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Banking and Finance

State Bank of India to join SWIFT's global payment interface

- **State Bank of India will soon sign up with the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Transactions' (SWIFT) Global Payment Interface (gpi)**, adding to the list of Indian banks that have subscribed to the interbank communication channel's new payment interface which is set to make cross-border transactions much more secure and transparent, a top official said.
- India's largest lender will join 11 of its counterpart banks that will have subscribed to this payments platform which comes with features such as end-to-end payment tracking, access to unaltered remittance information, faster and more transparent transactions.
- **These banks are ICICI Bank, Axis Bank, Punjab National Bank, Yes Bank, City Union Bank, HDFC Bank, Bank of India, Federal Bank Limited, Union Bank of India, Indian Bank and IndusInd Bank.**
- SWIFT said that they want to make gpi a universal payments interface by partnering with all major global banks by 2020.

IBBI signs pact with International Finance Corporation to train professionals

- **The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) has signed a cooperation agreement with the International Finance Corporation (IFC) to train professionals**, the government said on Thursday.
- The pact calls for organising workshops and training for insolvency professionals and IBBI officers, training the trainers, development of a national insolvency programme besides insolvency and valuation examinations. The agreement runs through till June 30, 2021.
- The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code 2016 provides for re-organisation and insolvency resolution of corporate persons, partnership firms and individuals in a time-bound manner. The aim is to maximise assets value of such persons, to promote entrepreneurship, availability of credit and balance the interests of all the stakeholders.
- For this purpose, the government has established an institutional infrastructure comprising of adjudicating authorities, the IBBI, insolvency professionals, insolvency professional agencies and information utilities.

Uttar Pradesh gets highways projects worth over Rs 1 Lakh Crore

- Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh inaugurated **National Highways projects worth Rs 1,10,154 crore in Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh.**
- He inaugurated foundation **stone for several works under Namami Gange programme worth over Rs 1969.57 crore.**
- The National Highways include four-laning of Lucknow-Sultanpur section on NH-56, four-laning of Kursi Road–Ayodhya Road section of Lucknow ring road, four-laning of Ghaghra Bridge to Budhanpur section on NH-233, widening of Sonoli-Gorakhpur section on NH-29E, widening of Barabanki-Jarwal Road Junction on NH-28C, etc.
- The foundation stone for construction of Lucknow-Kanpur Expressway was also laid.

Cabinet approves new measures to promote Hydro Power Sector

- The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved measures **to promote the Hydro Power Sector, which include declaring Large Hydropower Projects (HPO) as part of non-solar Renewable Purchase Obligation (RPO)**

- Large Hydropower Projects to be declared as a renewable energy source. As per the existing practice, only hydropower projects less than 25MW are categorized as a renewable energy source.
- HPO as a separate entity within non-solar renewable purchase obligation to cover large hydropower projects commissioned after notification of these measures. The small hydropower projects are already covered under the Non-Solar Renewable Purchase Obligation.

CCEA approves construction of a 3rd railway line between Narayangarh in West Bengal

- The **Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs** approved the construction of a 3rd railway line between **Narayangarh in West Bengal and Bhadrak in Odisha of 155 kilometres length.**
- The total estimated cost of this project is over Rs 1866 crore and will be completed by 2023-24.
- This will also help in generating direct employment for about 37 lakh man-days.

India and states

PM Modi releases new series of visually impaired friendly coins; 12-edged Rs 20 coin launched

- The **Prime Minister Narendra Modi on March 7, 2019** released the new series of visually impaired friendly circulation coins of **Rs 1, Rs 2, Rs 5, Rs 10 and Rs 20.**
- The coins were released at a function in New Delhi **where visually impaired children were specially invited.**
- The new circulation coins with various differentiating features, will greatly aid the visually impaired. **The coins will facilitate the visually impaired Divyang community, and will instill them with confidence.**

Agencies behind the design & development of coins

Design	National Institute of Design
Development	Security Printing and Minting Corporation of India Limited
Conception	Union Ministry of Finance

Prime Minister launches key development projects at Kalaburagi and Kancheepuram

- The Prime Minister Narendra Modi **launched key development projects at Kalaburagi in Karnataka and Kancheepuram in Tamil Nadu.**
- At Kalaburagi in Karnataka, the Prime Minister dedicated the ESIC Hospital and Medical College, Bengaluru to the nation.
- He also inaugurated the Super Specialty Block of KIMS in Hubali, the Income Tax Appellate Tribunal building in Bangalore and the Women's Hostel for Students from North Eastern Region at Bangalore University.
- At Kancheepuram in Tamil Nadu, the Prime Minister launched various National Highway projects, including the foundation stone for the four laning of NH-45C from Vikravandi to Thanjavur and the six laning of Karaipettai – Walajapet section of NH-4.
- He dedicated the 5 MMTPA capacity Ennore LNG Terminal to the nation.
- The Prime Minister also unveiled the statue of Dr MG Ramachandran at Dr. MGR Janaki College of Arts & Science for Women, Chennai.

PM launches Integrated Command, Control Centres; Flags off Nagpur Metro

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said, the Smart City Mission enables cities to identify their potential and challenges.**
- He said, the mission catalyses smart solutions for the challenges, through public consultation.

- The Prime Minister was speaking after the launch of **Integrated Command and Control Centers under the Mission at Gangtok and Namchi in Sikkim, Pasighat and Itanagar in Arunachal Pradesh and Agartala in Tripura through video conferencing in New Delhi.**
- Mr Modi said, the Smart City Command and Control Centres use digital technology to integrate different service networks.
- The **Prime Minister flagged off the first phase of a 13.5 kilometre stretch of the Nagpur Metro through video-conferencing from New Delhi.**

Hardeep S Puri launches e-Dharti App

- Housing and Urban Affairs Minister **Hardeep Puri today launched e-Dharti app where all the three modules- Conversion, Substitution and Mutation related to properties have been made online.**
- The payment system in Land and Development Office, L&DO has also been completely digitized.
- Work is also going on other three small modules namely Sale Permission, Mortgage Permission and Gift Permission will be completed soon.
- The public can now submit their applications online by visiting the L&DO website and are not required to visit this office for submission of them and for follow up of their applications.

NABL launches quality assurance scheme for basic composite medical laboratories

- The **National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories launched a voluntary scheme called Quality Assurance Scheme (QAS) for basic composite medical laboratories in February 2019** for sensitising small laboratories to basic doable quality practices.
- **The scheme is expected to bring transformational change in more than 5000 laboratories over the next 5 years and to transform them into labs providing quality service.** To familiarise and encourage more and more small labs, even in the remotest part of the country, to avail the scheme, NABL would be organising awareness programs in various cities of India.
- The scheme requires minimal documentation and a nominal fee has been prescribed for availing the scheme. The components of competence assessment have been added for assuring quality and validity of test results.

Cabinet approves promulgation of Central Educational Institutions (Reservation in Teachers' Cadre) Ordinance, 2019

- Union Cabinet approved the proposal for promulgation of the **Central Educational Institutions (Reservation in Teachers' Cadre) Ordinance, 2019.**
- The Ordinance will ensure that the Constitutional provisions of reservation for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and the socially and educationally backward classes in the faculty recruitment will be protected.

ISRO, French space agency CNES sign agreement on maritime security

- **National space agency ISRO and its French counterpart CNES signed an agreement to set up a joint maritime surveillance system in the country.**
- The two nations will explore putting up a constellation of low-Earth orbiting satellites that will identify and track movement of ships globally and in the Indian Ocean region where France has its Reunion Islands.
- They will initially share data from their present space systems and develop new algorithms to analyse them.
- The agreement comes a year after the two governments initiated broad collaboration plan during French President Emmanuel Macron's visit in March 2018.

PM-STIAC: Nine Science and Technology Missions and other Projects

- The Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government, Prof. K. Vijay Raghvan shared details of the nine national missions guided by the **Prime Minister Science, Technology & Innovation Advisory Council (PM-STIAC)**.
- **The PM-STIAC aims to facilitate the process of collaboration and focus needed to solve complex problems in a reasonable time-frame.**
- The Union Government is catalysing collaborations across scientific ministries, research institutions and industry partners, through the PM-STIAC, to leverage cutting edge scientific research for societal benefit.
- 4 meetings of the PM-STIAC have been held since October 2018 and key national missions emerged from the discussions. Each mission is being led by a lead Ministry and will engage international and national institutional partners, young scientists and industry.

Shri Vishwakarma Skill University, National Institute of Technical Teacher's Training and Research sign MoU

- A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between **Shri Vishwakarma Skill University (SVSU) and National Institute of Technical Teacher's Training and Research (NITTTR)** was signed.
- The MoU will be in force for a period of three years.
- The collaboration targets to ensure purposeful engagement of Faculty, Experts and Industry Partners for various academic activities.

Uttarakhand Chief Minister lays foundation stone for Doon-Mussoorie ropeway project

- **Uttarakhand Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat laid the foundation stone for the Dehradun-Mussoorie ropeway project.**
- The 300-crore rupees ropeway project is expected to be completed in three years.
- It will be one of the world's longest ropeways, and will shorten the one-hour zigzag drive to just 15 minutes from Purkul village the base camp at Dehradun to Mussoorie.

Madhya Pradesh: Ancient tribal language Gondi to be taught in tribal districts

- In Madhya Pradesh, **ancient tribal language Gondi will be taught in tribal districts.**
- Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath decided to include Gondi in the primary education curriculum of the state's tribal-dominated districts.
- The rapid decline in the number of people who speak that tongue is a matter of concern. Hence, the Chief Minister stressed on the need to save it.

Government issues guidelines to states on regulation of such homes; to be friendly for differently-abled

- The Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs on March 6, 2019 issued **the model guidelines for development & regulation of 'Retirement Homes'.**
- **The Model Guidelines prescribe an elderly friendly built environment; address the special needs; and protect the rights of senior citizens and retirees living in Retirement Homes** who aspire to spend their retired life independently in a safe and dignified environment.
- The Guidelines provide option to senior citizens and their family members, who are willing and can afford to purchase a living space for their parents.

Appointments

Soumya Swaminathan named Chief Scientist at WHO

- **Soumya Swaminathan, a Deputy Director-General of the World Health Organisation has been named Chief Scientist of the WHO.**
- **As Deputy Director-General Programmes (DDP)**, she was one of the three DDGs assisting WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.
- The new position, a component of Ghebreyesus's long-standing idea of ushering in reforms at the WHO, has specially been created for Swaminathan.

Ausaf Sayeed appointed new Ambassador of India to Saudi Arabia

- **Dr. Ausaf Sayeed**, presently High Commissioner of India to the Republic of Seychelles, **has been appointed as the next ambassador of India to Saudi Arabia.**
- An External Affairs Ministry release said, the Indian Foreign Service officer of the 1989 batch, Sayeed will succeed Ahmad Javed, who had been serving as envoy to Saudi Arabia since December 2015.
- Mr Sayeed has handled different areas including political, economic, consular and cultural work, besides Haj management and served as Ambassador to Yemen and Consul General of India in Chicago and Jeddah.

Justice SA Bobde nominated as Executive Chairman of NALSA

- President Ram Nath Kovind nominated **Justice SA Bobde of the Supreme Court as Executive Chairman of National Legal Services Authority (NALSA).**
- **The post is currently headed by Justice AK Sikri who retired on March 6, 2019.**
- The National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) is a statutory body constituted under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 to provide free Legal Services to the weaker sections of the society.

Awards

Former RBI governor Raghuram Rajan to get Yashwantrao Chavan national award

- **Former Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Raghuram Rajan has been chosen for the 'Yashwantrao Chavan National Award 2018'** for his contribution towards economic development.
- **Rajan will be presented the award at a function here on March 12 on the occasion of 106th birth anniversary of late Yashwantrao Chavan**, who was the first chief minister of Maharashtra, a release issued here said.
- NCP chief Sharad Pawar, who is president of the Yashwantrao Chavan Prathisthan, will preside over the function, it said.
- Rajan served as RBI governor between September 2013 and September 2016.

World

Malaysia joins the International Criminal Court

- **Malaysia ratified the Rome Statute making it the 124th State party to join the International Criminal Court (ICC).**
- Even though Malaysia had helped to negotiate the Rome Statute, it has been long been reluctant to ratify it.
- **The downing of flight MH17 and the Rohingya crisis have focused Malaysia's attention on the ICC.**

- After the election of Mahathir Mohamad as Prime Minister in May 2018, there has been a significant shift in the relationship between the Malaysian government and monarchy.

Report

Poorest of poor and uneducated women left behind in Integrated Child Development Scheme: Report

- As per a paper published in WHO bulletin recently, the poorest of the poor and uneducated women are not being covered under **the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS)**.
- The Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) provides a package of services at anganwadi or child-care centres to young children and pregnant women and lactating mothers.
- These services include supplementary nutrition, referral services, immunisation, health check-up, pre-school non-formal education and health and nutrition education.
- The study also said that mothers without any schooling were the lowest beneficiaries.

Days

International Women's Day 2019: President Ram Nath Kovind to present Nari Shakti Puraskar 2018

- **The International Women's Day 2019 was observed across the world on March 8, 2019.**
- The Day is observed to stand in harmony with all those fearless women fighting for gender equality, and highlight those women who often pass unnoticed.
- **Theme: 'Think equal, build smart, innovate for change'**
- The President of India, Ram Nath Kovind will confer the Nari Shakti Puraskar 2018. This year, 44 awardees have been selected for the Award.