India slips to 42nd place on EIU Democracy Index
India has slipped to 42nd place on the Economist Intelligence Unit’s annual Global Democracy Index amid the “rise of conservative religious ideologies” and increase in vigilantism and violence against minorities as well as other dissenting voices.

- While Norway has again topped the list, followed by Iceland and Sweden, India has moved down from 32nd place last year and remains classified among “flawed democracies”.
- The index ranks 165 independent states and two territories on the basis of five categories:

India joins Ashgabat agreement
India has joined the Ashgabat agreement which envisages setting up of an international transport and transit corridor linking central Asia with the Persian Gulf to significantly ramp up trade and investment.

- Turkmenistan, as depository State of Ashgabat Agreement, informed on February 1 that all the four founding members have consented to the Accession of India.
- Turkmenistan, Iran, Oman and Uzbekistan signed the agreement on April 25, 2011.
- In October 2016, Pakistan had formally joined the project. Kazakhstan is also a part to this agreement.

World Cancer Day: 4 February
World Cancer Day is an international day marked on February 4 to raise awareness of cancer and to encourage its prevention, detection, and treatment.

- World Cancer Day was founded by the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC) to support the goals of the World Cancer Declaration, written in 2008.
- The primary goal of the World Cancer Day is to significantly reduce illness and death caused by cancer by 2020.
- The theme for the World Cancer Day 2016-2018 is ‘We can. I can.’

Maldives declares state of emergency
Maldivian President Abdulla Yameen has declared a 15-day state of Emergency, his aide Azima Shukoor announced on state television.

- The move gives sweeping powers to security forces to arrest and detain suspects as Yameen refuses to comply with a Supreme Court order to release political prisoners.
- The latest crisis was triggered when the Maldivian Supreme Court ordered the release of some opposition leaders, including former president Mohammed Nasheed, after overturning their “terrorism” convictions.

Points to Remember
- The Maldives is a South Asian island country, located in the Indian Ocean, situated in the Arabian Sea.
- Male is the capital of Maldives while Rufiyaa is its currency.

Dubai named the world's busiest International Airport
Dubai International Airport says it has held on to its No 1 ranking as the world's busiest airport for ‘international travel’, after seeing some 88.2 million passengers in 2017.

- Dubai International Airport first surpassed London Heathrow as the world’s busiest airport for international traffic in 2014.
- It has maintained the title ever since, with some 90 airlines flying into skyscraper-studded Dubai.
- The airport is home to the long-haul carrier Emirates.
- Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport in Georgia remains the world’s busiest airport overall.

THE rankings 2018: 42 Indian Universities in list, none in top 25
The Times Higher Education (THE) released the list of the best colleges in Asia in the Asia University Rankings 2018 on 6 February.

- While the top 10 spots were secured by universities from China, Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore and South Korea, India managed to improve its score on the index with a total of 42 finding a place among just over 350 Universities.
- Indian Institute of Science (IIS) in Bengaluru was the topmost Indian University in the list coming in at rank 29.
At rank 44 was the Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay, followed by IIT-Kharagpur at 60 with 11,016 students.

IIT-Roorkee, rank 65, IIT-Kanpur, rank 81 and IIT-Delhi, rank 86. At rank 100, Tezpur University in Assam was the last Indian university in the top 100 list.

**Sushma Swaraj inaugurates Saudi cultural festival**

External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj has inaugurate Saudi Arabia’s annual ‘Janadriyah Festival’ where India has been invited as guest of honour this year, officials said.

Earlier, Minister of State for External Affairs VK Singh had said that India’s participation in the festival will be multifaceted and would take relations of the two nations “to new heights”.

According to the minister, the Indian pavilion at the festival will project a number of Indian themes and projects.

**Former Bangladesh PM Khaleda Zia sentenced to five years in prison**

A Special Court in Dhaka has sentenced former Bangladesh Prime Minister Khaleda Zia to jail for five years in a 10-year-old graft case.

- The court also sentenced her son, Tarique Rahman, and four others to jail for 10 years. Rahman is a resident of London.
- The Anti-Corruption Commission filed the case, accusing Ms. Zia and the five others of misappropriating over 2.1 crore Bangladeshi Taka that had come from a foreign bank as grants for orphans.

**India ranks 44 out of 50 nations in global IP index**

India has “increased substantially” its score in the latest international Intellectual Property (IP) index released by the US Chambers of Commerce, ranking 44th out of 50 countries.

- India’s overall score has increased substantially from 25 per cent (8.75 out of 35) in the 5th edition of the Index to 30 per cent (12.03 out of 40) in the 6th edition.
- The US tops the list with 37.98 points, followed by United Kingdom (37.97) and Sweden (37.03).

**List of MoUs/Agreements signed during visit of Prime Minister to Palestine**

MOU between India and Palestine for setting up of India-Palestine Super-specialty hospital at Beit Sahour in Bethelhem Governorate at a cost ofUS$ 30 million.

- MOU between India and Palestine for construction of India Palestine Centre for Empowering women, "Turathi” at a cost ofUS$ 5 million
- MOU between India and Palestine for setting up of new National Printing Press at Ramallah at a cost ofUS$ 5 million
- MOU between India and Palestine Construction of school in Muthalth Al Shuhada Village at a cost ofUS$ 1 million
- MOU between India and Palestine Construction of school in Tamoon village in Tubas Governorate in Palestine at a cost ofUS$ 1.1 million
- MOU between India and Palestine Assistance of US$ US$ 0.25 million for construction of additional floor to Jawahar Lal Nehru for Boys at Abu Dees

**PM Modi inaugurates Abu Dhabi’s first Hindu temple**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has laid the foundation stone for a new temple for the Hindu community living in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

- The temple will be the first to be built in Abu Dhabi, the capital of UAE which is home to a huge Indian diaspora.
- The PM laid the foundation stone for the temple from the Dubai Opera House via video conferencing.
- This is Modi’s second visit to the UAE after August 2015.
- The UAE has two Hindu temples which are located in Dubai.

**Mumbai 12th richest city globally; total wealth at USD 950 billion**

India's financial capital Mumbai, with a total wealth of USD 950 billion, has been named among the top 15 wealthiest cities globally, while New York topped the list, says a report.

- According to a report by New World Wealth, the economic hub of India is the 12th wealthiest city, followed by Toronto with a total wealth of USD 944
billion, Frankfurt (14th, USD 912 billion) and Paris (15th, USD 860 billion).

- Mumbai, also features among the top 10 cities in terms of billionaire population. The city is home to 28 billionaires, individuals with USD 1 billion or more in net assets.

World Government Summit begins in Dubai
The World Government Summit 2018 is being held in Dubai, UAE from February 11-13.

- Dubai Ruler Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, UAE's Vice President and Prime Minister, expresses his thanks to India Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s visit as guest of honour to the World Government Summit.
- The three-day event, which was first held in Dubai in 2013, has been described as the largest annual government summit.

List of MoUs signed on the occasion of the visit of PM to Oman
Agreement on Legal and Judicial Cooperation in Civil and Commercial matter
- Agreement on mutual visa exemption for holders of diplomatic, Special, service and official passports
- MoU on Cooperation in the field of health
- MoU on Cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space.
- MoU on Cooperation between Foreign Service Institute, Ministry of External Affairs, India and Oman Diplomatic Institute.
- MoU on Academic and Scholarly cooperation sectors between National Defence College Sultanate of Oman and the Institute for Defence Studies and the Analyses.
- MoU in the field of Tourism cooperation between India and Oman.
- Annexure to the MoU on Military Cooperation.

World Radio Day: 13 February
World Radio Day is an observance day held annually on 13 February.

- It was proclaimed on 3 November 2011 by UNESCO's 36th General Conference after originally being proposed by the Kingdom of Spain.
- The theme of World Radio day 2018 is "Radio and Sports".

Tamil Nadu among nine global market leaders in renewables
A new research by US-based Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA) showed that nine major global power markets, including India’s Tamil Nadu, have achieved an outsized share of wind and solar generation.

- The report, ‘Power-Industry Transition, Here and Now’, includes case studies of markets — ranked by relative share of reliance on variable renewables — that include Denmark, South Australia, Uruguay, Germany, Ireland, Spain, Texas, California and the Indian state of Tamil Nadu.
- Wind and solar accounted for 14.3 per cent of Tamil Nadu’s total electricity generation in 2016-17.

Ethiopia’s Prime Minister submits resignation after protests
Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn announced that he has submitted a resignation letter after the worst anti-government protests in a quarter-century.

- Ethiopia has been rocked by months of protests demanding wider freedoms that have left hundreds dead and tens of thousands detained.
- The protests have disrupted life and business in one of Africa’s fastest-growing economies.

MoU between Botanical Survey of India and Natural History Museum, UK
Botanical Survey of India (BSI) and Natural History Museum (NHM), UK signed a Memorandum of Understanding for cooperation in the field of genetic/taxonomic studies, research and training, conservation in India, including species and habitat conservation assessments, etc.

- NHM will help BSI in capacity building in areas of systematic botany and long-term conservation of plant genetic resources in India.

China's Qingdao to host SCO summit in June
East China’s Qingdao City will host the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Summit in June this year.

- Shandong is the birthplace of many ancient Chinese thinkers, including Confucius. In 2017, its GDP exceeded 7.2 trillion yuan.
- The summit has China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India and Pakistan as full members.

List of MoUs signed during the visit of President of Iran to India
President of Iran, Hassan Rouhani arrived in India on a three-day State visit. He has signed these MoUs with India:

- Agreement for the Avoidance of Double Taxation
- MoU on Exemption from Visa requirement for holders of Diplomatic Passports.
- Exchange of Instrument of Ratification of Extradition Treaty.
- Lease Contract for Shahid Beheshti Port- Phase 1 of Chabahar during Interim Period between Port and Maritime Organization (PMO), Iran and India Ports Global Limited (IPGL).
- MoU on Cooperation in the field of Traditional Systems of Medicine.
- MoU on the establishment of an Expert Group on Trade Remedy Measures to promote cooperation in areas of mutual interest.
- MoU on Cooperation in the field of Agriculture and Allied Sectors.
- MoU on Cooperation in the field of Health and Medicine.
- MoU on Postal Cooperation.

India’s defence budget breaks into world’s top 5: UK report
India’s defence budget broke into the world’s top five, beating the UK for the first time, a new report by a London-based global think-tank has said.

- India overtook the UK as the fifth-largest defence spender in the world in 2017 at $52.5 billion, up from $51.1 billion in 2016, according to the ‘Military Balance 2018’ report by the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS).
- In contrast, the UK’s defence budget fell from $52.5 billion in 2016 to $50.7 billion last year.

- World’s top five defence spenders are the US, China, Saudi Arabia, Russia and India.

J P Nadda addresses Global Digital Health Partnership Summit
“Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has great potential towards improvement of delivery of healthcare services. This was stated by Shri J P Nadda, Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare during his address at Global Digital Health Partnership Summit, at Canberra, Australia.

- India is committed to reforms in health service delivery using ICT under Digital India Program of Government of India.”
- The Union Health Minister spoke on the topic: Making Digital Health Services a Priority in Healthcare Reform.

UK and India upgrade joint research on clean water and clean energy
UK-India research projects on ‘Water Quality Research’ and ‘Energy Demand Reduction in Built Environment’ were launched by Dr V K Saraswat, Member, National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog, Professor Ashutosh Sharma, Secretary, Department of Science and Technology (DST) India and Daniel Shah, Director, Research Councils UK (RCUK) India.

- The ‘Water Quality Research’ programme has eight projects and ‘Energy Demand Reduction in Built Environment’ programme has four projects, with a total joint investment of up to £15 million.
- These projects aim to deliver mutual benefits and research solutions not only to the UK and India but also to address shared global sustainable development goals – clean water and clean energy.

World Day of Social Justice: 20 February
Social Equality Justice day is observed every year on 20th February.

- It is a day recognizing the need to promote efforts to tackle issues such as poverty, exclusion and unemployment.
- The theme of World Day of Social Justice 2018 is “Workers on the Move: the Quest for Social Justice.”

Mandarin approved as official language of Pakistan
The Pakistani Senate has approved a motion to declare Mandarin as one of the official languages of Pakistan.

- The motion said the step was necessary in view of ties between Pakistan and China.
- Punjabi, which is widely spoken in Punjab province of Pakistan, Pashto and many other native languages have not been declared official languages of the country.

**India, Indonesia joint military drill begins**

The Indian and Indonesian armies began the sixth edition of their annual military exercises in the West Java province of the archipelago country.

- The opening ceremony of the two-week Garuda Shakti military drill between the Special Forces of the Indian Army and the Indonesian Army was held at Bandung.
- Indian Ambassador to Indonesia Pradeep Kumar Rawat attended the opening ceremony along with Indonesian military officers.

**Nadda addresses Global Digital Health Partnership Symposium at Australia**

“Digital health has great potential towards reducing inequity in provisioning and distribution of healthcare resources and services and it can greatly facilitate proactive treatment for disabled patients, children with developmental delays and deformities and people suffering from mental health illnesses and for those suffering from stigmatic infections such as HIV/AIDS, leprosy and tuberculosis.” This was stated by Shri J P Nadda, Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare during his address at the Global Digital Health Partnership Symposium at Sydney, Australia.

- The Union Health Minister spoke on the topic: The role of digital health in supporting improved health outcomes in India.
- The Union Health Minister informed the participants that the National Health Policy (2017) of India clearly articulates the healthcare aspirations of people of India with three distinct goals.

**India ranks 81 in global corruption perception index**

The 2017 corruption perception index, released by anti-graft watchdog Transparency International, has ranked India at 81 among 180 countries and territories.

- India’s score in 2017 is 40 — the same as 2016, and an increase since 2015, when it was 38.
- The index says New Zealand and Denmark are the least corrupt countries, while Syria, Sudan and Somalia figure are ranked the most corrupt.
- Among BRICS nations, South Africa has been ranked the least corrupt (71), while Russia (135) is the most corrupt.

**International Mother Language Day**

International Mother Language Day (IMLD) is a worldwide annual observance held on 21 February to promote awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity and promote multilingualism.

- First announced by UNESCO on 17 November 1999, it was formally recognized by the United Nations General Assembly in a resolution establishing 2008 as the International Year of Languages.

**8th Indo- Seychelles Army exercise starts**

The eighth joint military exercise between the Indian Army and Seychelles People’s Defence Forces started on February 24 and will continue till March 4 at Mahe Island, Seychelles.

- The exercise is named “Lamitye” which in the local dialect ‘Creole’, means friendship.
- This exercise is the eighth in the series of bilateral exercises being conducted in the beautiful island nation.

**India International Textiles Expo begins in Colombo**

A three–day India International Textiles Expo (IITExpo) of India began in Sri Lankan capital of Colombo.

- It is being organized by Powerloom Development & Export Promotion Council (PDEXCIL) with the support of Union Ministry of Textiles & Ministry of Commerce & Industry.

**20th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers held in Fiji**

- The theme of the Conference was “Sustainability and Resilience: Can Education Deliver?”
- Dr. Singh made a ‘response statement’ to the presentation “20CCEM Thematic Issues” made by Dr. Rajesh Chandra, Vice Chancellor of University of South Pacific, Fiji on 21 February 2018.

India Ranks 47th on Inclusive Internet Index
India is ranked 47th out of 86 countries when it comes to inclusive Internet and connectivity for all, a Facebook report said.
- Facebook, which commissioned the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) to create a comprehensive “Inclusive Internet Index,” found India in the middle of Asian countries (12th out of 23) when it comes to connectivity.
- Sweden took the first place, followed by Singapore and the US.

Saudi Arabia allows women to join military
Saudi Arabia has for the very first time opened applications for women to enlist in the military as the kingdom continues to enact reforms granting females more access to a wide range of previously forbidden careers.
- Interested candidates can apply for positions with the rank of soldier in the provinces of Riyadh, Mecca, al-Qassim and Medina.
- A list of requirements says applicants must be Saudi citizens and aged between 25 and 35 with a high school diploma.

Third Scorpene submarine ‘Karanj’ Launched at Mazagon Docks
The third Scorpene class submarine constructed by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited for the Indian Navy, was launched on 31 January 2018 by Mrs Reena Lanba, President Navy Wives Welfare Association after the recitation of Sanskrit shlokas from the Atharva Veda and traditional ceremonies associated with the launch of naval platforms.

She also named this submarine as ‘Karanj’ and wished her good fortune.
- Admiral Sunil Lanba, Chief of the Naval Staff was the chief guest on the occasion.
- Karanj will now undergo rigorous trials and tests, both in harbour and at sea before it is commissioned into the Navy.

Railways to Set up a Coach Factory in Marathwada, Maharashtra
A high level meeting was held between Union Minister for Railways and Coal, Shri Piyush Goyal and Chief Minister of Maharashtra, Shri Devendra Fadnavis in Mumbai, to discuss the setting up of a massive rail coach factory in Latur, Maharashtra by Indian Railways.
- This plant would manufacture Electric Multiple Units for suburban trains and coaches for metros.
- Work on this project will be done on high priority with fast track processing of all approvals.
- Maharashtra Government has offered several concessions including in land, taxes and etc.

Uttar Pradesh India’s most polluted state: Greenpeace report
With 15 of its cities among 30 cities with highest levels of toxic air in the country, Uttar Pradesh is India’s most polluted state, says a Greenpeace India report.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s constituency Varanasi turned out to be the worst polluted city of UP.
- New Delhi topped list while Lucknow was 18th among the 30 most polluted cities and towns of the country.
- The report reveals that none of the 280 cities with 630 million people comply with the PM10 levels in the air as fixed by WHO at 20.
- Hassan in Karnataka has the cleanest air in the country.

Axis Bank Deputy VP inaugurates 19th Samaya Bharati 2018
The 19th India International Watch and Clock Fair “Samaya Bharati 2018” was inaugurated by Amruta Devendra Fadnavis, Deputy Vice President of Axis Bank at the Nehru Centre, Worli, Mumbai.
The fair, a grand horological event, was organised by India's leading watch and clock magazine "Trade Post" under the auspices of Watch Trade Federation.

### Union Budget 2018: Key takeaways and sector-wise highlights
Finance Minister Arun Jaitley delivered the current government's fifth and last full financial budget (Budget 2018 for the fiscal year 2018-19) amid subdued economic growth, challenging fiscal situation and farm distress.

Here are the key highlights from the Union Budget 2018:

#### Economic Health
- Economy firmly on course to achieve high growth of 8%
- GDP growth at 6.3% in the second quarter of 2017-18 signals turnaround of the economy
- Growth in the second half likely to remain between 7.2% to 7.5%

#### Agriculture and Rural Economy
- MSP for all unannounced Kharif crops increased to 150%
- Institutional credit for agri-sector increased to Rs.10 lakh crore in 2017-18
- Fisheries, aquaculture and animal husbandry corpus at Rs.10,000 crore
- New scheme Operation Greens with an outlay of Rs 500 Crore
- Govt to develop and upgrade existing 22,000 rural haats
- Agri-Market Infrastructure Fund with a corpus of Rs.2000 crore
- Allocation for Ministry of Food Processing doubled to Rs.1400 crore
- Loans to Self Help Groups (SHG) of women to increase to Rs.75,000 crore by March 2019.
- Increased allocation of National Rural Livelihood Mission to Rs 5750 crore
- Under Ujjwala Scheme distribution of free LPG connections will be given to 8 crore poor women
- Housing for All by 2022 - more than one crore houses to be built by 2019 in rural areas

#### Education, Health, and Social Protection
- Estimated budgetary expenditure on health, education and social protection at Rs.1.38 lakh crore
- Ekalavya Model Residential School to be set up for tribal children
- Investments for research & infra in premier educational institutions at Rs.1 lakh crore in next 4 years
- Allocation on National Social Assistance Programme at Rs. 9975 crore
- NHPS to cover over 10 crore poor and vulnerable families (approximately 50 crore beneficiaries)
- NHPS to provide coverage up to 5 lakh rupees per family per year for hospitalisation
- Rs 1200 crore for the National Health Policy, 2017 - additional Rs.600 crore for TB patients
- 24 new Government Medical Colleges and Hospitals

#### Medium, Small and Micro Enterprises (MSMEs) and Employment
- Major thrust for Medium, Small and Micro Enterprises (MSMEs) – allocation at Rs. 3794 crore
- Target of Rs.3 lakh crore for lending under MUDRA Yojana
- 70 lakh formal jobs to be created this year
- Govt to make 12% contribution of new employees in the EPF for all the sectors for 3 years
- Outlay of Rs.7148 crore for the textile sector
- Increase budgetary allocation on infrastructure for at Rs.5.97 lakh crore
- To develop 10 prominent tourist sites into Iconic Tourism destinations
- 35000 kms road construction in Phase-I at an estimated cost of Rs.5,35,000 crore

#### Railways
- Railways Capital Expenditure pegged at Rs.1,48,528 crore
- 4000 kilometers of electrified railway network slated for commissioning
- Work on Eastern and Western, dedicated freight corridors
- Over 3600 km of track renewal targeted in current fiscal
- Redevelopment of 600 major railway stations
- Mumbai’s local train network to have 90 kilometers of double line tracks at Rs.11,000 crore cost
- 150 km of additional suburban network planned for Mumbai
• Suburban network of 160 km at for Bengaluru metropolis

Air Transport
• To expand airport capacity more than five times to handle a billion trips a year
• Regional connectivity - 56 unserved airports and 31 unserved helipads to be connected
• To establish unified authority for regulating all financial services

Digital Economy
• NITI Aayog to initiate a national program to direct efforts in artificial intelligence
• Department of Science & Technology to launch Mission on Cyber-Physical Systems
• Allocation doubled on Digital India programme to Rs 3073 crore
• To set up 5 lakh wifi hotspots to provide net-connectivity to five crore rural citizens
• Rs. 10000 crore for creation and augmentation of telecom infrastructure

Defence
• Development of two defence industrial production corridors.
• Allocation of Rs 2.95 lakh crore to defence sector.

Emoluments
• To revise emoluments to Rs.5 lakh for the President
• Rs 4 lakhs for the Vice President
• Rs.3.5 lakh per month to Governor
• Pay for Members of Parliament - law for automatic revision of emoluments every 5 years
• 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi- Rs.150 crore for commemoration programme

Fiscal Management
• Budget Revised Estimates for Expenditure at Rs.21.57 lakh crore
• Revised Fiscal Deficit estimates at 3.5% of GDP
• To bring down Central Government’s Debt to GDP ratio to 40%

Jaitley announces ‘world’s largest healthcare programme’
Finance Minister Arun Jaitley announced two new initiatives under the Ayushman Bharat Programme in the Union Budget 2018.
• Under the programme, Mr. Jaitley announced a new flagship National Health Protection Scheme, providing a health insurance cover of ₹5 lakh a family per annum.
• The scheme will cover 10 crore vulnerable families, with approximately 50 crore beneficiaries.
• Mr. Jaitley also announced the creation of health and wellness centres, which will “bring healthcare closer to home”.
• These centres, 1.5 lakh in number, will provide free essential drugs and diagnostic services. A sum of Rs. 1200 crore had been allocated for this.

Wi-Fi hotspots for rural areas proposed
The government has proposed to set up five lakh Wi-Fi hotspots which will provide broadband access to five crore rural citizens.
• Allocation of Rs 10,000 crore has been provided in 2018-19 for creation and augmentation of telecom infrastructure.

Rs 2.04 lakh crore to be allocated for 99 cities under Smart City programme
The Finance Minister, Arun Jaitley, while presenting the Union Budget 2018-19, said that as many as 99 cities were selected under the ambitious Smart City Mission at an outlay of Rs 2.04 lakh crore.
• In the Smart City Mission that aims at 100 cities, 99 smart cities have been selected and will be allocated Rs 2.04 lakh crore, Jaitley informed Parliament.
• The Ministry has so far launched 99 smart cities in two years.

7th India Energy Congress begins
7th India Energy Congress has been kicked off in New Delhi on February 1, 2018.
• More than 400 experts will meet on February 1 and 2 to discuss and debate the energy transition being witnessed.
• The theme of the 7th edition of India Energy Congress is 'Energy 4.0: Energy Transition Towards 2030'.
• The India Energy Congress is the flagship event of World Energy Council India (WEC India) and joint event of ministries of power, coal, new & renewable energy, petroleum & natural gas, external affairs and Department of Atomic Energy.
PM to address the inaugural session of Advantage Assam - Global Investors Summit
The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, will address the inaugural session of Advantage Assam - Global Investors Summit 2018, in Guwahati on February 3, 2018.

- The two-day Summit will be the largest ever investment promotion and facilitation initiative by the Government of Assam.
- The Summit aims at highlighting the geo-strategic advantages offered to investors by Assam.

Yogi Adityanath inaugurates Surajkund Mela in Haryana
Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath inaugurated the Surajkund Mela on 2 February, in the presence of Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar.

- The 17-day-long event, which is in its 32nd edition, showcases India’s rich cultural diversity, crafts and handiworks.
- The Mela this year has the culture of Uttar Pradesh as its theme and focuses upon child rights violations across India.
- All of India’s states and 20 countries are participating in the festival.
- Surajkund is located in Faridabad in Haryana.

Centre sanctions Rs 1,500 cr for organic farming in Uttarakhand
The Centre has sanctioned Rs 1,500 crore for three years to promote organic farming in Uttarakhand.

- The amount was sanctioned by Union Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh when Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat met him in New Delhi.
- The Union minister also cleared a proposal worth Rs 2,600 crore for the co-operative sector in the state. Of which, Rs 200 crore is meant for the reorganisation of sugar mills.

International Conference on 'Demetrios Galanos and His Legacy'
The International Conference on 'Demetrios Galanos and His Legacy' was inaugurated at IGNCA in New Delhi.

- Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) is organizing the 8-days International Conference.
- The 8-day long convention is being held in Delhi and Varanasi, in addition to organizing the exhibition and folk music of Greece.

Venkaiah Naidu to Inaugurate First International Kala Mela
The Vice President of India Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu will inaugurate the First International Kala Mela in New Delhi on February 4.

- The Minister of State for Culture (Independent Charge) and Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Dr. Mahesh Sharma will also grace the occasion.
- Lalit Kala Akademi, the premier institution for the promotion of Art and Culture is organizing it at Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, New Delhi (IGNCA).

Environment Ministry launches ‘Green Good Deeds’ campaign
Environment Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan has appealed to the teaching community to join the “Green Good Deeds” campaign, launched by his Ministry to sensitise the people about climate change and global warming.

- The Minister reminded the teachers of their “Green Social Responsibility similar to corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

Maharashtra to become first state to have Transgender Welfare Board
The long pending Transgender Welfare Board (TWB) will finally see light of the day with the Maharashtra government making a provision of Rs 5 crore for welfare of the community.

- Minister of State for Social Justice Dilip Kamble told that the Board will be set up in a month’s time.
- It will look after education, employment, housing, and health schemes for transgenders and protect their Constitutional and human rights.
- Maharashtra will be the first such state to have such a Board, the minister said.
India’s biggest floating island released in Neknampur lake
On the occasion of World Wetland Day, city-based NGO Dhruvansh has introduced biggest floating island of India at Neknampur Lake, Hyderabad.

- The duo of Dhruvansh NGO, Madhulika and Neeraj Singh started Neknampur restoration programme in June 2016 adopting various cost effective methodologies to clean the lake.
- After successful introduction of 10x10 feet floating islands last year, the NGO introduced 2,500 square feet floating island with 3,500 wetland plants floating on this platform.

First defence industrial corridor between Chennai, Bengaluru
The first of the two defence industrial production corridors, as announced in the Union Budget, will link Chennai and Bengaluru.

- In his budget address, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said the government will develop two defence industrial production corridors.
- Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said that the first corridor will link Chennai and Bengaluru and will pass through Coimbatore and several other industrial clusters.

India’s Super Computer Could Aid In Doubling Farmers’ Income
The Union Budget saw much emphasis on doubling of farmers’ income and accurate weather forecasts will play a major part in it.

- What could contribute to the doubling of farmers’ income is India's most powerful Cray Super Computer - MIHIR - that will give more accurate weather forecasts.
- Built at a cost of Rs. 450 crore, MIHIR is housed in a badminton court-sized room at India's weather office near Delhi, and is capable of performing jobs equivalent to more than 2,500 high-end laptops, all working in tandem.
- Dr Harsh Vardhan, Science Minister, says "MIHIR, named after the Sun God, will help in our weather forecasting capability and strength will increase tremendously and it will now become about eight petaflops."

- Dr Vardhan said India will now also be ranked 4th, after Japan, UK and the US for dedicated HPC resources for weather/climate community.

Mukesh Khanna Quits as Chief of Children’s Film Society
Actor Mukesh Khanna said he has resigned as the chairperson of the Children’s Film Society two months prior to the end of his term, alleging lack of support to take children's films to theatres and inadequate funding for the institution.

- His three-year term was scheduled to end in April.
- The actor is known for his portrayal in popular TV serial Shaktimaan.
- He made his debut on the small screen as Bhisham Pitamah in B R Chopra’s Mahabharat.

Rs 51,600 crore released to states under MGNREGA in 2017-18: Government
The Centre has released more than Rs 51,600 crore to states under rural employment guarantee scheme MGNREGA till January 31 in financial year 2017-18, Rajya Sabha was informed.

- In written reply to a question, Minister of State for Rural Development Ram Kripal Yadav said that the release of funds to states for the implementation of various projects under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) was a continuous process.
- The ministry has released Rs 51,616.99 crore as on January 31, 2018.

Centre clears Rs 62 crore for cleaning Sal river
The central government has approved a project to abate pollution of river Sal at Navelim in Goa at an estimated cost of Rs 61.7 crore.

- The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) had in 2015 identified the river stretch at Navelim as one of the 302 polluted river stretches across the country based on bio-chemical oxygen demand (BOD) levels.
- The project was approved by the Union environment ministry last week under its National River Conservation Plan (NRCP) which covers 31 rivers (other than Ganga and its tributaries) in 14 states.
UP government in association with UNICEF launches DASTAK campaign
In Uttar Pradesh, State government in association with UNICEF has launched massive door to door campaign DASTAK to eradicate deadly Acute Encephalitis Syndrome and Japanese Encephalitis disease in the state.

- In DASTAK campaign, whole state machinery with the help of UNICEF will now literally go door to door in 38 JES and AE affected districts.

Maharashtra govt approves new wildlife sanctuary at Ghodazari
The Maharashtra government has approved Ghodazari in Chandrapur district as a new wildlife sanctuary in the state.

- The decision was taken at the 13th meeting of the Maharashtra State Board for Wildlife, chaired by Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis.
- The sanctuary, in the North East of Tadoba, will include 159 sq km of Brahmapuri forest.

President to inaugurate the Mahamastakabhisheka Mahotsav 2018
The President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind, will be in Karnataka to inaugurate the Mahamastakabhisheka Mahotsav 2018 of Gommateshwara Bhagwan Sri Bahubali Swami at Shravanabelagola February 7, 2018.

- The Mahamastakabhisheka Mahotsav is celebrated once every 12 years.
- It has been celebrated for about a 1,000 years.

60 Solar Cities to be developed across country
The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy under its scheme “Development of Solar Cities” has approved/sanctioned 60 Cities including 13 Pilot and 5 Model Cities up to 12th Five-year Plan period.

- In a written reply to a question in the Rajya Sabha, Minister of State (IC) for Power & New and Renewable Energy, Shri R K Singh informed that the master plans of 49 Solar Cities have been prepared.
- The Stake-holders Committees have been constituted in 21 Cities and Solar City Cells have been created in 37 Solar Cities.
- Solar PV projects with aggregate capacity of 8069.16 kWP and Solar Water Heating System with aggregate capacity of 7894 meter square collector area have been sanctioned under the programme.

- While Rs. 101.64 crore has been sanctioned, Rs. 25.92 crore has been released under scheme “Development of Solar Cities” so far.

India-UAE to ink 12 pacts during PM Modi’s visit
As many as 12 agreements will be signed during Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s visit to the UAE later this week as India and the oil-rich Gulf nation look to intensify economic cooperation.

- The agreements will include areas like finance and skills development.
- Modi will start his visit to three West Asian countries - Palestine, the UAE and Oman - on February 9 with focus on cooperation in key areas of defence, security and counter-terrorism.
- The Prime Minister will participate in the 6th World Government Summit in Dubai on February 10-11 in which India is a partner country.
- This will be PM Modi’s second visit to the UAE. He first visited the country in August 2015.

Haryana launches 'Gobardhan Yojana' to support farmers
The Haryana government has launched the 'Gobardhan Yojana' to provide for the sale of organic manure and cow urine with an aim to benefit farmers.

- A provision of Rs 11 crore has been made to provide benefits of various projects under this scheme, Khattar said while addressing villagers at a 'Kisan Samman Samaroh' in Nizampur village of Sonipat district.

Mumbai airport becomes world’s busiest single-runway airport
On January 20, Mumbai airport created a new world record for single-runway operations by handling 980 arrivals and take-offs in 24 hours.

- With this, the Mumbai Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International airport bettered its own feat of 974 flights in 24 hours, recorded on December 6, 2017.
- Gatwick, the U.K.'s second largest airport, remains the most efficient single-runway airport in the world.

First-ever Pelican Festival held at Atapaka Bird Sanctuary
Andhra Pradesh government has held the first-of-its kind, one-day Pelican Festival at the Atapaka Bird Sanctuary on Kolleru lake.
Koleru is one of the largest freshwater lakes in the country.

Officials made elaborate arrangements to attract tourists for the ‘Pakshula Panduga’ at Atapaka village, located on the borders of the Krishna and the West Godavari districts.

Centre to link driving licence with Aadhaar
The Centre is in the process of linking driving licences with Aadhaar number to weed out fake licences and a software for this covering all states on a real time basis is under preparation, the Supreme Court was told.

A bench comprising Justices Madan B Lokur and Deepak Gupta was informed about it by a court-appointed committee on road safety headed by former Supreme Court judge Justice K S Radhakrishnan.

This assumes significance as a five-judge Constitution bench headed by Chief Justice Dipak Misra is currently hearing a clutch of petitions challenging the constitutional validity of the Aadhaar scheme and the enabling 2016 law.

ISRO sets up 473 Village Resource Centres for rural development
To demonstrate the potential of satellite technology for development of rural areas, ISRO established Village Resource Centres (VRCs) on a pilot scale, in association with selected NGOs, Trusts and State Government Departments.

- VRCs have provided various space technology enabled services such as tele-healthcare, tele-education, natural resources information, advisories related to agriculture, career guidance to rural students, skill development and vocational training etc.
- About Rs 18 crores was spent for establishing 473 VRCs.

Gadkari Inaugurates 5 Highways Projects Around Allahabad
Shri Nitin Gadkari, the Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways, Shipping and Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation inaugurated / laid foundation stone for 137 km of highways projects worth Rs 5632 crore around Allahabad in Uttar Pradesh.

- Besides widening of national highways, this includes construction of a new, six-lane bridge over Ganga at Fafamau, Allahabad.
- Gadkari said that his Ministry plans to build highways worth Rs 2 lakh crore in Uttar Pradesh before the government’s five year term ends next year.

states are now open defecation free: Government
The government informed the Lok Sabha that till date 11 states and union territories (UTs) have been declared open defecation free (ODF) under Swachh Bharat Mission.

- The government is taking various steps under the SBM to make all states in the country ODF, the minister of state in the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Ramesh Chandappa Jigajinagi, said in a written reply.

Pon. Radhakrishnan inaugurates the Third Global Procurement Summit
The Minister of State for Finance and Shipping, Government of India, Shri Pon. Radhakrishnan said that the Government of India attaches great importance to fairness, transparency and accountability in public procurement and it has raised the citizen’s expectation in terms of efficiency and outcomes of public spending.

- He said that the present Central Government has a clear vision of transforming the procurement and public service delivery.
- The Minister for State for Finance Shri Pon. Radhakrishnan was delivering the Inaugural Address after inaugurating the Third Global Procurement Summit in New Delhi.
- The two day Summit is being organized by All India Management Association (AIMA), World Bank and the Government of India.

Inter-Ministerial Committee to tackle menace of trafficking
An Inter- ministerial Committee (IMC) with concerned stakeholders, Ministries/ departments of Government of India along with representatives of some State/UT Governments and CSOs under the Chairpersonship of Secretary, Women and Child Development has been constituted to tackle the menace of trafficking.
As per Ministry of Home Affairs, National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB) the total number of cases of ‘Procuration of minor girls’ has risen from 231 in the year 2006 to 2465 in the year 2016.

**Two-day Conference on Jobs and Livelihood opportunities with CII**
NITI Aayog has organized a two-day Conference on Jobs and Livelihood opportunities in collaboration with Confederation of Indian Industries, CII at Dr. Ambedkar International Centre in the capital.

- The Conference will provide a platform for dialogue between various stakeholders to share their views on the potential of job creation and livelihood opportunities.

**1,86,777 Affordable Houses Sanctioned for Urban Poor Under Pmay(Urban)**
Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs has approved the construction of 1,86,777 more affordable houses for the benefit of urban poor under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban) with an investment of Rs.11,169cr with central assistance of Rs. 2,797 cr.

- The approval was given in the 30th meeting of the Central Sanctioning and Monitoring Committee in its meeting.
- With the above proposed houses, cumulative houses under PMAY(U) would become 37,83,392 after final approval from CSMC.
- Further after subsuming projects of RAY scheme the total number of houses being funded under PMAY(Urban) would be 39,25,240 houses.

International Conference on Unani Medicine inaugurated
The Minister of State (IC) for Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region, MoS PMO, Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, Department of Atomic Energy and Space Dr. Jitendra Singh has inaugurated the two-day International conference on Unani Medicine on 10th February, 2018 at New Delhi.

- This year is special for Unani fraternity as it is the 150th Birth Anniversary of Hakim Ajmal Khan.
- To mark this day, the Central Council for Research in Unani Medicine (CCRUM), under the Ministry of AYUSH is organizing a two-day International Conference on Unani Medicine as part of celebration of Unani Day.
- The theme of the conference is Integration of Unani System of Medicine in mainstream healthcare.

"Swachh Bharat Sanitation Park” inaugurated in Delhi
The Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, in collaboration with the Environmental Sanitation Institute and Tata Trusts, has developed a Sanitation Park which was inaugurated in the Capital by Union Minister, Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Sushri Uma Bharti, and Secretary, Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Shri Parameswaranlyer.

- The Sanitation Park was developed at CGO Complex in New Delhi with an objective to create awareness on various safe technological options.
- The Park demonstrates various options pertaining to toilet technologies and solid and liquid waste management technologies, with a brief description of these technologies.

Shri RK Singh launches ASH TRACK Mobile App
Union Minister of State (IC) for Power and New & Renewable Energy, Shri R.K Singh, launched a Web based monitoring System and a Fly Ash mobile application named ASH TRACK.

- These platforms will enable better management of the ash produced by thermal power plants by providing an interface between fly ash producers (Thermal Power Plants) and potential ash users such as – road contractors, cement plants etc.

WCD Ministry to set up National Women Entrepreneurship Council
The Ministry of Women and Child Development is considering to establish National Women Entrepreneurship Council (NWEC).

- NWEC will promote entrepreneurship as it would be the umbrella organization for socio-economic gender parity, financial inclusion and economic empowerment of women in India.
- This information was given by Minister of State for Women and Child Development, Dr. Virendra Kumar in reply to a question in Lok Sabha.
NITI Aayog releases “Healthy States, Progressive India” Report
NITI Aayog released a comprehensive Health Index report titled, “Healthy States, Progressive India” at a function in the capital.

- The report ranks states and Union territories innovatively on their year-on-year incremental change in health outcomes, as well as, their overall performance with respect to each other.
- The report was released jointly by the CEO, NITI Aayog; Amitabh Kant, Secretary, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare; Preeti Sudan and World Bank India Country Director, Junaid Ahmad.
- States and UTs have been ranked in three categories namely, Larger States, Smaller States, and Union Territories (UTs), to ensure comparison among similar entities.
- Among the Larger States, Kerala, Punjab, and Tamil Nadu ranked on top in terms of overall performance, while Jharkhand, Jammu & Kashmir, and Uttar Pradesh are the top three ranking States in terms of annual incremental performance.
- Among Smaller States, Mizoram ranked first followed by Manipur on overall performance, while Manipur followed by Goa were the top ranked States in terms of annual incremental performance.
- Among UTs, Lakshadweep showed both the best overall performance as well as the highest annual incremental performance.

Government to set up a Cyber Crime Reporting Portal
The Union Home Minister has said the Government has decided to establish a Cyber Crime Reporting Portal to report Cyber Crimes Against Women.

- We will also establish a dedicated Cyber Crime Laboratory to stop Crimes Against Women and Children, he added.
- Shri Rajnath Singh was addressing the gathering after inaugurating the 24th All-India Forensic Science Conference in Ahmedabad.

Government releases Rs 9,940 crore to states for Smart Cities Mission
The Centre has released nearly Rs 9,940 crore to the states so far for the Smart Cities Mission, with Maharashtra accounting for the highest amount of Rs 1,378 crore, followed by Madhya Pradesh getting Rs 984 crore.

- The Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry has announced 99 cities for central assistance under the BJP government's flagship programme.
- The total proposed investment in these cities was Rs 2.03 lakh crore.

Rajnath Singh inaugurates first spoken Sanskrit centre
Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh launched the Centre for learning Sanskrit language in Gujarat University in Ahmedabad.

- The centre will offer a six-month course for people on how to speak the language.
- The coordinator of the course, Atul Unagar, said it was possibly the first such course launched in India.

National Productivity Day and Week
The National Productivity Council is observing National Productivity Day on February 12, and National Productivity Week till 18th February.

- It is the 60th Anniversary of the National Productivity Council and is being celebrated as Diamond Jubilee Year.
- "Industry 4.0 Leapfrog Opportunity for India " has been selected as the theme for the National Productivity Week -2018.

India Among Top Ten Nations in the World in Terms of Forest Area
Strongly emphasising the increasingly green credentials of the country, Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Dr. Harsh Vardhan has said that India has shown an increasing trend in the forest and tree cover, in comparison to the global trend of decreasing forest cover during the last decade.

- Releasing the India State of Forest Report (ISFR) 2017, Dr. Harsh Vardhan pointed out that India ranks among the top ten countries of the world in terms of forest area, despite the fact that none of the other 9 countries has a population density of more than 150
persons per sq km, compared to India, which has a population density of 382 persons per sq km.

- “India is ranked 10th in the world, with 24.4% of land area under forest and tree cover, even though it accounts for 2.4% of the world surface area and sustains the needs of 17% of human and 18% livestock population”, the Minister said.
- Dr. Harsh Vardhan added that as per the latest FAO report, India is placed 8th in the list of Top Ten nations reporting the greatest annual net gain in forest area.

### 4th Meeting of economic advisory council to the Prime Minister

The 4th meeting of the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM) was held on 12th February 2018 under the chairmanship of Dr Bibek Debroy, Chairman, EAC-PM & Member, NITI Aayog.

- Keeping in view the National Health Scheme announced by the Government in the Budget for the year 2018-19 presented in the Parliament on 1st February 2018, EAC-PM discussed the possible modalities of implementing the scheme.
- Dr Shamika Ravi, Part-Time Member of the EAC-PM made a presentation on “Health Reforms”.
- Another Part-Time Member of the EAC-PM, Dr Ashima Goyal made presentation on the draft “The Indian Fiscal - Monetary Framework: Dominance or Coordination?”. Ms Poonam Gupta, Lead Economist - India, World Bank made a presentation on “World Bank Report on Indian Economy”.

### All villages to be linked by roads by 2019

The Centre is making efforts to connect all villages through a road network by next year as part of the 'Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojna', said Union Minister Ram Kripal Yadav.

- Earlier, the target to complete these works was 2022 but it has been advanced to 2019.
- The Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) was launched by the Central government to provide connectivity to unconnected habitations as part of a poverty reduction strategy.

### Radio Umang: India’s first online radio station launched

Radio Umang, India’s first online radio station that allows the listener to just download and tune in, has been launched.

- Listeners can tune in to this online radio station through web streaming or download the app.
- With 24 hours programming, it has found listeners in Hindi speaking regions of India and in over 60 countries worldwide.

### President of India hosts ‘LPG Panchayat’ at Rashtrapati Bhavan

The President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind, hosted an’LPG Panchayat on February 13, 2018 at Rashtrapati Bhavan.

- The LPG Panchayat was organised by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas with an aim to provide a platform for LPG consumers to interact with each other, promote mutual learning and share experiences.
- Each LPG Panchayat has about 100 LPG customers coming together, near their living areas, to discuss safe and sustainable usage of LPG, its benefits and the link between clean fuel for cooking and women’s empowerment.
- The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas intends to conduct 1 lakh such Panchayats across India before March 31, 2019.

### India-Russia Agriculture Business Summit held in New Delhi

As a part of the country-wide year-long celebration of India-Russia Diplomatic Relations, since April 2017, the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare organised two major events, an India-Russia Agriculture Business Summit held in New Delhi and celebration of 70 years of Agricultural Relationship to be held in Suratgarh, Rajasthan on 14th February 2018.

- Shri Gajender Singh Shekhawat, Union Minister of State for Agriculture and Mr Sergey Beletskiy, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Agriculture, Russia addressed the India-Russia Agriculture Business Summit 2018, held at PUSA, New Delhi.
- Several business houses and leaders of business associations of both countries, working in agriculture sector attended the event.
- This will strengthen exchange of expertise to further business ties between the two countries.

### Venkaiah Naidu to inaugurate the Global Theatre Olympics
The Vice President of India, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu will inaugurate the 8th Global Theatre Olympics on 17th February, 2018 at the majestic Red Fort in New Delhi.

- This Global Theatre Festival is being held in India for the first time.
- The 51 days long event will travel to 17 Indian cities with 450 shows, 600 ambience performances and 250 power packed youth forum shows.

R.K. Singh inaugurates ‘Indian Power Stations 2018’ - International Conference
Union Minister of State (IC) for Power and New and Renewable Energy, Shri R.K. Singh inaugurated the ‘Indian Power Stations 2018’ - three-day International Conference on Operations and Maintenance in New Delhi.

- The Minister exhorted the NTPC to become India’s power sector multinational by setting up power plants in other Nations and become world’s largest power producer.
- Shri Singh also added that there was huge opportunity to export cheap power to neighbouring countries which will be beneficial for the entire region.

India’s biggest Global Conference on Pharma Industry and Medical Devices
The Department of Pharmaceuticals (DoP), Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers, along with Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI), is organizing ‘India Pharma & India Medical Device 2018’, with the theme - ‘Affordable and Quality Healthcare’.

- This is the 3rd International exhibition and conference on Pharmaceutical & Medical Device sector and to be held from 15th-17th February, 2018 in Bengaluru.

President inaugurates ‘Agricon 2018’ and ‘Agriexpo 2018’
The President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind, inaugurated the international conference ‘Agricon 2018’ and ‘Agriexpo 2018’ at Chandrashekhar Azad University of Agriculture & Technology (CSAUT), Kanpur on February 14, 2018.

- Speaking on the occasion, the President said that in a country as vast as India, problems of farmers in different regions are different.
- We will have to find solutions according to their needs. Water is a common concern.

- In this regard, the Government has promoted the concept of “per drop, more crop” and this message should reach every farmer in the country.

Meghalaya Governor inaugurates India, Bangladesh ‘Friendship Gate’
Meghalaya Governor Ganga Prasad has inaugurated the "Friendship Gate" constructed with an aim to have a Wagah-like beating retreat ceremony for the Indian and Bangladesh border guards.

- The Friendship Gate has been constructed near Integrated Check post, 90 km South of capital Shillong on border with Bangladesh.

India’s 1st radio festival to be held in Delhi
India’s first radio festival was held in Delhi on February 15, 2018.

- The festival was organised by the International of Women in Radio and Television, in collaboration with UNESCO.
- The radio festival was held to mark World Radio Day 2018, which was on February 13.

Mumbai to host TiE Global Summit
The TiE Global Summit (TGS) will be held in Mumbai on February 21 and 22.

- Helmed by TiE Mumbai, the second edition of the summit will have over 2000 participants, including successful entrepreneurs, industry leaders, leading investors, senior corporate professionals and academia in attendance at the J W Marriott Sahar.
- The summit is being held in association with leading government agencies and over 20 TiE chapters across India, USA, Canada, Singapore, Hong Kong, Australia and Dubai, with the aim of setting the tone for the next wave of business and innovation.

Prime Minister to inaugurate World Sustainable Development Summit 2018
The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, will inaugurate the 2018 edition of the World Sustainable Development Summit (WSDS 2018) at VigyanBhawan in the capital on 16th February.

- WSDS is the flagship forum of The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) and seeks to bring together on a common platform, global leaders and
thinkers in the fields of sustainable development, energy and environment sectors.

- The theme of the Summit this year is ‘Partnerships for a Resilient Planet’.
- WSDS 2018 seeks to create action frameworks to resolve some of the most urgent challenges facing developing economies in the backdrop of climate change.

**ISRO planning to launch Chandrayaan-2 mission around April this year**
The Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER), MoS PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space, Dr Jitendra Singh said that Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is planning to launch Chandrayaan-2 Mission around April this year.

- Chandrayaan-2 is the country's second mission to the moon, he added.
- He was addressing a press conference on the achievements of Department of Space and Department of Atomic Energy.
- Chandraayan-2 is a challenging mission as for the first time we will carry an orbiter, a lander and a rover to the moon.

**National Conference “Agriculture 2022- Doubling Farmers’ Income”**
The Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare (MoA&FW) is organizing a National Conference under the title of “Agriculture 2022 – Doubling Farmers’ Income” at National Agriculture Science Complex (NASC), Pusa, New Delhi.

- It is a two days conference scheduled on 19th and 20th February, 2018.
- The Conference is being organized on the advice of the Hon’ble Prime Minister with a view to identify various critical issues relating to agriculture and farmers’ welfare and finding appropriate solutions.
- The main aim of the conference is to build a consensus around appropriate recommendations that will help in shaping and sharpening the vision of the Government on Doubling Farmers’ Income by 2022 into actionable points.

**Mumbai to have India’s first artificial intelligence centre**
In a first in the country, Maharashtra government will be setting up an institute for artificial intelligence (AI) in Mumbai.

- Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis will unveil the plan for the institute during the Magnetic Maharashtra Summit.
- The Magnetic Maharashtra Summit will be inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on February 18.

**Modi govt to set up 562 more Ekalavya schools**
The government will set up 562 more Ekalavya Model Residential School (EMRS) in tribal areas across the country that will be on par with the Navodaya Vidyalayas, Tribal Affairs minister Jual Oram said.

- Detailing about the budgetary provisions for budget 2018-19, Oram said 271 EMRSs have already been sanctioned out of which 190 are currently operational.
- The EMRS are planned under a government scheme for model residential school for Indian tribals (Scheduled Tribes) across India.

**PM to inaugurate the Fourth Container Terminal of JNPT**
Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi will inaugurate the Fourth Container Terminal (FCT) of Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust in Mumbai.

- With this, JNPT will nearly double its container handling capacity.
- The new FCT will add a capacity of 24 lakh containers per year in Phase-I and after completion of
Phase-II in 2022, the capacity of JNPT will be 100 lakh containers per year.

- The Fourth Container Terminal has been developed on Design, Build, Fund, Operate and Transfer (DBFOT) basis for a concession period of 30 years at an estimated cost of Rs. 7915 Crore.
- The project is being implemented in two Phases, i.e. Phase – I and Phase – II. The indicative cost of the project for Phase – I is Rs 4719 Crore. The foundation stone for the project was laid by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi in October 2015, and Phase I has been completed in record time.

PM Narendra Modi lays foundation stone of Navi Mumbai International Airport
Prime Minister Narendra Modi has laid the foundation stone of the New Mumbai International Airport.

- He performed the Bhumi Poojan ceremony for the upcoming airport.
- The prime minister highlighted the importance of transportation in the faster growth of the economy. He said that to keep with globalisation it is important to get top quality infrastructure.
- On Sagarmala project, he said it will help in ushering in port-led development.

PM Narendra Modi opens Rs 7,900-crore fourth terminal at JNPT
Prime Minister Narendra Modi dedicated the first phase of the Rs 7,900-crore 4th terminal project of the JNPT to the nation, which will raise the cargo handling capacity of the nation’s largest container port by 50 per cent.

- The fourth terminal project seeks to double JNPT’s capacity to nearly 10 million standard container units and will make it the 33rd biggest port globally.
- The nation’s largest port JNPT has a capacity of 4.8 million standard container units capacity now. On completion of the second phase by 2022, total capacity will go up to almost 10 million.

Myriad forms of classical dance in India will be on display at a festival beginning in Khajuraho from February 20.

- The week-long Khajuraho Dance Festival at the temple town in Chhatarpur district is being organised by the culture department of the Madhya Pradesh government.
- The February 20-26 festival will showcase classical dances including Kathak, Odissi, Bharatnatyam, Kuchipudi, Kathakali and Mohiniattam.

Magnetic Maharashtra investors summit inaugurated
Prime Minister Narendra Modi has inaugurated the Global Investors’ Summit at “Magnetic Maharashtra: Convergence 2018 at the MMRDA grounds at Mumbai’s Bandra Kurla Complex.

- This summit is Maharashtra’s first Global Investors Summit and is said to be on the lines of Make In India initiative by PM Modi.
- PM will next inaugurate the Wadhwani Institute for Artificial Intelligence at the University of Mumbai.

Goa Government Launches Motorcycle Ambulance Service
The Goa government has launched a motorcycle ambulance service to provide quick medical help to patients in need in the coastal state.

- Chief Minister Manohar Parrikar unveiled a batch of 20 two-wheeler ambulances which would be deputed in high risk areas like the coastal belt.
- These motorbikes will be equipped with medical facilities, including oxygen cylinders.

PM addresses at the World Conference on IT
Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi on February 19, addressed World Congress on Information Technology in Hyderabad via Video Conference.

- This event is being held in India for the first time.
- It has been organized in partnership with NASSCOM, WITSA and the Government of Telangana.

India to host World Environment Day
India will host the World Environment Day 2018, Union Environment Minister Harsh Vardhan and United Nations Environment Program chief Erik Solheim said.

- The theme for the World Environment Day-2018, held every year on June 5, is “Beat Plastic Pollution”.
Canada hosted the event in 2017. Meanwhile, Harsh Vardhan also launched the first electric charging facility at the Lodhi Road UN office — the first ever in a UN office in India.

**Prime Minister to inaugurate Uttar Pradesh Investor’s Summit in Lucknow**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate two-day Uttar Pradesh Investors’ Summit 2018 in Lucknow.
- While the PM will inaugurate the summit on February 21, President Ram Nath Kovind will be present at the closing ceremony.
- The event has been organized by Uttar Pradesh Government to showcase the investment opportunities and potential in the state.
- Seven nations – Finland, Netherlands, Japan, Czech Republic, Thailand, Slovakia and Mauritius have been identified as country partners for the event.

**Cabinet approves creation of National Urban Housing Fund**

The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has given approval for creation of National Urban Housing Fund (NUHF) for Rs.60,000 crores.
- This fund will be situated in Building Materials and Technology Promotion Council (BMTPC), an autonomous body registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860 under the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.
- The Ministry has so far sanctioned 39.4 lakh houses under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban).

**Cabinet approves Agreement between India and Israel on Film Co-production**

The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has given its ex-post facto approval to an Agreement on Film Co-production between India and Israel signed during the visit of Prime Minister of Israel Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu to India, in the presence of both the Prime Ministers in Hyderabad House in New Delhi on 15th January, 2018.
- Co-production of an Indian film with an international party means that Indian producer can access international funds and can collaborate on the script, talent and distribution at international level.

**Varanasi to hold ‘Swachhagrah – Bapu ko Kaaryaanjali’**

To celebrate the creative and cultural industries in Varanasi and to focus attention on the need for Swachhta by using cultural forms, a Sanskriti Mahotsav “Swachhagrah – Bapu ko Kaaryaanjali” is being organized on the 21st and 22nd February, 2018 at the Man Mandir Ghat and Assi Ghat in Varanasi.
- The Mahotsav will integrate the tangible and intangible heritage along the river-belt and will see the engagement of the academia, artists, artisans, writers, poets, environmental and cultural forums on the use of cultural expressions for conservation and protection of the river and the ancient city.
- The Swachhta drive will be steered by school-children affiliated to Ministry of Culture, Government of India's Interpretation Centres through exhibitions, songs, puppetry, nukkad nataks and folk dances.
- The 2-day event would focus on performances on the theme of ‘Swachhagraha’ presented under the rubric of ‘Swachhagraha: Bapu ko Karyanjali’.

**R.K. Singh inaugurates ‘International R&D Conclave’**

Union Minister of State (IC) for Power and New & Renewable Energy, Shri R.K. Singh inaugurated the ‘International R&D Conclave’- two-day conference on Emerging Opportunities and Challenges of R&D in Indian Power Sector in New Delhi.
- It is being organised by Central Electricity Authority (CEA)
- In his address inaugural, Shri Singh stressed upon the need of a dedicated R&D department in CEA to coordinate the research in power sector.

**Government sets up the “NITI Forum for Northeast”**

The Union Government has issued order setting up the ‘Niti Forum for North-East’.
- The forum will be co-chaired by the Vice-Chairman of NITI Aayog and Minister of State (I/C), Ministry of Development of Northeastern Region (DoNER).
- The forum will have its Secretariat in the Ministry of DoNER.
• The NITI Forum for Northeast is tasked to identify various constraints on the way of accelerated, inclusive and sustainable economic growth in the North East Region of the country and to recommend suitable interventions for addressing identified constraints.

• It will also review the development status in the NER.

NER’s first regional Centre for Agriculture in Mizoram
Israel Ambassador Mr Daniel Carmon informed that a Centre for Agriculture, with collaboration of Israeli expertise, is going to be inaugurated in Mizoram on 7th March this year.

• This will be the first such centre in the North East region of India that is being established with Israeli collaboration, he added.

• Set up with a cost of Rs 8-10 crore, this centre is exclusively for processing of citrus fruits.

• The project has been set up with the tripartite collaboration of Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Government of India, Government of Israel and State Government of Mizoram.

Kerala makes vaccination compulsory for school admissions
The CPI(M)-led Left Front government in Kerala has made vaccination compulsory for school admissions from next academic year onwards.

• Parents will have to show details of shots given to children at the time of enrolment in schools.

• Earlier the government had constituted a 17-member experts panel headed by Dr E Ekbal to chalk out a comprehensive health policy.

Gandhi Nagar becomes the country’s first all-woman managed railway station
The Gandhi Nagar railway station in Jaipur, became the country’s first major railway station to be fully-managed by women.

• Gandhi Nagar is important railway station in Jaipur situated on the Jaipur-Delhi rail route with more than 50 trains passing through the station out of which 25 halting at the station.

• The station has footfall of more than 7,000 passengers every day.

Centre constitutes committee to study Brahmaputra and flood control measures in Assam
The Centre has constituted a committee headed by the Vice Chairman of the NITI Aayog Rajiv Kumar to study the Brahmaputra and flood control measures in Assam and neighbouring states.

• Assam government has submitted required report on flood control measures to the committee.

• Measures are being taken by the Water Resource department to repair the damaged river embankment due to flood.

Indian scientists develop next generation technology loop to generate clean energy
Indian scientists have developed a super critical carbon dioxide Brayton test loop facility that would help generate clean energy from future power plants including solar thermal.

• This next generation technology loop was developed indigenously by Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore.

• This is India’s first test-bed for next generation, efficient, compact, waterless super critical carbon dioxide Brayton cycle test loop for power generation.

• The technology is perhaps the first test loop coupled with solar heat source in the world.

Projects worth nearly Rs. 4,000 crore approved in 9th executive committee meeting of NMCG
In the 9th Executive Committee meeting of National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG), projects worth nearly Rs 4,000 crore were approved including a 20 MLD Common Effluent Treatment Plant (CETP) for tannery cluster at Jajmau in Kanpur in Uttar Pradesh.

• This 3-phased project at an estimated cost of Rs. 629 crore includes pre-treatment unit in 380 individual tannery units, a 20 CETP with physical, biological and tertiary treatment, installation of Zero Liquid Discharge (ZLD)-based pilot plant of 200 KLD capacity among other components.

• The central share of this project is Rs. 472 crore.

• This is a major step forward in arresting the pollution in Ganga emanating from the crucial industrial town of Kanpur.

• The project will be executed by a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) – Jajmau Tannery Effluent Treatment Association.
Mobile app e-saathi launched at UP Investors Summit
On the second and last day of the UP Investors Summit, a mobile application e-Saathi was launched.
- Through the app, people will be able to avail public services sitting at home.
- Deputy Chief Minister Dinesh Sharma said the state government was working to double the capacity of seats in skill development from 500 to 1,000, adding that MoUs worth Rs 1.2 lakh crore had been signed in the sector at the summit so far.

India 7th Most Targeted Nation for Web Application Attacks
Nearly 40 percent of over 53,000 cyber-attacks in India occurred in the financial services sector during 2017, placing it at the seventh spot in the list of targeted countries for Web Application Attacks (WAA), a new report said.
- Security incidents like phishing, website intrusions and defacements, virus and ransomware targeted the rapidly growing of the Banking, Financial services and Insurance (BFSI) sector in India.
- The report, titled "Akamai State of the Internet Security Q4 2017," also stated that the Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attack frequency in the BFSI sector increased by 50 percent in the fourth quarter of 2017.

Parivartan scheme launched in Haryana
The Haryana government launched Parivartan, a scheme designed to address 10 issues, including cleanliness and pollution, in 46 developmental blocks of the state.
- The 10 issues include facilitation of financing, making agriculture profitable and sustainable, improving health services, implementing Swachh Bharat, decongesting market areas, engaging the youth, checking air pollution, ensuring availability of identity-related services, effective policing, and ensuring road order and conduct.
- The chief minister said that for each of the 10 fields, there are three to seven parameters on which the performance of the officers would be assessed.

Shri Anant Kumar Singh Inaugurates Five-Day Handicraft and Gifts Fair
Secretary Textiles, Shri Anant Kumar Singh inaugurated the 45th edition of IHGF-Delhi Fair at India Expo Centre & Mart, Greater Noida.
- Speaking on the occasion, he said handicrafts sector plays a significant role in the country’s economy and provides employment to a vast segment of craft-persons in rural and semi-urban areas and generates substantial foreign exchange for the country while preserving its cultural heritage.
- The Fair will remain open till 27th February, 2018.

The 2 day ‘RAS BANARAS SANSKRITI MAHOTSAV’- concludes in Varanasi
‘Ras Banaras – Swachhagrah – Bapu ko Kaaryaanjali’, a diversified cultural festival organized by the Ministry of Culture at Maan Mandir and Assi Ghat of Varanasi concluded successfully2.
- The festival witnessed folk dance and songs, food & shopping delights in full swing.
- The event appealingly connected country’s youth to various facets of the country’s rich and vibrant culture alongside giving a message of cleanliness to the people of Varansi.

‘Rashtriya Sanskriti Mahotsav’ under ‘Ek Bharat Shrestha Bharat’ begins in Madhya Pradesh
To celebrate the idea of unity in diversity, Ministry of Culture is organising a Rashtriya Sanskriti Mahotsav under the Ek Bharat Shrestha Bharat matrix in Madhya Pradesh beginning February 24 for a duration of 7 days.
- The States paired with Madhya Pradesh are Nagaland and Manipur.
- The Mahotsav will cover a profusion of art forms from classical and folk music and dance, theatre to literature and the visual arts and would offer the chance to experience the best in established and emerging virtuosity.

Guwahati organises tribal festival 'Aadi Mahotsava'
Assam has organised a tribal festival called 'Aadi Mahotsava' at Gandhi Mandir Indoor stadium field in Guwahati to celebrate the ethnic tribal culture of the country.
- The 10-day festival is being conducted by the Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of
India in collaboration with the Ministry of Tribal Affairs in an attempt to celebrate the rare art and culture of the tribal communities.

- The Chief Minister of Assam, Sarbananda Sonowal inaugurated the event.

**Assam to observe ’Rhino Day’ on September 22**
The Assam government will be observing September 22 as ’Rhino Day’ to generate public awareness on protection of the one-horned pachyderm, Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal has said.

- A State Rhino Project in line with National Rhino Project will be launched in Assam soon for protecting the pachyderms from threats of poaching, he said.

**PM launches various projects worth Rs.1000 crores in Daman & Diu**
Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi launched various development projects worth Rs.1000 crores in Daman & Diu.

- He distributed certificates to beneficiaries of programs and addressed a public meeting at the Daman college ground.
- The Prime Minister inaugurated Air Odisha’s flight connecting Ahmedabad with Diu under the UDAN scheme.
- He flagged off Pawan Hans helicopter services from Daman to Diu through a video link.

**International Conference on Sustainable Biofuels 2018**
A two-day International Conference on Sustainable Biofuels is jointly being organized by Department of Biotechnology, Govt. of India on behalf of Mission Innovation and Biofuture Platform at the Stein Auditorium, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi.

- The event will bring together experts from Biofuels sector to take stock of current knowledge, share information and best practices, and build consensus on the actions most needed to move forward.
- Mission Innovation (MI) is a global initiative of 22 countries and the European Union to dramatically accelerate global clean energy innovation.

**‘Dhanush’ ballistic missile successfully test-fired**
India has successfully test-fired the nuclear-capable 'Dhanush' ballistic missile with a strike range of 350 km from a naval ship off Odisha coast, defence officials said.

- The surface-to-surface missile, a naval variant of the indigenously-developed 'Prithvi' missile, was test-fired from the ship positioned near Paradip in the Bay of Bengal.
- 'Dhanush' missile is capable of carrying a payload of 500 kg and hitting both land and sea-based targets.

**India to host 1st International Solar Alliance on 11th March**
India will host the first International Solar Alliance (ISA) summit on 11th March, which will be attended by French President Emmanuel Macron and United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres.

- Efforts are underway to put together 121 projects, which can be signed in two phases - about 50 on March 11 and another 71 on April 20.
- The summit will be held in Delhi.

**PM Narendra Modi launches Amma scooter scheme**
Prime Minister Narendra Modi has launched the Tamil Nadu government’s Amma scooter scheme and a massive tree plantation drive to commemorate the 70th birth anniversary of late chief minister J Jayalalithaa.

- Over one lakh working women will get scooters at subsidised rates.
- The Prime Minister highlighted the programmes rolled out by his government in the last four years for the welfare of women.

**Adityanath inaugurates 2-day ‘Rasotsav’ in Mathura**
Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath inaugurated two-day Rasotsav, jointly organised by the state tourism department, the Brij Tirth Vikas Parishad and the Brajbhumi Vikas trust.

- Local MP, actress-turned-politician Hema Malini has been instrumental in organising the event which is being held at the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Veterinary Institute.
- Adityanath earlier felicitated music maestros Pandit Jasraj and Pandit Hari Prasad Chaurasia.

**CII partnership summit held in Visakhapatnam**
The third Partnership Summit of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) begin in Visakhapatnam, with over 2,000 delegates attending the meet, 40 per cent of them being from abroad.

- Vice-president M Venkaiah Naidu inaugurated the three-day event.
- This summit is being jointly organised by the Andhra Pradesh State Government, the CII, and the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion under Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

Andaman & Nicobar Command to Host Milan 2018
The second week of March will witness Andaman & Nicobar Command hosting a multinational mega event MILAN 2018.

- MILAN is a congregation of littoral navies conducted biennially by Indian Navy at the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, under the aegis of the Andaman and Nicobar Command.
- Besides fostering co-operation through naval exercises and professional interactions, MILAN also provides an excellent opportunity to the participating navies to come together in a spirit of collaboration and mutual understanding to nurture stronger ties.

DRDO Successfully Test Flight Rustom 2
DRDO successfully flew its Rustom 2 at its Aeronautical Test Range (ATR) at Chalakere at Chitradurga.

- This flight assumes significance due to the fact that this is the first flight in user configuration with higher power engine.
- Secretary Deptt. of Defence (R&D) & Chairman DRDO Dr. S. Christopher along with senior scientists witnessed the flight and congratulated Rustom team.

21st National Conference on e-Governance to begin in Hyderabad
The Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG), Government of India, along with the Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology, Government of India in association with Government of Telangana is organizing the 21st National Conference on e-Governance on February 26-27, 2018 in Hyderabad, Telangana.

- Union Minister of State for Science & Technology and Earth Sciences, Shri Y.S. Chowdary will preside over the inaugural session of the conference.
- The theme of the Conference this year is, ‘Technology for accelerating Development’.
- The Inaugural Session will be followed by 3 Plenary Sessions on Day 1 based on themes: Building User Experience, Universalisation and Replication and Governing e-Governance while on Day 2 the two Plenary Sessions will be based on e-Governance Good/Best Practices, Emerging Technologies.

Hyderabad hosted 15th edition of BioAsia 2018
The 15th edition of BioAsia, the annual flagship programme of Government of Telangana was held from 22-24th February 2018 at Hyderabad International Convention Center (HICC) in Hyderabad.

- Theme of BioAsia 2018 was “RIGHT TIME, RIGHT NOW”.
- For this year’s event, Ireland, Netherlands and South Africa were international partners whereas the States of Gujarat, Assam and Rajasthan were the state partners.

UIDAI introduces special blue coloured 'Baal Aadhaar'
Aadhaar is increasingly becoming mandatory to make use of most of the government schemes and other activities such as getting a new SIM card or opening a new bank account.

- Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) has now introduced a blue coloured 'Baal Aadhaar' card for children below the age of 5 years.
- All children below the age of 5 don't need to give biometric details for getting an Aadhaar card.

‘SRIJAN’ has been launched at MyGov portal
Indian Railway Stations Development Corporation Limited (IRSDC) is taking up redevelopment of around 600 major Railway stations across the country.

- In this mega exercise, assistance and involvement of all stakeholders i.e. railway passengers, urban planners, architects, engineers is important.
- Towards this objective of stakeholders’ consultation, an idea competition for development of 635 stations on Indian Railways, ‘SRIJAN’ (Station Rejuvenation Initiative through Joint ActionN) has been launched at MyGov portal since 26.01.2018.
The last date for submission of entries in this competition is 26.03.2018. The winners will get certificates and worthy ideas will be incorporated in the designs.

**Intermodal Stations to come up in 15 cities**
The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has conducted detailed pre-feasibility studies for setting up Intermodal Stations at Nagpur and Varanasi, and the development of DPRs for this is in final stages of completion.

- Fifteen cities across the country have been prioritized for development of IMS of which Nagpur and Varanasi have been selected as pilot projects.
- Intermodal Stations are terminal infrastructure which integrate various transportation modes like rail, road, mass rapid transit system, bus rapid transit, inland waterways, auto-rickshaws, taxis and private vehicles etc, so that people can move from one mode to another seamlessly, with minimum use of automobiles.

**CSIR signs MoU with IORA: CSIR-CIMAP to host coordinating center on medicinal plants**
Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR) has entered into a MoU with the Regional Center for Science and Technology Transfer (RCSTT) of Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) for designating Central Institute of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants, Lucknow (CSIR-CIMAP) as Coordinating Center on Medicinal Plants.

- The MoU was signed by Prof. Anil Kumar Tripathi, Director CSIR-CIMAP and Dr. A. Sedrpousan, Director, IORA-RCSTT.
- The Indian delegation was led by Dr. Girish Sahni, DG, CSIR and Secretary, DSIR.
- The delegation also attended the 31st Khwarizmi International Award Ceremony which was addressed by H.E. Dr. Hassan Rouhani, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran.
- The IORA Center at CSIR-CIMAP will establish a database on the important medicinal plants, their value added products, related experts and industries of the IORA member states and organize meetings and training programmes to promote trade, commerce and scientific exchanges to complement the strength and limitation of the member states.

**Points to Remember**
- EPG is a joint mechanism consisting experts and intellectuals from India and Nepal.
- It was set up in February 2016 to provide suggestions for updating all existing bilateral treaties and agreements between both the countries.
- Next meeting of the group will be held in New Delhi.

**Bihar is national topper in FY17 growth, with 10.3 pc**
Bihar clocked a growth rate of 10.3 per cent in 2016-2017 as against 7.5 per cent in the corresponding fiscal a year ago, according to the latest Economic Survey tabled in the state Assembly.

- Bihar's growth rate is higher than that of the national average of 7.0 per cent, the 12th Economic Survey of Bihar said.
- The state has consistently been revenue surplus, which increased from Rs 5,101 crore in 2012-13 to Rs 10,819 crore in 2016-17.

**Govt sanctions Rs. 1200 cr to clear pollution in Delhi**
In a move to provide Delhi residents relief from the burgeoning air pollution crisis in the city, the central government has sanctioned schemes worth Rs 1,200 crore to keep a check on alarming pollution levels in the capital.

- According to NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant, on account of the air quality worsening in Delhi due to burning crop residue from October to December months, the schemes will help curb pollution.

**Second India-Korea Business Summit Held**
Second India-Korea Business Summit organized by the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP), Ministry of Commerce & Industry, in partnership with ChosunILbo, KOTRA, Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and Invest India, was held in New Delhi.
Aim of the summit is to strengthen the economic relationship, boost trade relations and increase investments between India and Republic of Korea.

The roundtable included delegates from both Governments and 25 CEOs from leading Korean companies with an estimated revenue of USD 575 billion.

**Uma Bharti launches 2nd project of Swajal Yojana in Rajasthan**

Union Minister of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Sushri Uma Bharti, launched the Swajal pilot project at Village Bikhampura, Karauli, Rajasthan.

- Besides ensuring the availability of clean drinking water to every household round the year, the project would also generate employment.
- She inaugurated the pilot Swajal Project at Bikhampura with a budget of more than 54.17 lakh rupees.

**Shri J P Nadda chairs 5th meeting of Mission Steering Group of NHM**

"The Health and Wellness Centers are expected to provide preventive, promotive, rehabilitative and curative care for a package of 12 services."

- This was stated by Shri J P Nadda, Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare as he chaired the 5th meeting of the Mission Steering Group of the National Health Mission (NHM) in New Delhi.
- Shri Hardeep S Puri, Union Minister of State (I/C) Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Shri Ashwini Kumar Choubey and Smt. Anupriya Patel, Ministers of State for Health and Family Welfare and Dr. Rajiv Kumar, Vice Chairman, NITI Aayog were also present at the meeting.

**National Science Day: 28 February**

National Science Day is celebrated in India on 28 February each year to mark the discovery of the Raman effect by Indian physicist Sir Chandrashekara Venkata Raman on 28 February 1928.

- For his discovery, Sir C.V. Raman was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1930.
- The theme of the year 2018 is "Science and Technology for a sustainable future."

**Ireda and Rumsl Signs Agreement for Large-Scale Solar Parks in MP**

Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency Limited (IREDA) and Rewa Ultra Mega Solar Limited (RUMSL) signed an agreement for financing the shared infrastructure of two large Solar Parks in Madhya Pradesh.

- Ministry of New & Renewable Energy (MNRE), World Bank & IREDA have been able to work out a proposal to channelize US$ 100 Million for creating common infrastructure for ultra-mega solar parks in India to achieve the 100 GW solar capacity addition target by 2022, set by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi.
- Under the World Bank Line of Credit, IREDA has sanctioned its first loan of Rs. 210.62 Cr. to RUMSL to finance two such solar parks in the state of Madhya Pradesh.

**India becomes third largest producer of crude steel**

India's crude steel production grew by 6.2 per cent to 101.4 million tonnes (MT) in 2017 compared to 95.5 MT in the previous year, a report by World Steel Association said.

- India has overtaken the US to become the world's third largest steel producer and the country is now looking to bag the second spot from Japan.
- China remained the world leader by producing 831.7 MT in 2017.
- Japan, the second largest global steel producer, witnessed a negative growth as steel output declined by 0.1 per cent.

**Axis Bank launches 4th edition of “Evolve”**


- This edition will span across 30 cities including Nagpur, Surat, Rajkot, Pune, Vishakhapatnam, Trichy, Kanpur, Ludhiana and Jamshedpur.
• The series aims to equip the participating SMEs with new-age strategies, live case studies, operational know-how, regulatory and Government related knowledge skills.

Govt to merge three general insurance companies
As part of divestment of public sector entities, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said the government will merge three general insurance firms into one and subsequently list the entity on stock exchanges.
• Three public sector general insurance companies - National Insurance Co Ltd, United India Assurance Co Ltd and Oriental India Insurance Company - will be merged into a single insurance.
• The minister said the government has begun strategic disinvestment in 24 public sector units (PSUs), including national carrier Air India.

Inland Waterways Authority of India signs agreement with World Bank
Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) signed a project agreement with the World Bank, even as the latter entered into a US $ 375 million loan agreement with the Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance for Jal Marg Vikas Project (JMVP).
• The signing of the Agreement follows the approval of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, for the implementation of the US $ 800 million JMVP for capacity augmentation of navigation on National Waterway-1(River Ganga) from Varanasi to Haldia.
• Out of the remaining amount, US $ 380 million is to be sourced through the Government of India counterpart funds from budgetary allocation and proceeds from the bond issue.
• Another US $ 45 million will come from private sector participation under the PPP mode.
• The JMVP, which is expected to be completed by March, 2023, is being implemented with the financial and technical support of the World Bank.
• The project will enable commercial navigation of vessels with the capacity of 1500-2,000 tons on NW-I.

Cochin Shipyard Limited signs MoU with Russian firm
Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL) and Joint Stock Company United Shipbuilding Corporation (USC), Russia have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to collaborate and engage in Design, Development and Execution of contemporary, State-of-Art vessels for Inland and Coastal Waterways.
• CSL and USC will collaborate for development of High-Speed Vessels, River-Sea Cargo Vessels, Passenger Vessels, Dredgers, and other watercrafts for inland waterways and coastal shipping.
• The MoU will give a push to the Government’s Make-in-India programme, as also its plans to develop eco-friendly and economic transportation along India’s inland waterways and coastal shipping routes under SAGARMALA.

Government nominates two directors to RBI central board
The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has said that the Centre has nominated two directors to its central board.
• The central government has nominated Prasanna Kumar Mohanty and Dilip S. Shanghvi as directors to the Central Board of the Reserve Bank of India for a period upto February 8, 2021 and March 10, 2021 respectively.

Nepal gets a high Rs. 650 crore outlay
India’s annual financial allocation to Nepal for 2018-19 has nearly doubled under the Union Budget presented on February 1.
• The External Affairs Ministry has been allocated a total Rs. 15,011 crore, which indicates a marginal increase of Rs. 1,321 crore over the previous year’s grant.
• For India’s development and diplomatic engagement under the ‘Neighbourhood First’ policy, the Budget has allocated Rs. 5545 crore.
• Bhutan is traditionally the largest recipient of Ministry’s allocation.

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

The parametric feedback was captured through a survey of 1100 MSEs in November–December.

CriSidEx will have 2 indices, one for the ‘survey quarter’ and another for the ‘next quarter’ once a trend emerges after few rounds of the survey, providing independent time series data.

The crucial benefit of CriSidEx is that its readings will flag potential headwinds and changes in production cycles and thus help improve market efficiencies.

And by capturing the sentiment of exporters and importers, it will also offer actionable indicators on foreign trade.

Advantage Assam Summit: Investment of Rs 1,00,000 crore committed

Assam's investment scouting exposition "Advantage Assam" attracted series of investment proposal.

- In the two day event as many 200 MOUs were inked and investment proposal to the tune of Rs 1,00,000 crore is committed.
- The event was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on February 3.
- Mukesh Ambani of Reliance Group of Industries announced that his company will be investing close to Rs 2500 crore in next three years.
- Assam Finance Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said that Rs 1500 crore investment is coming in tourism sector. Mahindra will invest in tourism infrastructure in Assam.

Uber, transport ministry partner to push road safety awareness

As part of its ongoing efforts to encourage road safety awareness, ride-sharing company Uber has joined hands with union ministry of road transport and highways to push for the cause in the country which witnesses around five lakh accidents every year.

Uber will jointly promote road safety messaging on its mobile application and the social media through co-branded materials and mediums.

The ministry and Uber will jointly be preparing the learning materials which will be shared and utilised by over 200 driving schools.

ICICI Bank, HDFC Bank approve JFC Finance's bid to acquire Palogix Infrastructure

ICICI Bank and HDFC Bank have approved JFC Finance (India) Ltd's bid to acquire the insolvent Palogix Infrastructure, a 20-year old firm in railways logistics.

- JFC Finance, the Delhi-based non banking firm, has proposed to acquire close to 80% in Palogix for Rs 100-crore.
- The logistics firm owes Rs 150 crore to creditors.

RBI keeps repo, reverse repo rates unchanged

On the basis of an assessment of the current and evolving macroeconomic situation, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) decided to keep the policy repo rate under the liquidity adjustment facility (LAF) unchanged at 6.0 per cent.

- Consequently, the reverse repo rate under the LAF remains at 5.75 per cent, and the marginal standing facility (MSF) rate and the Bank Rate at 6.25 per cent.
- The central bank has upped the inflation forecast for Q4 of this fiscal year to 5.1 percent from 4.3 percent to 4.7 percent earlier and to 5.1-5.6 percent in the first half of next year.
- The GVA forecast for FY18 has been revised down to 6.6 percent from 6.7 percent earlier.

Current Monetary Policy Rates:

- Repo Rate: 6%
- Reverece Repo Rate: 5.75%
- Marginal Standing Facility (MSF) Rate: 6.25%
- Bank Rate: 6.25%
- Cash Reserve Ratio: 4%
- Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR): 19.5%

Mumbai Dabbawalas partner with Paytm Payments Bank

Paytm Payments Bank, a digital bank which provides zero balance accounts and zero charges on digital transactions, partnered with the Mumbai Dabbawala Association, the pioneers of home-cooked food delivery.
• As part of this association, around 5000 dabbawalas will now be able to collect instant payments for their Dabba service through Paytm QR.
• Additionally, they will also avail an easy access to banking and other financial services by opening their bank accounts with Paytm.

RBI to set up ombudsman to further regulate NBFCs
The Reserve Bank of India wants to further tighten the regulations around the Non Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) by setting up an ombudsman for these entities.
• Till now, for consumer complaints, the RBI had made it mandatory for all the the NBFCs to have a grievance redressal officer, whose name and address has to be put up in the offices of the NBFCs.
• However, with an ombudsman in place, the customers can directly file a complaint, as per the RBI guidelines announced during the monetary policy.
• According to RBI, the scheme will cover all deposit-taking NBFCs and those with customer interface having asset size of one million and above initially.

RBI to link base rate with MCLR from 1 April
The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has said it will link the base rate for loans with the marginal cost of funds-based lending rate (MCLR) from 1 April to improve monetary policy transmission.
• This is likely to narrow the gap between the base rate and MCLR, and benefit borrowers who are still using the base rate, said some analysts.

Points to Remember
• Base rate is the minimum rate set by the Reserve Bank of India below which banks are not allowed to lend to its customers. The Base Rate was introduced by RBI in year 2010.
• MCLR stands for Marginal Cost of fund based lending rate, as per RBI notification to be used from 1st April 2016. MCLR is the minimum rate below with a Bank cannot fund any loan.
• MCLR it is set by the Banks or the particular lender while Base Rate was set by the RBI.

Forbes releases first-ever crypto-rich list
Forbes has released its first ever list of richest people in cryptocurrency, which is topped by Ripple co-founder Chris Larsen, with an estimated crypto net worth of USD 7.5-8 billion.
• According to Forbes, the average 2017 price change of Bitcoin, Ethereum and XRP, three of the most common cryptocurrencies, is a whopping 14,409 per cent.
• As per the publication, there are now nearly 1,500 cryptoassets in existence, valued at an aggregate USD 550 billion.

CCI imposes Rs 135.86 crore penalty on Google for search bias
Competition Commission of India (CCI) has found Google to have violated in online general web search and web search advertising services in India, and imposed a penalty of Rs 135.86 crore against the company.
• The order was passed in response to informations filed by Matrimony.com and Consumer Unity & Trust Society (CUTS) in 2012.

OVL, partners acquire 10% stake in Abu Dhabi oilfield
ONGC Videsh Ltd and its partners have acquired a 10 per cent in a large offshore oilfield in Abu Dhabi for USD 600 million.
• This is the first time that Indian oil companies have taken part in an Abu Dhabi oil and gas concession.
• OVL, the overseas arm of state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corp (ONGC), Indian Oil Corp (IOC) and a unit of Bharat Petroleum Corp Ltd (BPCL), paid a signing amount of USD 600 million for a 10 per cent stake in Abu Dhabi National Oil Co’s 40-year Lower Zakum Concession, Offshore Abu Dhabi.

IPPB to enable Digital Payments in Post Offices by April 2018
India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) Expansion Programme continues to make brisk progress and a nation-wide roll-out is scheduled beginning April 2018.
• Once the proposed expansion is completed, IPPB will be providing the largest financial inclusion network in the country, covering both urban as well as rural hinterland with ability to provide digital
payment services at the doorstep with the help of Postmen and Gramin Dak Sewaks (GDS).

- IPPB will also enable more than 17 crore active account-holders of Post Office Savings Bank to make interoperable digital payments including the benefit of NEFT, RTGS, UPI and bill payment services.
- Additionally, the IPPB will enable acceptance of digital payments across post offices in the country in line with the digital payments initiative of the government.

**VPN signs pact with National e-Gov Services**

Punjab National Bank has signed an agreement for information utility with National e-Governance Services Limited.

- The objective of the agreement is to augment the information infrastructure in India.
- The agreement will enable storing of financial information that will help substantiate defaults and verify claims expeditiously.
- This will in turn facilitate resolution in the National Company Law Tribunal in a time bound manner.

**WhatsApp releases payment-enabled beta version in partnership with NPCI**

WhatsApp has released a payment-enabled beta version of its messaging app in India.

- The exercise is being undertaken in partnership with the National Payments Corporation of India, the umbrella body for digital payments.
- WhatsApp allows peer-to-peer payments through the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) infrastructure.

**BoB to shut down its operations in South Africa**

Bank of Baroda will shut down its operation in South Africa—a development that comes within months of the South African Reserve Bank imposing a fine of R11 mn for lapses in compliance.

- Bank of Baroda notified South African Reserve Bank about its plan to exit the country.
- The Registrar, which is part of the South African Reserve Bank (SARB), is in discussions with the Bank of Baroda to ensure its orderly withdrawal from South Africa so that no depositor is disadvantaged.

**KVGB tops in code compliance rating**

The Dharwad-headquartered regional rural bank (RRB) Karnataka Vikas Grameena Bank (KVGB) has been awarded an overall rating of ‘above average’ on code compliance by the Banking Codes and Standards Board of India (BCSBI).

- The bank has been ranked first among 28 RRBs at an all-India survey during 2017-18 by BCSBI.
- BCSBI is an independent body set up by Reserve Bank of India.

**Zoho ties up with ICICI Bank for integrated platform**

Software Company Zoho has tied up with private lender ICICI Bank to provide accounting and banking on an integrated platform.

- The partnership will deliver a streamlined digital banking experience to customers using Zoho's cloud accounting software, 'Zoho Books'.
- This will also help businesses eliminate data entry, automate reconciliation, provide multiple payment options to their customers, request working capital loans, and pay suppliers directly from their accounting platform.

**PNB detects Rs 11,300 crore fraudulent transactions at Mumbai branch**

State-run Punjab National Bank (PNB) said it had detected some “fraudulent and unauthorised” transactions worth about $1.77 billion (about Rs 11,300 crore) at one of its branches in Mumbai.

- The bank said the transactions were for the benefit of a few select account holders with their apparent connivance.
- PNB, the country’s second-biggest state-run lender and fourth-biggest overall by assets, did not name the people involved.

**Equitas Bank launches digital savings account**

Equitas Small Finance Bank has introduced ‘selfieSavings’, an interactive digital savings account.

- This account can be opened with the web-based interactive video form by using Aadhaar number, PAN and other basic details.
The new selfeSavings account has no minimum balance requirement.

It pays an interest rate of 6 per cent per annum for balance below 10 lakh and 6.5 per cent for 10 lakh and above.

NDB to finance Rajasthan Water Sector Restructuring Project
The Loan Agreement for financing of Rajasthan Water Sector Restructuring Project for the Desert Areas was signed between Government of India and the New Development Bank (NDB) on 13th February 2018 at New Delhi.

- This is the first tranche loan of USD 100 million approved by the NDB under the Multi Tranche Financing Facility of USD 345 million for this project.
- The objective of this Project is to rehabilitate the 678 km long Indira Gandhi Canal system built during 1958-63 to prevent seepage, conserve water, and enhance water use efficiency as mandated by both national and state level policies on water use.

Centre to change base year for GDP, IIP to 2017-18
The government will change the base year to 2017-18 for the calculation of GDP and IIP numbers while for retail inflation the year will be revised to 2018, Union minister D V Sadananda Gowda said.

- The statistics ministry has proposed the new base year for GDP and IIP as 2017-18 while for CPI it will be 2018.
- The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MOSPI) has been allocated Rs 4,859 crore in the Union Budget 2018-19.

SBI launches Global NRI Centre in Kochi
The State Bank of India, which has a strong NRI customer base of over 33 lakh, has launched its Global NRI Centre (GNC) in Kochi.

- The GNC will be a one-stop customer service centre for all Non-Resident Indian (NRI) banking related services.
- To enhance the service experience of NRIs, the bank also launched other services such as Wealth Management, SBI Intelligent Assist, Free Post Box Service, SBI Mingle for NRIs and Remittance facility for US-based customers.

Milkbasket recognised as 'Startup of the Year' 2017
Milkbasket, India’s first and largest micro-delivery platform has been recognised as 'Startup of the Year' 2017 at the 7th Small Business Awards.

- The Startup of the Year award is dedicated to young SMEs, aged 7 years or less, with great potential to become big in local/international markets.
- Launched in early 2015, Milkbasket is India’s first and largest daily micro-delivery service.

TCS recognised as a global Top Employer for the third consecutive year
India's largest IT services company TCS is recognised as world's best employer by the Top Employer Institute for the third consecutive year.

- The Top Employer Institute, Amsterdam-based global certification company in employee conditions, selected TCS for its exceptional employee offerings from a pool of more than 1,300 companies in 113 countries.
- TCS picked up the latest Top Employer endorsement for 27 of its individual country teams across Europe, Asia Pacific, North America, Latin America and the Middle East.

Amazon Becomes World’s Third Most Valuable Company
Amazon’s market value surpassed Microsoft’s for the first time, making Amazon the world’s third most valuable company.

- Apple and Alphabet stand ahead of Amazon as the most valuable companies in the world.
- Microsoft, now ranked fourth, follows, ahead of Tencent and Facebook.

RBI sets up panel to probe PNB Fraud
In the wake of the Rs 11,300 crore fraud at the Punjab National Bank, the Reserve Bank of India has constituted a five member panel under former board member Y H Malegam.

- The Panel will look into the wide divergence by banks in asset classification and provisioning and reasons for frauds.

BSNL signs pact with Japan’s NTT AT for futuristic tech, 5G test
State-owned telecom firm BSNL and Japan’s NTT AT along with their Indian partner Virgo Corps, have signed an agreement to collaborate in developing futuristic technologies such as artificial intelligence / IoT and jointly create a 5G test bed.

- The agreement is in line with the vision of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to collaborate on the next generation technologies.

**British bank RBS hires “digital human” Cora on probation**

A life-like avatar called Cora is being put through her paces by Royal Bank of Scotland, helping customers with basic queries and giving its digital banking drive a more human face.

- RBS, which recently axed a quarter of its branches and has announced thousands of job cuts in the past year alone as it reduces costs, will only deploy Cora to NatWest customers if the bank's female avatar passes her probation period.
- Cora, which is undergoing advanced testing as part of a pilot programme at RBS, could even be used to train members of staff.

**EPFO cuts interest rate to 8.55% for 2017-18**

Retirement fund body Employees’ Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) has reduced interest rate on deposits to 8.55% for 2017-18 following a general decline in interest rates.

- The decision was taken by EPFO’s central board of trustees at its 220th board meeting, labour minister Santosh Kumar Gangwar said.
- EPFO had announced an interest rate of 8.65% for 2016-17 and 8.8% in 2015-16.

**India signs MoU with Canada’s International Development Research Centre**

A Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the Republic of India and Canada’s International Development Research Centre (IDRC), to usher the “programme based research support” in addressing current and future global and local developmental challenges, was signed on 22 February, 2018.

- Since 1972, IDRC has funded 551 research activities worth CA$159 million in India through institutions, researchers and NGOs.

- During the last five years (2012-17), 96 research projects worth CA$ 51 million were funded by the IDRC in India.

**Telangana, Taiwan signs agreement for better technology partnership**

The Telangana Government has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Taoyuan City of Taiwan for better technology partnership in the state.

- The World Congress on Information Technology (WCIT) 2018, concluded earlier with Telangana, India handing over the baton to Armenia for the 2019 edition.

**Aditya Birla Idea Payments Bank begins operations**

Aditya Birla Idea Payments Bank today became the fourth such entity to begin operations since issuance of licenses to 11 firms by RBI in August 2015.

- Telecom major Bharti Airtel was the first to begin the payments bank operations in November 2016 and the Aditya Birla group-promoted firm is the latest to join the bandwagon.
- The Department of Posts, which also got a license for a payment bank is yet to start its services formally, but it is running some operations on a pilot basis.

**ADB and India Sign $ 84 Million Loan for Bihar**

The Government of India and The Asian Development Bank (ADB) signed a $84 million loan for improvement and expansion of water supply in Bhagalpur and Gaya towns in Bihar.

- The tranche 2 loan is part of the $200 million multi-tranche financing facility (MFF) for the Bihar Urban Development Investment Program that was approved by ADB in 2012 to provide sustainable urban infrastructure and services in four towns in Bihar – Bhagalpur, Gaya, Darbhanga and Muzaffarpur.
- The loan will have a 25-year term, including a grace period of 5 years, an annual interest rate determined in accordance with ADB’s lending facility based on the London interbank offered rate (LIBOR), and a commitment charge of 0.15% per year.
Indo-German MOU on technical cooperation under Urban Development
An Indo-German MOU has been signed for an “Implementation Agreement in Sustainable Urban Development and Smart Cities in India”.
- The objective of the programme is to develop and apply concepts for sustainable urban development about the provision of urban basic services and housing in selected cities and Smart Cities in India.
- The ‘Sustainable Urban Development Programme - Smart Cities in India’ project is supported by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and jointly implemented by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Government of India and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ).

RBI launches Ombudsman Scheme for NBFCs
The RBI has launched ‘Ombudsman Scheme’ for non-banking financial companies (NBFC) for redressal of complaints against them.
- The scheme will provide a cost-free and expeditious complaint redressal mechanism relating to deficiency in the services by NBFCs covered under the Scheme.
- The offices of the NBFC ombudsmen will function at four metro centres -- Chennai, Kolkata, Mumbai and New Delhi.

Paytm launches two more firms to enter insurance sector
On a rapid expansion mode mobile fintech major Paytm has launched two more firms with an aim to enter the insurance sector in the country.
- This move has taken its total count of companies to six.
- The Vijay Shekhar Sharma-led firm has started Paytm Life Insurance Corporation Limited as well as Paytm General Insurance Corporation Limited. Both the companies have Sharma as one of the directors.

EESL signs MoUs of Rs. 3,730 crore with Andhra govt
The government-run Energy Efficiency Services Ltd (EESL) has signed MoUs with Andhra Pradesh government to invest Rs 3,730 crore in the state.
- The MoUs, spanning across e-mobility, energy efficiency and renewable energy and aimed to create 15,000 jobs, were signed at CII Partnership Summit.
- Through the MoUs, EESL, a joint venture of PSUs under the Union Power Ministry, hopes to save Rs 3,185 crore.

E-way bill for interstate goods movement from April 1
The e-way bill, to be generated under the GST for all inter-state movement of goods valued at over Rs 50,000, will become mandatory from April 1.
- The recommendation of the Group of Ministers on Information Technology would be considered by the Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council during its March 10 meeting.
- However, the implementation date for intra-state movement of goods is not yet decided and it would be implemented in a phase-wise manner.

Centre names 9,500 ‘high risk’ NBFCs
The government has categorised about 9,500 non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) in the country as “high risk” prone as they had not complied with a stipulated provision of the anti-money laundering law.
- A list of 9,491 “high risk financial institutions” has been published by the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) that functions under the Union Finance Ministry.

Google ties up with SBI for mobile payments app Tez
Internet giant Google has tied up with State Bank of India (SBI) for its mobile payments app Tez.
- Through this partnership, Google Tez will allow users to create an SBI UPI Id - @oksbi and get access to exclusive offers for SBI customers.
- The partnership will focus on building unique propositions for users and merchants, including specially curated offers.

KYC norms for e-wallets made mandatory from March 1
Users of prepaid payment instruments (PPI) such as mobile wallets will have to complete the KYC requirements by February 28 as the Reserve Bank of India has refused to extend the deadline any further.
Those who do not comply with the KYC norms will not be allowed to load money into their respective wallet accounts or carry out remittance-based transactions.

They will also not be allowed to transfer the cash in the wallet account to their bank accounts.

**Neelam Kapur appointed as Sports Authority of India DG**
Senior-most Indian Information Service officer Neelam Kapur, who had served as UPA government’s spokesperson, was appointed director general (DG) of Sports Authority of India (SAI).
- The 1982 batch IIS officer is at present the Principal Director General of the Directorate of Field Publicity (DFP).
- Kapur was appointed the Principal Director General of the Press Information Bureau (PIB) by the then UPA government in 2009.

**Thanglura Darlong appointed Ambassador of India to the Romania**
Shri Thanglura Darlong (IFS: 1988) has been appointed as the next Ambassador of India to Romania.
- He is expected to take up his assignment shortly. He is presently CLO, South Asian University, New Delhi.

**Cyprus President Nicos Anastasiades re-elected**
Cyprus' conservative incumbent Nicos Anastasiades was re-elected to another five-year term, defeating left-wing rival Stavros Malas.
- With almost all of the votes counted, Anastasiades held a 12-point lead over Malas.
- Anastasiades defeated Malas in the 2013 presidential election too.

**Points to Remember**
- Cyprus, officially the Republic of Cyprus is an island country in the Eastern Mediterranean and the third largest and third most populous island in the Mediterranean.
- Nicosia is the capital of Cyprus while Euro is its currency.

**Niti Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant gets extension till June 30, 2019**
Niti Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant was given an extension till June 30 next year, according to an official order.
- He was appointed the Chief Executive Officer of the government think tank on February 17, 2016 for a two-year term.
- Kant is a 1980 batch IAS officer of Kerala cadre.

**A.K Prasad Assumes Charge as Financial Commissioner, Railway Board**
Shri A.K.Prasad has been appointed as new Financial Commissioner (Railways), Railway Board and ex-officio Secretary to Government of India vice Shri B.N.Mohapatra, who superannuated on 31st January, 2018.
- Shri A.K.Prasad has since assumed charge as the new Financial Commissioner (Railways), with effect from 1st February 2018.
- Shri Prasad is an officer of Indian Railway Accounts Service (IRAS) of 1981 batch. He has done his Masters in Economics from Delhi School of Economics in the year 1980.

**Atul Anand takes Over as the Assistant Chief of Naval Staff – FCI**
Rear Admiral Atul Anand, VSM has been appointed as the Assistant Chief of Naval Staff – Foreign Cooperation and Intelligence (ACNS (FCI)) at IHQ MoD (Navy), New Delhi.
- He was commissioned in 1988, in the Executive Branch of the Indian Navy.
- An alumnus of the National Defence Academy, Khadakvasla, the Defence Services Command and Staff College, Mirpur, Bangladesh and the National Defence College, New Delhi, the Admiral is a specialist in Navigation and Direction.
- He has also attended the prestigious Advance Security Cooperation Course at the Asia Pacific Centre for Security Studies, Hawaii, USA.

**Hardayal Prasad appointed as SBI Card MD & CEO**
SBI Card, the country’s second largest credit card issuer, has a new Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer in Hardayal Prasad.
• Prasad has taken over from Vijay Jasuja, who superannuated on January 31.
• Prior to this appointment, Prasad was with State Bank of India, holding multiple leadership positions in the bank.
• He had joined SBI as a probationary officer in 1983.

Amitabh Bachchan to be brand ambassador for The Muthoot Group
The Muthoot Group has roped in Amitabh Bachchan as brand ambassador to represent them in their national campaigns.
• The Muthoot Group is known for its uncompromising values and trust earned over 131 years of excellence in business.

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

NPCI appoints Biswamohan Mahapatra as chairman
The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) said it has appointed Biswamohan Mahapatra as non-executive chairman of the board for a period of two years, with effect from February 8, 2018.
• Mahapatra succeeds B Sambamurthy, who has been the interim chairman.

Points to Remember
• National Payments Corporation of India is the umbrella organisation for all retail payment systems in India.
• Founded in 2008, NPCI is a not-for-profit organisation registered under section 8 of the Companies Act 2013.

Hamid elected Bangladesh president for second term
Abdul Hamid has been elected president of Bangladesh for a second consecutive term.
• Hamid has been elected president as no one else is running in the upcoming presidential election.
• Hamid took office on April 24, 2013, and his five-year term expires on April 23.
• According to article 123 of the constitution, presidential election should be held between 90 and 60 days before the five-year term expires.

Chandrashekhara Kambara elected Sahitya Akademi president
Kannada writer and Jnanpith awardee Chandrashekhara Kambara has been elected president of Sahitya Akademi, defeating his nearest rival, Odiya novelist and another Jnanpith recipient Pratibha Ray, by 27 votes.
• Ray secured 29 votes as against Kambara’s 56, while the third candidate, Marathi writer Bhalchandra Nemade, got four votes.
• Kambara has served as a member of Sahitya Akademi’s executive board for more than 10 years and has been its vice-president since 2013.

Ashok Das appointed next Ambassador of India to Brazil
Shri Ashok Das (IFS: 1987) has been appointed as the next Ambassador of India to the Federative Republic of Brazil.
• He is expected to take up his assignment shortly. He is presently Additional Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs.

Jacob Zuma quits as South African president
Jacob Zuma resigned as President of South Africa, reluctantly heeding orders by the ruling African National Congress (ANC) to bring an end to his nine scandal-plagued years in power.
• Cyril Ramaphosa is likely to sworn in as the new president.

South Africa
• South Africa, officially the Republic of South Africa (RSA), is the southernmost country in Africa.
• Capital: Pretoria (executive), Bloemfontein (judicial), Cape Town (legislative)
• Currency: Rand.
• South Africa is one of the members of BRICS group.
K P Sharma Oli becomes Nepal PM for second time
CPN-UML chairperson K P Sharma Oli has become Nepal's Prime Minister for the second time.

- President Bidhya Devi Bhandari appointed 65-year-old Oli as the country's 41st prime minister.
- Oli, who is known for his pro-China stance, had served as the country's prime minister from October 11, 2015 to August 3, 2016.
- Earlier, former prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba had addressed the nation and submitted his resignation to the president.

Cyril Ramaphosa elected President of South Africa
Cyril Ramaphosa has been elected as South Africa’s new president by ruling party legislators after the resignation of Jacob Zuma.

- Mr. Ramaphosa was the only candidate nominated for election in the parliament after two opposition parties said they would not participate.
- Chief Justice Mogoeng Mogoeng presided over the parliamentary election.

Archaeologist Arvind Jamkhedkar to head ICHR
Archaeologist and historian Arvind P. Jamkhedkar will be the next Chairman of the Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR).

- He will replace Prof. K. Sudershan Rao, whose term as ICHR chief was mired in controversy.
- The post fell vacant after Prof. Rao’s retirement. Prof. Jamkhedkar is at present Chancellor of Deccan College, Pune.

Haruhiko Kuroda reappointed as Bank of Japan chief
Japan's government has reappointed Bank of Japan Governor Haruhiko Kuroda for another term and chose Masazumi Wakatabe as his deputies.

- The selection of the new BOJ leadership comes at a crucial time for Japanese and global markets, which have been rattled in recent weeks.

Govt appoints two new EDs in banks
Debashish Mukherjee and Murali Ramaswami have been appointed executive directors of Canara Bank and Vijaya Bank respectively, according to an official order.

- Mukherjee is at present the general manager of United Bank of India and Ramaswami is the GM of Vijaya Bank.
- Mukherjee's appointment is initially for three years but it is extendable by two years after review of his performance, the order issued by personnel ministry said.

Govt ropes in Nandan Nilekani for developing IT infrastructure for healthcare scheme
Tech billionaire Nandan Nilekani will assist the government in developing IT infrastructure for the mega National Health Protection Scheme (NHPS), which seeks to cover 10-crore families.

- The IT infrastructure for the healthcare scheme will be of a huge scale as was required for Aadhar and will have to be scaled up gradually in view of the massive range of the programme.
- Former UIDAI chairman Nilekani - the brain behind the Aadhaar - is also a member of the GST return simplification committee.

Rahul Mahajan is Rajya Sabha TV Editor-in-Chief
Senior journalist Rahul Mahajan has been appointed Editor-in-Chief of Rajya Sabha TV, owned and operated by the Upper House of Parliament.

- A five-member selection panel, chaired by Prasar Bharti Chairman A. Surya Prakash, recommended Mahajan's appointment and Rajya Sabha Chairman M. Venkaiah Naidu approved it.
- Mahajan, who hails from Shimla in Himachal Pradesh, has 26 years of media experience, including 23 years in various news channels.

Subbarayudu appointed the Ambassador of Bolivia
M. Subbarayudu has been appointed the next Ambassador of India to Plurinational State of Bolivia.

- He is currently the Ambassador of India to Lima.
- He has been concurrently appointed the next Ambassador of India to Bolivia. He will soon take up this new assignment.

Michael McCormack becomes Australia deputy PM
A former regional newspaper editor, Michael McCormack, has been chosen as Australia’s new deputy prime minister.

- He replaces Barnaby Joyce as leader of the Nationals, the governing coalition's junior partner.
- Mr Joyce resigned over his affair with a former staffer, after holding the post for two years.

Magadhi writer Madhukar awarded Sahitya Akademi’s Bhasha Samman
Magadhi writer Shesh Anand Madhukar, who has been working extensively for the development of the language, was honoured with this year’s Sahitya Akademi Bhasha Samman award.

- The second writer of Magadhi language to be given the award, Madhurkar was conferred the award, comprising a Rs 1 lakh cheque and a memento, by Sahitya Akademi President Vishwanath Prasad Tiwari.

Shabnam Asthana wins Times Power Woman 2017 award
The Times Group recently celebrated the invaluable contribution of women by introducing The Times Power Woman 2017 (Pune) awards.

- Shabnam Asthana was awarded the ‘Times Power Women of the Year 2017’ - for Global PR.
- The award was conferred on her by Dilip Kamble, Minister of State for Social Justice and Special Assistance in the Government of Maharashtra.

Shyam Benegal Named For V Shantaram Lifetime Achievement Award
Veteran filmmaker Shyam Benegal has been selected for the prestigious 'V. Shantaram Lifetime Achievement Award' at the Mumbai International Film Festival (MIFF-2018).

- The award, carrying a trophy, a citation, shawl and cash prize of Rs 10 lakh, will be conferred on Benegal by Maharashtra Governor C.V. Rao at the MIFF 2018.
- During his career, he has made 28 feature films including classics like Ankur, Nishant, Mandi, Bhumika, Manthan and Junoon and 41 documentaries.

Reliance Industries wins Golden Peacock Award 2017 for CSR
Reliance Industries (RIL) said it has been awarded the Golden Peacock Award 2017 for corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives.

- The award was a recognition of the work done by its CSR arm Reliance Foundation under Founder and Chairman Nita Ambani.
- Golden Peacock Awards, instituted by the Institute Of Directors (IOD) in 1991 in India, are regarded as a benchmark of Corporate Excellence.

Hindi writer Krishna Sobti gets Jnanpith Award
Renowned Hindi writer Krishna Sobti has been conferred upon the Jnanpith Award for her contribution to Hindi Literature.

- Noted Poet Ashok Bajpai received the award from Jnanpith Award Committee Chairman Justice Bijendra Jain on behalf of Krishna Sobti.

Modi conferred ‘Grand Collar of the State of Palestine’
Prime Minister Narendra Modi was conferred the ‘Grand Collar of the State of Palestine’ by President Mahmoud Abbas.

- President Abbas conferred the honour on Mr. Modi after the conclusion of the bilateral meeting between the two leaders.
- Mr. Modi is the first Indian Prime Minister to make an official visit to Palestine.

Liberia’s Ellen Johnson Sirleaf wins Mo Ibrahim leadership prize
The Mo Ibrahim Foundation says it has awarded the $5 million African Leadership prize to former Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.

- The Ibrahim Prize, which honours role models on a continent where many leaders have stayed in power for decades, has been awarded just four times before since it was established in 2006.
- Ms. Sirleaf is the fifth person and first woman to receive it.
- Ms. Sirleaf, who was President from 2006 to 2017, stepped down in January, handing power to President George Weah.
Ramesh Sippy to get inaugural Raj Kapoor Award
Veteran filmmaker Ramesh Sippy, who directed the classic blockbuster Sholay and tele-serial Buniyaad, will be conferred the first Raj Kapoor Award for Excellence in Cinema.
- Instituted by the Asian Centre for Entertainment Education (ACEE), along with various international organisations like World Bank, UNICEF, USC Annenberg Normal Lear Centre, Hollywood Health and Society, Cinepolis Foundation and CMS, the Raj Kapoor Trophy will be unveiled in Mumbai.

Steve Smith wins second Allan Border medal
Steve Smith and Ellyse Perry stole the show at the Australian cricket’s Allan Border Medal night.
- While Smith claimed his second Allan Border Medal and was voted as the Test Player of the Year at the annual awards night, Perry was conferred with the Belinda Clark Medal.
- Incidentally, Smith had also won the coveted medal in 2015 and thus became only the fifth player to win it on more than one occasion.
- Along with Smith, teammate David Warner was voted as one-day player of the year while Aaron Finch was named as T20 International Player of the Year.
- Meanwhile, young Jhye Richardson was announced as the Bradman young cricketer of the Year.

Tata Steel bags ‘most ethical company’ award
Tata Steel has been recognized by Ethisphere Institute, a global leader in defining and advancing the standards of ethical business practices, as the World’s Most Ethical Company for the year 2018.
- The company has received the award for the sixth time in the ‘Metals, Minerals and Mining’ category.
- IT company WIPRO has also won the award in a separate category.

Aadhaar awarded as the ‘Best Emerging Technology’
India’s Aadhaar and Umang App have won awards at recently concluded World Government Summit 2018 in Dubai.
- Umang App won in Best m-Government Service Award for Accessible Government Category and Aadhaar won in the Best Government Emerging Technologies Award.
- The awards were presented by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior of UAE Sheikh Saif bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

Sanjiv Bajaj is the EY Entrepreneur of the Year 2017
Sanjiv Bajaj, Managing Director, Bajaj Finserv, has been named the Earnest Young’s Entrepreneur of the Year 2017.
- Dr. E Sreedharan was honored with the Lifetime Achievement Award for transforming the face of public transportation in India.

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

Ex-President Pranab Mukherjee to get honorary D.Litt from IIEST
Former President Pranab Mukherjee will be conferred an honorary D.Litt by the Indian Institute of Engineering Science and Technology (IIEST).
- Mukherjee will be conferred the honour during IIEST convocation on March 4 for his role as a public figure for many decades.
- IIEST is in Howrah district's Shibpur. Mukherjee was awarded an honorary D.Litt by Jadavpur University in December last year.

BAFTA Awards 2018: Full winners list
The 71st British Academy Film Awards were presented on 18 February. Below is the full list of with winners.
- Best Film: "Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri"
- Outstanding British Film: "Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri"
• Outstanding Debut By A British Writer, Director Or Producer: "I Am Not A Witch"
• Film Not In The English Language: "The Handmaiden"
• Documentary: "I Am Not Your Negro"
• Animated Film: "Coco"
• Director: "The Shape Of Water," Guillermo Del Toro
• Original Screenplay: "Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri," Martin McDonagh
• Leading Actress: "Frances McDormand, "Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri"
• Leading Actor: Gary Oldman, "Darkest Hour"
• Supporting Actress: Allison Janney, "I, Tonya"
• Supporting Actor: Sam Rockwell, "Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri"
• Original Music: "The Shape Of Water"
• EE Rising Star Award (voted for by the public): Daniel Kaluuya

Rahane, Rohit Sharma awarded Shiv Chhatrapati State Sports Awards
Indian cricket team members Ajinkya Rahane and Rohit Sharma have both been awarded Shiv Chhatrapati State Sports Awards by the Government of Maharashtra.

• Former India cricketer and assistant coach of Indian Premier League (IPL) franchise Delhi Daredevils Pravin Amre was awarded Coach of the Year for the 2016-17.

Table Tennis: Sharath Kamal lifts National Men’s singles title for the eighth time
Sharath Kamal has lifted the National men’s singles title for the eighth time, equalling the feat of Kamlesh Mehta.

• In the final at the Senior Table Tennis Nationals in Ranchi, he defeated top-seed Anthony Amalraj 4-1.
• Suthirtha Mukherjee from West Bengal emerged the new women champion, beating Hyderabad Nationals winner Manika Batra 4-3.

India Open Boxing: Mary Kom Clinches Gold
M C Mary Kom claimed a gold but the Indian men's juggernaut was denied a complete sweep by traditional powerhouses Cuba and Uzbekistan on an exciting final day of the India Open boxing tournament in New Delhi.

• Mary Kom won against Filipino Josie Gabuco 4-1 en route to her gold in the 48kg class among women.
• She had also claimed a gold medal at the 2015 Nation’s Cup in Serbia.

Vidarbha claims U-19 Cooch Behar Trophy
Vidarbha Under-19 cricket team once again proved their excellence as they clinched their maiden Cooch Behar trophy after claiming the maiden Ranji Trophy title earlier this season.

• The U-19 team defeated Madhya Pradesh on the basis of first innings lead in the final held at Nagpur.
• Captain and opener Atharva Taid led from the front as he struck 320 runs to power Vidarbha to a massive 614 for the loss of ten wickets.
• Earlier Madhya Pradesh scored 289 in their first innings.

Under-19 World Cup: India lifts their fourth World Cup
India thump Australia by 8 wickets to be crowned Under-19 World Cup Champions.

• Chasing 217, India wrapped up the win inside 39 overs.
• Manjot Kalra scored a sensational unbeaten century and was named Man of the Match.
• Shubman Gill was declared man of the series.
• The final match was played at Bay Oval, Mount Maunganui, New Zealand.

PV Sindhu finishes runner-up in India Open
Defending champion P V Sindhu suffered a narrow defeat in a pulsating final against American Beiwen Zhang to finish runner-up at the India Open Super 300 badminton tournament.

• Playing her second tournament of the new season, Sindhu came agonisingly close to clinching the title before losing 18-21 21-11 20-22 to Zhang in the women’s singles final.
• All England Championships finalist and fourth seed Shi Yuqi of China walked away with the men's crown after beating world no 7 and third seeded Taiwanese Chou Tien Chen 21-18 21-14.
Shubhankar Sharma becomes highest ranked Indian golfer
In-form young golfer Shubhankar Sharma was elevated from 193 to 72, a gain of 121 spots, in the world rankings making him the highest-ranked Indian in the world.
- Sharma has enjoyed a golden run over the past few months on the international stage.
- When Shubhankar entered the event in South Africa he was ranked 462 in the world.

Jhulan Goswami first female cricketer to take 200 ODI wickets
India's veteran pacer Jhulan Goswami has added another feather to her illustrious cap by becoming the first female cricketer to take 200 ODI wickets.
- Goswami achieved the feat during the second ODI between India and South Africa.
- The 35-year-old, playing her 166th ODI, dismissed opener Laura Wolvaardt for her 200th scalp.
- She was adjudged ICC Women Cricketer of the Year in 2007.

2018 Winter Olympics opening ceremony
The opening ceremony of the 2018 Winter Olympics will take place at the Pyeongchang Olympic Stadium in Pyeongchang, South Korea on February 9, 2018.
- The site of the opening ceremony Pyeongchang Olympic Stadium was built specifically for the games.
- These Games will feature 102 events in fifteen sports disciplines.
- Peace will be the central theme of the games.

Haryana crowned champions of Khelo India School Games
Sports powerhouse Haryana topped the overall medal tally after claiming 38 gold medals in the inaugural edition of the Khelo India School Games that concluded in New Delhi.
- Overall, Haryana won 102 medals, with 26 silver and 38 bronze. Maharashtra (110) finished second overall while Delhi (94) came third.

Tamil Nadu win maiden senior national football championship
Tamil Nadu beat Manipur 2-1 to lift their maiden title in the 23rd edition of the Senior Women's National Football Championship in Cuttack.
- Tamil Nadu created history by becoming champions in their first-ever final with Indumathi scoring the opener in the 3rd minute while Indrani made it 2-0 in the 40th minute.

Federer becomes oldest ATP World No.1
Roger Federer added yet another record to his vast collection when he become the oldest ATP world number one by beating Dutchman Robin Haase 4-6 6-1 6-1 to reach the semi-finals in Rotterdam.
- Federer took a wildcard into the ABN AMRO World Tennis event with his eyes fixed on a return to number one for the first time since November 2012.

Roger Federer beats Grigor Dimitrov to win Rotterdam Open title
Roger Federer marked his impending return to the top of the world rankings by sweeping aside second seed Grigor Dimitrov in the Rotterdam Open final.
- The 20-time Grand Slam champion beat world number five Dimitrov 6-2 6-2 6-2 comfortably in 55 minutes for his 97th title.

Manavadiya Rathore wins silver shotgun meet
The promising Manavadiya Singh Rathore has won a silver medal in the Qatar Open Shotgun meet in Lusail, Qatar.
- Participating in the junior men's trap event, Manavadiya shot 118 to finish second on the podium behind Italy's Angelo Scalzone, who shot 119.
- Germany's Jeremy Schulz won the bronze medal with a score of 115.

PyeongChang Winter Olympics concludes
The 2018 PyeongChang Winter Olympics concluded with a spectacular closing ceremony here on February 25.
- The grand event ran through 17 days and saw 2,920 athletes competing from 92 nations.

Points to Remember
- Tokyo will host the 2020 Summer Olympics, while Beijing will welcome the countries for the 2022 Winter Olympics.
- Norway won a record 39 medals overall to finish on top while Germany finish second with 31 medals.
Parupalli Kashyap lifts first title in three years
Commonwealth Games champion Parupalli Kashyap clinched his first international title in over three years as he overcame Malaysia’s June Wei Cheam to emerge men’s singles champion at the Austrian Open International Challenge.
- Kashyap, a former National champion and second seed, saw off Cheam 23-21 21-14 in a 37-minute clash.
- His last title came at the Syed Modi International Badminton Championships in 2015.

Sameer Verma lifts Swiss Open title
Indian shutter Sameer Verma dished out a clinical performance to outwit former world no 2 Jan O Jorgensen and clinch the men’s singles title at the $150,000 Swiss Open Super 300 tournament.
- The 23-year-old Sameer showed great anticipation and technique to bamboozle Jorgensen 21-15, 21-13 in a lopsided contest.

Aruna wins bronze at Gymnastics World Cup
Aruna Budda Reddy became the first Indian gymnast to clinch an individual medal at the Gymnastics World Cup in Melbourne by securing bronze in the women’s vault.
- Reddy, 22, scored 13.649 to finish behind gold medallist Tjasa Kysfel of Slovenia and Emily Whitehead of Australia who took silver.
- The other Indian woman in contention, Pranati Nayak finished sixth with a score of 13.416.

Karnataka beat Saurashtra to win Vijay Hazare Trophy
Sensible batting from opener Mayank Agarwal (90) helped Karnataka outplay Saurashtra by 41 runs in the final match of the Vijay Hazare Trophy 50-overs cricket tournament.
- Following the win, Karnataka pacer Sreenath Arvind also announced his retirement from first-class and list A cricket.
- This is the third title for Karnataka.

Points to Remember
- It is named after the famous Indian cricketer Vijay Haza

Deaths

Veteran Telugu actor Lakshmi Devi passes away
Veteran Telugu actor Lakshmi Devi Kanakala passed away on February 3 at the age of 78.
- Lakshmi used to be a popular actor in the 1980s. She is known for films such as Prema Bandham and Police Lockup.

BJP MP Hukum Singh passes away
BJP MP Hukum Singh (79) died, almost a month after he was admitted to the J P Hospital in Noida with severe breathing problems.
- He was an MLA in Uttar Pradesh for seven terms and a minister in the state before entering the Lok Sabha in the 2014 polls.

Kathakali maestro Madavoor Vasudevan Nair passes away
Kathakali maestro Madavoor Vasudevan Nair collapsed on stage and died while performing at Agasthyacodu Mahadeva Temple, Anchal. He was 89.
- A recipient of several awards, including Padma Bhu shan, he was the follower of the Kaplingattu School, the particular style of south Kerala.

Noted litterateur Chandrasekhar Rath passes away
Eminent litterateur Chandrasekhar Rath has passed away at the age of 89.
- He was recently nominated for Padma Shri by the Union government this year for his contribution towards Odia literature.
- Rath, a prolific writer, has written several novels, short stories, essays and poems during his illustrious career.

Pakistan’s iron lady Asma Jehangir passes away
Pakistan’s top lawyer and human rights activist Asma Jehangir passed away due to a cardiac arrest in Lahore. She was 66.
Known for her bold stance, Asma was the country’s symbol of resistance and a human rights activist who spoke against military dictators and abusers of law for the past five decades.

She headed the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan and remained the Supreme Court Bar Association chairperson.

She was also appointed as UN Rapporteur in the region during the 1990s.

**Former Union minister Bolla Bulliramaiah dies**

Former Union minister and veteran TDP leader Bolla Bulliramaiah died of old age-related illness. He was 92.

- Bulliramaiah, who was known as a genial person, joined the TDP during its inception and became an MP in 1984.
- He was elected to the Lok Sabha from the Eluru constituency in 1991, 1996 and 1999 and served as the Union minister of state for commerce during 1996-98 in the United Front government.

**Long-serving former Dutch prime minister dies aged 78**

The long-serving Dutch prime minister Ruud Lubbers, who led the Netherlands from 1982 to 1994, has died at the age of 78.

- Mr Lubbers had the longest tenure of any prime minister in the country's history, and guided the Netherlands through economic turmoil to prosperity.
- Mr Lubbers headed a conservative administration from 1982 to 1994.

**Telugu actor Gundu Hanumantha Rao passes away**

Well-known Telugu cinema comedian Gundu Hanumantha Rao passed away on February 19 in Hyderabad. He was 61.

- Born in Vijayawada on October 10, 1956 in a middle class family, Mr. Rao dabbled with theatre from a young age.
- The first role he essayed on stage was in a play called Ravana Brahma in Vijayawada.

**Padma Vibhushan cardiologist BK Goyal passes away**

BK Goyal, renowned cardiologist and Honorary Dean of the Bombay Hospital, passed away in Mumbai’s Breach Candy Hospital. He was 82.

- He was awarded the Padma Shri, Padma Bhushan and Padma Vibhushan by the Government of India.
- The Jaipur-born doctor authored a book, Heart Talk, besides having more than 50 publications in various Indian and globally recognized journals.
- In 2012, the All India Medical Council proposed his name for the post of President of India.

**Violinist M S Anantharaman dies aged 94**

Noted violinist M S Anantharaman, a prominent figure in the Parur school of music founded by Sundaram Iyer, died due to age-related illness. He was 94.

- He had popularised the Parur bani with his brother and veteran violinist MSG on the musical map of the world.

**Swachh Bharat Abhiyan ambassador Kunwar Bai passes away**

106 year-old Swachh Bharat Abhiyan Ambassador Kunwar Bai, who was felicitated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi for her unique move to build toilets in her village in Chhattisgarh, died following a prolonged illness.

- On February 21, 2016, while launching the National Rurban Mission Project at a public rally at Dungargarh in Chhattisgarh's Rajnandgaon district, the Prime Minister had touched her feet and felicitated her after he came to know that the woman had sold off about one dozen of her goats to build a toilet in her house and motivated others to make the village open defecation free.

**Bollywood actor Sridevi passes away**

Bollywood actor Sridevi passed away in Dubai after a cardiac arrest. She was 54.

- Sridevi worked in Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Kannada films before entering Hindi films.
- Her most remarkable films include Sadma, Chandni, Himmatwala, ChaalBaaz, Mr India, Nagina, Mawali, Tohfa and Gumrah among others.
The government of India awarded her Padma Shri, the fourth highest civilian honour, in 2013.

Former Cabinet Secretary TSR Subramanian Dies At 79
Former cabinet secretary TSR Subramanian has passed away aged 79, officials said.
• Mr Subramanian was the cabinet secretary from August 1, 1996, to March 31, 1998.
• Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Minister of State (MoS) for Personnel Jitendra Singh and other senior IAS officers have condoled his death.

PM Narendra Modi writes a book titled ‘Exam Warriors’ for students
Prime Minister Narendra Modi has written a book for students who battle stress and anxiety during examinations.
• The book, slated to be released on February 3, talks about the ways in which students can tackle the stress.
• The book has been titled ‘Exam Warriors’ and mentions various means such as practicing yoga.

“A Century is Not Enough”: Autobiography of Sourav Ganguly
Former Team India captain Sourav Ganguly’s autobiography is soon-to-be-published and it is named “A Century is Not Enough”.

The book is co-authored by Gautam Bhattacharya and published by Juggernaut Books.
• The book covers the ups and downs in more than a decade long career of the former Indian captain fondly called ‘Dada’.

Rajnath Singh Release Book Titled “Mere Sapnon ka Bharat”
Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh released a book titled “Mere Sapnon ka Bharat”. It is a compilation of interviews of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee by Tarun Vijay, an ex-MP, at a function in New Delhi.
• The Home Minister described Mr Vajpayee as a distinguished personality who stands alone because of his stature. He is respected by all cutting across the political parties divides.

Sachin Tendulkar launches book on child health care
Legendary Indian cricketer Sachin Tendulkar has launched a book on child health care titled ‘Even When There Is A Doctor’.
• Penned down by Dr Yashwant Amdekar along with Dr Rajesh Chokhani and Krishnan Sivaramakrishnan, the book describes the role of an individual or parents in improving their child’s health.