cricket scholarship programme, FG powerplayer.
(a) M. S. Dhoni (b) Virat Kohli
(c) Yuvraj Singh (d) Gautam Gambhir
114. Who has been appointed as the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) of Andhra Pradesh?
(a) Gopal Krishna Dwivedi (b) R.P. Sisodia
(c) Dinesh Kumar (d) Surendra Kumar
115. The Archeologists have unearthed a sandstone idol of a Jain monk in the Kayotsarga pose in _____.
(a) Noida (b) Gujarat (c) Gurugram (d) Mysuru
116. The Indian space Research Organisation (ISRO) will launch a satellite exclusively for which Ministry?
(a) Ministry of Defence (b) Ministry of Civil Aviation
(c) Ministry of Home Affairs (d) Ministry of External Affairs
117. The government's decision to buy 36 Rafale aircrafts shot the price of each jet up by _____.
(a) 10% (b) 25% (c) 36% (d) 41%
118. The Face book announced that it has removed more than 500 pages, groups and accounts originating from which country for engaging in the social network called "Coordinated inauthentic behavior"?
(a) Russia (b) Pakistan
(c) India (d) South Korea
119. _____ has become the first Indian to receive a nomination in one of the seven main categories at the Prestigious Laureus World Sports Awards.
(a) Mary Kom (b) Sania Mirza
(c) P.V. Sindhu (d) Vinesh Phogat

- 120.** Who is the author of the book "India's Ocean Neighborhood: Narendra Modi's Strategy Initiatives"?
- (a) S. V. Seshagiri Rao (b) A. G. Krishnamurthy
(c) Jagannadha Sharma (d) R. K. Sharma
- 121.** PM Narendra Modi had signed a pact for the import of Uranium with which country?
- (a) Afghanistan (b) Uzbekistan
(c) Kazakhstan (d) Kyrgyzstan
- 122.** India ranks _____ in the world in terms of high quality research publications in Artificial Intelligence (AI).
- (a) First (b) Second (c) Third (d) Fourth
- 123.** _____ has received BS6 Type approval certificate from Automotive Research Association of India (ARAI).
- (a) Tata Motors (b) Maruti Suzuki
(c) Mahindra & Mahindra (d) Volkswagen
- 124.** The Uttar Pradesh cabinet has approved the proposal of renaming the Mughalsarai tehsil after _____.
- (a) Syama Prasad Mukherjee
(b) Vallabhbhai Patel
(c) Atal Bihari Vajpayee
(d) Deendayal Upadhyay
- 125.** The National Green Tribunal has directed the National Highways Authority of India to furnish a performance guarantee of Rs. _____ for the delay in the construction of the Chilla-Motichur corridor in Uttarakhand.
- (a) 1 Crore (b) 2 Crore (c) 3 Crore (d) 5 Crore
- 126.** The Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Grameen) Scheme has achieved only _____ of its target to complete one crore houses.
- (a) 44% (b) 55% (c) 66% (d) 75%
- 127.** _____ is the first state to implement 10% reservation for the economically backward in government jobs and educational institutions
- (a) Gujarat (b) Telangana
(c) Rajasthan (d) Uttar Pradesh
- 128.** Nirmala Sitharaman has inaugurated the 426.60 metre long Dillo Bridge in which state?
- (a) Himachal Pradesh (b) Uttarakhand
(c) Arunachal Pradesh (d) Madhya Pradesh
- 129.** _____ and Libcoin are in dialogue to build India's first 1GWh Lithium ion factory.
- (a) HAL (b) DRDO (c) NPCIL (d) BHEL
- 130.** _____ became the oldest Indian Cricketer to win the Man of the Series award.
- (a) Kedar Jadhav (b) MS. Dhoni
(c) Bhuvaneshwar Kumar (d) Shikhar Dhawan
- 131.** The Rural Development Ministry has proposed that the monthly pensions of the elderly poor, widows and disabled to be increased from the current Rs. 200 to ____
- (a) Rs.500 (b) Rs.800 (c) Rs. 100 (d) Rs.1500
- 132.** _____ has announced that they are creating an Institute for Ethics in Artificial Intelligence with an initial grant of \$7.5 million over a period of five years.
- (a) Twitter (b) Google (c) Facebook (d) Instagram
- 133.** The 4th edition of "India Steel 2019" expo is inaugurated in which city?
- (a) Pune (b) Mumbai (c) New Delhi (d) Noida
- 134.** The first interstate bridge in Jammu & Kashmir linking areas of Kathua district with Punjab is being built on which river?
- (a) Ravi (b) Beas (c) Sutlej (d) Jhelum
- 135.** As per the updated list of Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) on Indian Amphibians _____ species being treated as critically endangered and _____ species as endangered.
- (a) 14, 30 (b) 16, 30 (c) 15, 32 (d) 19, 33
- 136.** Which zone has topped the Zonal ranking in the "Premium" category trains in the first ever "Total cleanliness survey"?
- (a) South Central Railway
(b) North Western Railway
(c) Northern Railway
(d) North Eastern Railway
- 137.** Which state government launched a new initiative "Bal Sabha" (Children's Assembly)?
- (a) Gujarat (b) Maharashtra
(c) Madhya Pradesh (d) Rajasthan
- 138.** Which bank has raised Rs. 217 crore through its Employee Stock Purchase Scheme (ESPS)?
- (a) Syndicate Bank (b) State Bank of India
(c) Indian Overseas Bank (d) Indian Bank
- 139.** _____ became the first player to win the Sir Garfield Sobers Trophy for ICC Cricketer of the year, his second consecutive year.
- (a) Virat Kohli (b) Jasprit Bumrah
(c) M.S. Dhoni (d) Rishabh Pant
- 140.** "The India Africa Field Training Exercise (FTE) 2019" is scheduled to be conducted from March 18th to 27th in ____.
- (a) Kolkata (b) Bengaluru (c) New Delhi (d) Pune
- 141.** Which Indian cricket bowler has become the fastest Indian to claim 100 wickets in One-day Internationals?
- (a) Mohammed Shami (b) Umesh Yadav
(c) Ishant Sharma (d) Jasprit Bumrah
- 142.** According to the Status Paper on Government Debt for 2017-18, the total debt of the Centre as a percentage of GDP in 2017-18 was reduced by how much?
- (a) 34.2% (b) 40.7% (c) 46.5% (d) 29.8%
- 143.** Which of these poets were awarded 'Saraswati Samman 2017'?
- (a) Megha Rao (b) Sitanshu Yashashchandra
(c) Khawaja Musadiq (d) Pratishtha Khattar

- 144.** Which of the following ministries will organise the 4th edition of 'Bharat Parv' at the Red Fort in Delhi from 26 to 31 January 2019?
 (a) Ministry of Culture
 (b) Ministry of Human Resource Development
 (c) Ministry of Tourism (d) Ministry of Home Affairs
- 145.** Nethaji Subhash Chandra Bose Museum was inaugurated in which city?
 (a) Bangalore (b) Delhi
 (c) Hyderabad (d) Cochin
- 146.** Raghbir Singh Bhola who passed away recently belongs to which sport?
 (a) Hockey (b) Cricket (c) Volleyball (d) Football
- 147.** _____ has become India's only port to be ranked among World's top 30 global container ports.
 (a) Port of Kolkata
 (b) Cochin Port
 (c) Jawaharlal Nehru Port trust
 (d) Mumbai Port Trust
- 148.** _____ gets an additional charge as interim Finance Minister, to present the interim Budget.
 (a) Suresh Prabhu (b) Piyush Goyal
 (c) Nitin Gadkari (d) Jayanth Sinha
- 149.** Vodafone, Idea has undertaken a Rs. _____ equity infusion to its tower and fibre asset monetization plans to continue the capex.
 (a) 10,000 Crore (b) 15,000 Crore
 (c) 20,000 Crore (d) 25,000 Crore
- 150.** _____ Plans global expansion with Induction of 222-seater Airbus A321 Neo Planes.
 (a) Jet Airways (b) Air India
 (c) Spice Jet (d) Indigo
- 151.** Who has been appointed as the new MD and CEO of Yes Bank?
 (a) Bindhu Kapoor (b) A. S. Rajeev
 (c) Sunil Mehta (d) Ranveet Gill
- 152.** What is the Theme of "National Girl Child Day 2019"?
 (a) Empower Girls: Before, During and After Crisis
 (b) A girl is flower, not a thorn
 (c) Empowering Girls for a Brighter Tomorrow
 (d) Adolescent Girls: Issues and Challenges
- 153.** As per the United Nations World Economic Situation and Prospects (WESP) 2019 report. Indian Economy is expected to accelerate from 7.4% to _____ in 2019-20.
 (a) 7.5% (b) 7.6% (c) 7.7% (d) 7.8%
- 154.** The India Africa Field Training Exercise (IAFTX) will be held in _____ from March 18 to 27.
 (a) Pune (b) Bangalore (c) Kolkata (d) Mumbai
- 155.** Navy Chief Admiral Sunil Lanba commissioned the new Naval Air Base _____ in Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
 (a) INS Makar (b) INS Mhadei
 (c) INS Taragiri (d) INS Kohasa
- 156.** International Day of Education is observed on _____.
 (a) 23rd January (b) 24th January
 (c) 25th January (d) 27th January
- 157.** The Election Commission of India (ECI) hosted an International Conference on "Making Our Elections Inclusive and Accessible" in which city?
 (a) Hyderabad (b) Mumbai
 (c) New Delhi (d) Pune
- 158.** As per the report by Brand Finance, ____ has topped the list as the most valued IT services brand globally in 2018-19?
 (a) Accenture (b) TCS (c) IBM (d) Infosys
- 159.** India and which country held substantive discussions to continue close cooperation on Maritime security counter-terrorism and medical co-operations?
 (a) South Africa (b) Myanmar
 (c) Sri Lanka (d) Maldives
- 160.** ISRO's PSLV-C44 successfully launched "Kalamsat" and "Microsat-R" Satellites. Microsat-R has been developed by _____.
 (a) BEL (b) Tata Aerospace
 (c) DRDO (d) HAL
- 161.** _____ has entered the list of top 100 most valuable brands, according to the Brand Finance Global 500 2019 report, released by World Economic Forum.
 (a) Mahindra (b) Tata
 (c) Aditya Birla (d) Bajaj
- 162.** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has approved the appointment of _____ as part-time Chairman of Federal Bank.
 (a) Dilip Sadarangani (b) P. Chandrasekar
 (c) K. Siddhartha (d) Anant Kumar
- 163.** People can watch the highlights of this year's Republic Day Parade on a mobile application _____ launched by the Defence Ministry.
 (a) IND 2019 (b) REPUBLIC 2019
 (c) RDP INDIA 2019 (d) INDIA PARADE 2019
- 164.** Who won 2019 Australian Open Men's Singles Title?
 (a) Roger Federer (b) Novak Djokovic
 (c) Rafael Nadal (d) Andy Murray
- 165.** Who won 2019 Australian Open Women's Singles Title?
 (a) Naomi Osaka (b) Petra Kvitova
 (c) Kristina Mladenovic (d) Serena Williams
- 166.** What is the name of the young Mountaineer from Ongole, who has climbed the 6,960-metre Mt. Aconcagua in the Andes Mountain range in Argentina?
 (a) Shekar Babu (b) K. Bharat
 (c) S. Nagaraju (d) SK. Himmamsa

- 167.** The Indian Railways has named the indigenously manufactured superfast "Train 18" as "Vande Bharat Express", which runs between National Capital and ____.
- (a) Jaipur (b) Varanasi (c) Kolkata (d) Pune
- 168.** Which country's Government appointed commission has said that it should stop using coal for electricity production by 2038?
- (a) Italy (b) USA (c) Australia (d) Germany
- 169.** The Music festival. Sur Jahan, Previously known as Sufi Sutra, will be held in _____ from February 6th to 8th.
- (a) Hyderabad (b) Mumbai
(c) Goa (d) Karnataka
- 170.** Who has claimed her first Badminton World Federation Title?
- (a) Carolina Marin (b) P V Sindhu
(c) Saina Nehwal (d) Nozomi Okuhara
- 171.** Who won the New South Wales men's Amateur Golf Championship in Australia?
- (a) Shubhankar Sharma (b) Jyothi Randhawa
(c) Shiva Kapur (d) Karthik Sharma
- 172.** Which Institute will tie-up with National Chung Cheng University of Taiwan to develop necessary expertise on Artificial Intelligence?
- (a) IIT-Madras (b) IIT-Kanpur
(c) IIT-Bombay (d) IIT-Ropar
- 173.** The five-day long famous tribal and folk dance festival – Lokrang is celebrated in _____.
- (a) Shillong (b) Bhopal
(c) Dispur (d) Agartala
- 174.** The 3rd Stock Taking conference on Tiger conservation was inaugurated in which city?
- (a) Ahmedabad (b) Assam
(c) New Delhi (d) Karnataka
- 175.** India is the World's ___ largest producer of crude steel.
- (a) First (b) Second (c) Third (d) Fourth
- 176.** The three former Tata group executive in partnership with Quantum Advisors launch a \$ 1 billion Environment, Social, and Governance (ESG) Fund. Who would be the chairman of the Joint Venture?
- (a) Ajit Doval (b) Alan Rosling
(c) Mukund Govind Rajan (d) Rajinder Sharma
- 177.** The DaMan Scheme of Odisha government is related to which of the following?
- (a) Malaria eradication (b) Housing for all
(c) Education (d) Environment
- 178.** India and _____ signed agreement to enable India's Participation in Programme for International Students Assessment (PISA) to be held in 2021.
- (a) IMF (b) World Bank
(c) United Nations (d) OECD
- 179.** Which state government has announced the Jiban Sampark project for the welfare of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups?
- (a) Madhya Pradesh (b) Odisha
(c) Chattisgarh (d) Tripura
- 180.** Which state has plans to provide a mobile app to tackle sewer blockage?
- (a) Telangana (b) Andhra Pradesh
(c) Karnataka (d) Kerala
- 181.** _____ said that it has launched in India Valsartan – Sacubitril, a drug used for certain types of heart failure and works by relaxing blood vessels.
- (a) Aurobindo Pharma (b) Natco Pharma
(c) Divis Labs (d) Dr. Reddy's Labs
- 182.** The Union Minister for Minority Affairs Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi said that the GST on Haj has been reduced from 18% to _____.
- (a) 15% (b) 10% (c) 8% (d) 5%
- 183.** Which state government has tied up with National Remote Sensing Agency (NRSA) for providing High resolution satellite Images for monitoring forest cover?
- (a) Telangana (b) Andhra Pradesh
(c) Kerala (d) Karnataka
- 184.** Which Railway has bagged number one position for cleanliness in the country?
- (a) South Eastern Railway (b) North Eastern Railway
(c) Western Railway (d) Southern Railway
- 185.** Former Defence Minister George Fernandes, passed away. He was a member of the Rajya Sabha from which state?
- (a) Rajasthan (b) Madhya Pradesh
(c) Bihar (d) Maharashtra
- 186.** Which Ministry announced the formation of Domestic Council for Germs and Jewellery?
- (a) Commerce Ministry (b) Home Ministry
(c) Finance Ministry (d) Ministry of Mines
- 187.** The Home Ministry has approved the release of Rs. _____ to six states and a Union Territory for damage caused by Natural Calamities during the Kharif season 2018-19
- (a) 6,326 Crores (b) 7, 214 Crores
(c) 8,324 Crores (d) 8,936 Crores
- 188.** _____ has become the first Hindu Woman to be appointed as the Civil Judge in Pakistan.
- (a) Meenakshi (b) Karuna Arora
(c) Menaka Anand (d) Suman Kumari
- 189.** RBI said that it will inject _____ into the system through purchase of government securities in February to increase liquidity.
- (a) 25,000 Crores (b) 35,00 Crores
(c) 37,500 Crores (d) 39,000 Crores

- 190.** Which state government has announced the success of the Golden Langur conservation Breeding Programme in the state?
 (a) Assam (b) Meghalaya
 (c) Mizoram (d) Manipur
- 191.** NASA said that the Parker Solar Probe has begun its second orbit of the sun. The Parker Solar Probe completed its first orbit of the sun on _____.
 (a) January 18th (b) January 19th
 (c) January 20th (d) January 21st
- 192.** Green Peace report says that there are _____ Indian cities that breach air pollution standards but are not included in the Centre's Natural Clean Air Programme (NCAP)
 (a) 110 (b) 122 (c) 139 (d) 146
- 193.** ISRO plans to transfer the technology for manufacturing of Lithium-ion cells to how many companies?
 (a) 5 (b) 10 (c) 15 (d) 20
- 194.** The National Green Tribunal has directed which state government to submit a performance guarantee of Rs. 10 crore each within a month as it was dissatisfied with Yamuna cleaning project.
 (a) Uttar Pradesh (b) Haryana
 (c) Delhi (d) All the above
- 195.** JSW Energy plans to invest Rs. _____ in manufacture of electric passenger cars.
 (a) 4000 crores (b) 5,400 crores
 (c) 6,500 crores (d) 7, 200 crores
- 196.** Which state has bagged the Best State Award for its active participation in the Swasth Bharat Yatra, a Pan-India cyclothon aimed at promoting the concept of "eating right for a healthy life".
 (a) Telangana (b) Kerala
 (c) Andhra Pradesh (d) Tamil Nadu
- 197.** The Human space Flight centre, which will be the hub of ISRO's manned mission was inaugurated in _____.
 (a) Andhra Pradesh (b) Bengaluru
 (c) Tamil Nadu (d) Kerala
- 198.** The Centre has hiked its popular research scholarship called the Junior Research Fellowship to Rs. _____ per month from existing Rs. 25,000
 (a) 30,000 (b) 31,000 (c) 32,000 (d) 35,000
- 199.** The Navy has signed a contract with _____ to build two Talwar Stealth frigates.
 (a) Cochin Ship Yard
 (b) Mazagon Dock Ship Builders Limited
 (c) Goa Ship Yard Limited
 (d) Hindustan Ship Yard
- 200.** Who has received the US award for the contribution to energy policy?
 (a) Narendra Modi (b) Venkaiah Naidu
 (c) Piyush Goyal (d) Ravi Shankar Prasad

ANSWER KEY

1	a	2	b	3	a	4	b	5	d
6	a	7	b	8	d	9	b	10	c
11	a	12	b	13	a	14	a	15	b
16	a	17	d	18	d	19	c	20	c
21	b	22	c	23	a	24	d	25	b
26	b	27	a	28	d	29	c	30	b
31	c	32	b	33	c	34	b	35	d
36	c	37	a	38	a	39	b	40	c
41	a	42	b	43	d	44	c	45	a
46	b	47	c	48	b	49	b	50	a
51	b	52	c	53	d	54	d	55	b
56	b	57	a	58	b	59	c	60	c
61	c	62	b	63	d	64	a	65	b
66	b	67	a	68	b	69	d	70	d
71	d	72	c	73	a	74	d	75	b
76	c	77	b	78	c	79	b	80	c
81	b	82	c	83	c	84	d	85	d
86	c	87	a	88	b	89	c	90	c
91	c	92	c	93	d	94	b	95	d
96	a	97	c	98	c	99	c	100	a
101	b	102	c	103	d	104	a	105	b

106	c	107	a	108	a	109	c	110	a
111	c	112	b	113	d	114	a	115	d
116	c	117	d	118	a	119	d	120	a
121	b	122	c	123	a	124	d	125	b
126	c	127	a	128	c	129	d	130	b
131	b	132	c	133	b	134	a	135	d
136	b	137	d	138	c	139	a	140	d
141	a	142	c	143	b	144	c	145	b
146	a	147	c	148	b	149	d	150	d
151	d	152	c	153	b	154	a	155	d
156	b	157	c	158	a	159	d	160	c
161	b	162	a	163	c	164	b	165	a
166	d	167	b	168	d	169	c	170	c
171	d	172	d	173	b	174	c	175	b
176	c	177	a	178	d	179	b	180	a
181	b	182	d	183	a	184	d	185	c
186	a	187	b	188	d	189	c	190	a
191	b	192	c	193	b	194	d	195	c
196	d	197	b	198	b	199	c	200	c
