

CURRENT AFFAIRS JANUARY 2019 PDF

AWARDS & HONOURS

Name of the award	Award Winner	Additional Information
Carnot prize	Piyush Goyal	The former power minister will be awarded by the Kleinman Center for Energy Policy at the University of Pennsylvania School of Design.
Assam Republic Day journalism award	D N Chakraborty	The award comprises Rupees one lakh in cash, a citation, the Assamese 'xoraai' (the bell metal memento presented as an honour), 'jaapi' (headgear) and an angavastra.
Bharat Ratna	Pranab Mukherjee, Nanaji Deshmukh & Bhupen Hazarika	
Best Miniratna PSU	Numaligarh Refinery Limited (NRL)	The award, comprising of a trophy, was presented to NRL MD S K Barua by Member of Parliament Manoj Tiwari and veteran actress and social activist Poonam Dhillon.
Sheikh Saud International Prize	C N R Rao	For Materials Research, given by the Centre for Advanced Materials of the UAE.
Womans Voice Award	Ranjani Murali	The award carries a cash prize of Rs 1 lakh apart from a citation.
Sansad Ratna Award	Anurag Thakur	For distinguished performance as a parliamentarian.
Japan Prize	Dr. Rattan Lal	The Japan Prize Foundation announced the laureates of the 2019 Japan Prize, who have pushed

CURRENT AFFAIRS JANUARY 2019 PDF

		the envelope in their respective fields of “Materials and Production” and “Biological Production, Ecology”.
Franco-German human rights award	Detained Chinese lawyer Yu Wensheng	
Philip Kotler Presidential award	PM Narendra Modi	
Sushila Devi Literature Award	Namita Gokhale	For her novel “Things to Leave Behind”.
Award for the Best Crime Detection for 2018	Gangavaram circle police	For the Best Crime Detection (ABCD) for 2018 from the Chief Secretary Anil Chandra Punetha and Director General of Police R.P. Thakur in Vijayawada.
Exhibitor of the Year Award	DRDO	
The Best Motion Picture Drama at the 76th annual Golden Globe Awards	Bohemian Rhapsody’	
National Geospatial Award	IIT Professor Jayanta Kumar Ghosh	
The Kabi Samrat Upendra Bhanja National Award	Manoj Das	Manoj Das is an eminent English and Odia writer.
National Nritya Shiromani Award	Anindita Neogy Anaam	For promoting the dance from across the world.

CURRENT AFFAIRS JANUARY 2019 PDF

APPOINTMENTS

Name of the Person	Name of the Position	Additional Information
PK Purwar	BSNL CMD	He will take office from July He will replace Anupam Shrivastava, who has been the CMD of the State-run firm since January 2015.
Lt Gen Rajeev Chopra	Director General of NCC (DGNCC).	Lt Gen Rajeev Chopra has commanded an infantry battalion in Operation Rhino (Assam). He has commanded a Brigade in Eastern Command and was Inspector General of HQ IGAR (South) in the insurgency-torn state of Manipur.
Vice Admiral Ajit Kumar	Western Naval Command chief	Vice Admiral Kumar succeeds Vice Admiral Girish Luthra.
Ajai Kumar	MD and CEO, Yes Bank	
Dilip Sadarangani	Part Time Chairman of Federal Bank	Dilip Sadarangani is a renowned banker with experience in various facets of banking, particularly technology, in different countries.
Suman Kumari	Pakistan's first Hindu woman judge	Ms. Kumari, who hails from Qambar-Shahdadkot in Sindh province, will serve in her native district.
Poonam Khetrapal	WHO regional director for South-East Asia	Poonam Khetrapal Singh has been appointed the South-East Asia regional director of the World Health Organization (WHO) for a second five-year term.

CURRENT AFFAIRS JANUARY 2019 PDF

Ronojoy Dutta	IndiGo, Chief Executive Officer (CEO)	The company has also approved the appointment of Meleveetil Damodaran, the Independent Non-Executive Director, as the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Company with immediate effect.
Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah	Malaysian king	
Parthasarathi Mukherjee	Lakshmi Vilas Bank, MD	
Stefan Lofven	Sweden's Prime Minister	
Justice Asif Saeed Khosa	26th Chief Justice of Pakistan	Chief justice Khosa will serve as top judge for approximately 337 days and is scheduled to retire on Dec 21, 2019.
Manu Sawhney	ICC Chief Executive	
Daniel Callahan	TCS, independent director	
Deepak Maheshwari	chief credit officer (CCO), Axis Bank	
Gita Gopinath	IMF , 1st woman Chief Economist	The 47-year-old, succeeds Maurice Obstfeld.
Vikram Misri	India's new envoy to China	A 1989-batch Indian Foreign Service officer, Misri replaced Gautam Bambawale.
Justice Asif Saeed Khosa	The new Chief Justice of Pakistan	
Saurabh Kumar	Chairman of Ordnance Factory Board	
Justice AK Sikri	Executive Chairman of NALSA	by President Ram Nath Kovind
Vinod Kumar Yadav	Railway Board Chairman	

CURRENT AFFAIRS JANUARY 2019 PDF

Jair Bolsonaro	Brazil's President	
TB Radhakrishnan	1st Chief Justice of Telangana HC	
Sudhir Bhargava	Chief Information Commissioner	

BANKING & FINANCE

FDI rose 18% in FY18 to Rs 28.25 lakh crore: RBI

Foreign direct investment (FDI) during the previous fiscal grew 18 per cent to Rs 28.25 lakh crore. FDI increased by Rs 4,33,300 crore, including revaluation of past investments, during 2017-18 to reach Rs 28,24,600 crore in March 2018 at market value, according to RBI data on 'Census on Foreign Liabilities and Assets of Indian Direct Investment Companies, 2017-18'. The RBI said as many as 23,065 companies responded to the latest round of the census, of which, 20,732 firms had FDI or ODI in their balance sheet in March 2018.

AIIB to provide local currency financing in India, Pakistan

China-based Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), in which India is the second largest shareholder, plans to launch local currency financing in India and some other Asian nations later this year to reduce cross-border investment risks caused by exchange-rate fluctuations. The first group of countries to have this new service could include India, Indonesia and Pakistan.

RBI removes BoI, BoM, OBC from Prompt Corrective Action framework

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) removed three state-owned banks from its weak-bank watch list, a move that will lift lending restrictions on them.

"It has been decided that Bank of India (BoI) and Bank of Maharashtra (BoM) which meet the regulatory norms including Capital Conservation Buffer (CCB) and have Net NPAs (non-performing assets) of less than 6 per cent as per third quarter results, are taken out of the PCA (prompt corrective action) framework subject to certain conditions and continuous monitoring," the RBI said.

Brand Finance 2018: Tata slips 3 spots; Reliance, Airtel, Infosys fall too

The country's top corporates have slipped in ranking according to the latest study of the world's leading 500 brands released by UK-based Brand Finance. The Tata brand has slipped three places to 104, the lowest in 11 years, though brand value has grown nine per cent to touch \$14.2 billion in 2018.

Last year, Tata's brand value was \$13.1 billion, which was also the first time it went out of the top 100 list, coming in at 101, according to Brand Finance, which has been releasing the report since 2007. The top spot has been occupied by Amazon followed by Apple on second and Google on third.

Reserve Bank to infuse Rs 37,500 crore through OMO

The Reserve Bank of India said it will inject Rs 37,500 crore into the system through the purchase of government securities in February to increase liquidity. It has been monitoring the evolving liquidity conditions and durable liquidity requirements of the system.

Accordingly, it has been decided to conduct the purchase of government securities under Open Market Operations (OMOs) for an aggregate amount of Rs 375 billion in the month of February 2019 through three auctions of Rs 125 billion each during the 2nd, 3rd and 4th week," the RBI said in a release.

There will be no auction during the first week due to the scheduled MPC meeting, it added.

UAE, Saudi digital currency restricted to a few banks

Central banks of the UAE and Saudi Arabia announced that a digital currency the two countries are currently working on will be restricted to a limited number of banks in the initial stage.

The two apex banks said in a statement that one of the objectives of launching the common digital currency project 'Aber' is for use in financial settlements between the two countries through Blockchain and distributed ledger technologies. The pilot project is aimed at 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.

IRDAI sets up a panel to identify systemically important insurers

Insurance regulator IRDAI set up a panel to identify domestically systemically important insurers (SII) and put in place an enhanced regulatory framework for them.

The committee headed by Pravin Kutumbe, Member-Finance & Investment, Irdai, has been asked to submit report in six months.

SBI Card and Etihad Guest tie-up to launch premium card for international travel

SBI Card and Etihad Guest, the loyalty programme of Etihad Airways, have joined hands to launch a travel specific Visa credit card for members and Indian travellers. This is the first international co-brand partnership of SBI Card, the country's second largest credit card issuer. The card will be available in two variants, Etihad Guest SBI Card and Etihad Guest SBI Premier Card, will bring an unmatched value proposition to Etihad Guest members and international travellers from India.

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Vodafone Idea Board Approves Rights Issue for Rs 25,000 crore

The Vodafone Idea board approved a plan to raise funds to the tune of Rs 25,000 crore via rights issue. As part of the fund-raising plan, promoters of the company — Vodafone group and Aditya Birla group — intend to contribute up to Rs 11,000 crore and Rs 7,250 crore, respectively, towards the issue.

Vodafone Idea had announced plans to raise Rs 25,000 crore last year in equity to bolster its balance sheet and meet future capex needs to boost 4G coverage in an effort to catch up with rival telcos as they continue to pump capital. According to the new strategy, the management plans to invest Rs 27,000 crore in 2019-20, supported by savings of around Rs 14,000 crore that it expects to come from synergising operations of merged entities.

YES Bank ties up with Maharashtra to onboard fair price shops as BCs

The Maharashtra government has partnered with private sector lender YES Bank, under its e-PDS State programme, to onboard fair price shops (FPS) as Business Correspondent Agents. YES Bank will onboard close to 40 per cent of all fair price shops in Maharashtra, spanning 12 districts such as Palghar, Thane, Pune, Kolhapur, Latur," the lender said in a release, adding that this will cover more than 20,000 ration shop owners and over 70 lakh citizens.

At 6.6%, China's Economy grew at slowest pace in almost 3 decades in 2018

China's economy grew at its slowest pace in almost three decades in 2018, losing more steam in the last quarter as it battles to quell massive debt and a US trade war, official data showed. The 6.6 percent growth comes in above the official target of around 6.5 percent and matches a forecast by analysts polled by AFP, but is down from the 6.8 percent chalked up in 2017, according to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS).

And in a sign of the struggle Beijing faces, growth in the last three months of the year clocked in at 6.4 percent, matching a low seen during the global financial crisis 10 years ago, with economists widely expecting the slowdown to deepen.

Nepal bank announces ban of Indian notes above Rs 100

Nepal's central bank has announced the ban of Indian currency notes with denominations above Rs 100. The Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) on Sunday issued a circular for the institutions licensed by it notifying them about the ban, reports Xinhua news agency. Nepal's cabinet in December had decided to ban the use of these currency notes.

ICICI Bank launches premium savings account for men

ICICI Bank has launched a new premium savings account for upwardly-mobile male customers, named 'The ONE'. It is available in two variants – Magnum and Titanium. It offers the account holder with a range of benefits including the option of opting for health and term life insurance. It also waives the processing fees for home loans for account holders.

HDFC Standard Life Insurance is now HDFC Life Insurance

HDFC Standard Life Insurance changed its name to HDFC Life Insurance following the receipt of relevant approvals from regulatory authorities. The change in name is effective right off the bat and the company will henceforth operate under the name HDFC Life Insurance Company Ltd.

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 Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis' pet Nagpur-Mumbai 'Samruddhi Corridor' expressway project. SBI has agreed to lend the highest amount, Rs 8,500 crore, said Bhushan Gagrani, principal secretary in the Chief Minister's Office. "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.

Cabinet approves recapitalisation of Export-Import Bank of India

The Union Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has approved the recapitalization of EXIM Bank. The details are as follows:

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). 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.

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.

ICICI Bank appoints B Sriram, Rama Bijapurkar as independent directors

Private sector ICICI Bank on 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.

RBI slaps Rs 3 cr. penalty on Citibank India

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has imposed a penalty of Rs 3 crore on Citibank India for not complying with directions regarding the 'fit-and-proper criteria' for directors of the bank.

The RBI in a statement, however, added that the action is based on deficiencies in regulatory compliance and is not intended to pronounce upon the validity of any transaction or agreement entered into by the bank with its customers.

RBI provides USD 400 million to Sri Lanka's central bank under swap deal

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has agreed to provide \$400 million to the Central Bank of Sri Lanka (CBSL) under the SAARC swap facility, to boost the island nation's reserves.

CBSL has requested a further bilateral swap arrangement of \$1 billion from RBI which is "under consideration".

◆ SAARC Full form – South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation.

◆ Sri Lanka Central Bank governor – Indrajit Coomaraswamy

◆ Sri Lanka Finance Minister – Mangala Samaraweera

Reserve Bank of India forms committee to boost digital payments

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) constituted a High-Level Committee on Deepening of Digital Payments to encourage digitization of payments and enhance financial inclusion. The five-member committee headed by UIDAI's former Chairman Nandan Nilekani will include RBI's former Deputy Governor Mr. H.R. Khan and Former Secretary, Ministry of Information Technology, Mrs. Aruna Sharma among others.

India allows Iran's Bank Pasargad to open branch in Mumbai

The government has allowed Iran's Bank Pasargad to open a branch in Mumbai while India's state-owned UCO Bank will be opening a branch in Iran. The move is expected to facilitate transactions related to India's oil purchases from Iran amidst US sanctions. The

banks will also handle transactions relating to operation at Iran's Chabahar Port which India is developing.

RBI sets up panel under Nandan Nilekani to boost digital payments

The Reserve Bank of India Tuesday constituted a high-level committee under Aadhaar architect Nandan Nilekani to suggest measures to strengthen the safety and security of digital payments in the country. The five-member panel on deepening of digital payments has been constituted with a view to encourage digitisation of payments and enhance financial inclusion through digitisation .

RBI may pay govt up to Rs40,000 crore interim dividend: Report

The RBI may reportedly transfer an interim dividend of Rs30,000-Rs40,000 crore to the government by March. Final decision on the dividend could reportedly be taken by the time Finance Minister Arun Jaitley presents government's budget on February 1. The funds are crucial to meet the fiscal deficit target of 3.3% of the GDP for the financial year ending in March.

Parliamentary panel asks RBI to fix dysfunctional ATMs

A parliamentary panel has asked the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to address the issue of dysfunctional ATMs to avoid any situation of a forced cash crunch. The panel further asked banks to install an adequate number of ATMs. There were 2,05,866 ATMs in the country as of September 2018, according to an RBI data.

Bancassurance pact was signed between Syndicate Bank and SBI Life Insurance

Syndicate Bank and SBI Life Insurance signed a bancassurance pact aiming to offer a comprehensive financial planning solution to its customers. This was signed between Syndicate Bank MD & CEO, Mrutyunjay Mahapatra and MD and CEO of SBI Life, Sanjeev Nautiyal through the pact.

HDFC MF surpasses ICICI Prudential MF to become largest AMC in India

HDFC Mutual Fund has pipped ICICI Prudential MF to become the country's largest asset management company after a gap of over two years. As of December-end, HDFC MF manages assets to the tune of Rs 3.35 lakh crore, while those of ICICI Prudential MF stood at Rs 3.08 lakh crore, as per the latest data available with Association of Mutual funds in India (Amfi). The assets under management (AUM) of HDFC MF have grown

over 9 per cent in October-December quarter from the previous three-month period, however, ICICI Prudential MF's AUM slipped by 0.6 per cent during the period under review.

RBI forms expert panel on MSMEs under ex-SEBI chief UK Sinha

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has set up a committee under former SEBI Chairman UK Sinha to address issues regarding the sustainability of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). The eight-member committee will also examine factors affecting the availability of finance to MSMEs. This comes after RBI allowed one-time restructuring of MSME loans of up to Rs 25 crore.

Cabinet clears merger of Dena Bank, Vijaya Bank with Bank of Baroda

The Cabinet has approved the merger of Vijaya Bank and Dena Bank with Bank of Baroda. The merged bank will become India's second-largest state-run bank and will "help create a strong globally competitive bank", the government said. The merger will become effective April 1, and employees of Dena Bank and Vijaya Bank will be absorbed into Bank of Baroda.

INDIAN AFFAIRS

National Salt Satyagraha Memorial in Dandi, Gujarat dedicated to the nation by PM

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi dedicated the National Salt Satyagraha Memorial at Dandi in Navsari district, Gujarat to the nation on Mahatma Gandhi's death anniversary. At the memorial site, he also unveiled statues of Mahatma Gandhi and 80 Satyagrahis who had marched with him during the historic Dandi Salt March in 1930 to make salt from sea water against the British law. The memorial also has 24-narrative murals depicting various events and stories from the historic 1930 Salt March. Solar trees are installed to meet the energy requirements of the memorial complex.

Air India resumes its services from New Delhi to Najaf in Iraq

Air India is resuming its services from New Delhi to the holy city of Najaf in Iraq after 25 years. Indian Ambassador to Iraq Dr Pradeep Rajpurohit said, the services will commence from the 14th of next month, and it is initially being planned for twice a

week. Najaf is a city some 160 kilometres from Baghdad. It is an important pilgrimage place considered sacred by Shia Muslims.

All Research Fellows Also Entitled to HRA as per Central Government Norms

With effect from January 1, 2019, Central Government has enhanced the fellowship of Ph.D students and other research personnel enrolled in any area of science and technology, including Physical and Chemical Sciences, Engineering, Mathematical Sciences, Agricultural Sciences, Life Sciences, Pharmacy etc.

The hike in fellowship will directly benefit over 60,000 Research Fellows and also provide a template to the States to consider increase in their fellowship rates. Fellowship of the Junior Research Fellows in the first two years of Ph.D programme is increased from the current rate of Rs.25,000/- to Rs.31,000/- per month. Similarly, in the remaining tenure of Ph.D, Senior Research Fellow will get Rs. 35,000/- per month instead of the present Rs.28,000/- per month.

Further, there is substantial 30-35% enhancement in the financial rewards for the scientists involved in the R&D projects as Research Associates. The top bracket of Research Associateship is fixed at Rs.54,000/-. All the research fellows are also entitled to HRA as per Central Government norms.

Srikrishna committee indicts Chanda Kochhar

The Justice B.N. Srikrishna Committee that probed allegations against Chanda Kochhar, the former CEO and MD of ICICI Bank, has found that she violated the bank's code of conduct in dealing with conflict of interest and fiduciary duties in the case of loans to Videocon that had routed a part of the money to a company owned by her husband Deepak.

GST reduced to 5% for Mansarovar Yatra, Haj

Pilgrimages such as Kailash Mansarovar Yatra, the Haj, and the Pashupatinath tour will become cheaper with the government exempting religious tours from service tax. According to a notification, service tax exemption has been provided to 'services by a specified organisation in respect of a religious pilgrimage facilitated by the Government of India under bilateral arrangement'.

CURRENT AFFAIRS JANUARY 2019 PDF

The Haj is undertaken only through chartered flights, and the Yatra is also done mainly through chartered flights. Journeys through chartered flights attracted 18 per cent GST. Now, GST for all religious tours has been fixed at 5 per cent. The GST for air travel in economy class is 5 per cent, and GST for business class air travel is 12 per cent.

National Conference on “Prison Design” to begin in Visakhapatnam

The first ever National Conference on “Prison Design” will begin in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh. The two-day conference is being hosted by the DG Prison, Andhra Pradesh on the behalf of State and is being sponsored by the Bureau of Police Research & Development (BPR&D).

BPR&D is committed to provide synergetic platform to all Prison professionals, Police Officials and civil Architects to evolve better “Prison Designs” suiting to the safety and security needs of the prison, ease in handling the administration of the prisons on one hand and provide conducive structures for humane living conditions for the inmates as per the constitutional mandates.

Pariksha Pe Charcha 2.0 to be organised in Delhi

Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi will be interacting with a cross section of Students, Teachers and Parents from India and abroad in an expanded edition – Pariksha Pe Charcha 2.0 at Talkatora Stadium, New Delhi tomorrow. A lot of excitement and enthusiasm is being seen among the students, teachers and parents to not only participate in the unique event but also to receive valuable tips from the Prime Minister who is keen to ensure that the students take exams in a relaxed atmosphere and do not come under stress to ensure better results in the long run.

Ministry of Defence Launches ‘RDP INDIA 2019’

The Digital India campaign of the Government, Ministry of Defence had launched a mobile app ‘RDP India 2019’. with the intent of making available the highlights of the Republic Day event, not only to the spectators at Rajpath, but also to the general public all over the world.

This app contains information about the Parade on Rajpath, New Delhi, including Order of the March, details of the tableaux presented by different States and Ministries, children cultural performances, fly past and names of recipients of Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar 2019. It was extremely informative to the spectators witnessing

the Parade and was widely appreciated. The app also had the provision for live streaming of the Parade.

Two Day International Stock Taking Conference on Tiger Conservation inaugurated in New Delhi

The 3rd Stock Taking Conference on Tiger Conservation was inaugurated in New Delhi . Third in a series of Stock Taking Conferences, this is the second to be held in India after 2012 and is expected to have wide ranging discussions on the status of the Global Tiger Recovery Program (GTRP) by the 13 tiger range countries besides deliberations on combating wildlife trafficking.

The conference is being hosted by the National Tiger Conservation Authority, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change in close collaboration with the Global Tiger Forum which is an International, Intergovernmental Organization for conserving tigers in the world.

In Global Corruption Index, India's Rank Improves By 3 Points

President Xi Jinping's high profile anti-graft campaign has not made much of an impact as China's ranking on perceived corruption has fallen to 87, below India's 78, according to the annual index by global watchdog Transparency International.

India rose by three points to 78. Vietnam too figured high at 117 while Singapore moved up three spots to third place, behind first-placed Denmark and New Zealand, with the top spot signifying the least corrupt nation. The US also fell, from 16th to 22nd position, tumbling out of the top 20 for the first time in recent years.

India bags the Award of Excellence for 'Best in Show' at New York Times Travel Show 2019

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 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 with a view to scale up its tourism promotional efforts in the US, enhance India's visibility and to increase its share of US Outbound travel market.

Nation pays homage to Mahatma Gandhi on his 71st death anniversary

The nation pays homage to Father of the Nation Mahatma Gandhi on his 71st death anniversary. The day is also observed as Martyrs' Day. He was assassinated on this day in 1948.

President Ram Nath Kovind, Vice-President M Venkaiah Naidu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid tributes to Mahatma Gandhi at Rajghat in New Delhi this morning. Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Hardeep Singh Puri, Congress President Rahul Gandhi and leaders from different political parties also paid tributes.

Reliance Jio launches JioRail App for JioPhone users

Telecom major Reliance Jio said that IRCTC reserved ticket booking service is available for its users on any JioPhone through the brand new JioRail App. According to the company, the App will allow customers to book and cancel tickets by using debit cards, credit cards and e-wallets, check PNR status, train information, timings, routes, seat availability and several other services on their JioPhones.

"Available on the Jio App Store, the JioRail app also allows Tatkal booking for any last minute travel plans," the company said in a statement.

India to participate in PISA in 2021

India will participate in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) which tests the learning levels of 15-year-old students, in 2021.

The HRD ministry has signed an agreement with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) which conducts PISA every three years, confirming India's participation in the triennial global survey that assesses students in reading, mathematics, science and collaborative problem-solving. Participation in PISA allows benchmarking performance against a wide range of countries. PISA uses test items aligned with international benchmarks. Test items are adapted to the local context and language, pilot tested and validated.

ICAR launches National Agricultural Higher Education Project (NAHEP)

The ICAR has recently launched Rs 1100 crore ambitious National Agricultural Higher Education Project (NAHEP) to attract talent and strengthen higher agricultural education in the country. This project will be funded by the World Bank and the Indian Government on a 50:50 basis.

The objective of the NAHEP for India is to support participating agricultural universities and ICAR in providing more relevant and higher quality education to Agricultural University students.

Artisan Speak: Ministry of Textiles signs pacts with leading textile cos to help weavers

The Government of India and industry players have entered into agreements whereby the Government will link textile companies and handloom clusters, enabling the textile firms to directly source their requirements for handlooms from handloom clusters.

The strategic partnership between big brands and handloom clusters is aimed at establishing long-term market linkages between key industry players on the one hand and handloom weavers on the other; this will ensure sustainable development of the sector, resulting also in sustainable and enhanced income opportunities for weavers.

Bharat Parv showcasing spirit of Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat begins at Red Fort

Fourth edition of Bharat Parv, showcasing the spirit of Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat began at Red Fort in Delhi. It will continue till 31st of this month. The five-day event is a part of Republic Day Celebrations and the objective of this festival is to generate a patriotic fervour and promote the rich cultural diversity of the country.

The major highlights of this year's Bharat Parv are the replica of the Statue of Unity and a Gandhi Gram in which 10 painting artists will create paintings on the theme of 'Ideology of Mahatma Gandhi'. Other highlights include display of Republic Day parade tableaux, performances by the Armed Forces bands and photo exhibition.

Indian Railways' fastest Train 18 named Vande Bharat Express: Piyush Goyal

India's first indigenously built engineless semi-high speed train, Train 18, has been named Vande Bharat Express, Union Minister Piyush Goyal announced. The train is set

to run between Delhi and Varanasi at a maximum speed of 160 kmph and will soon be flagged off by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

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 is Oxford Dictionary's Hindi Word Of The Year 2018

On January 26, the Oxford Dictionaries announced 'Nari Shakti' as the Hindi Word of the Year. The Hindi Word of the Year chosen every year, in many ways, reflects the conversations, ethos of a particular year. The word this year, Nari Shakti, has been derived from Sanskrit and when broken down, the word 'nari' means women and 'shakti' means power.

India 6th in GDPR readiness index: Cisco

Nearly 65 per cent of Indian organisations are better prepared for the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), making the country the sixth leading nation globally in the GDPR readiness index, global networking leader Cisco said. The GDPR, which focused on increasing protection for EU residents' privacy and personal data, came into force in May last year and organisations globally have been working steadily towards getting ready for it.

Next level' of food safety in India: FSSAI announces new packaging regulations

The Food Safety and Standard Authority of India (FSSAI) has announced new regulations prohibiting all food businesses in India from using 'unsafe' materials such as newspapers and recycled plastics to wrap food products.

The food businesses shall have to comply with these regulations by 1 July, 2019.

BFW, Universal Robots to co-create robots for MSMEs

Bharat Fritz Werner Ltd (BFW), a Bengaluru-based machining solution provider, has partnered with Universal Robots, a Danish robot maker and a leader in collaborative robots, to co-create robots for MSME sector.

This aims to disrupt the traditional production set-up of MSME segment with top-notch

automation solutions and will dramatically impact productivity, quality and working conditions.”

Sahapedia announces 2nd edition of heritage walk festival

Sahapedia and UNESCO have announced the second edition of the India Heritage Walk Festival (IHWF), expanding their footprint to 37 cities, with a focus on heritage education and walks for people with special needs. The IHWF will kick off with a heritage walk in Ahmedabad on February 2, focusing on the religious history and co-existence of multiple faiths in the Gujarat city. A primary objective of the festival, which will conclude on February 28 with simultaneous walks in multiple cities, is to widen access to various aspects of India’s tangible and intangible heritage.

IAFTX 2019 to be held in Pune in March

With the aim to synergise humanitarian mine action and joint peace operations, the Indian Africa Field Training Exercise (IAFTX) will be held in Pune from March 18 to 27 . The field training exercise would be conducted at Aundh Military Station and College of Military Engineering .

Piyush Goyal gets additional charge of ministry of finance, corporate affairs

Railway Minister Piyush Goyal was given the additional charge of the Finance and Corporate Affairs ministries in view of the indisposition of Arun Jaitley, who is currently undergoing treatment abroad. According to a Rashtrapati Bhavan communique, the President, as advised by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, directed that during the period of Jaitley’s indisposition, the portfolios of the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Corporate Affairs, held by him, be temporarily assigned to Goyal, in addition to his existing portfolios.

Omega Healthcare Inks MoU With IIIT-Bangalore

Omega Healthcare Management Services said it has signed a pact with IIIT-Bangalore for advanced use of latest technology in providing healthcare solutions. The MoU is aimed at building industry-grade AI engines that can be embedded as part of Omega’s business solutions to solve healthcare business challenges, the company said in a statement.

CURRENT AFFAIRS JANUARY 2019 PDF

The pact also entails research programmes in artificial intelligence (AI) and Data Science, aiming to focus on specific business-related processes along with expected outcomes, with the programme being collectively decided by both organizations .

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

Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (JNPT), India's premier container port, has got listed among the top 30 container ports globally. JNPT notched up five spots to be 28th on the list compared to its previous ranking, according to the latest Lloyds report. This is a validation of all the efforts and strategic initiatives being implemented at JNPT in order to enhance overall port efficiency.

Various new processes activated under the Ease of Doing Business initiative have helped in overall growth of the port business besides allowing the EXIM trade to save time and cost. JNPT also launched an App service to facilitate better tracking of consignment and ease the trade process for their EXIM partners. The App allows traders to access all the relevant information about consignment and port related updates regarding traffic and weather.

PM Inaugurates Subhas Chandra Bose Museum at Red Fort

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Subhas Chandra Bose museum at Red Fort to mark the leader's 122nd birth anniversary. PM Modi also visited the Yaad-e-Jalian Museum, which is the museum on the Jallianwala Bagh and World War I, reported news agency Press Trust of India.

He will also visit the Museum on 1857- India's first war of Independence as well as Drishyakala- Museum on Indian Art at the same venue. 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. The Yaad-e-Jalian showcases an authentic account of the Jallianwala Bagh tragedy, which occurred on April 13, 1919. It also showcases the bravery and valour of the Indian soldiers during World War I.

Government institutes Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar

Government has instituted an annual award titled Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar. The award is to be announced every year on 23rd January on the birth anniversary of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose.

For the year 2019, 8th Battalion of National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) located at Ghaziabad has been selected for the Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar for its commendable work in Disaster Management. The Award recipient will receive a certificate and a cash prize of Rs. 51 lakh.

India ranks 80th on Global Talent Competitive Index 2019

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.

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.

India ranks in 'Bloomberg Innovation Index' of 60 economies for first time ever

In a major breakthrough with regard to recognition of India amid the global space, India has been ranked in Bloomberg's 2019 list of most innovative countries in the world — 2019 Bloomberg Innovation Index — for the first time ever. India has grabbed 54th spot in the Bloomberg Innovation Index with a score of 47.93 out of 100 in '2019 Bloomberg Innovation Index' of 60 economies.

South Korea has topped the Bloomberg Innovation Index for the sixth time in a row with a total score of 87.38, followed by Germany, Finland, Switzerland, Israel, Singapore, Sweden, U.S., Japan and France in the top 10.

Yoga is India's greatest legacy and most glorious gift to the world: Vice President

The Vice President of India, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu has said that Yoga was India's greatest legacy, its most glorious gift to the world. He said that the massive participation of people from all over the world on International Yoga Day celebrations was a testament to the fact that the world has accepted Yoga and was celebrating it.

Indian Army to hold military exercises with African nations in Pune

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.

The exercise is scheduled to be held between March 18 to 27, 2019. Training in anti-terror operations, humanitarian mine action and joint peace operations keeping in mind UN mission will be the focus of the military exercise.

Online inter-state trade through the e-NAM portal started

The e-NAM platform has reached an inflection point by initiation of inter-state trade in January 2019. The start of online inter-state trade through the e-NAM portal this month is a landmark achievement in e-NAM history and its strengthening in future will definitely add a new chapter to Agricultural marketing in the Indian context.

The first inter-State trade on e-Nam between Andhra Pradesh and Telangana has been carried out on 19.01.2019 between farmer from Gadwal mandi in Telangana State, who sold 8.46 quintal of groundnut to, a trader in Kurnool, Andhra Pradesh through the e-NAM portal. This has been followed by another trade between these two mandis across both States.

India among the most trusted nations globally: 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 to a report.

The 2019 Edelman Trust Barometer report released, ahead of the the World Economic Forum (WEF) meet, noted that the Global Trust Index witnessed a marginal increase of 3 points to 52. 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.

Shri Nitin Gadkari inaugurates bridge over River Ravi in J&K

Union Minister for Road Transport & Highways, Shipping, Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation Shri Nitin Gadkari inaugurated a 1210-meter span-bridge over the river Ravi in Kathua district in Jammu and Kashmir. The bridge over Ravi at Keerian – Gandial will benefit over 2,20,000 people living on the two sides – Kathua in Jammu, and Pathankot in Punjab. It will reduce the distance between the two cities from 45 kms to 8.6 kms, which will save on both time and fuel cost. The Keerian – Gandial bridge has been constructed at a cost of Rs 158.84 crore to improve inter-state connectivity.

President confers Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar 2019

President Ram Nath Kovind conferred the Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar 2019 to students at the Rashtrapati Bhavan. The different categories of award this time is innovation (six awards), scholaristic (three awards), social service (three awards), art and culture (five awards), sports (six awards) and bravery (three awards).

The award carries a medal, a cash prize of Rs 1,00,000, book vouchers worth Rs 10,000, a certificate and a citation. The award for individual consists of a cash prize of Rs one lakh, medal, citation and a certificate to each awardee, while the award for institution consists of Rs five lakh prize, medal, citation and a certificate. A total of 783 applications were received for the Baal Shakti Puruskar this year.

India's first all-woman party launched, to contest Lok Sabha polls

India's first-ever all-women political party — the National Women's Party (NWP) — was launched in Mumbai and it will contest half — 283 — of the 545 Lok Sabha seats in the 2019 elections. The NWP, described as “a party of mothers”, has been founded by a medico and social activist, (Dr) Shwetha Shetty, and will strive for 50 per cent reservation for women in the lower House.

Maruti Suzuki India Launches Programme to Promote Innovation in Mobility Space

The country's largest carmaker Maruti Suzuki India (MSI) launched an initiative to promote innovation in the automobile and mobility space. Under the programme — Mobility & Automobile Innovation Lab (MAIL) — the company will identify innovative and cutting-edge solutions through startups, which

are futuristic and customer oriented. The initiative will provide a platform to budding talent in the country to showcase their entrepreneurial capabilities at a national level.

India Steel 2019 – Exhibition and Conference begins in Mumbai

India Steel 2019 Exhibition and Conference will be held in Mumbai from 22nd to 24th January, 2019. The three-day event organised by Ministry of Steel will help chart out the future growth path of the steel industry. The event will witness the participation of the companies across the industrial spectrum ranging from MSMEs to the biggest names in the Indian and international steel sector.

The event provides an opportunity for all the stakeholders to deliberate and identify ways to contribute towards building a robust roadmap for the further growth of the steel sector.

Khelo India Youth Games: Maharashtra with 228 medals win overall trophy

Host Maharashtra topped the medals table with a whopping 85 gold, 62 silver and 81 bronze medals in the Khelo India Youth Games that concluded at the Shiv Chhatrapati Sports Complex, Balewadi, here on Sunday. Maharashtra not only won the lion's share of gold medals ahead of Haryana (62), Delhi (48), Karnataka (30), Tamil Nadu (27), Uttar Pradesh (23), Punjab (23), Gujarat (15), West Bengal (13) and Kerala (12) but also topped the silver and bronze tallies. Maharashtra won a total of 228 medals, while Haryana and Delhi followed with 178 and 136 respectively.

2nd World Integrated Medicine Forum 2019 from 23-25 January, 2019 in Goa

Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for AYUSH Shri Shripad Yesso Naik, will inaugurate the 2nd World Integrated Medicine Forum 2019 on the 'Regulation of Homeopathic Medical Products; Advancing global collaboration' being organized from 23-25 January, 2019 in Goa. The organizers of the forum are the Central Council for Research in Homeopathy, under the Ministry of AYUSH.

The themes of the forum are: Regulatory collaborations, Converging on minimum regulatory & legal standards, Advancing safety and quality standards, Regulatory trend towards standardization and minimizing complexity, Recognizing homeopathy as distinct holistic medical system and Veterinary homeopathy.

Group insolvency: UK Sinha-headed working group to suggest suitable framework

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. This Working Group has been tasked to submit a report — within two months — recommending a complete regulatory framework to facilitate insolvency resolution and liquidation of corporate debtors in a Group.

India to surpass UK in world's largest economy rankings in 2019: PwC

India is likely to surpass the United Kingdom in the world's largest economy rankings in 2019, to become world's fifth largest economy, according to a report by global consultancy firm PwC. As per the report, while the UK and France have regularly switched places owing to similar levels of development and roughly equal populations, India's climb up the rankings is likely to be permanent.

PwC's Global Economy Watch report projects real GDP growth of 1.6 per cent for the UK, 1.7 per cent for France and 7.6 per cent for India in 2019. The US was the world's largest economy with a size of 19.39 trillion dollars, followed by China at 12.23 trillion dollars at the second place in 2017.

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

Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) and Libcoin are in dialogue to form a world class consortium to initially build 1GWh lithium ion battery plant in India. Its capacity will be scaled up to 30GWh in due course. With this, India has finally taken steps into its energy security and clean energy commitment to the world.

BHEL will be sending a team of senior officers for study of the facilities, R&D infrastructure and other techno-commercial issues soon. Based upon the evaluation and recommendations of the team, further process towards formation of Joint Venture will be carried forward.

Reliance Retail, Jio to launch new e-commerce platform

Reliance Industries Ltd Chairman and managing director Mukesh Ambani said group companies Reliance Retail and Reliance Jio Infocomm would jointly launch a new e-commerce platform in the country. Gujarat would be the first state to get it.

Dr. Jitendra Singh inaugurates UNNATI Programme of ISRO in Bengaluru

Minister of State in Department of Space, Dr. Jitendra Singh inaugurated the UNNATI (Unispace Nanosatellite Assembly & Training) programme organized by ISRO in Bengaluru, Karnataka.

UNNATI, a capacity building programme on Nanosatellite development, is an initiative by ISRO to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the first United Nations conference on the exploration and peaceful uses of outer space (UNISPACE-50).

Prabhu inaugurates 10th edition of India Rubber Expo 2019

Union Minister for Commerce and Industry, Suresh Prabhu inaugurated the 10th edition of the India Rubber Expo – 2019 in Mumbai. The three-day event being held at the Bombay Exhibition Centre is one of the most anticipated events in the rubber industry's calendar.

Prabhu said that the rubber industry is a truly homegrown industry which is having a deep impact on several global markets. The minister hoped that the rubber industry will continue to grow faster, create more employment opportunities, increase exports and add to the economic output of India.

President Ram Nath Kovind Inaugurates three day Gandhian Resurgence Summit at Parmarth Niketan camp at Prayagraj Kumbh

President Ram Nath Kovind Inaugurated the three day Gandhian Resurgence Summit at Parmarth Niketan camp at the ongoing Prayagraj Kumbh. About 300 Gandhians from different parts of the country and organisations are participating in the Summit.

Prayagraj Kumbh 2019 will be remembered for opening of doors to Akshaya Vat (sacred tree) and Saraswati Koop (sacred well) for common men after 450 years. It was a long pending demand of the devotees.

GDP to be a tad higher to 7.5% in FY20: India Ratings

India Ratings, a Fitch Group Company, estimated India's GDP growth could touch 7.5 per cent in financial year 2019-20 as against 7.2 per cent during current fiscal i.e. 2018-19.

Over the past few years, private final consumption expenditure and government final consumption expenditure have been the primary growth drivers of Indian economic growth. India Ratings believes investments are slowly but steady gaining traction with

gross fixed capital formation growing 12.2 per cent in FY19 and projected to clock 10.3 per cent in FY20.

BES EXPO 2019 begins in New Delhi

Information and Broadcasting Secretary Amit Khare along with TRAI Chairman R S Sharma inaugurated the 25th International conference and exhibition on terrestrial and satellite broadcasting, BES EXPO 2019 in New Delhi. Nearly 300 companies from 25 countries are displaying their products in the Expo. On the occasion, an exhibitor's directory was released by the dignitaries and BES awards were presented to the winners.

PM visits Silvassa in Dadra & Nagar Haveli

The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi visited at Silvassa in Dadra and Nagar Haveli and inaugurated several development projects worth more than Rs 1400 crore that includes:

He laid foundation Stone of Medical College in Sayli, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, with the foundation stone laying of Medical College, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu have got its first ever Medical College .

Prime Minister released IT policy for Dadra and Nagar Haveli. M-Aarogya mobile app and door to door waste collection, segregation and processing of Solid Waste in Dadra & Nagar Haveli was also launched. He also distributed Gold cards to beneficiaries of Ayushman Bharat and distributed Van Adhikar Patra to the beneficiaries. He noted that both Daman and Diu, and Dadra and Nagar Haveli have been declared open defecation free.

PM Modi Inaugurates India's First Cinema Museum in Mumbai

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi inaugurated the National Museum of Indian Cinema at Films Division of India premises in Mumbai. NMIC, a first-of-its-kind museum preserving the film heritage of India, is housed in two buildings — the New Museum Building and the 19th century historic palace Gulshan Mahal — in the Films Division campus in Mumbai.

Shehri Samridhi Utsav focusing on Urban Livelihoods from 1st – 15th February 2019

Shri Hardeep S. Puri, Minister of State (I/C) for Housing and Urban Affairs, has informed that a fortnight of events named 'Shehri Samridhi Utsav', focusing on urban livelihoods is being organised by his Ministry, from 1st -15th February 2019.

The event aims at extending the outreach of National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NULM) to the poorest of the poor and the most vulnerable, showcase its initiatives and facilitate access of SHG members to the other government schemes.

Justices Maheshwari, Khanna sworn in as SC judges

Justices Dinesh Maheshwari and Sanjiv Khanna were sworn in as Supreme Court judges, taking the working strength of the court to 28. Chief Justice of India (CJI) Ranjan Gogoi administered the oath of office to them at a ceremony held in court number 1 of the apex court in the morning. Subsequently, Justice Khanna shared the bench with Justices S A Bobde and Deepak Gupta in Court no 2 while Justice Maheshwari sat in court 1 with the CJI and Justice L Nageswara Rao.

Narendra Modi inaugurates Kollam bypass

Giving a major boost to Kerala's infrastructure, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, during his third official visit to Kollam, inaugurated the 13-km long, 2-lane Kollam bypass on National Highway-66 (NH 66). According to the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, the Kollam bypass has been constructed at a cost of Rs 352 crore.

GDP growth likely to be tad higher at 7.5% in FY20: India Ratings and Research

The country's economy is likely to grow a tad higher at 7.5 per cent in 2019-20 on account of steady improvement in major sectors — industry and services, said India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra) .

According to the advance estimates of the Central Statistics Office (CSO), the economy may clock a growth rate of 7.2 per cent in the current financial year, up from 6.7 per cent in the previous year. Ind-Ra, a Fitch Group company, expects gross domestic product (GDP) growth to be a "tad higher" at 7.5 per cent in fiscal 2019-20.

Commerce Minister Suresh Prabhu inaugurated the 10th edition of the India Rubber Expo 2019 in Mumbai

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The rubber industry is a truly homegrown industry which is having a deep impact on several global markets. The minister hoped that the rubber industry will continue to grow faster, create more employment opportunities, increase exports and add to the economic output of India.

India's Satyarup becomes world's youngest mountaineer to climb 7 Peaks, 7 Volcano Summits

Mountaineer Satyarup Siddhanta became the youngest man to climb the seven highest peaks and volcanic summits across all continents after conquering Antarctica's highest point Mount Sidley. Satyarup achieved the feat at the age of 35 years 262 days while Australia's Daniel Bull did it aged 36 years 157 days. With this feat Satyarup also became the first Indian to conquer the seven mountain peaks and seven volcanic summits.

Commerce Ministry forms panel to streamline gems and jewellery industry

To streamline the Rs 5-trillion gems and jewellery industry, the Union ministry of commerce announced a committee to draft guidelines for forming a domestic council. Last year, the ministry had proposed to recognise the All India Gems and Jewellery Trade Federation (AIGJF) as a council for representing the domestic gems and jewellery sector. This seems to have been dropped.

The five-member committee is headed by Pramod Agrawal, chairman, Gems and Jewellery Export Promotion Council. It has members from the India Bullion and Jewellers Association, AIGJF and other trade bodies.

Gandhi Peace Prize Conferred for Last 4 Years

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

1.For 2015: Vivekananda Kendra, Kanyakumari for their contribution in Rural Development, Education, Development of natural resources.

2. For 2016: Jointly to Akshaya Patra 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. For 2017: Ekal Abhiyan Trust for their contribution in providing Education for Rural and Tribal Children in remote areas pan India, Rural Empowerment, Gender, and Social Equality.

4. For 2018: Shri Yohei Sasakawa for his contribution in Leprosy Eradication in India and across the world.

Union Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas Dharmendra Pradhan flags off SAKSHAM awareness vans

Union Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas Dharmendra Pradhan flagged off SAKSHAM (Sanrakshan Kshмата Mahotsav) Vans to promote and create awareness among people on the need of oil and gas conservation for the future and the methods to do it. The van will travel to 30 districts to create awareness on conservation of energy for a better future.

The Petroleum Conservation Research Association (PCRA) in association with Oil and Gas CPSEs has been organising SAKSHAM as a month-long campaign to sensitise citizens about the acute need for petroleum conservation.

Tripura CM launches Rs 1,000cr forest management project

Tripura Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb 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 project would help improve forests in the targeted catchment areas, and the ecosystem would be conserved. It would also create livelihood of the people living in and around the forest areas,” he said.

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.

Bengaluru most dynamic city, Hyderabad ranked second: JLL CMI

Bengaluru is the world’s most dynamic city among 131 major established and emerging business hubs globally, followed by Hyderabad, according to the sixth City Momentum Index published by JLLtoday.

Closely following Bengaluru is Hyderabad that is ranked second with Delhi (4th), Pune

(5th), and Chennai (7th) featuring in top 10 cities. At 15th position, Kolkata was the sixth Indian city ranked amongst top 20.

With 19 of the top 20 cities from Asia Pacific, the rankings highlight and showcase the region's continued rapid urbanization and strong economic growth. In the 2018 edition of the City Momentum Edition, Hyderabad topped the rankings followed by Bengaluru (2nd), Pune (4th), Kolkata (5th) and Delhi (8th).

CCEA approves Numaligarh Refinery capacity expansion project worth over Rs 22,000 cr

Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has decided to expand the capacity of Numligarh Refinery in 3 Million Metric Tonne Per Annum, (MMTPA) to 9 MMTPA. The project will be completed within a period of 48 months. Mr Goyal said the decision of expansion of refinery will meet the requirement of crude oil and petroleum products in the northeast region. He said it would also generate direct and indirect employment in Assam.

abinet approves expenditure sanction for Integrated E-filing and Centralized Processing Centre 2.0 Project

The Union Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has given its approval to expenditure sanction of Rs.4,241.97 crore for Integrated E-filing & Centralized Processing Center 2.0 Project of the Income Tax Department. The Union Cabinet also approved the expenditure sanction for the consolidated cost of Rs.1,482.44 crore of the existing CPC-ITR 1.0 project upto FY 2018-19.

This approval has significant benefits for the Department and taxpayers through various functionalities such as pre-filing of ITR and acceptance by taxpayer as a means to improve accuracy and to reduce refund/processing turnaround time .

Govt launches initiative to enable women entrepreneurs to sell items on GeM

The commerce ministry said 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 the 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, it said in a statement.

7-Member Group of Ministers (GoM) constituted for boosting the real estate sector

In pursuance of decision in the 32nd Meeting of GST Council held on 10 January 2019 at New Delhi, a Group of Ministers (GoM) for boosting the Real Estate Sector under the GST regime has been constituted. Nitin Patel, Deputy Chief Minister, Government of Gujarat is convener of the 'GoM for boosting Real Estate Sector under the GST regime'.

Flipkart-owned Myntra and Jabong CEO Ananth Narayanan steps down, Amar Nagaram takes over

Flipkart-owned fashion retailer Myntra on Monday said that Ananth Narayanan has resigned as the chief executive officer (CEO), a development which was widely expected after a recent re-jig at its parent group. Flipkart executive Amar Nagaram has been appointed as the new head of Myntra and Jabong, according to an internal email sent to employees.

MOU signed for development and facilitation of Agriculture R&D

The DBT and ICAR has entered into Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for much-needed emphasis on multi-disciplinary R&D activities and nurturing innovations in Agricultural Biotechnology Research and Education.

The MoU between ICAR and DBT is for mutual collaboration to explore the possibility of cooperation, convergence and synergy to promote and accelerate the progress of research and training in various disciplines of agricultural biotechnology between ICAR and DBT.

Govt. Launches two National level Initiatives in the field of science communication

The Department of Science and Technology (DST) along with Doordarshan (DD), Prasar Bharati launched two science communication initiatives, DD Science and India Science .While DD Science is an one-hour slot on Doordarshan National channel, which will be telecast Monday to Saturday from 5 pm to 6pm, India Science is a internet-based channel, which is available on any internet-enabled device, and will offer live, scheduled play and video-on-demand services.

Modi govt allots additional Rs 6,000 crore to MGNREGA; highest ever in a year

The government said it has made an additional allocation of over Rs 6,000 crore to rural employment scheme MGNREGA, taking the total allocation to Rs 61,084 crores, which is highest ever in a financial year. The additional allocation comes after nearly 90 lawmakers, several prominent civil society members, activists, leaders of farmers' movements and former bureaucrats wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi raising concerns over fund crunch.

India-Myanmar begin Army exercise for UN peacekeeping

The second India-Myanmar bilateral Army exercise 'IMBEX 2018-19' commenced at Chandimandir military station near . "The aim of this joint training event is to train the Myanmar delegation for participation in UN peacekeeping operations. The exercise includes participation of 15 officers from Myanmar Army and 15 officers from Indian Army who shall jointly train for over a period of six days," the spokesman said.

National Youth Parliament Festival 2019 launched by Rajyavardhan Rathore

Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Sports Col Rajyavardhan Rathore (Retd) launched the National Youth Parliament Festival 2019 here, thereby beginning the celebration of the National Youth Day 2019. Honourable Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, in his Mann Ki Baat address on 31stDecember 2017, had shared his idea of organizing Youth Parliaments for young people in every district of the country. It is to provide a chance to the youth to brainstorm about new India and to find ways and chalk out plans to realize our resolves before 2022.

UAE, Saudi Arabia to invest in Indian agriculture sector: Suresh Prabhu

Union Minister for Commerce & Industry and Civil Aviation Suresh Prabhu said the UAE and Saudi Arabia have evinced interest in investing in India's agricultural sector. "UAE and Saudi have decided to use India as a base for food security. Exports have been identified. India produces 290 million tonnes of foodgrain and 305 to 310 million tonnes of horticulture.

Pranav R Mehta becomes 1st Indian to head Global Solar Council

A visionary in the field of Solar Energy and the chairman of National Solar Energy Federation, Pranav R Mehta taken over as the president of Global Solar Council (GSC).

He has become the first Indian to head the GSC. The Global Solar Council (GSC) was launched on December 6, 2015, following the historic United Nations Climate Change Conference (UN COP 21).

Centre launches 5-yr plan to combat pollution in 102 cities

The Environment Ministry launched National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) aimed at reducing toxic particulate matter in 102 Indian cities by 2024. The NCAP will be a mid-term, five-year plan with 2019 as the first year, while 2017 will be the base year for comparison of concentration. An amount of ₹300 crore has been sanctioned for this purpose.

Cabinet approves 3 new AIIMS at Gujarat, Jammu and Kashmir

The Cabinet approved the establishment of three new All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS)- two in Jammu and Kashmir and one in Gujarat. The AIIMS will be set under Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana scheme. The AIIMS at Gujarat will be set in Rajkot, while those in Jammu and Kashmir will be set in Vijaynagar and Awantipora.

IIT-Madras team create 'space fuel' to curb greenhouse gases

IIT-Madras scientists have created a 'space fuel' which they claim could help curb greenhouse gases and provide a new, sustainable source of energy. The solid fuel was created in a vacuum, one thousand billion times below atmospheric pressure in conditions similar to deep space. Called clathrate hydrates, they are water molecules with gases like methane and carbon dioxide trapped inside.

India's growth rate to touch 7.5% in 2019-20: World Bank

The World Bank has said that India's economy will accelerate to 7.5% in 2019-20 as consumption remains robust and investment growth continues in the country. It also added that India will retain its position as the fastest growing major economy in the world. World Bank's report has also projected India's 2020-21 and 2021-22 fiscal years' growth rate at 7.5%.

Lok Sabha passed the 'DNA Technology (Use and Application) Regulation Bill, 2019'

The purpose of this Bill is to expand the application of DNA-based forensic technologies to support and strengthen the justice delivery system of the country. The key

components of this Bill include: establishment of a DNA Regulatory Board; accreditation of DNA laboratories undertaking DNA testing, analysing, etc.; establishment of the National and Regional DNA Data Banks, as envisaged in the Bill, will assist in forensic investigations. The Bill also aims to add value in empowering the criminal justice delivery system by enabling the application of DNA evidence, which is considered the gold standard in crime investigations.

ASI declared 6 monuments of National Importance in 2018

- ◆ The 125-year-old Old High Court Building in Nagpur, Maharashtra;
- ◆ Two Mughal-era monuments in Agra – Haveli of Agha Khan and Hathi Khana;
- ◆ The ancient Neemrana Baori in Rajasthan's Alwar district;
- ◆ The Group of Temples at Ranipur Jharail in Odisha's Bolangir district;
- ◆ The Vishnu Temple in Kotali, Pithoragarh district, Uttarakhand

are the Six monuments that have been listed. In 2016 and 2017, no new monument was included in the list of sites of national importance.

Indian Panorama Film Festival begins in New Delhi

A 10-day long Indian Panorama Film Festival began at Siri Fort Auditorium in New Delhi. The films to be shown in the Festival reflect the economic progress the country has made and the changes that society has undergone. One minute silence was observed in honor of Bengali filmmaker Mrinal Sen who passed away recently. Sen was a crucial figure of India's parallel cinema along with Satyajit Ray and Ritwik Ghatak. A total of 26 Feature Films and 21 Non-Feature Films will be screened during the festival.

All homes will have electricity by March 31, assures Modi govt

The government has said that it's on track to meet its official March 31 target to electrify every home. It added that a December 31 deadline promoted publicly by the Power Ministry was only an "internal target".

As of December 31, about 10.48 lakh households were left to be electrified in four states – Assam, Rajasthan, Meghalaya and Chhattisgarh. In April, the government launched the initiative – “Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana,” which translates to Prime Minister’s Power Plan for Every Home – “to achieve universal household electrification in the country by Dec. 31, 2018.”

LS passes 10% quota bill for economically weak in general category

The Lok Sabha cleared the constitution amendment bill to introduce a 10% reservation for poorer sections among general category aspirants for jobs and educational institutions. The bill was supported by 323 members while 3 members voted against it. The bill will be presented to the Rajya Sabha for debate.

India’s Arunima world’s 1st woman amputee to scale Antarctic peak

Padma Shri Arunima Sinha, who became the world’s first woman amputee to climb Mount Everest in 2013, has now conquered Mount Vinson, making her the world’s first woman amputee to scale Antarctica’s highest peak. A former national level volleyball player, Arunima had lost her left leg after being thrown off a moving train and getting hit by another in 2011.

Vijay Mallya first person to be named ‘fugitive economic offender’

A special anti-money laundering court has declared liquor baron Vijay Mallya a “fugitive economic offender”, the first person to be declared so under a new law. The ruling empowers authorities to confiscate the assets of Mallya, who owes over ₹9,000 crore to Indian banks. A UK court last month said Mallya can be extradited to India to face fraud charges.

Centre approved Centre for Classical Language at Tirur

The Union Ministry of Human Resource Development approved the establishment of a Centre for Classical Language at the Thunchath Ezhuthachan Malayalam University, Tirur, Kerala.

The Ministry has communicated the decision to the Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysuru. It is said that the State government would be required to prepare a detailed project report and sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the

Ministry. The proposed centre would spur the development of Malayalam language and help the Malayalam university also.

Veer Savarkar International Airport in Port Blair declared as an authorized Immigration Check post

Information, Public Relations and Tourism Division of Andaman and Nicobar Administration announced that the Veer Savarkar International Airport in Port Blair will be an authorized Immigration Check post.

Kaiga Atomic power station sets new world record

Karnataka's Kaiga Atomic power station created a world record for the longest uninterrupted operation for 962 days on December 10. It had earlier set a record of 941 days. The earlier record of 940 days by Heysham-2 unit 2 was set by the United Kingdom. Generating Station-1 (KGS-1) at Kaiga in Uttara Kannada, Karnataka has now been shut down for maintenance after 962 days of operation. It will be commissioned again after the maintenance activities.

Cabinet approved the amendment on Trade Unions Act

The Union Cabinet approved the amendment on Trade Unions Act, 1926, to facilitate recognition of trade unions at the Central and federal level. The amendment was proposed by the Centre. Most trade unions opposed the proposed amendments saying the government was trying to interfere in, and cripple, their functioning. Ten Central trade unions had earlier written to the Labour Ministry objecting to the draft version of the amendment Bill; the only major standout was the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh, affiliated to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh.

Govt appoints LIC MD Bhargava as the insurer's interim Chairman

The government on Tuesday gave Life Insurance Corporation's (LIC) senior-most Managing Director (MD) Hemant Bhargava additional charge as the insurer's interim Chairman. Bhargava will be replacing VK Sharma who retired on Monday. Bhargava, who founded LIC Cards Services, was appointed as the Managing Director of LIC in February 2017.

PM Modi inaugurated 6th International Rice Research Institute in Varanasi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Varanasi and Ghazipur in Uttar Pradesh. He dedicated the 6th International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), South Asia Regional Center (ISARC) to the nation. The Institute is built at the campus of National Seed Research and Training Center (NSRTC) in Varanasi.

Government doubles export incentives for onion farmers to 10 percent

Government has doubled the export incentives for onion farmers from existing 5 percent to 10 percent. This is the result of steep drops in recent weeks in the prices for onions, a staple food in India. The export incentive for fresh Onions was zero before July, 2018. During July this year, the incentives were introduced at the rate of five percent. The Ministry said, now, with the current increase, Onions enjoy one of the highest incentives for Agro-exports.

STATE RELATED CURRENT AFFAIRS

PM inaugurates state-of-the-art Hospital in Surat

The Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi inaugurated state-of-the-art super speciality Rasilaben Sevantilal Shah Venus hospital in Surat. He expressed happiness that this hospital will also serve the people under the Ayushman Bharat Scheme. Ayushman Bharat Scheme will create an entirely new ecosystem which helps to create healthier India. The scheme will boost set up of new hospitals in tier 2-3 cities, which also increases job opportunities in the healthcare sector.

Tamil Nadu bags Swasth Bharat Yatra award for 'best performance'

Tamil Nadu 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'. Madurai and Sivakasi won the awards for the best performing districts, while the State also bagged 17 awards in various other categories.

Health Minister C. Vijaya Baskar received the award from Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare Ashwini Kumar Choubey on Tuesday. Health Secretary J. Radhakrishnan was present on the occasion.

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India had organised the Swasth Bharat Yatra, a key element of the 'Eat Right India Movement', to commemorate the 150th

birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi from October 2018 to January 2019. The objective was to promote the message of 'Eat Healthy' to prevent non-communicable diseases, 'Eat Safe' to prevent food-borne diseases and 'Eat Fortified' to prevent micro-nutrient deficiencies.

Maharashtra Government launched Special Scheme to Curb infant deaths

A special scheme is launched by the Maharashtra government with an aim to curb infant deaths. Child Development Minister Pankaja Munde launched the scheme by distributing baby care kits to the children born in Primary health center and Government Hospitals. The government allocated Rs.20 crore for the scheme.

The baby care kit contains a blanket, a small mattress, a towel, a thermometer, baby oil, shampoo, toys, nail cutter, gloves, socks, among other items. The kit costs around Rs.2000. The scheme is applicable only for the first child of the parents. It will be beneficial around 4 lakh women across Maharashtra.

Four National Highway Projects Inaugurate in Bikaner and Nagaur in Rajasthan

Union Minister for Road Transport & Highways, Shipping and Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation Shri Nitin Gadkari will inaugurate and lay the foundation stone for four NH projects in Rajasthan . These include three projects in Bikaner and one in Nagaur.

At Bikaner the first project for laying of foundation stones is the 162.46 kms , 2 lane section of NH from Raisinghnagar to Poogal. This road is being built under Bharatmala on EPC mode at a cost of Rs 687.07 crore. The second is the 4 lane/2 lane Khajuwala-Poogal and Poogal–Dantour-Jaggasar-Gokul-Godu-Ranjeetpura-Charanwala–Naukh-Bap sections of NH-911 being built under Bharatmala on HAM basis.

Odisha CM Announces Jiban Samparka Project

Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik announced Jiban Samparka Project while inaugurating the Adivasi Mela-2019 at the IDCOL Exhibition Ground . Speaking about the project, Patnaik said that the Jiban Samparka project will be implemented in the state in partnership with UNICEF, India, to generate awareness among Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups in Odisha on various development and welfare initiatives of State Government, especially on women and child welfare.

“The Jiban Samparka’s focus areas will include skill development, empowering communities, cooperation and innovation among the groups. Of 75 tribal communities in the country, 13 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups reside in remote and far-off areas of 12 districts in Odisha,” said the CM.

CSC launches First Cash and Carry Store in Kanth, Muradabad (Uttar Pradesh)

Common Services Centres (CSCs) under Digital India mission are providing Citizen Centric Services. CSCs are delivering many government and non-government services to citizens in rural India across the country. They have also launched many products: like Patanjali, i-Ball, Samsung and signed agreement with many service providers.

Common Services Centres (CSCs) are also selling IFFCO fertilizers and seeds through its vast network in the country.

In its endeavor to promote rural marketing and create employment, CSC has launched its first Cash and Carry store in Kanth Tehsil of Moradabad district, Uttar Pradesh. Efforts are on to have one cash & carry store in every block. The store currently has products of Godrej, Patanjali, JIVA, Crompton, i-Ball. The store also offers free membership benefits to other CSC VLEs and government employees.

Odisha hikes farmers’ welfare scheme KALIA target beneficiaries five-fold

The Odisha government decided on a five-fold increase in the number of target beneficiaries for farmers’ welfare scheme KALIA for the landless agricultural household category to 5 lakh during 2019-20.

“Though earlier it was decided to restrict the number of beneficiaries under landless agricultural households to one lakh, now it has been decided to enhance it to 5 lakh during 2019-20,” said Chief Secretary A P Padhi. Each beneficiary household under the landless agricultural category will get Rs 12,500 as assistance under the Krushak Assistance for Livelihood and Income Augmentation (KALIA) scheme and each beneficiary will be paid Rs 5,000 in the first tranche. The balance will be paid in two more tranches later.

Cable-stayed 'Atal Setu' inaugurated 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 by Union Minister Nitin Gadkari.

Ailing Goa Chief Minister Manohar Parrikar, Union AYUSH Minister Shripad Naik and other ministers from the state also attended the event to inaugurate the 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. .

Around 13,000 tonnes of corrosion resistant reinforcement steel, 32,000 square metres of structural steel plates and 1,800 kilometres of high tensile pre-stressing strands have gone into making the bridge. The bridge 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.

Tripura, CISF, ICAR bag 'Best Tableau Award' for Republic Day parade

Tableaux of Tripura, the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) and the Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR) won the first prize for the Republic Day Parade at the Rajpath, Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented the awards at a ceremony.

Under the states and union territories category, the first prize went to Tripura for its float based on the theme of 'Empowering Rural Economy in Gandhian Way'. The second prize went to Jammu and Kashmir for its theme on 'Gandhiji's Ray of Hope – Our Composite Culture' and the third prize to Punjab for its float on the theme of 'Jallianwala Bagh'.

Uttarakhand's first tulip garden in Pithoragarh

Uttarakhand's first tulip garden will come up over 50 hectares of forest land in Pithoragarh district at a cost of Rs 50 crore. The state government has obtained the Centre's nod for development of the garden.

To be developed by the ONGC, under its corporate social responsibility programme in over 50 hectares of forest land near Chandak hill top, the proposed tulip garden will be

the country's second after the one located in Srinagar (J&K), state finance minister and Pithoragarh MLA Prakash Pant said.

PM inaugurates BPCL's Integrated refinery complex in Kochi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi dedicated to the nation an integrated refinery expansion complex of the public sector Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited at the Kochi Refinery here.

He also laid the foundation stone for a petrochemical complex at the refinery and a skill development institute at Ettumanoor besides inaugurating a mounded storage vessel at the LPG bottling plant of the Indian Oil Corporation Limited here.

The integrated refinery is a modern expansion complex and would transform the Kochi Refinery as the largest PSU refinery in the country with world class standards.

PM Modi lays foundation stone for AIIMS Madurai in Tamil Nadu

Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone for All India Institutes of Medical Sciences, AIIMS at Madurai in Tamil Nadu. He also inaugurated the super speciality blocks of Madurai's Rajaji Medical College and Thanjavur and Tirunelveli Medical Colleges through video conferencing. Mr Modi also dedicated a dozen Post Office Pass Port Seva Kendras to the nation.

Speaking on the occasion, the Prime Minister said that AIIMS hospitals have a brand name in providing quality health care for people from Kanyakumari to Kashmir and from Gujarat to Guwahati.

Chhattisgarh Government To Waive Rs. 207 Crore Irrigation Tax Of Farmers

In a move that will benefit 15 lakh farmers in Chhattisgarh, Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel announced to waive their outstanding irrigation taxes worth Rs. 207 crore. The chief minister's announcement comes just over a month after his government decided to waive farmers' short-term agricultural loans worth Rs. 6,230 crore and hike the MSP for paddy to Rs. 2,500.

"Sinchai kar (irrigation tax) to the tune of Rs. 207 crore pending from around last 15 years as on October, 2018 will be written off. As many as 15 lakh farmers will be benefited from the decision.

Employment scheme launched for urban poor youth in Madhya Pradesh

On the occasion of Republic Day, the Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, Kamal Nath announced the launch of the 'Yuva Swabhiman Yojana' for youth from the economically weaker sections in urban areas. In his Republic Day address at the Police Parade Maidan in Madhya Pradesh, Kamal Nath said that the youth were the future of India and they had immense talent which needed to be honed.

The scheme has been launched by the chief minister of Madhya Pradesh .It aims to provide employment to the youth belonging to the weaker section of the society mainly in urban areas of the state. Under this scheme, 100 days of employment will be provided to youngsters from economically weaker sections of the society in urban areas.

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. . My government is committed to the welfare of millions of Pravasi Malayalis. The one-time payment of Rs 5 lakh will be deposited with KIIFB (Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board) for financing infrastructure projects," said Sathasivam. 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.

Gujarati poet Sitanshu Yashaschandra presented Saraswati Samman for 2017

The 27th Saraswati Samman was conferred upon eminent Gujarati poet Sitanshu Yashaschandra . Organised by the KK Birla Foundation, the award for 2017 was given to Yashaschandra for his poetry collection, 'Vakhar,' published in 2009. The poet was given a plaque and Rs 15 lakh prize money by famed poet-lyricist Gulzar.

The Saraswati Samman is given annually to an author for outstanding literary work published in the last 10 years in any of the languages included in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution.

All women RPF squad 'Joymati Bahini' launched in Guwahati

A dedicated RPF Women Squad named as 'JOYMATI BAHINI', comprising women sub-inspector and constables of the Railway Protection Force (RPF) was officially launched by B.B. Mishra, Inspector General cum Principal Chief Security Commissioner of N.F. Railway at Kamkhaya Railway Station. It was named after the courageous princess, Joymati to have a constant motivating factor to be courageous, and dedicated at all times in the service to society.

The main aim of the JOYMATI BAHINI is to strengthen women security around Guwahati region within railway premises and trains.

Nitin Gadkari Inaugurates and Lays Foundation Stone of 39 National Highways Projects in Andhra Pradesh

Union Minister for Road Transport & Highways, Shipping, Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation Shri Nitin Gadkari inaugurated and laid the foundation stone of 39 National Highways Projects in Andhra Pradesh .These include construction of eleven ROBs under Setu Bhartam programme. These projects have a length of 1384 kms, and involve investment of Rs 16,878 crore.

The length of National Highways in Andhra Pradesh before May 2014 was 4193 Km which has now increased to 7246 Km (including In-principle NHs). Thus, there has been increase of 3053 Km length in NHs. Total likely investment in Andhra Pradesh is Rs 1,00,000 cr for development of National Highways. Under Bharatmala about 2,520 Km of roads amounting to Rs 44,000 crore have been envisaged. Under SethuBhartam, 31 ROBs have been approved with cost of about Rs 2,500 crore.

Nirmala Sitharaman inaugurates TN Defence Industrial Corridor

Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman inaugurated the Tamil Nadu Defence Industrial Corridor in the Tiruchirapalli district of Tamil Nadu, with various private and public sector industries announcing an investment of around Rs 3100 crores. The Defence Minister spoke about various initiatives for the industry to engage with armed forces and co-create the best in defence technologies through the flagship 'Make in India' program.

Two-day Agri Vision concludes in Hyderabad

Agri-Vision 2019, a two-day conference on 'Envisioning Agro Solutions for Smart and Sustainable Agriculture' was held in Hyderabad. A panel discussion on Technology in Agri Entrepreneurship: Success Stories and Experiences from the progressive farmers was held. The theme of the conference was 'Envisioning Agro Solutions for Smart and Sustainable Agriculture'.

2nd World Orange Festival begins in Nagpur

The second World Orange Festival will be organised in Nagpur from today to 21 of this month.

The festival, while offering its famed oranges to the world, will also showcase and brand the exquisite fruit in order to boost its export. Agricultural experts and scientists from various countries will participate in the workshops and guide farmers.

Sitharaman inaugurates strategic bridge in Arunachal Pradesh

Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman visited the forward areas along India-China border in Dibang Valley of Arunachal Pradesh and inaugurated the Diffo (Chipu) bridge at Roing. In addition to enhancing operational capability, the 329-metre bridge will usher economic prosperity for people of Namsai, Lohit, Anjaw and Lower Dibang districts of Arunachal Pradesh.

The minister was accompanied by Eastern Army Commander Lieutenant General MM Naravane, GOC Spear Corps Lieutenant General Rajeev Sirohi and other military and civil officials.

Maharashtra FM-led GoM to look at issues related to lottery under GST

A ministerial panel headed by Maharashtra Finance Minister Sudhir Mungantiwar will examine uniformity of taxation on lottery under GST or other issues arising out of it. According to the terms of reference, the panel will decide whether the disparity in tax structure on the same product needs be continued or a uniform rate be prescribed for both, the finance ministry said in a statement. Under GST, state-organised lottery falls under the 12 percent tax slab while state-authorized lottery attracts 28 percent tax.

India-Myanmar joint training exercise begins in Chandimandir

The second edition of the India-Myanmar bilateral army exercise, IMBEX 2018-19, commenced at Chandimandir Military Station that houses the headquarters of the Western Command.

The aim of this joint training programme, spread over six days, is to train the Myanmar delegation for participation in United Nations peace keeping operations under the UN flag. The exercise includes participation of 15 officers from Myanmar Army and 15 officers from the Indian Army.

PM inaugurates global trade show at Vibrant Gujarat Summit

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated a global trade show in Gandhinagar, organised as part of the ninth edition of the Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit 2019. The Vibrant Gujarat Global Trade Show is being held on around two lakh sq mt area of an exhibition ground in the state capital. Around 25 industrial and business sectors are showcasing their products at the event.

Chennai Traffic Police introduces robots for traffic management

The Chennai Traffic Police has inducted a road safety robot named ROADEO to help police in traffic management and assist pedestrians in Chennai roads. These robots can be integrated with the traffic signals, as well as can be operated manually, through a Bluetooth app, thereby easing the work of traffic police. The robot has two hands to interact with the people and show traffic signs and highly expressive eyes to show important messages.

PM unveils projects worth over Rs 1,550 cr in Odisha

Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched a slew of central government projects worth over Rs 1,550 crore in Odisha. The prime minister dedicated to the nation the electrification of Jharsuguda-Vizianagaram and Sambalpur-Angul railway lines spanning 813 km, which have been completed at a cost of Rs 1,085 crore.

Modi also inaugurated the doubling of 14.2 km Barpali-Dungaripali and 17.3 km Balangir-Deogaon rail lines, completed at a cost of Rs 189.3 crore. They are part of the 181.54 km Sambalpur-Titlagarh doubling project.

India's largest startup ecosystem inaugurated in Kerala

India got its largest startup ecosystem when Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan inaugurated here 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 promote hardware startups, the BioNest that promotes medical technologies, BRINC which is the country's first international accelerator for hardware startups.

Jai Kisan Rin Mukti Yojana launched by Madhya Pradesh CM

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath Tuesday launched his government's Rs 50,000-crore farm debt-waiver scheme named 'Jai Kisan Rin Mukti Yojana'. Hailing the scheme as a milestone, Nath said here it would benefit 55 lakh small and marginal farmers. He also slammed the opposition parties for alleging that the scheme was being implemented without any budgetary provisions.

One Family One Job scheme launched in Sikkim

Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Kumar Chamling launched the 'One Family One Job' scheme which entitles one government job for every family in the state. Mr. Chamling had announced the scheme last year during the winter session of the state legislative assembly. At a "Rojgar Mela" (employment fair) organised at the Paljor stadium here, over 12,000 unemployed youths were handed out appointment letters

Gujarat implements 10 per cent EWS quota

Gujarat has become the first state in the country to implement the new provision. The BJP-led Gujarat government implemented 10 per cent reservation in state government jobs and education for the economically weaker sections (EWS) in the general category.

India allows Iran's Bank Pasargad to open branch in Mumbai

The government has allowed Iran's Bank Pasargad to open a branch in Mumbai while India's state-owned UCO Bank will be opening a branch in Iran. The move is expected to facilitate transactions related to India's oil purchases from Iran amidst US sanctions. The banks will also handle transactions relating to operation at Iran's Chabahar Port which India is developing.

Chhattisgarh becomes 3rd state to bar CBI from probing cases

After Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal, Chhattisgarh has become the third state to withdraw the General Consent given to CBI to probe cases in the state. The state has informed the Department of Personnel and Training and the Union Ministry of Home Affairs of the decision. The CBI must now seek permission before investigating any fresh cases in Chhattisgarh.

Cabinet approves ST status for 6 communities in Assam

The Union Cabinet has approved Scheduled Tribe (ST) status for six communities in Assam, including the Moran and Matak communities. Home Minister Rajnath Singh said a bill in this regard will be introduced in the Parliament in the near future. He added, "Full safeguards will be provided to protect the interests, rights and privileges of existing Scheduled Tribes of Assam."

Tamil Nadu announces creation of 33rd district Kallakurichi

Tamil Nadu CM EK Palaniswami on Tuesday announced in the state Assembly the creation of the 33rd district named Kallakurichi, which will be carved out by bifurcating Viluppuram. The district will have four Assembly constituencies and one parliamentary constituency, Palaniswami added. Notably, late CM J Jayalalithaa had promised to make Kallakurichi a district in her 2016 election campaign.

Andhra Pradesh tops ACIs 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.

Kerala govt allows women to apply for Agastyaarkoodam trek

The Kerala Forest Department opened online registration for women to trek Agastyaarkoodam. Agastyaarkoodam is a pilgrimage centre within the Neyyar Wildlife Sanctuary which had an unofficial ban on women entry until the Kerala High Court in

November 2018 ruled out the gender-based restriction. The annual trek will be held from January 14 to March 1.

Bengaluru Bulls beat Gujarat Fortune Giants to lift PK trophy

Bengaluru Bulls beat Gujarat Fortune Giants in the Pro Kabaddi Season 6 final in Mumbai to lift their maiden trophy. Both the sides had been previous runner-ups in the Pro Kabaddi League. This is Bengaluru's second consecutive win against the same team after having earlier beaten the Gujarat Fortune Giants in the Qualifier 1.

Global Healthcare Summit 2019 to be held in Hyderabad

The 13th edition of Global Healthcare Summit 2019 is to be held in Hyderabad from July 21 to 24. The summit is organized in partnership with the Global Association of Physicians of Indian Origin.

The organizing chapters of the conference include Osmania, Gandhi, Kakatiya and Telangana Medical alumni, Association of Telugu Medical Graduates of the U.S.A., Gandhi Medical College Global Alliance, and Kakatiya Medical College Old Students' Association. More than 500 physicians are expected to attend the summit.

Bill on Arunachal Pradesh's ST list approved by Union cabinet

The Union Cabinet approved the introduction of a Bill to modify the list of Scheduled Tribes (ST) of Arunachal Pradesh. The bill proposes deletion of the Abor tribe from the state's ST list 'as it is the same as Adi' tribe.

As there is no tribe called 'Khampti', the bill replaces it with 'Tai Khamti' on the list. The bill seeks to include the Mishmi-Kaman (Miju Mishmi), Idu (Mishmi) and Tاراon (Digaru Mishmi) tribes in the list.

Haryana government approved 11 projects to resurrect Saraswati river

Haryana Saraswati Heritage Development Board (HSHDB) met under the chairmanship of chief minister Manohar Lal Khattar and approved 11 major projects, including the restoration of heritage sites, along the course of the river. These include the construction of Somb Saraswati barrage, Saraswati reservoir and Adi Badri dam on Somb river, a tributary of the Yamuna that originates in the Shivalik Hills.

UP to impose 0.5% 'gau kalyan' cess to fund cow shelters

Uttar Pradesh cabinet has cleared a policy for implementation of a 0.5% cow welfare cess or 'gau kalyan' cess. This would help the state earn additional Rs 34 crore for constructing and maintaining cattle shelters to accommodate at least 1,000 stray cattle per district. The additional levy on excise items may include alcohol and impact its price in the state.

Madhya Pradesh government to create an Adhyatmik Vibhag (spiritual department)

Congress-led Madhya Pradesh Government announced that it is going to create an Adhyatmik Vibhag (spiritual department) by merging several existing department. The Congress had promised to form such a department before the last month's Assembly elections.

The proposed Adhyatmik Vibhag (Spiritual Department) going to be formed by merging Dharmik Nyas Evam Dharmasv Department (Religious Trust and Endowment Department), Anand Vibhag (Happiness Department) in addition to the Directorate of Religious Trust and Endowment, Madhya Pradesh Teerth Evam Mela Pradhikaran and Rajya Anand Sansthan.

India, Pakistan exchange list of nuclear installations

India and Pakistan exchanged a list of their nuclear installations and facilities under a bilateral agreement that prohibits both the countries from destroying each other's nuclear facilities. Under the agreement, both India and Pakistan inform each other of nuclear installations and facilities on January 1 of each calendar year. This is the 28th consecutive exchange of such list.

Tamil Nadu's Virudhunagar tops Aspirational Districts: NITI Aayog

NITI Aayog released the Second Delta Ranking of the Aspirational Districts Programme. The rankings were released by NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant. The rankings detail the incremental progress achieved by the districts during June to October this year across six key development sectors. Virudhunagar district in Tamil Nadu has shown the most improvement overall, followed by Nuapada district in Odisha, Siddarthnagar in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar's Aurangabad and Koraput in Odisha.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi to inaugurate Indian Science Congress-2019 in Punjab on Jan 3

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate Indian Science Congress-2019 in Jalandhar, Punjab on the third of next month. This will be the 106th edition of the event based on the theme 'Future India: Science and Technology'.

Prime Minister will also address about 30,000 delegates, including Nobel laureates, eminent scientists, policymakers, young researchers and school children, from across the country and abroad. During the five-day long Congress, more than 100 conferences and events on science and technology will be held.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Israel Aerospace enters follow-up missile deals with India for \$93 million

Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) forged \$93 million worth of follow-up agreements with India to provide naval surface-to-air missile systems. The contracts were made with the Indian Navy and Cochin Shipyard Limited.

IAI said it will provide complementary systems for the air defence system and that the contracts involve follow up orders for a range of maintenance and other services for various sub-systems of IAI's advanced Medium Range Surface-to-Air Missile Air Defense System.

India, South Africa Seal 3-Year Strategic Programme To Boost Cooperation

India and South Africa sealed three year strategic programme to further boost cooperation in number of key areas after talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and South African President Cyril Ramaphosa.

The strategic programme will cover cooperation in a range of areas including defence and security, trade and investment, the blue economy, tourism, IT and agriculture.

Cabinet approves MoC between India and Japan in the field of Food Processing Industry

The Union Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has given its approval to the Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) between India and Japan in the field of food processing sector. Bilateral cooperation in the field of food processing

between India and Japan will be mutually beneficial to the food processing sector in both countries.

Health, trade on table as South African President Cyril Ramaphosa visits India

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa's visit to India as the state guest of honour at the Republic Day celebrations is expected to give fresh impetus to bilateral relations in areas as diverse as human resource development and defence.

During his two-day visit, Ramaphosa will have a meeting and hold delegation-level talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on bilateral, regional and global issues, the external affairs ministry said. Ramaphosa, along with Modi, will address the India-South Africa Business Forum on January 25 to boost trade ties.

India grants US\$ 1.5 million to modernize facilities at Vipulananda Institute of Aesthetic Studies in Batticaloa

India and Sri Lanka signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to provide modern infrastructural facilities to the Swami Vipulananda Institute of Aesthetic Studies, Eastern University in Batticaloa District of Sri Lanka.

The project involves refurbishment of the Auditorium and construction of a modern Building Complex with Audio & Video Recording Cum Editing Facilities and supply vehicles to Swami Vipulananda Institute in Eastern University Batticaloa through a grant of SLR 275 million from the Government of India.

The Government of India and JICA sign Loan Agreements on Japan's Official Development Assistance Loan to India

The Loan Agreements were signed here today in New Delhi between the Government of India and JICA, New Delhi under Japanese Official Development Assistance Loan Program. The Project for the Construction of Chennai Peripheral Ring Road (Phase 1) aims to meet increasing traffic demands in Chennai metropolitan area by constructing the Chennai Peripheral Ring Road (Section 1) and installing Intelligent Transport Systems, thereby contributing to mitigation of Traffic Congestion and promoting Regional Economic Development.

Indians over 65 and under 15 can now visit Nepal and Bhutan with Aadhaar

Aadhaar cards are now valid travel documents for Indians under 15 and over 65 years travelling to Nepal and Bhutan, according to a Home Ministry communiqué. Indians other than those in the two age brackets will not be able to use Aadhaar to travel to the two neighbouring countries, for which no visas are needed, said the communiqué issued recently.

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) this year to address the issue of land degradation and desertification. conference of the UNCCD, which has participation from over 100 countries, 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. The government is committed to achieve land degradation neutrality by 2030 and by hosting the COP-14 it aims to showcase its role as a leader in addressing the land agenda.

US launches new innovation initiative at Raisina Dialogue 2019

The United States Chamber of Commerce's Global Innovation Policy Center (GIPC) launched a new innovation initiative at the Raisina Dialogue in New Delhi. The initiative, titled "Fair Value for Innovation", will examine economic underpinnings that would enable breakthrough innovation, and explore how policymakers can harness innovation capital in India and around the globe through research, advocacy, partnerships, and programs.

Swaraj meets Turkmenistan counterpart; discusses enhancing bilateral cooperation

External Affairs Minister Sushma met Foreign Minister of Turkmenistan Rasit Meredow on the sidelines of the India-Central Asia Dialogue here and discussed enhancing bilateral cooperation across sectors.

Swaraj arrived in the ancient city of Samarkand on a two-day visit to Uzbekistan to attend the first India-Central Asia Dialogue, which focussed on a plethora of regional issues including enhancing connectivity to war-ravaged Afghanistan.

Japan's passport ranked world's most powerful, India's 79th

Japan has retained its top spot as the world's most powerful passport this year, with its citizens able to enter 190 countries without requiring a visa, according to the Henley Passport Index. India's passport was ranked 79th, having visa-free access to 61 destinations. The Henley Passport Index is based on data provided by the International Air Transport Authority (IATA).

Three Indian-origin women scientists awarded by Australian government under Superstar of STEM initiative

Three Indian-origin women scientists were among the 60 Superstars of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics) list awarded by the Australian government. The 3 scientists are Onisha Patel, Devika Kamath, and Asha Rao. Under the initiative, due to the gender gap in STEM courses, the government there is planning to train these scientists for one year to become influencers for female students.

The 32-year-old, Devika Kamath is an astrophysicist, Onisha Patel is doing her research to generate a cure for many cancers including breasts.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Italy, UN, launch Africa Centre for Climate and Sustainable Development

Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte has opened a new centre here set up by the government in partnership with the UN to fight climate change and boost sustainable development in Africa. The new centre is located near the headquarters of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) in central Rome. It will help develop and scale-up innovative solutions for sustainable development, implement the goals of the UN's 2030 Agenda and the landmark 2015 Paris Climate Agreement to end reliance on fossil fuels and cap global warming.

A major focus on boosting the agricultural sectors and promoting rural development in Africa was needed to ensure a better future for the continent's youth who, can be the drivers of development, said FAO Director-General Jose Graziano da Silva at the ceremony.

Dubai Airport retains Top Position As World's Busiest in 2018

The UAE's aviation sector continues to scale new heights, with Dubai International maintaining its position as the world's busiest airport for international passengers for the fifth consecutive year while the sector's contribution to the country's economy also grows steadily.

Dubai International Airport handled 89.1 million passengers in 2018, missing its target but remaining the world's busiest for international travellers. Passenger traffic rose 1% last year, operator Dubai Airports said, its weakest annual growth rate in at least a decade and short of its 90.3 million target.

India remained the biggest source of traffic for DXB, with maximum passengers from the Indian cities of Mumbai, Delhi and Cochin, followed by Saudi Arabia and United Kingdom respectively.

Chinese scientists successfully clone five gene-edited monkeys

Chinese scientists cloned five monkeys from a gene-edited macaque with circadian-related disorders, another first for the country in the controversial field. The cloned monkeys were born in Shanghai at the Institute of Neuroscience of Chinese Academy of Sciences, according to two articles published in National Science Review. Researchers knocked out BMAL1 — a critical transcription factor for activating circadian rhythms — through gene editing at the embryo stage, then cloned a monkey with the mutation.

Dubai start-up summit opens doors for Indian entrepreneurs

For the first time, Indian entrepreneurs will be able to pitch their ventures to the rich investors of the Gulf region, among others, with the Dubai AIM Startups opening its doors for Indian start-ups to participate. While UAE has been hosting the annual investment meeting for few years now, this will be the first time that Indian start-ups will get an opportunity to participate in the international summit, to be held in Dubai in April.

Arab Economic And Social Development Summit Held In Beirut

The Arab Economic and Social Development Summit held in Lebanon's capital Beirut. The leaders of many Arab countries took part in the summit aimed to make a joint statement on a 29-item agenda that ranges from discussions on an Arab free trade zone

and the economic effect of Syrian refugees on host countries. The economic meeting is a prelude to the actual Arab League summit taking place in Tunisia in March.

Rio de Janeiro to be World Capital of Architecture for 2020

The UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (Unesco) has named the Brazilian city of Rio de Janeiro as the World Capital of Architecture for 2020. Having defeated Paris and Melbourne, Rio will be the first city to receive the title under a programme launched together by Unesco and the International Union of Architects (UIA) in November 2018.

Malala Yousafzai has written a new book titled We are Displaced

Malala Yousafzai, the Nobel Peace Prize winner and Pakistani activist, has written a new book, titled We are Displaced, charting her experiences travelling the world and visiting refugee camps. Publishers Weidenfeld & Nicolson and Hachette India said that her travels through the refugee camps led her to reconsider her own displacement.

Shenzhen becomes 2nd China city with 99% electric taxis

Shenzhen city in southern China has announced 99% of the taxis operating in the city are now electric, becoming China's second and largest city to do so. Out of 21,689 taxis operational in the city, around 7,500 taxis were still gasoline-powered in 2018. Notably, the northern China city of Taiyuan has had only electric taxis since 2016.

South Korea bans single-use plastic bags in supermarkets

The South Korean government ban on the use of disposable plastic bags at big supermarkets came into effect on January 1 in a bid to protect the environment and encourage recycling. The revised law affects about 2,000 supermarkets over 165 square metres in size, all of which used to provide disposable plastic bags for free, South Korea's Environment Ministry said.

More than 60 countries now have bans or taxes on single-use plastics, according to the United Nations, which has called for such measures to stem the tide of pollution.

China named its lunar rover as Yutu 2

China successfully deployed Chang'e-4 lunar probe to carry out a string of experiments on the unexplored far side of the moon. It has named the lunar rover as 'Yutu 2'. The

Lunar rover Yutu 2 touched the lunar surface and left a trace on the loose lunar soil. The rover's touchdown is part of China Chang'e-4 lunar probe. Analysts say that China's lunar probe is part of its Made in China-2025 project. It will be focusing on advanced technology, including space applications.

China successfully tested its Mother of All Bombs

China successfully tested its most powerful non-nuclear weapon, dubbed as the Mother of All Bombs. The bomb, whose strength is only second to that of a nuclear weapon, was 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. 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.

Israel and US officially withdraw from UNESCO over 'anti-Israel' bias

The US had notified UNESCO of its decision to quit the organisation in October 2017 and had called for its "fundamental reform". Israel followed the US in quitting UNESCO. The Paris-based organisation has previously criticised Israel's occupation of East Jerusalem and granted full membership to Palestine in 2011.

Sweden ranked first in climate action CCPI

Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI) reported that Sweden has been named the first best performing country in the CCPI 2019 list. CCPI evaluates the climate protection performance of 60 countries, responsible for over 90% of global energy-related CO2 emissions.

Morocco has been named second. Morocco, the North African country significantly increased the share of renewables over the past five years and increased new renewable energy capacity. Lithuania is in the third position in CCPI 2019.

The bottom five in the list are Saudi Arabia, U.S., Iran, South Korea, and Taiwan. With the connection of the world's largest solar plant to the grid, Morocco is on track for achieving its target of 42% installed renewable energy capacities by 2020.

Uzbekistan promotes 2019 as year of investment in backdrop of wider business with India

President of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev announced 2019 as the 'Year of Active Investment and Social Development' in the backdrop of proposed investments from India to boost the economy of the Central Asian country, in his annual address to the Parliament. The President stated that concrete measures will be taken on creating an open economy, radically improving the business environment and investment climate and reducing the state presence in the economy. He stressed that investment was the driver of the economy, new technologies, advanced experience, and highly qualified specialists come with investments into all sectors and regions.

Germany approves USD 8 billion rail and road tunnel link to Denmark

German authorities gave their approval to an US\$8 billion (6.30 billion pounds) rail and road tunnel linking Denmark and Germany, despite environmental objections. It is part-funded by the European Union. The 19 km (11.8 mile) Fehmarnbelt link, connecting the Danish island of Lolland to the island of Fehmarn on the German side, was due to be completed in 2024.

US scientist names beetles after 'Game of Thrones' dragons

University of Nebraska-Lincoln Professor Brett Ratcliffe has named three newly-discovered beetle species after fictional dragons which appear in the HBO show 'Game of Thrones'. The species were named Drogoni, Rhaegali and Viserioni, which are Latin versions of Drogon, Rhaegal and Viserion. Drogoni and Viserioni can be found in Colombia and Ecuador, while Rhaegali is native to the French Guiana.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

IIT-Ropar launched an app to help the visually impaired

In a bid to assist visually impaired people to easily determine denomination of currency notes, the Indian Institute of Technology at Ropar in Punjab has developed an Android App "Roshni", using image processing and analytics.

The App was launched at the IIT Ropar. Assistant professor Puneet Goyal, said that 'Roshni' is the first Android App that works successfully with new currency notes that

were released after demonetisation and it works well in broad range of light conditions and holding angles.

ISRO successfully launches PSLV-C44 with Microsat-R, Kalamsat onboard

India successfully launched the 46th mission of its Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) from the Sriharikota spaceport, near Chennai, carrying Microsat-R and Kalamsat to Sun Synchronous Polar Orbit. PSLV-C44 is the first mission of PSLV-DL and is a new variant of the PSLV.

The rocket took off from the first launch pad (FLP) of Satish Dhawan Space Centre SHAR, Sriharikota. The PSLV is a four-stage launch vehicle with alternating solid and liquid stages. The two-strap-on configuration is designated PSLV-DL. PSLV-C44's fourth stage (PS4), which is an experimental orbital platform for carrying out technology demonstration, was moved to a higher circular orbit so as to establish an orbital platform for carrying out experiments.

NAS Shibpur to be commissioned as INS Kohassa

To enhance the operational capability of Andaman and Nicobar Command (ANC), Naval Air Station (NAS) Shibpur will be commissioned as INS Kohassa, a Defence release said. Admiral Sunil Lanba, Chief of Naval Staff will commission NAS Shibpur which was established in 2010 as INS Kohassa on January 24, the release issued by the Headquarters. INS Kohassa has been named after a White-Bellied Sea Eagle, which is a large bird of prey endemic to Andaman and Nicobar Islands, it said.

The NAS Shibpur was set up as a Forward Operating Air Base (FOAB) for surveillance in North Andaman. Located in the northern most part of the islands, the airfield holds strategic importance not only for the security of the islands but also for its overall development.

IIT Madras launches startup to train students on Artificial Intelligence at low cost

The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras faculty has recently launched a startup to prepare the Indian workforce for the advent of Artificial Intelligence age by training students at nominal costs. Their startup One Fourth Labs has an online school 'PadhAI' that offers affordable India-specific courses on AI.

The top performing students from courses on PadhAI will be invited to a ‘summer garage,’ an AI residency programme at IIT Madras Research Park where they can work on research, tackle problems of societal impact, or find solutions to commercial value.

NASAs TESS found a new planet

Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS), NASA’s latest planet-hunting probe, has discovered a new world outside our solar system, orbiting a dwarf star 53 light years away. This is the third new planet confirmed by TESS since its launch in April 2018.

The planet has been named as HD 21749b. The planets orbits a bright, nearby dwarf star about 53 light years away, in the constellation Reticulum, and appears to have the longest orbital period of the three planets so far identified by TESS.

Boeing world’s largest planemaker for 7th straight year

US-based Boeing has retained its position as the world’s largest planemaker for the seventh year in a row, delivering a record 806 aircraft in 2018. Overall, the company saw 893 net orders valued at \$143.7 billion. Boeing was followed by its European rival Airbus which delivered 800 aircraft last year.

Scientists ‘hack’ photosynthesis, boost plant growth by 40%

Researchers from the University of Illinois and the US Agricultural Department have ‘hacked’ the photosynthesis process to boost tobacco plant growth and productivity by 40%. The study reversed a process caused by a photosynthetic ‘glitch’ that suppresses crop yield. The engineered plants developed faster, grew taller, and produced about 40% more biomass found in larger stems, the scientists said.

ISRO launches ‘Samwad’ with students to engage them on space science

Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has launched Samwad with students as part of its outreach programme. The Indian Space agency will engage youngsters across the country in activities concerning space science under this programme. The new conversation mission will inspire students cutting across schools and colleges.

During the inauguration in Bengaluru, 40 students and 10 teachers from select schools interacted with ISRO Chairman Dr. K Sivan about the Indian Space Programme and their benefits to the common man.

Chinese spacecraft shares 1st image from Moon's far side

China's robotic probe, Chang'e 4, which became the first human-made object to land on far side of the Moon, has shared its first image. Chang'e 4 landed in the South Pole-Aitken basin, the largest and oldest impact basin on the Moon. Only one face of the Moon is visible from Earth due to its close orbit.

ISRO plans to launch 32 space missions in 2019: Chairman

Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) Chairman K Sivan said the organisation plans to launch 32 space missions in 2019. The planned missions include Chandrayaan-2, the ₹800-crore mission to land on Moon with lander and rover. India's first human space mission in 2021-22, Gaganyaan, will also be pursued this year, Sivan said in the New Year message to staff.

SPORTS

Gurgaon boy wins New South Wales men's Amateur Golf Championship

India's Kartik Sharma added another feather to his cap, winning 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.

The Gurgaon golfer has been playing for India since the age of 10 as part of the National Squad. He had been selected to represent Indian Golf Union (IGU) for three events in Australia namely Australian Masters of the Amateur Championship (Jan 8-11), Australian Amateur Championship (Jan 15-20) and NSW Amateur Championship (Jan 21-25).

Viswanathan Anand finishes joint third at Tata Steel Masters

In Chess, five-time world champion Viswanathan Anand had to be content with a joint third-place finish after settling for a draw with compatriot Vidit Gujrathi in the 13th and final round of the Tata Steel Masters at Wijk Aan Zee, the Netherlands.

With three victories, a defeat against winner Magnus Carlsen of Norway and nine draws, Anand ended the event on 7.5 points and will add six points to his existing rating. He is

sixth in world rankings. Carlsen expectedly won the event after drawing rather easily with Anish Giri of Holland in the final round.

Naomi Osaka clinches Australian Open 2019 title, takes No. 1 rank

Naomi Osaka has become the first Japanese tennis player to attain the world number one rank after clinching the Australian Open title. The 21-year-old defeated Petra Kvitova of Czech Republic 7-6(2), 5-7, 6-4 in the most dramatic big-hitting final, claiming her second straight Grand Slam after the bittersweet experience of winning the US Open title last year amid controversial circumstances.

South African Johan Botha retires from all forms of cricket

Former South Africa all-rounder Johan Botha has announced his immediate retirement from all forms of cricket. The 36-year-old Botha, who received his Australian citizenship in 2016, failed to take a wicket during nine-wicket loss to the Sydney Sixers. He had played all 10 matches for the first-place Hurricanes this season.

ICC Awards: India's Rishabh Pant named ICC's Emerging Cricketer of 2018

India's fast-rising wicketkeeper-batsman Rishabh Pant was named the International Cricket Council's Emerging Player of the Year in the world body's annual awards. The 21-year-old Pant was picked by the ICC's voting academy for a stellar show in his breakthrough Test year in 2018.

He became the first Indian wicket-keeper to score a Test century in England, and equalled the record for the most catches taken in a Test, with 11 against Australia in Adelaide in December. He was also the first Indian wicket-keeper to score a Test hundred in Australia.

ICC Awards: Virat Kohli creates history, named ICC Test, ODI Player and Cricketer of the year 2018

Virat Kohli scripted history by becoming the first player in history to win the Sir Garfield Sobers Trophy for ICC Cricketer of the Year, as well as the ICC Men's Test Player of the Year and the ICC ODI Player of the Year awards.

The 30-year-old has also been named captain of ICC's Test and ODI teams of 2018 for a fabulous run in international cricket. Kohli scored 1,322 runs at an average of 55.08 in

13 Tests with five hundreds during the calendar year while in 14 ODIs he amassed 1202 runs at an astonishing average of 133.55 with six centuries. He also scored 211 runs in 10 T20Is.

Ankita Raina wins title in Singapore

Ankita Raina made light of the challenge of beating the top seed and World No. 122, Arantxa Rus of the Netherlands, as she won 6-3, 6-2 in the final of the \$25,000 ITF women's tennis tournament here on Sunday. It was the first title of the season and eighth singles title of her career. In the final, Ankita faced two break points on her serve and saved both. She converted three of seven breakpoints that she forced, to race to the trophy.

CWG gold Medalist Mohammed Ali Qamar becomes youngest India women's boxing coach

Mohammed Ali Qamar, India's first Commonwealth Games gold medal winner in boxing, has taken over as chief coach for the country's women pugilists. At 37, he became the youngest to get the top job.

Ali Qamar, will replace veteran Shiv Singh. Ali Qamar has been an assistant coach in the national camp for more than a year.

Chennai's Gukesh Crowned India's Youngest Grandmaster

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.

Stephen Constantine steps down as India coach after Asian Cup exit

Stephen Constantine resigned from his position of Indian football team's head coach after the Blue Tigers suffered an exit from the group stage of the AFC Asian Cup 2019. India had to bow out of the tournament after they suffered a heartbreaking 1-0 loss against Bahrain at the Sharjah Stadium on Monday. Jamal Rashed's 91st-minute penalty sent India on their way home, after a solid defensive performance from Constantine's men.

1st Ekalavya Model Residential Schools Sports Meet 2019' at Hyderabad

Shri Jaswantsinh Sumanbhai Bhabhor, Minister of State for Tribal Affairs inaugurated the “1st Ekalavya Model Residential Schools Sports Meet 2019” at Gachibowli stadium in Hyderabad. The National Sports Meet is being held from 14th to 16th January 2019 at GMC Balayogi Stadium, Gachibowli, Hyderabad. The Telangana State has been chosen as the host for the Meet and the Tribal Welfare Residential Educational Institutions Society is organizing the Event. The Minister said the government of India is planning to establish more than 400 Eklavya model schools by 2022

Shakil Ahmed sets world record in Indoor Rowing

Asian Cup gold medalist and noted oarsman Shakil Ahmed added one more feather in his cap when he set up a world record by completing 100,000 (one lakh) metres of indoor rowing in the 40-years-and-above category. FISA level one coach, Shakil, who has twenty six international medals during his rowing career so far, began his record setting indoor rowing feat in Salt Lake stadium complex.

India's D Gukesh becomes the world's second youngest Grandmaster

Tamil Nadu's D Gukesh became India's youngest and the world's second youngest Grandmaster after achieving his third and final GM norm at the ongoing 17th Delhi International Open Chess tournament. At 12 years, seven months and 17 days, Gukesh missed Sergey Karjakin's record of becoming the youngest GM in the history of chess by only 17 days.

8-year-old Kartik Singh becomes youngest to win Junior World title in golf

Gurgaon's 8-year-old Kartik Singh has won the under-8 category at the Kids' Golf World Championship organised by US kids Golf in Malaysia, which makes him the youngest Indian to win the title. Kartik is well known all across DLF Golf and country club for his dedication and hard work. He started playing Golf three years ago, when he accompanied his father to a match and was spotted by the coaches there.

USA Cricket becomes ICC's 105th member

The International Cricket Council (ICC) approved USA Cricket as its 105th member, which is expected to open the door for T20 Internationals to be played in Florida, which has a large base of West Indies supporters.

The USA Cricket Association had previously been an associate member of the ICC, but was suspended over governance issues for a third time in 2015 before being expelled in June 2017.

Mary Kom becomes world number one woman boxer in 48-kg category

Mary Kom, who had become the first ever woman boxer to win six world championship titles in November last year, has been ranked number one by the International Boxing Association (AIBA) in the light fly (45-48kg) category. The 35-year-old tops her weight division with 1700 points. Ukraine's 22-year-old boxer Hanna Okhota is ranked second, with 1100 points.

Maharashtra to host 2nd edition of Khelo India Youth Games

Maharashtra is all set to host the second edition of Khelo India Youth Games which will officially begin tomorrow in Pune. More than 9000 players from different states will participate in 18 different games at Khelo India Youth Games. It has already been announced that Youth Olympic Gold Medallist in shooting Manu Bhaker and Saurabh Chaudhari, as well as weightlifter Jeremy Lalrinnunga, will be among the cream of India's youth sporting talent competing at these games.

Hopman Cup: Roger Federer & Belinda Bencic retain title for Switzerland

Hopman Cup, an annual international eight-team indoor hardcourt tennis tournament was held in Perth, Western Australia. It is a mixed competition in which male and female players are on combined teams and represent their countries.

This year 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. It was Switzerland's fourth title overall, behind only the United States with six. This year's tournament is the 31st edition of the Hopman Cup and potentially be the final edition of the tournament as it will be replaced by an ATP tournament from next year.

India win a Test series in Australia for the first time in history

India won the four-match Test series against Australia 2-1 as the Sydney Test ended in a draw after the fifth day's play was washed out due to rain. This is the first time ever that

India have won a Test series in Australia. Before this, India had played 11 Test series in Australia since 1947, losing eight and drawing three.

Federer first person to win Hopman Cup thrice

Roger Federer and Belinda Bencic beat Germany's Alexander Zverev and Angelique Kerber to lift a fourth Hopman Cup title for Switzerland. Federer, who is the first person in history to win the Hopman Cup on three occasions, helped Switzerland retain the title this year. Federer won the Hopman Cup in 2001 alongside Martina Hingis.

Rishabh Pant 1st ever Indian wicketkeeper to slam Test ton in Australia

Rishabh Pant smashed a 137-ball hundred in the first innings of the fourth Test against Australia in Sydney, becoming the first ever Indian wicketkeeper to slam a Test century on Australian soil. Farokh Engineer had slammed the previous highest Test score of 89 by an Indian wicketkeeper in Australia in 1967. Pant has now slammed two Test hundreds.

Kohli fastest to 19,000 international runs, breaks Sachin's record

India captain Virat Kohli has become the fastest batsman to reach 19,000 international runs, achieving the feat in his 399th innings during the fourth Test against Australia. Kohli surpassed former India batsman Sachin Tendulkar, who had reached the feat in 432 innings. Kohli had become the fastest to reach 18,000 international runs (382 innings) in September last year.

ICC Test Rankings: India retain top spot

India retain top spot in ICC's year-end test rankings, following a famous 137-run win in Melbourne Test against Australia; England and New Zealand at second and third place while Australia placed fifth. India maintained their 116 points to consolidate their top place followed by the English team, who are placed at the second spot with 108 points.

CURRENT AFFAIRS JANUARY 2019 PDF

OBITUARY

Name of the Person Died	Associated Field
George Fernandes	Former Defence Minister
Chaitanya Majhi	Former Minister and noted tribal leader
Michel Legrand	French Oscar-winning composer
Krishna Sobti	Eminent Hindi writer
Raghubir Bhole	Former India hockey player
Shivakumara Swami	Lingayat seer
Masazo Nonaka	World's oldest man
Atin Bandyopadhyay	Sahitya Akademi award winning Bengali writer
Mary Oliver	Pulitzer Prize-winning poet
John C. Bogle	Founder of Vanguard
Ramakant Achrekar	Sachin Tendulkar's childhood coach
Kader Khan	Veteran actor-writer

CURRENT AFFAIRS JANUARY 2019 PDF

Important Days

Date	Day
1 January	Global Family Day
8 January	African National Congress Foundation Day
9 January	Pravasi Bharatiya Divas
11 January	Death anniversary of Lal Bahadur Shastri
12 January	National Youth Day
15 January	Indian Army Day
23 January	Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Jayanti
24 January	National Girl Child Day
25 January	National Voters Day
25 January	National Tourism Day
26 January	Republic Day
26 January	International Customs Day
28 January	Birth Anniversary of Lala Lajpat Rai
30 January	Martyrs Day or Shaheed Diwas
30 January	World Leprosy Eradication Day