

Banking and Finance

ADB, India sign 85 mn dollar loan to support Odisha skill development project

- The **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** and the Government of **India** on Monday signed a **85 million dollar loan to improve the skill development eco-system in Odisha** and establish an advanced skill training centre, the World Skill Centre (WSC), in the state capital Bhubaneswar.

ICICI Securities launches eATM service for retail investors

- Brokerage firm **ICICI Securities Ltd** has announced **launch of eATM orders, which instantly credits into a retail investor's bank account funds accrued from stock sales**. Under the current settlement system, an investor gets money into their accounts after two days (T+2) after a transaction.
- The **ICICIdirect** account almost becomes like an ATM where clients can sell and within 30 minutes walk into any ATM and withdraw the cash. The money would be credited within 30 minutes with a limit of ₹50,000 per client per day.

Tech Mahindra launches first AI based talent exchange market place, 'Talex'

- IT major, **Tech Mahindra Ltd**, on Monday launched the **first Artificial Intelligence (AI) based, talent exchange market place, Talex**, to address issues related to upskilling, reskilling and talent management within the organisation.
- The solution has been developed by an in-house team of young disruptors, company release said.

SBI Mutual Fund launches its first AI powered voice assistant

- **SBI Mutual Fund**, one of India's leading mutual fund houses in the country, announced the launch of **its first AI-powered voice assistant with Google on Saturday**.
- The voice assistant can be currently accessed through any smart phone having Google Assistant or where the Google Assistant app has been downloaded, or any of the Google Home devices.

Bahrain and Maharashtra Government signs MoU on fintech

- The **Economic Development Board (EDB)**, the investment promotion arm of the **Kingdom of Bahrain** today signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the **Maharashtra Government** to provide a framework for **Co-operation between the two authorities to promote FinTech in their respective markets**.
- This MoU is in line with the EDB's aims of exploring greater synergies between India and Bahrain in the financial technology space and will last for an initial period of three years.

Centre approves SCord to tackle smuggling

- In an attempt to tackle smuggling, the Central government has approved **Anti-Smuggling National Coordination Centre (SCord) under the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI)**.
- All the border agencies like BSF, ITBP, Assam Rifles, SSB and Coast Guards would be the members of SCord, which will help India to formulate a national anti-smuggling policy.

India, UAE sign currency swap deal

- **India and the UAE on Tuesday signed two agreements, including one on currency swap**, as external affairs minister Sushma Swaraj held exhaustive discussions with her counterpart Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan to step up cooperation in areas such as trade, security and defence.
- **Currency Swap is a pact between two countries that allows trading in their own currencies and payments to import and export trade at a pre-determined exchange rate**, without bringing in a third benchmark currency like the US dollar.
- The second agreement will **enable both sides to undertake development projects in Africa**.

Government forms Rajiv Kumar Committee to look at selling of OIL, ONGC fields to private companies

- The Union Government on December 3, 2018 constituted a six-member committee to look at selling of 149 small and marginal oil and gas fields of state-owned the **Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) and Oil India Limited (OIL) to private and foreign companies to boost domestic output**.

The panel is chaired by the **NITI Aayog Vice Chairman Rajiv Kumar**.

RBI keeps all key policy rates unchanged

- The Reserve Bank of India, RBI, maintained status quo on all key policy rates in the fifth bi-monthly monetary policy review announced this afternoon. Subsequently, **the repo rate remains unchanged at 6.5 percent and the reverse repo rate at 6.25 percent**.
- Repo rate is the rate at which RBI lends to banks generally against government securities. The reverse repo is the rate at which RBI borrows money from banks. **The RBI informed the marginal standing facility rate and the Bank Rate too remain at 6.75 percent**.
- RBI has lowered its inflation forecast based on moderation in food inflation and the sharp decline in international crude oil prices. Accordingly, **inflation is projected to be in the range of 2.7 to 3.2 percent in the second half of this fiscal**.
- Assuming a normal monsoon next year, **RBI said that inflation will likely to stay in the range of 3.8 to 4.2 percent in the first half of next fiscal**.

RBI to set up panel to look into problems of MSMEs

- The **Reserve Bank of India** Wednesday said an **expert committee will be constituted to propose long-term solutions for the economic and financial sustainability of the MSME sector**.
- The panel's composition and its terms of reference will be finalised by the end of December, the RBI said in 'Statement on Developmental and Regulatory Policies'.
- **The report of the panel will be submitted by the end of June 2019. Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) contribute significantly to employment, entrepreneurship and growth in the economy.**

Indian Overseas Bank to issue 18.24 crore shares under ESPS scheme

- State-owned **Indian Overseas Bank** Wednesday said it has decided **to issue more than 18 crore shares to its staff under the employee stock purchase scheme**.
- The lender said that the issue price, including premium, is determined by the committee of directors.
- However, the bank did not disclose details about the issue price and how much fund has been raised under this scheme.

Indian Chamber of Commerce signs MoU with China Council to promote bilateral trade

- **The Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC)** today signed an MoU with **China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT)** to increase the bilateral trade between India and China.
- The signing of memorandum of understanding will help the parties involved to improve and expand trade relations between Sichuan in China and Kolkata in India, and exchange trade information and publications; increase participation in local trade fairs, exhibitions, business forums; exchange trade delegations and missions and co-host B2B initiatives.

RBI approves Amalgamation of SBM Bank (Mauritius) Limited, India with SBM Bank (India) Limited

- The Reserve Bank of India approved the Scheme of amalgamation of **SBM Bank (Mauritius) Limited, India with SBM Bank (India) Limited**.
- The amalgamated entity has been granted licence by the Reserve Bank to carry on the business of banking in India through **Wholly Owned Subsidiary (WOS) Mode under section 22(1) of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949**.
- The Scheme has been sanctioned in exercise of the powers contained in **sub-section (4) of Section 44A of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949**.

RBI to implement an Ombudsman scheme for digital transactions

- Reserve Bank of India has said that it will implement an **Ombudsman Scheme for Digital Transactions covering services provided by entities falling under Reserve Banks regulatory jurisdiction**.
- RBI said, with the digital mode for financial transactions gaining traction in the country, there is an emerging need for a dedicated, cost-free and expeditious grievance redressal mechanism for strengthening consumer confidence in this channel.
- **The scheme will be notified by the end of January 2019.**

ICICI Bank launches Robo Advisory App for Mutual Fund Investment

- ICICI Bank has launched "**Money Coach**", **a software robotics algorithm-led investment advisory application on mobile**.
- The app will provide seamless service through a bank account right from enrolment into a mutual fund and then to actual investment and liquidation.
- **This is the first time a bank has come with such a service.**

Cabinet approves Agriculture Export Policy in line with govt's commitment to double farmer's income by 2022

- The Union Cabinet today approved **Agriculture Export Policy in line with government's commitment to double farmer's income by 2022**.
- Speaking to media in New Delhi after the meeting of the Cabinet, Minister for Commerce and Industry Suresh Prabhu said, farmers will get the benefit of export opportunities through a stable trade policy regime.

Ministry of Shipping approves development of freight village in Varanasi

- Ministry of Shipping has **approved development of a freight village in Varanasi adjoining the Inland Waterways Terminal on River Ganga**. It will be developed at a cost **156 crore rupees**.
- According to an official release, it will serve as a cargo hub and a centre for aggregation and value addition.

OPEC to consider PM Modi's views on deciding global oil prices

- During the meeting of leaders of Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in Vienna, Saudi Arabia's energy minister Khalid Al Falih said OPEC nations will **consider Prime Minister Narendra Modi's consumer-centric views on oil pricing before taking any decision.**
- Oil prices have crashed nearly 30 percent in the last two months as major producers including the US are pumping oil at high rates.

India signs agreement with Iran to pay crude bill in rupee

- India signed an agreement with Iran to pay for crude oil it imports from the **Persian Gulf nation in rupees.**
- Indian refiners will **make rupee payments in a UCO Bank account of the National Iranian Oil Co (NIOC).**

RBI Governor Urjit Patel resigns

- Reserve Bank Governor Urjit Patel on Monday stepped down from his post citing personal reasons.
- In a statement, Dr. Patel said he is stepping down with immediate effect.
- He said it has been his privilege and honour to serve in the Reserve Bank of India in various capacities over the years.
- Dr. Patel succeeded Raghuram Rajan as the 24th Governor of RBI in September 2016. He had been appointed for a three-year term.

SEBI to relax listing norms for start-ups; renames ITP as 'Innovators Growth Platform'

- The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) on December 7, 2018 passed a slew of relaxations for start-ups in sectors like e-commerce, data analytics and bio-technology to raise funds and list them on stock exchanges.
- The proposed changes include **renaming the 'Institutional Trading Platform' (ITP) of start-ups' listings as 'Innovators Growth Platform'.**

The SEBI had earlier set up an expert group to review the start-up platform. The group proposed following changes in the Framework:

- Do away with requirement of **at least 50 percent of pre-issue capital**
- The group proposed to get rid of the requirement of at least 50 percent of pre-issue capital held by qualified institutional investors.
- **It proposed that 25 percent of pre-issue capital for at least two years should be with qualified institutional investors,** a family trust with net worth of at least Rs 500 crore, well-regulated foreign investors and a new class of 'Accredited Investors' (AIs).

UK court orders extradition of Vijay Mallya

- The UK court on December 10, 2018 ordered the extradition of Indian business tycoon and liquor baron Vijay Mallya from Britain to India to face charges of fraud filed against him. The decision follows a nine-month-long trial on an extradition warrant, which began with Mallya's arrest in April 2017 and ended in September.
- India has been seeking the businessman's extradition on charges of fraud and money laundering amounting to almost Rs 9,000 crore. He has been on bail since his arrest.

RBI cancels Certificate of Registration of 32 NBFCs

- The Reserve Bank of India on Monday said it has ***cancelled the Certificate of Registration of 32 non-banking financial companies.***
- The central bank in a release said it cancelled the registration of the companies by exercising of powers vested on it under Section 45-IA (6) of the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934.

Govt contribution to NPS raised to 14 per cent

- Finance Minister Arun Jaitley has said ***Cabinet had decided to make some changes in National Pension Scheme, NPS on 6th of this month.***
- Speaking to media in New Delhi on Monday, Mr Jaitley said ***Central Government contribution will be raised to 14 per cent from existing 10 per cent in NPS.***
- He said the tax exemption limit for lump sum withdrawal on exit has been enhanced to 60 per cent.

ADB to give \$31 mn loan to develop tourism and boost jobs in Tamil Nadu

- ***The Asian Development Bank (ADB) will provide \$ 31 million loan to develop tourism and boost jobs in Tamil Nadu,*** a finance ministry statement said Tuesday.
- ***The total cost of the project is \$ 44.04 million, of which the government will provide \$ 13.04 million. It is expected to be completed in June 2020.***

RBI slaps Rs 10 mn fine on Indian Bank for violating cyber security norms

- ***The Reserve Bank of India Tuesday said it has imposed a fine of Rs 10 million on Indian Bank for violating cybersecurity norms.***
- The RBI has imposed, by an order dated November 30, 2018, a ***monetary penalty of Rs 10 million on Indian Bank for contravention of Circular on Cyber Security Framework in banks,*** the central bank said in a release.

Economist Surjit S Bhalla resigns as Member of the Economic Advisory Council to PM Modi

- ***Economist Surjit S Bhalla resigned from his position as the part-time Member of the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister Narendra Modi.***
- Prime Minister accepted Bhalla's resignation.
- The Economic Advisory Council is ***headed by NITI Aayog member Bibek Debroy.***

Nissan's first global digital hub inaugurated at Trivandrum IT park

- ***The Nissan Global Digital Hub was officially inaugurated on Monday at Trivandrum, Kerala.*** This centre will drive digital transformation for Nissan's business by placing digital technology at the heart of key operations and services.
- ***The facility, located in Kerala's IT hub, Technopark, in Thiruvananthapuram, is the first of a number of software and information technology development centres slated to come up in Asia, Europe, North America and Latin America.***

ICICI Bank launches first-ever account exclusively for working women in India

- ***ICICI Bank today announced the launch of the first ever account exclusively for working women in India. Christened, 'Advantage Woman Aura Savings Account', it offers a slew of benefits across categories like 'banking', 'lifestyle', 'convenience', 'investment & tax planning', 'child education' and 'protection'.***

- The comprehensive bouquet of benefits includes a cashback of Rs. 750 per month on usage of debit cards across key segments, 50% discount on locker rentals and processing fees on home, auto and personal loans. It also offers unlimited free transactions on ICICI Bank as well as Non – ICICI Bank ATMs in India, thereby providing exceptional flexibility.

CBIC notifies 'Korean Won', 'Turkish Lira' in List of Currencies for Exchange Rate

- The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) included two currencies - **Korean Won and Turkish Lira in the list of currencies for which it notifies the exchange rate.**
- Currently, the CBIC notifies exchange rates for 20 currencies for the purpose of valuation of imported and exported goods and now with the inclusion of Lira and Won, the total number is now 22.

Amazon India inks pact with FISME to educate MSMEs about online selling

- **Amazon India** Thursday said it has partnered with **FISME** to help micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) tap into opportunities in the e-commerce sector.
- According to the pact, Amazon.in will collaborate with **The Federation of Indian Micro and Small & Medium Enterprises (FISME)** to conduct various events and workshops across the country that will enable MSMEs sell their products online.

President Kovind inaugurates 5th Enterprise India show in Myanmar

- President Ram Nath Kovind inaugurated the **5th Enterprise India show in Yangon, Myanmar today which was hosted by Confederation of Indian Industry** and the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce. The focus of the conference was Small and Medium Enterprises.
- Addressing the gathering of business leaders from both the countries, President said that India has established itself as the fastest growing major economy in the world, the two countries can do much to learn and leverage from each other's competencies.

Ashok Leyland inks MoU with Israel's Elbit Systems for high mobility vehicles

- **Hinduja Group firm Ashok Leyland** Wednesday said it has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with **Israel's Elbit Systems for high mobility vehicles.**
- As part of this agreement, Ashok Leyland will provide high mobility vehicles (HMV) for mounting Elbit Systems' artillery guns and systems. The integrated systems are targeted for worldwide export markets," Ashok Leyland said in a regulatory filing.

India, ADB sign USD 60 Million loan agreement to reduce floods in Assam

- India and the **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** on December 13, 2018 signed a **USD 60 million loan agreement to reduce floods and the riverbank erosion in Assam.**
- **This Tranche 2 loan is part of the USD 120 million multi-tranche financing facility (MFF) of the ADB for the Assam Integrated Flood and Riverbank Erosion Risk Management Investment Program.** The program was approved by the ADB Board in October 2010.

Niti Aayog organising 3rd edition of Women Transforming India awards 2018

- NITI Aayog is organising the **third edition of the Women Transforming India Awards 2018.** The event will also mark launching of the upgraded portal of the **Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP).**
- An official release said, Vice President M. Venkaiah Naidu, as the Chief Guest, will give away the awards and launch the WEP upgraded portal.

OPPO sets up R&D centre in Hyderabad

- Chinese handset maker **OPPO** Saturday said it has **set up a research and development (R&D) centre in Hyderabad**.
- The India R&D centre is the fourth such set up globally and the largest outside China, it said.

India and States

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa to be the Chief Guest at Republic Day Celebrations 2019

- **South African President Cyril Ramaphosa will be Chief Guest at India's 70th Republic Day celebrations on January 26, 2019.**
- Ramaphosa was invited to be chief guest by Prime Minister Narendra Modi when two leaders met on sidelines of G20 summit in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

India and Sweden sign MoUs in Renewable Energy sector

- **India and Sweden** on Monday signed **two memorandums of understanding (MoUs) in the Renewable Energy sector** to enhance the technology and bring in energy efficiency in India.
- The first MoU was signed between Swedish solar pump manufacturer **Spowdi** and Bangalore based **EMVEE** for **setting up local manufacturing/assembly in Bangalore**.
- The second MoU was signed between **Swedish Earth Fault Protection System** provider **Swedish Neutral** and India's leading distribution company **Tata Power DDL** for **setting up a pilot for earth fault protection in Delhi**.

India's First Engine-Less Train Touches 180 Kmph Mark During Trial Run

- **India's first locomotive-less aka engineless train breached the 180 kmph mark during the test run on Sunday**, a senior official said. It has been **named 'Train18'**.
- This Rs 100-crore indigenously designed train will become the country's fastest train.

UP-Nepal to sign MoU declaring Ayodhya-Janakpur twin cities

- The **Uttar Pradesh** and **Nepal** governments will soon sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) **to declare Ayodhya and Janakpur as twin cities**, an official said on Monday.
- An understanding to this effect was arrived at a meeting between a Nepalese delegation and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath late on Sunday.

Microsoft India to host first Education Days in India on Dec 4-5

- Continuing in its efforts to enhance the educational landscape through technology, **Microsoft India is organising the first Microsoft Education Days 2018 in Gurugram on December 4 and 5**.
- The two-day event will bring together students, over 220 educators and Microsoft Partners under one roof to showcase their work and deliberate on innovation in Education in India.

FSSAI launches Heart Attack Rewind Campaign for elimination of industrially produced trans-fat

- Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) launched media campaign **"Heart Attack Rewind"**, calling for **elimination of industrially produced trans-fat in the food supply**.

- It will support FSSAI's global target of eliminating trans-fat in India by 2022, a year ahead of global target by World Health Organization (WHO).
- It is in line with FSSAI objective to get Freedom from 'Trans Fat: India@75'.

Government launches Digital Sky Platform for drone registration

- The Union Government's Civil Aviation Regulations (CAR) to enable safe flying **of Remotely Piloted Aerial Systems (RPAS) popularly referred to as drones** came into effect on December 1, 2018. The Government had announced the release of the regulations in August 2018.
- With the announcement, while nano drones can start flying in the country with immediate effect, for drones of micro size and above categories, the operators would be required to register on the **Digital Sky portal**.

Nagaland becomes first north-eastern state to launch single emergency number '112'

- The Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh on December 1, 2018 launched **the single emergency number '112' under the Emergency Response Support System (ERSS) for the state of Nagaland**.
- The launch coincided with the state's formation day and the **inaugural day of the 2018 edition of the Hornbill Festival**.

India, US agree to further strengthen bilateral defence cooperation

- **India** and the **US** have **agreed to further strengthen bilateral defence cooperation that follows the discussions and outcomes of the 2 plus 2 Dialogue** held in New Delhi this year.
- Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, who is on a visit to the US, discussed with American counterpart James N Mattis the growing partnership between India and US in the field of defence.

Second meeting of NITI Forum for North East held in Guwahati

- **The second meeting of the NITI Forum for North East was held in Guwahati on December 4, 2018.** The meeting was presided over by Vice Chairman of the NITI Aayog Rajiv Kumar and co-chaired by Minister of State for Development of North Eastern Region, Dr. Jitendra Singh.
- The NITI Forum for North East was constituted in 2018 to periodically review the development status in North Eastern Region.

International conference on bears starts in Agra

- **The four-day International conference on bears began in Agra, Uttar Pradesh** on December 4, 2018. The conference is expected to witness participation from over 80 delegates from 11 countries across the world.
- The conference is aimed at sharing knowledge on the principles of the welfare of bears and other wild animals in zoos, sanctuaries and rescue centres.

Statue of Unity among top tourist destinations

- The 182-metre tall '**Statue of Unity**', dedicated to Sardar Patel in Gujarat's Narmada district has slowly become one of India's top tourist spots.
- The statue is now attracting around **30,000 visitors every day**. The United States Consul-General Edgard Kagan also visited the memorial.

India, China exchange views on issues of common interest

- **India** and **China** on Tuesday exchanged views on regional and international issues of common interest.
- Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale and Vice Foreign Minister of China Kong Xuanyou held consultations in New Delhi.

Mahindra's Igatpuri plant India's first Carbon Neutral Facility

- **Mahindra's** Igatpuri plant has become **India's first carbon neutral manufacturing facility** and has been certified by Bureau Veritas (India) Pvt. Ltd.
- Mahindra & Mahindra said that it was the first company in the world to commit to doubling its energy productivity by 2030, signing on to The Climate Group's EP100 program.

National Commission for Women to support livelihood programmes for women in northeast

- The **National Commission for Women (NCW)** has decided to support **northeast livelihood programmes** for **women**, particularly for those falling under the younger age group, through skill development and specialised training.
- The livelihood programmes will impart skill training to these women in order to make them self-reliant.

Railways Ministry, Madame Tussauds Wax Museum sign MoU to foster tourism in Delhi NCR

- **The National Rail Museum (NRM)** of the Railways Ministry signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with **the Madame Tussauds Wax Museum to foster tourism in Delhi NCR region**.
- **This first time ever public-private museum collaboration** will help attract more tourists to both National Rail Museum and Madame Tussauds Wax Museum.

GSAT-11: India's heaviest communication satellite launched successfully from French Guiana

- India's heaviest and most-advanced communication satellite **GSAT-11**, also called the "**Big Bird**", was successfully launched into space on December 5, 2018 from **the Spaceport in French Guiana, South America**.
- The satellite will help provide satellite-based internet to remote places where cable-based internet cannot reach. The satellite, **weighing 5854 kg**, is the heaviest Indian-made equipment that has been put into the orbit.

India, Peru sign agreement for co-operation and mutual assistance in Customs Matters

- **India** and the Republic of **Peru** on December 5, 2018 signed an agreement for **co-operation and mutual assistance in customs matters**.
- The agreement was signed on the sidelines of the **80th Session of the Policy Commission meeting of the World Customs Organisations (WCO)** which was held in **Mumbai** during December 3-5, 2018.

WCD Ministry to formulate guidelines to ensure safety of children in hostels

- The Ministry of Women and Child Development will soon **formulate guidelines for children's hostels, prescribing the minimum standards of care that should be provided to the children**.
- The decision comes at a time when institutions, housing children on the request of parents who are unable to take care of them and their education or due to other circumstances that force parents to

keep them at children's homes, are not registering under **the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015.**

Union Minister Nitin Gadkari inaugurates India Water Impact Summit 2018 in New Delhi

- Union Minister for Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation, **Nitin Gadkari inaugurated India Water Impact Summit 2018 in New Delhi.**
- The three days summit is jointly organised by the Ministry, National Mission for Clean Ganga and the Centre for Ganga River Basin Management and Studies.

Bihar government sets Rs 100 fee for family property split

- **Bihar government fixed Rs 100 as the charge** for people to get their property registered after division of family's immovable assets.
- This decision was taken at cabinet meeting which was chaired by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar.

Conference on partnership between EU and India for Cultural Heritage Conservation begins

- The two-day conference on partnership between the **European Union and India commenced in New Delhi for Cultural Heritage Conservation.**
- Over 30 leading experts are deliberating on issues being faced in cultural heritage conservation and exploring innovative solutions to tackle challenges of climate change and urbanisation.

Mukhyamantri Tirth Yatra Yojana: Delhi Government launches Free Pilgrimage Scheme for senior citizens

- Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on December 5, 2018 launched the '**Mukhyamantri Tirth Yatra Yojana**' which offers free travel packages for senior citizens from Delhi to five religious circuits. 1,100 senior citizens from every constituency of Delhi will be able to avail this facility at one go.
- Under this free pilgrimage scheme, **a Delhi resident above 60 years will be eligible to take free pilgrimage along with his or her spouse.**

Cabinet approves implementation of Shahpurkandi Dam (National Project) on river Ravi in Punjab

- The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday **approved implementation of Shahpurkandi Dam Project, Punjab on river Ravi**, Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said.
- For this, **Central Assistance of Rs 485.38 crore (for irrigation component) would be provided over five years from 2018-19 to 2022-23.**

Centre approves additional assistance of over Rs. 3048 cr to Kerala in view of recent devastating flood

- Centre today approved an **additional assistance of over 3048 crore rupees to Kerala in view of recent devastating flood in the state.**
- It also sanctioned over 539 crore rupees to cyclone hit Andhra Pradesh and over 131 crore rupees to landslides affected state of Nagaland.

Foundation stone of PUSA 'Kisan Haat' in ICAR's ATIC was laid by Radha Mohan Singh

- Union Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Minister Radha Mohan Singh on Thursday **laid the foundation stone of Pusa Kisan Haat in ICAR's Agricultural Technology Information Centre (ATIC).**
- The Union Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Minister said with a view to encourage and attract youth towards agricultural education and cater to the rising number of students, an international hostel is being constructed.

Cabinet approves National Mission on Interdisciplinary Cyber-Physical Systems

- Union Cabinet on Thursday approved the **National Mission on interdisciplinary Cyber- physical system** which will be implemented by Department of Science and Technology at a **total outlay of Rs 3660 crore for a period of five years.**
- Under this scheme, 15 Technology Innovation Hubs, six Application Innovation Hubs and four Technology translation Research Hubs are to be set up across country.

Indian Coast Guard conducts Exercise 'Clean Sea-2018' at sea off Port Blair

- The **Indian Coast Guard** has conducted the **Regional Level Marine Oil Pollution Response Exercise titled 'Clean Sea - 2018' at sea off Port Blair** today.
- Coast Guard ships Viswasth, Vijith, Rajveer, Rajshri, 4 interceptor boats and its air assets Dornier and Chetak helicopters participated in the exercise.

Ravi Shankar Prasad launches National Challenge 'Ideate for India - creative solutions using technology' for school students

- Minister for Electronics and IT Ravi Shankar Prasad today launched **National Challenge - 'Ideate for India - creative solutions using technology' for school students in New Delhi.**
- **'Ideate For India'** national challenge is a joint collaboration between National e-governance Division and Intel India, supported by the Department of School Education and Literacy of Ministry of Human Resources Development.

Kiren Rijiju inaugurates All India Police Shooting Competition 2018 at Manesar

- Minister of State for Home Kiren Rijiju today **inaugurated the 19th All India Police (AIPDM) Shooting Competition-2018 at Manesar, Gurugram in Haryana.**
- More than 750 participants of 31 teams of State Police Forces and Central Armed Police Forces are participating in the event.

India pays homage to Dr B R Ambedkar on his 63rd Mahaparinirvan Diwas

- India paid homage to Bharat Ratna **Dr BR Ambedkar on his 63rd Mahaparinirvan Diwas on December 6, 2018.**
- He died on **December 6, 1956** and the day is observed as Mahaparinirvan Diwas every year.

Modi to inaugurate Asia's 2nd largest bridge Bogibeel in Assam on Vajpayee's birthday

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate on December 25 **the Bogibeel Bridge, India's longest rail-road bridge, connecting the north and south banks of the Brahmaputra,** falling in the eastern part of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh, a senior railway official said as per PTI.
- The ceremony to mark the opening of the bridge coincides with **the 94th birth anniversary of the former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee,** who passed away in August.
- **It will be the second largest bridge in Asia with three-lane roads on top and a double-line railway track below.**

India's first underwater museum to open off Puducherry coast soon

- **India is set to get its first underwater museum off the Puducherry coast,** giving a boost to tourism in the Union territory.

- **INS Cuddalore**, a minesweeper decommissioned in March after it travelled 30,000 nautical miles in 30 years, will be turned into a museum, according to a Times of India report.

Kia Motors signs MoU with Andhra for future eco mobility

- South Korean auto major **Kia Motors** on Thursday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) **with the state of Andhra Pradesh to collaborate on the partnership for future eco mobility.**
- The partnership reinforces Kia's commitment to support the Andhra Pradesh government in growing the uptake of electric vehicles (EV) and the development of a local EV infrastructure, the company said in a statement.

Gangotri, Yamunotri in Uttarakhand; Amarkantak in MP; and Parasnath in Jharkhand included under PRASAD Scheme

- Union Government included **Gangotri** and **Yamunotri** in Uttarakhand, **Amarkantak** in Madhya Pradesh and **Parasnath** in Jharkhand under **Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual, Heritage Augmentation Drive (PRASAD)** to develop pilgrimage and heritage destinations in the country.
- With the new additions, the number of sites under PRASAD has now reached to 41 in 25 states.
- It was launched in 2014-15 by Union Ministry of Tourism.

Air pollution causes 1 in 8 deaths in India

- India, **with 18 percent of the world's population, has a disproportionately 26 percent of the global premature deaths and disease burden due to air pollution.**
- **One in eight deaths in India was attributed to air pollution in India in 2017**, making it a leading risk factor for death.

Tourism Ministry formulates Guidelines for approval of Online Travel Aggregators

- The Union Ministry of Tourism has formulated the guidelines for approval and re-approval of **Online Travel Aggregators to ensure adequate safeguards against deficiency of service, alternate arrangements and punitive deterrence.**
- The voluntary scheme will be open to bonafide online travel aggregators to bring them on a common platform in the organised sector. The guidelines will be rolled out online by the end of December 2018. Hence, all applications and fee payment will have to be made on the online platform.

Kandhamal Haldi of Odisha to get GI tag

- **Odisha's Kandhamal Haldi (turmeric)** will soon get Geographical Indications (GI) tag.
- Its registration was moved by Kandhamal Apex Spices Association for Marketing and was accepted under sub-section (1) of Section 13 of Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999.

India opposes move to declare Gilgit-Baltistan as fifth province

- India has voiced strong opposition to **Pakistan's move to declare Gilgit-Baltistan as its fifth province.**
- MEA spokesperson Raveesh Kumar said India's stated position on Gilgit Baltistan has been very clear and consistent.

NITI Aayog launches Global Hackathon on Artificial Intelligence

- **NITI Aayog** in partnership with **Perlin**, a Singapore-based AI start up, has launched '**AI 4 All Global Hackathon**' to further expand the idea of '**Artificial Intelligence, AI for All**' articulated in the National AI Strategy.
- The Hackathon was announced at the AI conference organised by **NITI Aayog**, in partnership with the **ORF**, held in Mumbai in November 2018.

India Water Summit concludes in Delhi

- The three days India Water Summit concluded in New Delhi today. Key issues including afforestation, biodiversity, urban river management, innovation in sewage and sewerage management were discussed during the event.
- During the valedictory session, Secretary, Ministry of Water Resources, U.P Singh emphasized on the creation of a working group which will help in converting technology to working models.

Foreign Minister of Iceland meets Sushma Swaraj in Delhi

- **Foreign Minister of Iceland Gudlaugur Thór Thórdarson** today met **External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj** in **New Delhi** and held discussions on bilateral, multilateral and international issues of interest.
- The two sides noted that in the **areas such as geo-thermal energy, fisheries, IT, pharmaceuticals and tourism, the two countries could establish strong partnership**. The Icelandic Minister appreciated growing opportunities for Icelandic companies in the fast-growing Indian economy.

MP Upendra Kushwaha resigns from Union Council of ministers

- Member of Parliament and Chief of Rashtriya Lok Samta Party (RLSP) **Upendra Kushwaha** resigned from the **Union council of ministers on December 9, 2018**.
- According to reports, Kushwaha has sent his resignation to Prime Minister Narendra Modi as he is quitting the BJP-led NDA alliance.

India starts visa on arrival for South Korean nationals

- **India has started granting visa on arrival to South Korean nationals**, a move that makes South Korea the second nation to be given the privilege after Japan, whose citizens have been getting the privilege since March 2016. The decision came into effect from October 1, 2018.
- Like the Japanese nationals, the facility to South Korean citizens would include double entry visit for a period not exceeding 60 days for business, tourism, conference and medical purposes for entry through six designated international airports - Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, Bengaluru and Hyderabad.

India successfully test-fires Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile Agni-5

- The indigenously built **Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile Agni-5** has been test-fired successfully from **Abdul Kalam island under Chandipur Interim Test Range** on Monday.
- This is the fourth successful test of this missile. Previously the test of Agni 4 was unsuccessful. Having 17 meters length and 2 meters diameter the missile can hit the target from a distance of 5 thousand kilometres.

Government notifies four commonly used medical devices as drugs

- The Union Government has notified four commonly used medical devices including **nebulisers, blood pressure monitors, digital thermometers and glucometers as drugs under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act.**
- The decision will enable the government to ensure their quality and performance. The Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) will regulate the import, manufacture and sale of these devices from January 2020.

Tamil Nadu launches toll-free helpline '181' for domestic violence victims

- The Tamil Nadu government on December 9, 2018 **launched a 24-hour toll-free helpline '181' for women facing domestic violence and sexual harassment.** The initiative was launched by the state's Chief Minister K Palaniswami.
- The move will enable women facing domestic violence and sexual harassment at home or workplaces to contact the toll-free helpline to get emergency assistance such as police help, legal aid or medical services including an ambulance.

India, China to resume military drills after one year gap

- The 7th India and China joint military exercise - '**Hand in Hand**' will begin on December 1, 2018 in the southwest Chinese city of Chengdu. It is scheduled to conclude on December 23.
- The exercises will be held after a gap of one year as both the sides were locked in a 73-day standoff in Doklam in the Sikkim sector of the border in 2017.

Kannur International Airport in Kerala begins operations

- **The Kannur international Airport-KIAL in Kerala began its operations on December 9, 2018** with Union Civil Aviation Minister Suresh Prabhu and Kerala Chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan jointly lighting the lamp inside the terminal building, marking its inauguration.
- The chief minister and the Union Minister then jointly flagged off the first flight from the airport to Abu Dhabi at 10.10 am.

18th All India annual conference of heads of science centres, museums begins

- The 18th **All India Annual Conference of the Heads of Science Centre's and Museums began on December 8, 2018 in Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh.**
- Inaugurating the three-day conference, Arunachal Pradesh Environment and Forest Minister Nabam Rebia said that the Arunachal Pradesh State Council Science and Technology is playing an important role to tie up and collaborate with other scientific institutions across the country to promote science and technology in the state.

Home Ministry launches Twitter account to spread awareness about cybercrimes

- Home Ministry launched a Twitter account '**@CyberDost**' to **spread awareness about cybercrimes and normal precautions to be taken.**
- The Twitter handle **@CyberDost** is aimed at enhancing people's basic knowledge about cybercrimes and precautions to be taken for prevention.

PM Modi to inaugurate Partners' Forum 2018

- The Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the fourth Partners' Forum on December 12, 2018 at New Delhi.
- The Government of India, in association with the **Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (PMNCH)**, is hosting this two-day international conference.
- The invited countries have been selected from across all regions and income levels and include countries that are **currently chairing key global and regional bodies** (e.g. G7, G20, BRICS, etc.).

EU Ambassador opens India's first CoE at MAHE

- India's first Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence established by the European Union was inaugurated at the Department of European Studies (DES) at Manipal Academy of Higher Education here on Saturday by Ambassador of the European Union (EU) to India and Bhutan, Tomasz Kozlowski.
- Kozlowski congratulated the leadership, faculty and students of MAHE on this achievement and stated that Manipal has always been a pioneer in promoting higher education and research in international relations in India in general and European studies in particular.

Delhi HC bans online sale of medicines across India

- The Delhi High Court on December 12, 2018 ordered a **ban on the sale of online medicines by e-pharmacists across the country**. The court directed both Central and state government to ensure immediate implementation of the order.
- The HC bench comprising **Chief Justice Rajendra Menon and Justice V K Rao passed the judgement while hearing a PIL filed by Delhi-based dermatologist Zaheer Ahmed** who complained that lakhs of medicines were being sold on the internet every day without much regulation, posing a huge risk to patients and doctors alike.

UP to establish Umbrella University named after former PM late Atal Bihari Vajpayee

- The Uttar Pradesh Government has decided to establish **an umbrella university to control all the medical and dental colleges and nursing institutions in the state**. The university will be named after former Prime Minister, **late Atal Bihari Vajpayee**.
- The decision was taken in a cabinet meeting headed by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath at Lucknow on December 11.

Govt approves auction of 683 private FM Radio channels

- The government has approved the auction of **683 private FM Radio channels in 236 cities, some of them in remote areas**.
- Answering a specific question, he said an **FM Relay station at Godda in Jharkhand has been approved**. The Minister said, a transmitter is being procured for this purpose.

SC Collegium recommends Justice Ravindra Bhat as Chief Justice of Rajasthan High Court

- The Supreme Court collegium recommended the appointment of **Justice Ravindra Bhat as the Chief Justice of Rajasthan High Court**.
- Justice Bhat is currently a judge of the Delhi High Court.

First National Workshop on Explosives Detection inaugurated at Pune

- The first National Workshop on Explosives Detection was inaugurated today at High Energy Materials Research Laboratory Pune.
- A total of 200 delegates from different **DRDO labs, Army, CRPF, CISF, Police, Academic Institutes, Industry and other Security agencies** are attending the workshop.

India, Saudi Arabia sign bilateral annual Haj 2019 agreement

- India and Saudi Arabia on December 13, 2018 signed the **bilateral annual Haj 2019 agreement at Jeddah**. The agreement was signed by the Union Minister for Minority Affairs, Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi and Haj and Umrah Minister of Saudi Arabia, Dr. Mohammad Saleh bin Taher Benten.
- A large number of Muslim women are likely to go to Haj 2019 without “**Mehram**” (male companion). More than 2100 women have already applied.

India's first private UAV factory comes up in Hyderabad

- India's first private sector unit for manufacturing unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) opened at **Adani Aerospace Park** here on Friday.
- Built by the **Adani Group** and Israel-based **Elbit Systems**, the 50,000 square feet facility will develop **Hermes 900** medium altitude long-endurance UAVs for the Indian and global markets.

Google launches shopping website in India

- Google has unveiled **Google Shopping**, a dedicated search engine intended to provide an immersive and improved online shopping experience.
- Along with finding products, **Google Shopping** allows users to filter through offers and review prices across multiple retailers.

Railway Minister Piyush Goyal dedicates first Railway University to nation in Vadodara

- Railway Minister Piyush Goyal dedicated India's first Railway University to the nation in Vadodara yesterday. Speaking on the occasion, Mr Goyal said that this is a big step towards the professional education and training in the railway sector.
- **Ministry of Railways** has sanctioned **421 crores rupees** for this university and its curriculum development for the next five years.

Telangana becomes India's first state to have paperless justice system

- **Telangana** became the first state in the country to have **Inter-operable Criminal Justice System (ICJS)** integrated with the **Crime and Criminals Tracking Network and Systems (CCTNS)** project that facilitates transparency and speed in police service delivery.
- The ICJS is aimed at integrating the CCTNS project with e-courts, e-prisons, databases, forensics, prosecution, juvenile homes and a nationwide fingerprint database of criminals.

ICMR releases draft of India's first essential diagnostics list

- In a bid to ensure quality diagnostics at all level of healthcare facilities, the **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)** has formulated draft of new **National Essential Diagnostics List (NEDL)**.
- “The list is on the lines of the drug list. It is a scientifically designed list, **which has been based on the World Health Organization's list of essential diagnostics** for key areas like HIV and hepatitis, but it also takes into account the priority areas of non-communicable diseases and diseases prone to

outbreaks such as dengue,” Dr Kamini Walia, senior scientist at ICMR was quoted by Hindustan Times as saying.

ECO Niwas Samhita 2018-an Energy Conservation Building Code for Residential Buildings launched

- Ministry of Power has launched the ECO Niwas Samhita 2018, an **Energy Conservation Building Code for Residential Buildings (ECBC-R)**.
- **The implementation of this Code is will give a fillip to energy efficiency in residential sector.**
- **This Code has been prepared after extensive consultations with all stakeholders, consisting of architects & experts including building material suppliers and developers.**

J-K admin greenlights proposal for setting up first-ever university in Ladakh

- **Jammu and Kashmir administration** Saturday gave its nod for the **establishment of the first ever university in Ladakh.**
- The approval came during a State Administrative Council meeting chaired by Governor Satya Pal Malik. His advisors, K Vijay Kumar, Khurshid Ahmad Ganai and Kewal Kumar Sharma, Chief Secretary BVR Subrahmanyam and Principal Secretary to the Governor Umang Narula were also present at the meeting.

JK becomes first state to have explicit law banning ‘Sextortion’

- **J&K has become first state in the country to have a law explicitly banning sexual exploitation of women by those in positions of authority,** having a fiduciary relationship or a public servant.
- Bill seeks to amend the Ranbir Penal Code whereby specific offence under section 354 E is being inserted to provide for the offence of **‘Sextortion’**.

President Kovind lays foundation stone of Railway Station at Kevadia

- President Ramnath Kovind today laid the **foundation stone of new ultra-modern Railway Station at Kevadia in Narmada district of Gujarat**
- **The station will connect the Statue of Unity project to the rest of India** through broad gauge railway line.
- **As per schedule 32 kilometers long new broad-gauge railway line between Chandod and Kevadia** will be completed in one year and connect the Kevadia with the rest of country.

Appointments

India

Name	Appointed as	Organisation/Country
Shaktikanta Das	Governor	Reserve Bank of India
A N Jha	Finance Secretary	India
AS Rajeev	MD & CEO	Bank of Maharashtra
T.S Vijayan	additional independent director	YES Bank
Kirthiga Reddy	Venture Partner	Softbank Vision Fund
Arundhati Bhattacharya	Chairman	SWIFT India
Uday Shankar	Chairman	Star and Disney India
Zoramthanga	Chief Minister	Mizoram

K Chandrasekhar Rao	Chief Minister	Telangana
Bharat Bhushan Vyas	Member	Union Public Service Commission (UPSC)
Brijendra Pal Singh	President	Film and Television Institute of India (FTII)
Ashok Gehlot	Chief Minister	Rajasthan
Sachin Pilot	Deputy Chief Minister	Rajasthan
Kamal Nath	Chief Minister	Madhya Pradesh

World

Name	Appointed as	Organisation/Country
Pawan Singh	first Indian member	Judges Committee of the International Shooting Sports Federation (ISSF)
Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador	President	Mexico
Preeti Saran	Asia Pacific Seat	United Nation's Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR)
Rajiv Mehrishi	Vice-Chair	United Nations Panel of External Auditors
Uday Shankar	President	The Walt Disney Company Asia Pacific

Days

Day	Observed on	Theme/Info
International Day of Persons with Disabilities	3 December	Empowering persons with disabilities and ensuring inclusiveness and equality
International Day for the Abolition of Slavery	2 December	
World AIDS Day	1 December	Know your HIV status
National Pollution Control Day	2 December	to give the honor and memorialize the thousands of human beings who had lost their existence because of the Bhopal gas calamity
47th Indian Navy Day	4 December	
World Soil Day	5 December	'Be the Solution to Soil Pollution'
Submarine Day	8 December	The day commemorates the induction of the first submarine, the erstwhile INS Kalvari, into the Navy on this day in 1967.
SAARC Day	8 December	
International Civil Aviation Day	7 December	Working Together to Ensure No Country is Left Behind.
International Anti-Corruption Day	9 December	United Against Corruption
Armed Forces Flag Day	7 December	
Human Rights Day	10 December	Let's stand up for equality, justice and human dignity
International Mountain Day	11 December	#MountainsMatter
International Day of Neutrality	12 December	
International Universal Health Coverage Day	12 December	Unite for Universal Health Coverage: Now is the Time for Collective Action.
National Energy Conservation Day	14 December	

International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and of the Prevention of this Crime

9 December

Lists & Reports

Deepika Padukone First Woman to Reach Top 5 in Forbes India List of Richest Indians

- **Deepika Padukone has become the first woman ever to feature in the top 5 of this list.** With Rs 112.8 crore earning—courtesy Padmaavat and her many brand endorsements—she features at the fourth position.
- As per the publication, there are **18 women on this year's list while there were 21 the previous year.** Apart from her, Alia Bhatt, Anushka Sharma, Katrina Kaif, PV Sindhu and Saina Nehwal are also included in the top 100 list.
- Bollywood actor **Salman Khan tops the list with a total earning of Rs 253.25 crore between October 1, 2017, and September 30, 2018.** He has been declared the country's highest paid celeb for the third consecutive year.
- Indian cricket captain **Virat Kohli** was placed on the second spot with total earnings of Rs 228.09 crore. Actor Akshay Kumar completed the top three with Rs 185 crore tally in the period under consideration for the list.

PM Modi most followed world leader on Instagram

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi emerged as the most popular global leader on social media platform Instagram with 14.8 million followers.**
- According to a list published by online platform **twiplomacy**, Modi is followed by Indonesian President Joko Widodo with 12.2 million followers.
- With 10 million followers, US President Donald Trump is at the third position on photo-sharing platform.
- The picture of newly married Indian cricket captain **Virat Kohli** and his wife, actress **Anushka Sharma** meeting the prime minister has become the most liked picture posted by any world leader. **The picture received 18,34,707 hearts since all three have a combined following of 55 million on Instagram.**

Awards & Honors

Delhi minister Imran Hussain gets PETA 'Hero to Animals' award for banning Chinese manjha

- **Delhi Minister of Food Supplies, Environment and Forest and Elections Imran Hussain was awarded by the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA)-India for banning the Chinese manjha, or the glass-coated kite strings, across Delhi -- on December 1.**

- The award, named '**Hero to Animals**,' was also given to three other individuals and companies that have pushed animal rights forward.

Sahitya Akademi Awards 2018 announced in 24 languages

- Sahitya Akademi today announced its annual Awards in 24 languages. Seven books of poetry, six novels, six short stories, three of literary criticism and two of essays have won the Sahitya Akademi Awards, 2018.
- Those who have won the award for their collection of poetry include **Sananta Tanti in Assamese, Paresh Narendra Kamat in Konkani, S Ramesan Nair in Malayalam and Dr Rama Kant Shukla in Sanskrit.**
- Writers who won the awards for short stories **include Sanjib Chattopadhyay in Bengali, Mushtaq Ahmed Mushtaq in Kashmiri and Prof Bina Thakur in Maithili.**
- **Inderjeet Kesar in Dogri, Anees Salim in English, Chitra Mudgal in Hindi** are among the awardees in the novel category.
- The Akademi said in a press release that the awards will be presented at a roadshow function to be held on 29th January next year at New Delhi during the **Festival of Letters to the organised by Sahitya Akademi.**
- An eminent short-story writer, **Mushtaq Ahmad Mushtaq**, bagged the Award for his collection of short stories "**AAKH**". An Indian Information Service officer Mushtaq Ahmad is presently posted as Head of the Regional News Unit at Radio Kashmir Srinagar.

TIME names Jamal Khashoggi, other journalists as 'Person of the Year'

- **Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi, who was murdered in October at his country's Istanbul consulate, was on Tuesday named Time magazine's "Person of the Year"** alongside several other journalists.
- The magazine also honoured Philippine journalist **Maria Ressa**, Reuters reporters **Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo** -- currently imprisoned in Myanmar -- and the staff of the **Capital Gazette in Annapolis, Maryland**, including five members killed in a June shooting.
- **It is the first time someone has been chosen posthumously for the prestigious cover.**

Rattan Lal wins Glinka World Soil Prize 2018

- **Rattan Lal**, a distinguished university professor of soil science at the Ohio State University, won the '**Glinka World Soil Prize 2018**' in a ceremony at the headquarters of **UN FAO in Rome.**
- He was awarded for his remarkable contribution to sustainable soil management.

Mary Kom honoured with Meethoileima title

- The Manipur Government on December 11, 2018 honoured AIBA World Women Boxing Gold medallist **MC Mary Kom** with the title "**Meethoileima**" (par excellent queen) at a function in **Imphal.**
- The state government conferred the title 'Meethoileima' in recognition of her unprecedented feat of winning the sixth gold medal in the recently concluded World Boxing Championship and her illustrious career in the field.

Author Amitav Ghosh honoured with 54h Jnanpith award

- Noted English writer **Amitav Ghosh** has been **honoured with this year's Jnanpith Award**, a literary award given to an author for "**outstanding contribution towards literature**".
- The decision was taken in a meeting of Jnanpith Selection Board chaired by eminent novelist, scholar and Jnanpith laureate Pratibha Ray.
- He is known for a series of novels such as "**Shadow Lines**", "**The Glass Palace**", "**The Hungry Tide**", and Ibis Trilogy -- "**Sea of Poppies**", "**River of Smoke**" and "**Flood of Fire**", which chronicled the Opium trade between India and China run by the East India Company.

Jharkhand gets "Krishi Karman" award in rice category

- **Jharkhand** has been selected for "**Krishi Karman**" award in the rice category from the Union Ministry of Agriculture.
- The award will be given away in February 2019. It carries a cash prize worth Rs 2 crore and a citation.
- Two progressive farmers, one male and one female, would also be given '**Agriculture Minister's Krishi Karman Award**'.

World

India to host G-20 Summit in 2022

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said that India will host the G20 Summit in 2022**, when the country celebrates its 75 years of Independence.
- In a tweet, Mr Modi said, in 2022 India completes 75 years since Independence and he looks forward to welcoming the world to the G-20 Summit in that special year.
- Mr Modi invited leaders from across the world to come to India, the world's fastest growing large economy, and know its rich history and diversity and experience the warm Indian hospitality.

World Bank unveils USD 200 billion in climate action investment for 2021-25

- **The World Bank unveiled USD 200 billion in climate action investment for 2021 to 2025**, thus, doubling its current five-year funding.
- The move coincides with a UN climate summit COP24 in Katowice, Poland.
- The move represents a significantly ramped up ambition to tackle climate change and sends an important signal to the wider global community to do the same.

Qatar to withdraw from OPEC in January 2019

- **Qatar** decided to withdraw its membership from the **Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)** from January 2019.
- The announcement was made by Qatar's Energy Minister, Saad al-Kaabi at a press conference in Doha.

COP24: UN Conference on Climate Change begins in Poland

- The **24th meeting of Conference of Parties (COP24) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)** began on December 3, 2018 at Katowice, Poland.

- The Fijian Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama declared the UN COP24 climate summit open and handed over the presidency of the talks to Michal Kurtyka, Poland's Deputy Environment Minister in the presence of UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.

Asia Pacific Summit 2018 begins in Kathmandu

- The **Asia Pacific Summit 2018** began on December 1, 2018 in **Kathmandu, Nepal**. The Summit will continue till December 3, 2018.
- The Theme of two-day Summit is "Addressing the Critical Challenges of Our Time: Interdependence, Mutual Prosperity, and Universal Values".

SpaceX launches 64 satellites aboard reusable rocket

- Elon Musk's SpaceX on December 3, 2018 launched **its Falcon 9 rocket carrying 64 small satellites into low orbit around the Earth, setting a new US record**.
- According to the company, the mission was one of its largest and most complex and intricate endeavours. The mission also marked the third voyage to space for the same Falcon 9 rocket, which marks another milestone for SpaceX's cost-cutting reusable rocket technology.

UNSC to convene on Iran missile launch issue

- The UN Security Council convened on December 4, 2018 to discuss on **the Iran missile launch issue**.
- The world body held the meeting at the request of France and Britain after they accused Iran of test-firing a medium-range missile during the weekend.

UN launches AI chat bot with Facebook to help battle climate change

- The world is facing a man-made disaster and the extinction of much of the natural world is on the horizon, renowned broadcaster Sir David Attenborough said on the launch of UN's new campaign, **ActNow.bot**.
- The initiative comes as global decision-makers are being asked at the two-week long UN climate negotiations, known as COP24, which officially began on November 3, to intensify efforts in the battle against climate change and to agree on the implementation guidelines of the landmark 2015 Paris Agreement.
- ActNow.bot is designed with artificial intelligence to give people the power and knowledge to take personal action against climate change directly on the **Facebook Messenger Platform**.

United States gives 60 days to Russia to comply with nuclear treaty

- **United States** warned **Russia** that it will withdraw from a major Cold War treaty limiting mid-range nuclear arms, if **Moscow does not dismantle missiles within 60 days**.
- US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said that the US will no longer be bound by the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty, unless Moscow withdraws a new system that has threatened to trigger an arms race.

US re-establishes Permanent Diplomatic Mission in Somalia for first time in 27 years

- The **United States** re-established a "**permanent diplomatic presence**" in **Somalia** for the first time in 27 years.
- The department spokeswoman Heather Nauert called the new move another step forward in formalising US diplomatic engagement in Mogadishu.

OPEC to meet in Vienna

- The members of **Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries** and other oil-producing countries are scheduled to meet in **Vienna** to discuss ways to manage the oil output, supply glut and demand slowdown.
- Over the past two months, **oil prices have plunged** and a barrel of **Brent crude** currently stands at around **USD 60**.

China launches the first ever space rover to explore the dark side of the moon

- China has launched a rover on December 8, 2018, **that will land on the far side of the moon**, a global first that would boost Beijing's ambitions to become a space superpower.
- The **Chang'e-4 lunar probe mission** -- named after the moon goddess in Chinese mythology -- launched on a Long March 3B rocket from the southwestern Xichang launch centre in the pre-dawn hours, according to the official Xinhua news agency.

India 4th, China 1st highest carbon dioxide emitter: Study

- India is the fourth highest emitter of carbon dioxide in the world, accounting for 7 per cent of global emissions in 2017, a study by the Global Carbon Project released on December 5 says.
- The top four emitters in 2017, which covered 58 per cent of global emissions, were China (27 per cent), the US (15 per cent), the European Union (10 per cent) and India (7 per cent), according to the projection by the Global Carbon Project.

Indian cardiologist performs world's first telerobotic surgery from a distance of 32 km

- India became the world's first to successfully perform a telerobotic coronary intervention on December 5 by an Ahmedabad base cardiologist in Gujarat.
- An Ahmedabad based cardiologist **Dr Tejal Patel** performed the first ever telerobotic operation on a middle-aged woman

UN launches new framework to combat international terrorism

- The UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on December 6, 2018 launched a new framework titled '**UN Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact**' to combat international terrorism and coordinate efforts across the peace and security, humanitarian, human rights and sustainable development sectors.
- The framework is an agreement between **the UN chief, 36 organisational entities, the International Criminal Police Organisation (INTERPOL) and the World Customs Organisation** to better serve the needs of member states when it comes to tackling the scourge of international terrorism.

FAO Council approves India's proposal to observe International Year of Millets in 2023

- Food and Agriculture organisation, **FAO Council** has approved **India's proposal to observe an International Year of Millets in 2023**.
- **Millets** consists of **Jowar, Bajra, Ragi** and minor millets together termed as **nutri-cereals**. In addition, the **FAO Council** has also approved India's membership to the Executive Board of the United Nations World Food Program for 2020 and 2021.

First International Conference on 'Sustainable Water Management' held in Mohali

- The first International Conference on 'Sustainable Water Management' began on December 10, 2018 at Indian School of Business (ISB) in Mohali, Punjab.
- The conference is being organised by Bhakra Beas Management Board (BBMB) under the aegis of the National Hydrology Project of the Union Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation. It will be held for two days till December 11.

UAE to double women's representation in Federal National Council to 50 per cent

- The **United Arab Emirates (UAE)** has, in a landmark decision, decided to increase the representation of Emirati women in the **Federal National Council to 50 per cent from the coming Parliamentary term.**
- A decree passed by the UAE President has directed the doubling of the current percentage of women's representation in the Federal National Council from 22.5 per cent to 50 per cent in the coming parliamentary term.

John Kelly to step down as US's Chief of Staff

- President Trump said on December 8, 2018 that his chief of staff, **John F. Kelly, would step down by the end of December 2018.**
- The move is a part of a long-planned staff shake-up as the president heads into the 2020 campaign facing growing peril from the special counsel and newly empowered Democrats.

Ukrainian to end two-decade-old friendship treaty with Russia

- Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko on December 10, 2018 signed a bill ending the two-decade-old **treaty on friendship, cooperation and partnership between Ukraine and Russia.**
- **The treaty will be terminated on April 1, 2019 amid rising tensions between the two countries.**

Japan chooses Chinese character for 'disaster' to define year 2018

- **Japan selected the Chinese character for 'disaster' as its defining symbol for 2018,** a year that saw the country hit by deadly floods, earthquakes and storms.
- At the end of every year, the people of Japan vote for the Chinese character they think embodies the key events of the previous 12 months. **20858 people out of 193,214 chose the character 'disaster'.**
- **Floods across Japan in July 2018 caused more than 200 deaths and nearly evacuation of 9 million people.**

Nepal bans Indian currency notes above Rs 100 denomination

- The **Nepal government has banned the use of Indian currency notes of Rs 2,000, Rs 500 and Rs 200 denominations,** according to a media report.
- **The government has asked the people to refrain from keeping or carrying Indian bank notes higher than Rs 100 denomination** as it has not legalised them, The Kathmandu Post quoted Minister for Information and Communications Gokul Prasad Baskota as saying.

Global debt hits all-time high of USD 184 trillion: IMF

- **The International Monetary Fund has revealed in a report that the global debt has reached an all-time high of 184 trillion US dollars,** which is the equivalent to 225 per cent of the world GDP in 2017.

- The report states that nations like the **United States, China and Japan account for more than half of the debt.**

Sweden moves to ban outdoor smoking

- **Sweden is banning outdoor smoking in certain public places including playgrounds and train station platforms.**
- In a 142-120 vote the Riksdagen, the Swedish Parliament extended the smoking ban as of July 1, 2019.
- According to the new law, **the goal is to make the Scandinavian country smoke-free by 2025.**

Sports

Gautam Gambhir Retires From All Forms of Cricket

- Indian batsman **Gautam Gambhir has announced his retirement from cricket** on Tuesday (December 4). The Ranji Trophy game between Delhi and Andhra starting Thursday at the Feroz Shah Kotla will be his last game.
- Gambhir, 37, has played 58 Tests, 147 ODIs and 37 T20Is for India scoring more than 10000 runs combined. He made his debut in 2003 and last played for India in a Test against England in Rajkot in 2016. He retires with nine Test centuries and 11 ODI centuries to his name.

Croatian Captain Luka Modric bags 2018 Ballon d'Or

- Croatian Captain and midfielder **Luka Modric**, who had led **Croatia** to its maiden Cup final before they lost to France in the summit clash, **has won the 2018 Ballon d'Or.**
- **Mbappe**, however, won the best young player of the year award at the Ballon d'Or ceremony.

Books

Vice President Venkaiah Naidu releases two volumes of selected speeches of President Kovind

- Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu has said that political parties must evolve a consensus on the Code of Conduct for their Members both inside the Legislature and out of it. He said, otherwise people might soon lose faith in the political processes and institutions.
- Mr Naidu said this after releasing two volumes of selected speeches of **President Ram Nath Kovind - The Republican Ethic and Loktantra ke Swar** in New Delhi this evening.

VVS Laxman's autobiography '281 and Beyond' launched by Sachin Tendulkar in Mumbai

- Former Indian Test batsman **VVS Laxman** was recently in Mumbai for the book launch of his autobiography **281 and Beyond.**
- **The event was attended by Indian batting legend Sachin Tendulkar who also was a part of the event.** In fact, the book was launched by the Little Master as he and Laxman looked back to the golden era of Indian cricket.

Noted agriculturalist Jayaraman passed away

- Noted agriculturalist **Jayaraman**, who pioneered ***the protection and propagation of indigenous paddy varieties in Tamil Nadu***, passed away in Chennai on December 6, 2018.
- Hailing from Thiruthuraipoondi, Jayaraman has been credited with documenting and protecting more than 170 paddy varieties.

Former Kerala minister, veteran Cong leader C N Balakrishnan passed away

- Veteran Congress leader and former Kerala minister **C N Balakrishnan** died at a private hospital here, party sources said Tuesday.
- Balakrishnan, a former Cooperation minister, undergoing treatment for pneumonia at a private hospital here and the end came late Monday night, the sources said.

Padma Shri historian and former Jamia VC, Mushirul Hasan passed away at 71

- **Professor Mushirul Hasan**, a renowned historian and former vice-chancellor Jamia Millia of Islamia, passed away at the age of 71 early on Monday morning. Hasan was also formerly the director general of the National Archives of India.
- He also served as vice-chairman, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, president of the Indo-Iran Society of the Iran embassy and president of the Indian History Congress.