

17th to 24th FEBRUARY 2017 CURRENT AFFAIRS CONTENT

17th FEBRUARY 2017

INTERNATIONAL

1. India ranks 143rd in economic freedom index

India ranked a dismal 143rd in an annual index of economic freedom by a top American think tank, behind its several South Asian neighbours including Pakistan, as progress on market-oriented reforms has been "uneven".

- The Heritage Foundation in its Index of Economic Freedom report said despite India sustaining an average annual growth of about 7 per cent over the past five years, growth is not deeply rooted in policies that preserve economic freedom.
- Hong Kong, Singapore and New Zealand topped the index respectively.

NATIONAL

2. Indian panorama festival 2017 begins in port blair

Govt of India, is organizing Indian Panorama Film Festival (Public Screening of films) in Port Blair from February 15 to 19, 2017.

- About 15 films of different languages and different genre will be screened at two different venues viz. PBMC Auditorium and ITF Ground during the festival.
- The Chief Secretary, A&N Administration, Shri Anindo Majumdar inaugurated the Film Festival.

3. Two-day Global Investor Summit 'Momentum Jharkhand' begins in Ranchi

A two-day mega event of Global Investor Summit, branded as "Momentum Jharkhand" was started at Khelgaon of Ranchi.

- The Jharkhand Government is hoping for an investment of around three lakh seventy five thousand crores rupees from 219 companies.

Jharkhand

- Capital: Ranchi Chief Minister: Raghubar Das Governor: Draupadi Murmu

4. MP govt to set up Tourism Board

Madhya Pradesh government has decided to constitute MP Tourism Board for expansion of facilities at tourist spots and draw investment in the sector.

- The main functions of the board will be to perform all responsibilities mentioned under Tourism Policy-2016, like to draw private investment in tourism sector, investors' facilitation and avail grant and facilities for investors as per the policy, the official said.
- The board will also develop a work plan for all tourism-related archaeological sites, wildlife places, caves with natural beauty, amusement and other parks, water reservoirs and also take measures for their supervision.

Madhya Pradesh

- Capital: Bhopal Chief Minister: Shivraj Singh Chouhan Governor: Om Prakash Kohli

TRADE/BANKING

5. RBI to reimburse MDR to banks on government payments

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said it will reimburse banks the **merchant discount rate (MDR)** on debit cards used for payment of tax and non-tax dues to the government of India.

- In a notification on its website, the central bank said the reimbursement will be applicable from 1 January, 2017.
- MDR is the commission paid by the merchant to the acquiring bank for every digital transaction allowed by the bank.

6. RRBs can now lend up to 2 lakh against gold

The Reserve Bank of India has doubled the quantum of loan that Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) can give against security of gold/ gold ornaments to Rs2 lakh.

- Earlier limit was Rs 1 Lakh.
- Such loans will be subject to the conditions that the period of the loan cannot exceed 12 months from the date of sanction; interest will be charged on the amount at monthly rests but will become due for payment along with principal only at the end of 12 months from the date of sanction.
- Further, RRBs are required to maintain a Loan to Value (LTV) ratio of 75 per cent, that is, if the value of gold ornaments pledged with a bank is Rs1 lakh, then it will give a loan of Rs75,000, on the outstanding amount of loan, including the interest on ongoing basis, failing which the loan will be treated as a non-performing asset.
- The RBI said crop loans sanctioned against the collateral security of gold/ gold ornaments will continue to be governed by the current norms relating to income recognition, asset classification and provisioning for such loans.

Regional Rural Banks

- Regional Rural Banks are local level banking organizations operating in different States of India.
- They have been created with a view to serve primarily the rural areas of India with basic banking and financial services.
- However, RRBs may have branches set up for urban operations and their area of operation may include urban areas too.

- Central Government held 50% shares of RRBs, State Government- 15% and Sponsor Banks- 35.
- These were set up on the recommendations of The M. Narasimham Working Group.
- Prathama Bank was the first bank established in 1975, sponsored by Syndicate bank.

7. Citi Bank launches instant chat service for customers

Citi bank has launched instant chat services for customers logged in to Citibank Online (CBOL) in India.

- The real-time chat facility focuses on resolving queries instantly, in a safe environment, across cards, domestic and non-resident accounts, and loans, for clients as they transact online.
- India is the first country in Asia Pacific within the Citi network, which spans 12 countries in the region, to launch the generic chat capabilities.

Citi Bank India

- India Headquarters: Mumbai Founded in India: 1902 India Head: Pramit Jhaveri

8. IMF Launches South Asia Training and Technical Assistance Center in New Delhi

The IMF's South Asia Training and Technical Assistance Center (SARTTAC) was officially inaugurated by Secretary Shaktikanta Das of India's Ministry of Finance in New Delhi on February 13, 2017.

- Deputy Managing Director Carla Grasso and senior officials from the center's six South Asian member countries (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka) and development partners attended the event.
- SARTTAC is a collaborative venture between the IMF, the member countries, and development partners.
- The center's strategic goal is to help its member countries strengthen their institutional and human capacity.

International Monetary Fund

- Headquarters: Washington D.C. Managing Director: Christine Lagarde (France)
- Founded: 27 December 1945 Members: 189 Parent Organization: United Nation Organization

9. Railway general tickets to be available in banks

In a major step towards easing availability of train tickets, the Indian Railways will soon start disbursing tickets of the general class from banks.

- The Indian Railways and the State Bank of India are in constant touch to work out the modalities for this.
- The project will reach its final stages by April 2017 after which a trial run will begin soon.
- The Indian Railways is considering two options for this new initiative. One is to make tickets available to the travelers by installing an automated vending machine in the bank premises. And the other is to make changes in the ATM and link them with railway's ticket distribution system.

APPOINTMENTS

10. Vikas Swarup appointed High Commissioner to Canada

Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Vikas Swarup has been appointed the new High Commissioner to Canada.

- Mr. Swarup, a well-known author, became the MEA spokesperson in April 2015.
- He will replace Vishnu Prakash in Canada.
- Gopal Baglay, the present joint secretary in charge of the Pakistan-Afghanistan-Iran desk, will be the next spokesperson.

Canada

- Capital: Ottawa Currency: Dollar Prime Minister: Justin Trudeau

11. Tamil Nadu Governor appoints Edappadi K Palaniswami as Tamilnadu CM

Tamil Nadu Governor C Vidyasagar Rao has appointed Edappadi K Palaniswami as chief minister.

- The governor requested the chief minister-designate to seek the vote confidence of the assembly within 15 days.
- Palaniswami has claimed that he has the support of 124 legislators, while the O Pannerselvam camp had that of only 10.

Tamilnadu

- Capital: Chennai Governor: C Vidyasagar Rao

18th FEBRUARY 2017

NATIONAL

1. Tarini to be Inducted into Indian Navy on 18 February 2017

The Indian Navy's second ocean going sailboat Tarini will be inducted at a ceremony scheduled to be held at the INS Mandovi Boat Pool on 18 February 2017.

- Admiral Sunil Lanba, Chief of Naval Staff will also be present on the occasion.
- INSV Tarini is a sloop built by M/s Aquarius Shipyard Pvt Ltd at Divar, Goa.
- The sail boat Tarini is being inducted into the Navy and is slated to be the platform for First Indian All Women Circumnavigation of the Globe expedition of the Indian Navy.

2. BEL launches communication radio

PSU Bharat Electronics Ltd (BEL) has unveiled a new communication radio for the Indian armed forces, called STARS-V Mk III, at the Aero India 2017 show.

- MV Gowtama, CMD of BEL, said: "The radio is completely designed, developed and made in BEL."
- It is a multi brand, high data rate, software intensive IP radio with mobile ad hoc networking (MANET) functions supporting up to 64 nodes.

Bharat Electronics Ltd

- Headquarters: Bengaluru Founded: 1954 Chairman: MV Gowtama

3. Govt cuts tenure of Sebi's Chairman-designate Ajay Tyagi by two years

The government said that the tenure of the next chairman of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), Ajay Tyagi, will "initially" be for three years.

- A government official said the latest order was issued to clear up ambiguity on the length of the tenure.
- The new order said the term will be for an initial three-year period, leaving open the possibility that it could be extended later.
- The rules allow for a term of five years or up to the age of 65 for the Sebi chairman.
- Some Sebi members appointed recently have been given five-year terms.

SEBI

- Headquarters: Mumbai Founded: 12 April 1992 Chairman: Ajay Tyagi

TRADE/BANKING

4. Corporation Bank bags 'National MSME Excellence Award 2017'

Corporation Bank has been awarded once again 'National MSME Excellence Award 2017' organized by the Federation of Industry, Trade and Services (FITS).

- D V Subramanya Varma, General Manager, Corporation Bank received the award from Haribhai P Choudhary, Honourable Union Minister of State, Ministry of Micro Small and Medium Enterprises in New Delhi.

Corporation Bank

- Headquarters: Mangalore Founded: 12 March 1906 CEO and MD: Jai Kumar Garg
- Tagline: A Premier Public Sector Bank

5. Canara Bank signs MoU with HRD Ministry

Canara Bank on Thursday said it has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) to operationalise the Higher Education Financing Agency (HEFA).

- In September 2016, the Union Cabinet had approved the establishment of HEFA to give a major push for the creation of high quality infrastructure/capital assets in premier educational institutions.
- HEFA has been jointly promoted by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) and Canara Bank with an authorised capital of Rs. 2,000 crore.

Canara Bank

- Headquarters: Bengaluru Founded: 1906 Chairman: T.N. Manoharan
- Tagline: Together We Can

APPOINTMENTS

6. Ranganathan, Mehta appointed Non-Official Director in IOB, PNB

T C A Ranganathan and Sunil Mehta were appointed as Non-Official Directors in Indian Overseas Bank and Punjab National Bank respectively.

- The Appointments Committee of Cabinet has cleared their appointment as Non-Official Director/Non-Executive Chairman in the respective banks for a period of three years, an order issued by Personnel Ministry said.
- Mehta's appointment is subject to a condition that he needs to resign from the board of State Bank of India before joining the new post.

Punjab National Bank

- Headquarters: New Delhi Founded: 1894 CEO and MD: Usha Ananthasubramanian
- Tagline: The Name you can Bank Upon

Indian Overseas Bank

- Headquarters: Chennai Founded: 10 February 1937
- Executive Director: K Swaminathan Tagline: Good People to Grow With

7. Eight Executive Directors appointed in various banks

Eight Executive Directors (EDs) have been appointed in various public sector banks on the recommendations of Banks Board Bureau. The appointments have been made for three years.

- Neelam Damodharan and Atanu Kumar Das: Bank of India.
- K Swaminathan: Indian Overseas Bank
- Ashok Kumar Pradhan: United Bank of India.
- P Ramana Murthy: Central Bank of India
- Fareed Ahmed Khan: Punjab and Sind Bank.
- M K Bhattacharya: Indian Bank
- S Harishankar: Allahabad Bank

AWARDS

8. Hindi Scholar and writer Surendra Verma selected for Vyas Samman award 2016

Well known Hindi Scholar and writer Surendra Verma has been selected for Vyas Samman-2016.

- Mr Verma has been chosen for this prestigious award for his novel Kaatna Shami Ka Vriksha : Padma Pankhuri Ki Dhar Se, published in 2010.
- The award instituted by K K Birla Foundation in 1991 carries a cash award of 3.50 lakh rupees.
- Sunita Jain was awarded last year.

19th FEBRUARY 2017

NATIONAL

1. UDAN scheme to increase number of airports by 50

The implementation of the regional air-connectivity scheme, UDAN, will see the number of operational airports in the country shoot up by over 50, while the cost of travelling will come down to as low as Rs 2,500 for up to an hour of air journey, said Jayant Sinha, Minister of State for Civil Aviation.

- According to Sinha, there are 75 small operational airports in the country, and this number will increase to over 125 with the successful implementation of UDAN (Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik).
- Drawing reference to Jharkhand, the Minister said the Centre will be able to connect all major cities of the State in 1-2 years.

2. India's Western Regional Agriculture Fair – 2017 inaugurated in Bikaner

Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Shri Radha Mohan Singh inaugurated India's Western Regional Agriculture Fair – 2017 in Bikaner.

- The Minister of Agriculture further said that Government of India has fixed an ambitious target for making the farmers income double in the next five years.
- To achieve this target, the out of box initiative has been taken instead of traditional system.
- Towards this, the establishment of National Agriculture Mandi E-NAM portal is an revolutionary initiative for the farmers with which farmers can sale their agricultural products on better prices in any of the mandis.

3. South Asian Speakers' Summit held in Indore

Lok Sabha Speaker Sumitra Mahajan inaugurated a two-day South Asian Speakers Summit in Indore on Achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

- The Summit had a Plenary Session on Identifying Resources for SDGs Implementation in South Asia: Opportunities for Parliamentary Cooperation.

APPOINTMENTS

4. Renu Pall appointed Ambassador of India to Montenegro

Ms. Renu Pall has been concurrently accredited as the next Ambassador of India to Montenegro, with residence in Vienna (Austria).

- She is expected to take up her assignment shortly.
- She is presently Ambassador of India to Austria.

Montenegro

- **Capital: Podgorica** **Currency: Euro** **President: Filip Vujanovic**
- **Prime Minister: Dusko Markovic**

AWARDS

5. Lata Mangeshkar honoured with 'Legendary Award ' 2017

Indian melody queen Lata Mangeshkar has been honoured with the 'Legendary Award' by The Brand Laureate.

- She says she is thankful for her gratifying career and well-wishers.
- The Brand Laureate recognises world-class achievement in branding amongst individuals and companies.

SPORTS

6. East Zone clinches Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy 2017

East Zone clinched the Syed Mushtaq Ali Inter Zonal Trophy with their fourth consecutive win as they trounced West Zone by eight wickets on the final day of the tournament at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai.

- Set a target of 150, they polished off the chase in 13.4 overs after Virat Singh's 34-ball 58 and Ishank Jaggi's stroke-filled 56.

DEATHS

7. Hindi novelist Ved Prakash Sharma passes away at 62

Celebrated Hindi novelist Ved Prakash Sharma, who has 176 novels to his credit, died in Meerut. He was 62.

- Sharma had also written scripts for about half-a-dozen Hindi movies.
- Mr. Sharma started his writing career at the age of 14 and initially ghost written novels for others.

8. Former MP Jambuvantrao Dhote passes away

Former Nagpur MP Jambuvantrao Dhote, who always stood for the cause of separate Vidarbha, passed away following a massive heart attack. He was 78.

- Popularly known as "Lion of Vidarbha", Dhote was also a legislator for two terms from Yavatmal district.
- An ardent disciple of Subhash Chandra Bose, he started his political career with the Forward Bloc and later moved to the Congress in the late 70s before joining the Shiv Sena.

20th FEBRUARY 2017

NATIONAL

1. India's only volcano active again

India's only live volcano in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands has started spewing smoke and lava again.

- After lying dormant for 150 years, Barren Island volcano erupted in 1991 and has been showing sporadic activity since then, scientists of Goa based National Institute of Oceanography (NIO) said.

- A team of scientists led by Abhay Mudholkar, from CSIR-National Institute of Oceanography (CSIR-NIO) in Goa reported that the volcano is active and spewing smoke and lava once again.
- 2. India sanctions soft loan USD 340 million to Nepal**
India has sanctioned a soft loan of 340 million US dollar to Nepal for various infrastructure development programmes.
- Indian Ambassador to Nepal Ranjit Rae handed over the approval papers to Physical Infrastructure and Transport Minister of Nepal Ramesh Lekhak in the presence of Railways Minister Suresh Prabhu.
- Under this programme Mahalaki bridge and 15 roads will be constructed in various parts of Nepal.
- 3. Nagaland chief minister TR Zeliang resigns**
Embattled Nagaland chief minister TR Zeliang announced his resignation from the top post, days after party legislators withdrew their support to break the deadlock between agitating tribal groups and the government.
- Nagaland has been in a state of turmoil ever since the Nagaland Tribal Action Committee began their agitation demanding the resignation of Zeliang over his decision to conduct civic bodies' elections with 33 per cent reservation for women.

TRADE/BANKING

- 4. Oriental Bank launches mobile wallet 'Batuaa'**
On the occasion of its 75th Foundation Day, Oriental Bank of Commerce (OBC) has come up with several digital offerings including launch of mobile wallet 'Oriental Batuaa'.
- Besides introducing a new version of mobile banking, OBC has also launched two new cards.
- The two MSME schemes that have been launched are 'Oriental Sanjeevani' and 'Oriental Budget Hotels and Restaurants'.

AWARDS

- 5. India's 'Newton' & 'Aaba' Win Big at Berlinale 2017**
Two Indian films at the world renowned Berlin Film festival bagged awards - Amit Masurkar's *Newton* and Amar Kaushik's *Aaba*.
- While Rajkumar Rao-starrer *Newton* brought home the CICAIE Art Cinema Award in the Forum section of the fest, *Aaba* won the Special Prize of Generation Kplus International Jury for Best Short Film.

SPORTS

- 6. Afridi announces retirement from international cricket**
Pakistan all-rounder Shahid Afridi announced his retirement from international cricket, ending an illustrious 21-year career.
- Nicknamed 'Boom Boom', Afridi had been a fan favourite since he burst onto the scene in 1996, striking a 37-ball one-day century against Sri Lanka in only his second match to set a world record that was unbeaten for 18 years.
- 7. India win silver at Asian Women's Rugby Sevens Trophy**
India won the silver medal at the women's Asian Rugby Sevens Trophy having won five matches and lost one at Vientiane, Laos.
- In the seven-nation round-robin competition, India defeated Laos 22-7, Philippines 12-5, Nepal 43-0 and Malaysia by 26-12.
- On the second day, India defeated Pakistan by 5-0 and in the last match were beaten by South Korea by 0-29.

DEATHS

- 8. Former Chief Justice of India Altamas Kabir passes away in Kolkata**
Hailed as one of the brilliant judges of the Supreme Court, former Chief Justice of India, Justice (Retired) Altamas Kabir passed away after prolonged illness. He was 68.
- Justice Altamas Kabir appointed as the 39th Chief Justice of India on Septemebr 29 in 2012. He held the office till July 18, 2013.

BOOKS

- 9. Book to chronicle Dream Girl Hema Malini's journey**
Dream Girl Hema Malini's incredible journey from an actor, a danseuse and filmmaker to a politician is being chronicled in a new book which will hit stores on her 69th birthday this October.
- Billed as an authorised biography, 'Hema Malini: Beyond the Dream Girl' is penned by author-columnist Ram Kamal Mukherjee.

21st FEBRUARY 2017

INTERNATIONAL

- 1. World Day of Social Justice observed**
The World Day of Social Justice was observed globally on 20 February 2017
- The theme for 2017 is "preventing conflict and sustaining peace through decent work".
- The day is observed with an aim to recognise the need to promote efforts to tackle several issues like exclusion, unemployment and poverty.
- 2. India world's largest importer of major arms in the last four years**
India was the world's largest importer of major arms between 2012-16, accounting for 13 per cent of the global total sales, according to a new data released by Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).
- India increased its arms imports by 43 per cent, between 2007-11 and 2012-16. In the last four years India's imports were far greater than those of its regional rivals China and Pakistan.

- Saudi Arabia was the world's second largest arms importer in 2012-16.
- The United States of America is the leading arms exporter in the world with almost half of its arms exports going to the Middle East.
- Russia comes close second that increased its exports by 23 percent, selling its arms to four countries of India, Vietnam, China and Algeria.

NATIONAL

3. Indian Coast Guard Ship ICGS AYUSH commissioned in Kochi

Indian Coast Guard Ship ICGS AYUSH was commissioned in Kochi, Kerala.

- The ship was commissioned by Vice Admiral AR Karwe, Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Southern Naval Command.
- The fast patrol vessel (FPV) is fitted with state-of-the-art navigational and communication equipment including Integrated Bridge System (IBS) and Machinery Control System (MCS).
- Post commissioning, the ship will be based at Krishnapatnam in Andhra Pradesh.

4. India's first dedicated heliport to open in Delhi

The capital will soon get India's first dedicated "heliport" for flying in and out of Delhi to nearby areas in choppers.

- Aviation secretary R N Choubey said the Rs 100-crore project will be inaugurated on February 28 and will be an integrated one with a chopper maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) unit part of the complex at Rohini.
- It will be Owned by Pawan Hans Helicopters Ltd (PHHL).

5. Health Secretary launches 'SAATHIYA' Resource Kit and 'SAATHIYA SALAH' Mobile App

C K Mishra, Secretary, Health and Family Welfare launched the SAATHIYA Resource Kit including 'Saathiya Salah' Mobile App for adolescents, as part of the Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram (RKSK) program.

- One of the key interventions under the programme is introduction of the Peer Educators (Saathiyas) who act as a catalyst for generating demand for the adolescent health services and imparting age appropriate knowledge on key adolescent health issues to their peer groups.
- In order to equip the Saathiyas in doing so, the Health Ministry has launched the Saathiya Resource Kit (including 'Saathiya Salah' Mobile App).
- This Resource Kit comprises Activity Book, Bhranti-Kranti Game, Question-Answer Book and Peer Educator Diary.
- The mobile app is also linked to another important piece of cost-effective information platform of a toll-free Saathiya Helpline (1800-233-1250) which will act as an e-counselor.

6. Karnataka Bank inks pact with Daimler India

Karnataka Bank Ltd has entered into a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Daimler India Commercial Vehicles Pvt Ltd (DICV) for extending finance to customers for the purchase of commercial vehicles manufactured by the company.

- A press release said that DICV has nominated Karnataka Bank as a preferred financier for the purchase of commercial vehicles manufactured by the company.

Karnataka Bank

- **Headquarters: Mangaluru** **Founded: 1924** **Chairman: P Jayarama Bhat**
- **Tagline: Your family bank across India**

APPOINTMENTS

7. Shurozelie Liezitsu elected Nagaland Chief Minister

Naga People's Front (NPF) President Shurozelie Liezitsu was selected as a consensus candidate by the Democratic Alliance of Nagaland for the post of Chief Minister.

- Liezitsu will be sworn as the Chief Minister of Nagaland on February 22.
- Earlier Nagaland's Chief Minister TR Zeliang stepped down from his post.

Nagaland

- **Capital: Kohima** **Formed: 1 December 1963** **Governor: Padmanabha Acharya**

8. Trump Chooses H.R. McMaster as National Security Adviser

President Trump appointed Lt. Gen. H. R. McMaster as his new national security adviser.

- McMaster will take on the role after having served several tours of duty in Germany, Southwest Asia and Iraq.
- McMaster has a PhD in military history from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

DEATHS

9. Norway Nobel Committee chairwoman dies aged 65

Kaci Kullmann, the chairwoman of the Norwegian Nobel Committee which selects the Peace Prize laureates, has died aged 65.

- Kullmann became a member of the Norwegian Nobel committee in 2003, and was elected chair in 2015.
- She was among the decision makers who honoured former US vice president Al Gore (2007), former US president Barack Obama (2009), Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo (2010), and Iranian human rights activist Shirin Ebadi (2003).

Norway

- **Currency: Krone** **Capital: Oslo** **Prime Minister: Ema Solberg**

9. Katamati Mine wins Best Green Award

Tata Steel's Katamati iron mine has been honoured with the the Best Green Organisation of the Year Award.

- The award was presented at a function organised by World CSR Day on February 18 in Mumbai.
- Katamati iron mine has been engaged in environmental protection efforts for years and has successfully implemented Environmental Management System as per the requirements of ISO 14001:2004.

APPOINTMENTS

10. FreeCharge CEO Govind Rajan resigns

Govind Rajan, the chief executive of Jasper Infotech-owned digital payments platform FreeCharge, has resigned from the company.

- Former Housing.com CEO, Jason Kothari, who joined Snapdeal last month as its chief strategy and investment officer, will oversee the business operations of FreeCharge.
- Rajan, who had joined Jasper Infotech in July 2015, initially held the role of chief strategy officer at Snapdeal. However, he took over the top job at Freecharge in May last year.

23rd FEBRUARY 2017

NATIONAL

1. India aims to bring broadband to every village by 2018

India aims to bring high-speed digital connectivity to every village by 2018 and is keen to share expertise in the area with other nations, the government said.

- In his Union Budget presented on February 1, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said the government would allocate Rs 10,000 crore to expand the Bharat Net project in 2017-18 for high-speed broadband.

2. National Biodiversity Congress held in Kerala

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan inaugurated the five-day-long National Biodiversity Congress and Expo at Tagore theatre in Thiruvananthapuram.

- This is one of the biggest biodiversity congresses in the country and its focal theme is 'Mainstreaming biodiversity for sustainable development'.

Kerala

• **Capital: Thiruvananthapuram**

Governor: P Sathasivam

Formation: 1 November 1956

3. J-K govt limits guests, dishes at weddings

The Jammu and Kashmir government has announced restrictions on the number of guests to be invited and specified the number of dishes that can be served at both public and private gatherings, mostly weddings, in a bid to limit wastage of food and essential commodities in such ceremonies.

- The order will come into effect from April this year.
- While families will be allowed to invite only 500 people for their daughter's wedding, the number has been restricted to 400 if one's son is getting married. And only 100 people can be invited for smaller ceremonies like engagements.
- The wedding menu is also likely to be restricted and non-vegetarian dishes cannot accede more than seven with only two servings of fruits and sweets.
- Loudspeakers and firecrackers can not be used in any government or private program.
- Also, giving sweets and dry fruits with invitation cards has been restricted.

4. Minister for Railways Dedicates Coaches of Antyodaya Express to the nation

Minister of Railways Shri Suresh Prabhakar Prabhu inspected the newly turned rake of Antyodaya Express consisting 22 Coaches.

- Chairman, Railway Board, Shri A. K. Mital and senior officials were also present on the occasion.
- The Minister appreciated the new Antyodaya Rake and dedicated it to the common people of the nation.

5. CCEA approves 40,000-mw solar park scheme

In a major push for solar power development in the country, a cabinet panel approved increasing the capacity of solar parks and projects from 20,000 MW to 40,000 MW.

- "The enhanced capacity would ensure setting up of at least 50 solar parks -- each with a capacity of 500 MW and above in various parts of the country," Power and Renewable Energy Minister Piyush Goyal told.
- "The capacity of the solar park scheme has been enhanced after considering the demand for additional solar parks from the states," he said.
- "The solar Parks and ultra mega solar power projects will be set up by 2019-20 with central government financial support of Rs 8,100 crore," he added.

6. India, China hold strategic dialogue

China and India today held their upgraded strategic dialogue to shore up bilateral ties amid hectic parleys to resolve differences over Beijing's reluctance to support India's NSG bid as well as a UN ban on JeM chief Masood Azhar.

- Just before the dialogue, Foreign Secretary S Jaishankar held talks with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi.
- Later, Jaishankar along with China's Executive Vice Foreign Minister Zhang Yesui held the strategic dialogue.

TRADE/BANKING

7. Vijaya Bank, SIDBI ink pact to provide concessional loans to MSEs

Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Vijaya Bank for providing concessional finance to micro and small enterprises (MSEs).

- The MoU aims at promoting and strengthening units in the MSE segment through concessional funding.
- The MoU also envisages joint financing/co-financing of MSMEs for meeting capital expenditure under the 'SIDBI Make in India Soft Loan Fund for Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises' scheme at concessional rate of 9.60 per cent, along with

working capital from Vijaya Bank.

Vijaya Bank

- **Headquarters: Bengaluru** **Founded: 1931** **MD and CEO: Kishore Kumar Sansi**
- **Tagline: A friend you can bank on**

SIDBI

- **Headquarters: Lucknow** **Founded: 2 April 1990** **Chairman: Dr. Kshatrapati Shivaji**

8. Bharti Airtel to buy Telenor India

Bharti Airtel, India's largest telecoms network operator, said it would buy Telenor (India) Communications Pvt Ltd, in a deal that will bolster Airtel's footprint with additional spectrum of 43.4 MHz in the 1800 MHz band.

- Airtel will buy Telenor's India operations in seven circles - Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh (East), Uttar Pradesh (West) and Assam, the company said in a statement.
- Telenor India's operations and services will continue as normal, until the transaction is completed, the company said.

9. Centre clears Rs 5,700-crore hydro project to be set up in Nepal

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has approved Rs 5723.72 crore by state-owned SJVN Limited in the 900-mw Arun-III hydropower project in Nepal, power, coal, renewable energy and mines minister Piyush Goyal said.

- Financial closure for the project is expected to be achieved by September this year and it is scheduled to be completed after five years.
- The project will offer 21.9% free power to Nepal for 25 years and generate employment of around 3000 persons in India and Nepal.
- The project will be carried out by a subsidiary owned by public sector company SJVN.
- Sutlej Jal Vidyut Nigam (SJVN) is a joint venture of centre and Himachal government. Centre holds 64.46 percent shares while Himachal Pradesh holds 25.51 percent shares.

Nepal

- **Capital: Kathmandu** **Currency: Rupee** **Prime Minister: Pushpa Kamal Dahal**
- **President: Bidhya Devi Bhandari**

APPOINTMENTS

10. Suman Saxena takes charge as the Whole Time Member of the IBBI

Ms. Suman Saxena took charge as the Whole Time Member, Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI).

- Ms Saxena will look after Research and Regulation Wing comprising Corporate Insolvency, Corporate Liquidation, Individual Insolvency, Individual Bankruptcy, Research and Publications, Data Management and Dissemination and Advocacy.
- She will also look after National Insolvency Programme, Continuing Professional Programme, and Knowledge Management and Partnership.
- Ms. Saxena served as a member of the Indian Audit and Accounts Service for over 35 years.
- Her last assignment was Deputy Comptroller and Auditor General, where she oversaw three important sectors, namely, defence, communications and railways.
- She has also been the Director of National Academy of Audit and Accounts.

11. Abhijit Sarkar appointed Vice President of Asian Hockey Federation

Asian Hockey Federation (AHF) has appointed Abhijit Sarkar as its new Vice Chairman and also the chief of AHF Commercial and TV Committee.

- Sarkar, who has been associated with the Sahara India Pariwar since 2004, was appointed on the basis of an Executive Board Meeting held on February 7.

12. Justice Sapre to head Cauvery Tribunal

Supreme Court sitting judge Justice Abhay Manohar Sapre will head the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal (CWDT).

- According to Ministry of Water Resources, Supreme Court Chief Justice J S Khehar has nominated Justice Sapre as the tribunal chairman on 16 February.
- The post was vacant after the resignation of Justice B S Chauhan following his appointment as Law Commission chairman, in March 2016.
- Before his elevation to the Supreme Court, Sapre served as chief justice of Guwahati High Court and the High Court of Manipur.
- He also served as judge at Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan High Courts.
- He was appointed as a judge of the Supreme Court and assumed charge on August 13, 2014. He is due to retire on August 27, 2019.
- The appointment of Sapre assumes significance since the Supreme Court is set to hear the Cauvery case on a regular basis from March 21.
- CWDT was established by centre to resolve Cauvery water dispute.

13. The president of Azerbaijan picked his wife to be vice president

The president of oil-rich Azerbaijan picked his wife to be the nation's first-ever vice-president.

- President Ilham Aliyev, 55, named his wife Mehriban Aliyeva, 52, as vice president after he ordered a referendum last year to create the role and extend his own term from 5 to 7 years.
- The resolutions passed in September with more than 90 percent of the votes.

Azerbaijan

- **Capital: Baku** **Currency: Manat** **Prime Minister: Artur Rasizade** **President: Ilham Aliyev**

AWARDS

14. Haryana: 42 sportspersons conferred Bhim Awards

42 Haryana sportspersons as the players were given the Bhim Awards for their performances in the year 2013-14, 2014-15 and 2015-2016 in an award function presided over by Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar at Haryana Raj Bhawan.

- Khattar and Haryana Governor Kaptan Singh Solanki conferred the award to sportspersons.
- The players were given a cash prize of Rs 5 lakh, an idol of Bhim, a scroll of honour, a blazer and tie/scarf.
- 2016 Rio Paralympics silver medallist Deepa Malik was also given the award for the year 2013-14.

SPORTS

15. India to host Combined World Cup for shooting in 2019

India will be hosting the Combined World Cup for shooting in 2019, a qualifying event for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, which will further boost the country's profile as a global shooting destination.

- The National Rifle Association of India's (NRAI) bid was approved by the International Shooting Sport Federation's Executive Board in its meeting held in New Delhi.
- Combined World Cup comprises all the three categories — shotgun, rifle and pistol, and at stake in the 2019 edition will be a number of quota places for the Tokyo Games.

BOOKS

16. Amarinder Singh's biography 'The People's Maharaja' released

Punjab congress chief Amarinder Singh's biography, 'The People's Maharaja', was released on 21st February.

- The authorised biography, authored by Chandigarh-based writer Khushwant Singh, sheds a new light on the sequence of events that led to the 1984 army action at Golden temple in amritsar.
- Speaking during a discussion after the launch of the book, Amarinder explained the circumstances under which he had resigned from the Congress over Operation Bluestar in 1984.
- He had, however, rejoined the party in 1998.

17. PM releases the book "Judicial Reforms – Recent Global Trends"

The Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, released the book "Judicial Reforms – Recent Global Trends" and presented the first copy to President Pranab Mukherjee.

- Speaking on the occasion, the Prime Minister said that India has to keep pace with changing technology, and the new, interdependent global order.

24th FEBRUARY 2017

INTERNATIONAL

1. India, Israel to develop missile for Army

Ahead of the first visit of an Indian Prime Minister to Israel later this year, India has approved a deal to develop jointly a medium range **surface-to-air missile (MR-SAM)** system for the Army in a Rs17,000-crore deal.

- The deal will be executed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and Israel Aircraft Industries (IAI).
- The systems will be manufactured in India and would have an 80% indigenous content.

NATIONAL

2. International Ayurvedic research Institute planned at Kannur

Kerala government has decided to set up a Rs 300 crore international Ayurvedic research institute at Kannur during the 13th five year plan.

- The project will be implemented with central assistance.
- Cabinet also decided to set up Kerala Blood Bank society of International standards.
- It will be set up jointly by Thiruvananthapuram Citizens India Charitable Trust, Health Department with technical assistance of WHO.
- The government also decided to strengthen the Public Works Department's design, investigation and quality control wings.

3. President of India inaugurates international conference on 'Bharat Bodh'

The President of India, Shri Pranab Mukherjee inaugurated an international conference on 'Bharat Bodh' organized by the Indira Gandhi National Open University and Bhartiya Shikshan Mandal in New Delhi.

- Speaking on the occasion, the President complimented the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) and the Bharatiya Shikshan Mandal for organizing this conference bringing together intellectuals, academicians and researchers to unravel various aspects of the "Bharat Bodh".

4. DONER Ministry along with Tezpur University to encourage entrepreneurship in Northeast

Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DONER), jointly with the Department of Business Administration, Tezpur University and North Eastern Finance Corporation Limited (NEDFi), is coming up with a Business Idea Challenge to encourage entrepreneurship in the North-East Region (NER).

- The annual industry-academia interface event "Sampark", which will see the DoNER Ministry's involvement for the first time, brings the spirit of entrepreneurship in the region.
- The event will take place on March 3, 2017 and will be the 17th edition in the series.
- To encourage the students towards entrepreneurship, a Pioneering Business Idea Challenge 2017 is being organized as a part of the event.

5. 24 February: Central Excise Day

Central Excise Day is commemorated every year all across the India on 24th of February.

- It aims to encourage the employees of excise department to carry out the central excise duty all over the India in better way

in order to prevent the corruption.

- It is also celebrated to commemorate the establishment of the Central Excise and Salt Act on 24th of February in the year 1944.

TRADE/BANKING

6. Five associate banks to merge with SBI from April 1

The merger of State Bank of India's five associate banks with the SBI will become effective in the new fiscal year, the government said.

- In gazette notifications the government said the entire undertakings of these five banks shall stand transferred to and vested in State Bank of India from April 1, 2017.
- The combined entity will have a network of nearly 23,000 branches, further increasing the dominance of the country's largest bank.

7. ADB, India ink \$500 million loan pact to expand power connectivity

India and the ADB has signed a \$500 million loan pact to expand inter-regional power connectivity in the country, and strengthen transmission system to accommodate renewable energy-generation capacity.

- The project, which is expected to be completed by December 2020, will help build 800 kilovolt (kV) and 320 kV High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) converter stations and 765 kV power transmission systems in India, the multilateral lending agency said in a statement.
- The loan has a 20-year term, including a five-year grace period with an annual interest rate determined in accordance with ADB's LIBOR-based lending facility, it said.

8. Karnataka Bank bags two awards at IBA Banking Technology Awards

City based private sector bank - Karnataka Bank Ltd has bagged two IBA - banking technology awards 2017.

- The awards are, winner- best financial inclusion initiatives [small bank] category; and runner up - best use of digital and channels technology [small bank] category.

9. Oriental Bank ties up with Chola MS to sell insurance products

The Public Sector Oriental Bank of Commerce has signed a corporate agency agreement with general insurance provider Cholamandalam General Insurance Company, for distribution of insurance products.

- Chola MS will offer a wide range of non-life insurance products to customers of Oriental Bank of Commerce through its branches.
- The insurance products include motor, health, home and travel, a company statement said.

AWARDS

10. Dohmen, Naomi win International Hockey Federation's Player of the Year Awards

- Male Player of the Year 2016- John-John Dohmen (Belgium)
- Female Player of the Year 2016- Naomi van As (Netherland)
- Male Goalkeeper of the Year 2016- David Harte (Ireland)
- Female Goalkeeper of the Year 2016 - Maddie Hinch (Britain)
- Male Rising Star of the Year 2016 - Arthur Van Doren (Belgium)
- Female Rising Star of the Year 2016- Maria Granatto (Argentina)
- Male Coach of Year 2016- Danny Kerry (Britain)
- Female Coach of Year 2016- Karen Brown (Britain)
- Male Umpire of the Year award 2016- Christian Blasch (Germany)
- Female Umpire of the Year award 2016- Laurine Delforge (Belgium)

SPORTS

11. Adidas Ties Up With FIFA U-17 World Cup For Mission XI Million

Sportswear giant Adidas has announced its association with FIFA U-17 World Cup Local Organising Committee, coming onboard as the exclusive performance partner for the Mission XI Million programme.

- The programme was recently flagged off by the Sports Ministry and All India Football Federation in the capital.
- The Mission XI Million is an initiative that aims at reaching out to millions of youth across India to increase participation in football and create a platform for them to develop their skills.

DEATHS

12. Nobel-winning economist, mathematician Kenneth J Arrow dies

Kenneth J. Arrow, the youngest-ever winner of a Nobel prize for economics, whose theories on risk, innovation and the basic mathematics of markets have influenced thinking on everything from voting to health insurance to high finance, has died. He was 95.

- Arrow and British economist Sir John R Hicks shared the 1972 Nobel memorial prize in economic science for their pioneering mathematical work on general equilibrium theory, which says that there is an overall balance between supply and demand in an economy as a whole.
- Their mathematical models dealt with the factors involved, such as when and where a product is sold.
- He also was known as a mentor. Five of his former students went on to become Nobel winners.

******* ALL THE BEST *******