



Monthly Current Affairs Magazine February, 2019

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RBI removes Bank of India, Bank of Maharashtra, OBC from PCA regime

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Thursday removed three public sector banks from the prompt corrective action (PCA) framework, allowing them to carry on normal business, especially lending. The three banks are Bank of India (BoI), Bank of Maharashtra (Mahabank), and Oriental Bank of Commerce (OBC).
- The central bank took this decision after reviewing the performance of these banks in the October-December (Q3) 2018-19 (FY19) quarter. The banks will, however, have to meet some norms that will ensure close monitoring.

GDP growth rate for FY18 revised upward to 7.2% from 6.7% earlier

- The government on Thursday revised the economic growth rate upwards to 7.2 per cent for 2017-18 from the 6.7 per cent estimated earlier.
- According to the revised gross domestic product (GDP) data, released by the Central Statistics Office (CSO), the demonetisation year, 2016-17, saw a growth rate of 8.2 per cent, the highest in the five years of the Modi government. Earlier, the growth rate was estimated at 7.1 per cent.

HDFC Bank joins hands with IIM-A to launch regional digital summit

- The HDFC Bank on Thursday joined hands with the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad (IIM-A) to launch its first regional DIS Summit, a platform for start-ups to showcase their innovations to power the bank's growth.
- The Centre for Innovation, Incubation and Entrepreneurship (CIIE) at IIM-A will help the bank identify potential fin-tech ideas in its incubation and entrepreneurship cell in its initial phase. Another partner in the summit is 91springboard, a platform for stakeholders like start-ups, corporates and the government to have successful ventures.

DAC approves indigenous construction of 6 submarines worth Rs 40000 cr

- The Defence Acquisitions Council, DAC chaired by Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman approved indigenous construction of six submarines worth 40 thousand crore rupees.
- It is the second project under the Ministry's ambitious strategic partnership model aiming to boost the government's Make in India' program.
- The first project to get the government's nod for implementation under the new model was the acquisition of 111 utility helicopters for the Navy at a cost of over 21 thousand crore rupees in August last year.

4,78,670 houses sanctioned under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban)

- The Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs approved the construction of another 4,78,670 more affordable houses for the benefit of urban poor under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban).
- The approval was given in the 42nd meeting of the Central Sanctioning and Monitoring Committee.
- The cumulative number of houses sanctioned under PMAY (U) now is 72,65,763.
- Andhra Pradesh has been sanctioned 1,05,956 houses while the sanction for West Bengal is 1,02,895 houses.
- The number of houses sanctioned for Uttar Pradesh is 91,689, while Tamil Nadu has been sanctioned 68,110.

Mphasis and NASSCOM collaborate to recognise Artificial Intelligence (AI) start ups

- IT major Mphasis on Thursday today partnered with NASSCOM to felicitate best in class AI start-ups at the upcoming NASSCOM Technology and Leadership Forum 2019.
- In an effort to drive the adoption of futuristic technologies including Deep Learning, Machine Learning, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Analytics, the partnership will recognize, nurture and promote bright young startups to scale the current AI ecosystem in India.

Interim Budget 2019: the highlights

- Union Finance Minister Piyush Goyal presented an Interim Budget for 2019 in Parliament on Friday.

- An Interim Budget usually doesn't list out new schemes or doesn't unveil any policy measures. The government will present the vote on account for the next four-to-five months.
- A full-fledged Budget will be presented after the House reassembles after the general election.

Here are the highlights from Mr. Goyal's budget speech:

- No income tax for earnings up to ₹5 lakh
- Individuals with gross income of up to ₹6.5 lakh need not pay any tax if they make investments in provident funds and prescribed equities
- Standard tax deduction for salaried persons raised from ₹40,000 to ₹50,000
- TDS threshold on interest on bank and post office deposits raised from ₹10,000 to ₹40,000
- TDS threshold on rental income increased from ₹1.8 lakh to ₹2.4 lakh
- ESI cover limit increased to ₹ 21,000. Minimum pension also increased to ₹ 1000.
- Mega pension scheme for workers in the organised sector with an income of less than ₹15,000. They will be able to earn ₹ 3000 after the age of 60. The scheme will be called Pradhan Mantri Shramyogi Maan Dhan Yojana.

Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation signs MOU with World Bank Group's IFC

- The Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation and the International Finance Corporation of the World Bank Group have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) **for climate change and conservation of the environment. The Rs 7000 crore MOU was signed on Tuesday.**
- According to the MOU which was signed, the International Finance corporation will help the AMC to work out strategy for meeting the challenge of climate change and its management. The IFC will even give its directions on how to use the funds. The MOU will be operational for five years till 2024.
- The IFC will also give its technical support to the AMC for implementing the projects for climate change and conservation of environment.

Yes Bank senior group president Pralay Mondal resigns

- Yes Bank senior group president and head - retail and business banking Pralay Mondal has tendered his resignation.
- On January 31, Rana Kapoor's reign as the Managing Director and Chief Executive of Yes Bank, which was co-founded by him.

2 RRBs amalgamated, named 'Tamil Nadu Grama Bank'

- Three Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) sponsored by the public sector Indian Bank were amalgamated and renamed as 'Tamil Nadu Grama Bank', with its Head Office in Salem.
- The amalgamation will be effective from April one, a release from the Indian Bank said here on Saturday.
- The amalgamated RRB namely "Tamil Nadu Grama Bank" will be under the sponsorship of Indian Bank, with Head Office at Salem.

Odisha Govt signed MoU with KEC, Iran for mutual cooperation

- On the 4th day of MSME International Trade Fair-2019, the session on "Promoting Women Entrepreneurship" received an overwhelming participation from more than 300 women entrepreneurs, exporters and startups.
- On this occasion, an MoU between Odisha Assembly of Small & Medium Enterprises (OASME) and Khazar Electric Company (KEC) from Iran was also signed for mutual cooperation for transfer of technology and production of equipments for agriculture, food processing, agriculture and waste management in presence of ACS, MSME.

FDI Policy on E-Commerce released

- To ensure due compliance of the FDI policy on e-Commerce, Press Note 2 (2018) was issued.

- As per the policy, an entity having equity participation by e-commerce marketplace entity or its group companies, or having control on its inventory by e-commerce marketplace entity will not be permitted to sell its products on the platform run by such marketplace entity.
- **e-Commerce marketplace entity will not mandate any seller to sell any product exclusively on its platform only.**
- This Press Note is effective from February 1, 2019.
- **The FDI policy on e-Commerce permitted 100 percent FDI in B2B e-commerce activities.**

SBI to roll out YONO Krishi and Global apps in April

- After receiving overwhelming response to its **YONO (You Only Need One) app**, the country's largest lender, **State Bank of India**, now plans to launch **YONO Krishi** and **YONO Global** apps in April, according to its chairman **Rajnish Kumar**.
- YONO Krishi, which will have all the retail facilities, will also cater to the specific needs of farmers and create an ecosystem for them.
- **The YONO Global will cater to NRI citizens and people on the move, Kumar said.**

Govt to launch campaign to saturate farmers for financial inclusion under KCC

- **Government today decided to launch a campaign to saturate farmers for financial inclusion under Kisan Credit Cards (KCC).** Agriculture Ministry in a statement said, the campaign will be launched through the Financial Institutions in collaboration with the State Governments.
- **The Department of Financial Services has already issued directives to the Financial Institutions in this regard.**
- The Ministry said, there are around seven crore active KCCs and issuing of KCCs in large numbers have helped increasing the agriculture credit.

Empowering Women Entrepreneurship through MSME Schemes

- **Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) is empowering women entrepreneurs through its different schemes.**
- 1.38 lakh projects have been set up by the women entrepreneurs under **Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP) Scheme** since inception.
- PMEGP, a major credit-linked subsidy scheme since 2008-09, helps set up micro enterprises and generate employment in rural and urban areas of the country.

MG Motor India Signs Mou With State Bank of India for Electronic Dealer Finance Scheme

- **MG Motor India has signed a MoU (Memorandum of Understanding) with the country's largest public sector lender State Bank of India, for the latter's Electronic Dealer Finance Scheme (e-DFS).**
- The strategic tie-up will provide access to wholesale inventory finance to MG partner dealers through SBI's electronic lending product.

Yes Bank signs MoU with MG Motor in India

- **Yes Bank**, India's fourth largest private sector Bank, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with **MG Motor India**, a British automotive company headquartered in Birmingham, United Kingdom, **to enter into a strategic financing partnership.**

ICICI Bank launches FD Xtra, a range of innovative term deposits

- **ICICI Bank announced today that it has launched a range of fixed deposits (FDs) and recurring deposits (RDs) called FD Xtra.**
- According to the bank's press release, the new term deposits have been designed to meet life-stage needs and goals of customers including term-insurance, saving for down-payment of home and car, retirement planning, child education and fulfilling travel aspirations among others.

India signs MoU with Russia to fast-track North-South corridor

- India, eyeing a bigger role in Eurasia and Afghanistan amid prevailing geopolitics, has signed a memorandum of understanding with Russia for fast-tracking International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC) that will enable a smoother connectivity to the region via Iran.
- Russian Railways Logistics Joint Stock Company (RZD) and Container Corporation of India (CONCOR), the largest rail container transport operator in India, last week signed the MoU for providing logistics services on INSTC, the implementation of which has been delayed for years despite a dry run on the corridor in recent years.

Oppo signs MoU with Telangana to help startups grow

- Chinese smartphone player **Oppo** on Tuesday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Telangana government to support and develop the startup ecosystem in the state.
- As part of the agreement, Oppo would provide technical expertise and mentoring support to startups helping the government create a supportive startup ecosystem for working in camera and image processing, battery, networks (5G), system performance, payments, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and gaming, the company said in a statement.

RBI cuts repo rate in its maiden policy review under Shaktikanta Das

- In a major policy shift, the six-member monetary policy committee (MPC) headed by Governor Shaktikanta Das on Thursday lower the repo rate by 25 basis points to 6.25 per cent in 4-2 vote. RBI has thus cut rate for the first time in 17 months. The last rate cut happened in August, 2017.
- The MPC also changed the policy stance to 'neutral' from 'calibrated tightening'. This was first money policy review for former economic affairs secretary Shaktikanta Das, who took over as RBI Governor in the second week of December, 2018.

RBI MONEY POLICY HIGHLIGHTS

- RBI Governor Das voted in favour of rate cut
- MPC unanimously voted to change stance to neutral
- FY20 GDP seen at 7.4 per cent
- CPI seen at 2.4% in Jan-March 2019 and 3.2-3.4% in April-Sept
- RBI to withdraw rule on FPI exposure to single corporate entity
- To raise limit for collateral free farm loan to Rs 1.6 lakh
- FY20 Budget proposals likely to boost aggregate demand
- Risk weight on bank exposure to NBFCs linked to ratings

Kerala becomes first state to set up Price Monitoring and Research Unit

- Kerala became the first State to set up a Price Monitoring and Research Unit (PMRU) to track violation of prices of essential drugs and medical devices under the Drugs Price Control Order (DPCO).
- The move comes more than five years after the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) proposed such a system for the States and the Union Territories.

Cabinet approves amendments to Banning of Unregulated Deposit Schemes Bill

- The Cabinet has approved a proposal for Official Amendments to Banning of Unregulated Deposit Schemes Bill, 2018.
- Briefing media after the Cabinet meeting in New Delhi last night, Union Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said, the amendments will further strengthen the bill to effectively tackle illicit deposit-taking activities, and prevent such schemes from duping the poor.

Government allows export of bio-fuels from special economic zones, EoUs

- The government allowed export of bio-fuels from Special Economic Zones (SEZs) and export-oriented units (EoUs) with certain conditions.

- In August 2018, the government imposed **restrictions on export of bio-fuels for non-fuel purposes.**

Smriti Irani launches India Size project in Mumbai

- **Union Minister of Textiles Smriti Irani launched the India Size project in Mumbai yesterday.**
- **A first-of-its-kind project in the history of the country, India Size aims to arrive at a standard Indian Size for the ready-to-wear clothing industry, on the lines of the standardized sizes available in countries such as the USA and the UK.**

Cabinet approves introduction of National Institutes of Food Technology, Entrepreneurship and Management Bill, 2019

- The Union Cabinet approved the introduction of **National Institutes of Food Technology, Entrepreneurship and Management Bill, 2019 in the Parliament.**
- The objective of the bill is to confer the status of **Institutions to National Importance to National Institute of Food Technology, Entrepreneurship and Management (NIFTEM) at Kundli, Haryana, and the Indian Institute of Food Processing Technology (IIFPT) at Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu.**

CCEA approves continuation for the Central Sector Scheme of Exploration of Coal and Lignite

- The Cabinet Committee of Economic Affairs approved the proposal for continuation of the **Scheme of "Exploration of Coal and Lignite" with an expected expenditure of Rs.1875 Crore.**
- The approved scheme is for carrying out 24,41,500 meter of drilling and 3575 line km of surface geophysical survey for promotional exploration and detailed drilling in Non CIL Block in Coal & Lignite along with Shale gas studies and associated studies to provide coal resources in 3 years period.

CCEA approves proposal for setting up 12,000 MW grid-connected Solar Photovoltaic (PV) Power Projects

- **The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) approved the proposal of Ministry of New & Renewable Energy for implementation of the Central Public Sector Undertaking (CPSU) Scheme Phase-II for setting up 12,000 MW grid-connected Solar Photovoltaic (PV) Power Projects.**
- The project will be set up by the Government Producers with Viability Gap Funding (VGF) support of Rs. 8,580 crore in 4 years period (2019-20 to 2022-23), as per the terms and conditions specified in Government Producer Scheme.

CCEA approves creation of Agri-Market infrastructure fund for development and upgradation of Gramin Agriculture Markets

- **The Cabinet Committee of Economic Affairs approved creation of a corpus of Rs. 2000 crore for Agri-Market Infrastructure Fund (AMIF) to be created with NABARD for development and up-gradation of agricultural marketing infrastructure in Gramin Agricultural Markets and Regulated Wholesale Markets.**
- AMIF will provide subsidised loan to state and central governments for their proposal for developing marketing infrastructure in 585 Agriculture Produce Market Committees (APMCs) and 10,000 Grameen Agricultural Markets (GrAMs).

RBI fines Rs 1 crore on SBI for not monitoring use of funds to borrower

- **State Bank of India on Thursday said that the Reserve Bank of India has slapped Rs 1 crore penalty on the country's largest lender for violating norms.**
- **RBI "in exercise of powers conferred under Section 47 A of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 has levied a penalty of Rupees one crore on the bank for not monitoring the end use of funds in respect of one of its borrowers," SBI said in a regulatory filing.**

Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority imposes Rs 9 lakh fine on United India Insurance

- **Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority has imposed a fine of Rs nine lakh on state-owned United India Insurance Co Ltd for violating certain procedures.**

- The insurance watchdog had issued a show-cause notice in August last year in connection with the on-site inspection conducted by the IRDAI during October, 2015.

exampundit *Aventus launches India's first ESG Fund*

- The Aventus India ESG Fund made its maiden investment on February 1, marking the first time a fund of this kind has been launched in India.
- ESG stands for environment, social and governance.
- The fund will invest \$1 billion and takes into account India's top 100 companies by market capitalisation.

Jet Airways signs MoU with SBI, seeks govt nod for open offer exemption

- Jet Airways and its biggest lender SBI have finally inked a MoU, pursuant to which the airline has formally applied to the Ministry of Civil Aviation for exemption from the takeover code and open offer, ET Now learns from sources.
- Sources say as per the MoU, SBI may convert its debt to equity which will be worth almost a 15% stake in Jet Airways. If SBI infuses more funds into the airline, then its stake may rise to 30%.

Cabinet approves setting up of unified authority for regulating IFSCs in India

- The Union Cabinet on February 6, 2019 approved establishment of a unified authority for regulating all financial services in International Financial Services Centres (IFSCs) in India through the International Financial Services Centres Authority Bill, 2019.
- India's first International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) became operational on April 11, 2015 at GIFT City in Gandhinagar, Gujarat.
- The International Financial Services Centre is the institution that caters to customers outside the jurisdiction of the domestic economy. These centres deal with flows of finance, financial products and services across borders.

Centre sanctions Rs173 cr for 58 NH projects in Himachal Pradesh

- Centre has sanctioned 173 crore rupees for 58 national highway projects in Himachal Pradesh.
- Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur told Assembly that the issue of declaring 69 highways and one other road as national highway has been taken up with the centre.

RBI raises collateral-free farm loan limit to Rs 1.6 lakh

- RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das today announced that the limit of collateral free agricultural loans has been increased from one lakh to 1.6 lakh. Addressing the post monetary policy announcement in Mumbai today, Mr. Das said the decision has been taken in view of the overall inflation and rise in the agricultural input costs since 2010 when the limit was last revised.
- Mr. Das said this move will enhance coverage of small and marginal farmers in the formal credit system.
- Earlier today, in his maiden bi-monthly policy review, the Monetary Policy Committee headed by Mr. Das reduced the policy repo rate by 25 basis points from 6.5 percent to 6.25 percent and also changed the policy stance from calibrated tightening to neutral.
- The RBI Governor said he expects banks to transmit the rate cut benefit to customers and will have an interaction with all the banks in this regard within the coming fortnight. On the liquidity front, Mr. Das said that RBI is constantly and continuously monitoring the liquidity situation and based on the requirement, will ensure that there is no liquidity scarcity.

Union Minister Suresh Prabhu launches two schemes in Mumbai

- Union Minister for Commerce and Industry Suresh Prabhu launched two ambitious schemes, the Hirkani Maharashtrachi and District Business Plan Competition in Mumbai today.
- Addressing the gathering Mr Prabhu said that participation of women is very important for the successful implementation of the schemes.
- Five SHGs at district level will be selected and Rs. 2 lakh will be given to each SHG to take the idea forward.

US-India CEO Forum to be held on February 14; American members of Forum announced

- US Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross on February 7, 2019 **announced the names of the American private sector members of the US-India CEO Forum. MasterCard CEO Ajay Banga and Qualcomm CEO Steve Mollenkopf are among the members of the US-India CEO Forum.**
- **The first meeting of the US-India CEO Forum under the US President Donald Trump Administration will be held in New Delhi on February 14, 2019.**
- The meeting will be co-chaired by US Commerce Secretary, Wilbur Ross and Union Minister of Commerce and Industry and Civil Aviation, Suresh Prabhu.

Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana: Guidelines launched for States to implement scheme; PM-Kisan Portal launched

- The Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare on February 7, 2019 **launched a platform named PM Kisan, <http://pmkisan.nic.in>, under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana (PM-KISAN) for uploading the details of the Small and Marginal Farmers (SMF).**
- **The Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana** was announced in the Union Interim Budget 2019 by Finance Minister Piyush Goyal.
- The Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, Radha Mohan Singh on February 8, 2019 wrote to the Chief Ministers of all States for their support in the effective and speedy implementation of the PM-KISAN Yojana so that the entitled benefits are speedily transferred to the farmers.

Arunachal Pradesh CM Pema Khandu flags off Arunachal leg of Startup India Yatra

- Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu flagged off the **Arunachal leg of the Startup India Yatra from civil secretariat in Itanagar.**
- The Startup Yatra van will travel across the state with two Boot camps and 4 van stops to provide a platform to entrepreneurs at grassroots to pitch their ideas.

PM Narendra Modi inaugurates PETROTECH-2019

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi on February 11, 2019 inaugurated the 13th International Oil and Gas Conference - PETROTECH-2019 at India Expo Centre in Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh.** The Prime Minister also addressed the inaugural session of the event.
- Welcoming the delegates, Union Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said, **India is the third largest consumer of crude oil and petroleum products and the government has taken several measures to provide energy for all.**

Engineers India enters into MoU with Mongol Refinery, Mongolia

- **Engineers India Ltd (EIL) said that it has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Mongol Refinery State Owned LLC of Government of Mongolia.**
- As per MOU, EIL shall provide **Project Management Consultancy Services to Mongol Refinery for setting up of an Oil Refinery in Mongolia** for which terms and conditions are being discussed and will be mutually settled in the form of a contract agreement, company said in a filing with BSE.

Dealer-Owned-Dealer-Operated model for setting up CNG stations by private players launched

- The Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas & Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Dharmendra Pradhan launched the **'Dealer Owned Dealer Operated' (DODO) model for setting up CNG stations.**
- Under the scheme, **87 Geographical areas serviced by 23 entities authorised will be covered.**
- **More than 1500 CNG stations are presently operational in the country, catering to the demands of over 33 lakh CNG vehicles.**

RBI penalises seven banks for violating various norms

- Seven Banks were penalised by the Reserve Bank of India for violating various norms. **Three banks- HDFC Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank and IDBI Bank - were fined Rs 2 million each for non-compliance with various directions issued by RBI on Know Your Customer (KYC) norms and Anti-Money Laundering (AML) standards.**
- **The central banks also penalised four other bank- Allahabad Bank, Andhra Bank, Indian Overseas Bank and Bank of Maharashtra- for non-compliance with various directions issued by RBI on monitoring of end use of funds, exchange of information with other banks, classification and reporting of frauds, and on restructuring of accounts. While Andhra Bank was fined Rs 10 million, the other banks were fined Rs 15 million each.**

Kerala government launches online clearance mechanism for entrepreneurs

- **Kerala government launched an online mechanism that will ensure clearance to proposals within 30 days of application.**
- **The Kerala single window interface for fast, transparent clearances (K-SWIFT) was launched on Monday by Kerala chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan at ASCEND Kerala 2019, an initiative of the government to position the state as an investment hotspot.**

Textiles Ministry to organise outreach programme for stakeholders

- **The Union Ministry of Textiles would be organising an outreach programme for textiles sector MSMEs on February 13, 2019 in New Delhi to hold interactions with the stakeholders to help them avail the support and outreach for 100 days programme announced by the Prime Minister.**
- **Minister of Social Justice & Empowerment Thawar Chand Gehlot will be the Chief Guest of the event and Minister of Textiles, Smriti Zubin Irani will preside over the function. An exhibition showcasing achievements of the textiles sector MSMEs will also be held on the occasion.**

Govt approves extension of CLCS-TUS scheme for MSMEs with 2,900cr outlay

- **The government Wednesday approved a three-year extension of the Credit Linked Capital Subsidy and Technology Up-gradation Scheme for MSMEs with total outlay of 2,900 crore.**
- **The scheme has been approved for continuation beyond the 12th five-year Plan for three years from 2017-18 to 2019-20.**
- **The scheme aims at improving the competitiveness of MSMEs by integrating various ongoing schematic interventions aimed at up-grading technology through Credit Linked Capital Subsidy (CLCS).**
- **The scheme will facilitate technology up-gradation , improvement in Quality of products by MSMEs, enhancement in productivity, reduction in waste.**

Cabinet approves increase in MSP for Raw Jute for 2019-20 season

- **The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs on Wednesday gave its approval for increase in the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for Raw Jute, for 2019-20 season.**
- **Briefing media persons after the Cabinet meeting, Railway Minister Piyush Goyal said the MSP for Fair Average Quality (FAQ) of Raw Jute has been increased to Rs 3950 per quintal for 2019-20 season from Rs 3700 per quintal in 2018-19 season.**
- **The MSP would yield returns of 55.81 per cent over the all India weighted average cost of production.**

RBI Imposes Rs 5 Crore Penalty on Four PSU Banks, Including SBI

- **Four major banks – Bank of Baroda, Corporation bank, State Bank of India and Union Bank of India -- were on Wednesday penalized to pay a fine of Rs 5 crore by the Reserve bank of India.**
- **The central bank has asked the banks to pay the fine for violating the RBI directions of end use of funds, exchange of information with other banks, classification and reporting of frauds, and on restructuring of accounts.**
- **The RBI has imposed the penalty in its order on January 31, this year.**

RBI clears Yes Bank of divergence

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has cleared Yes Bank of any disparity in reporting bad loans, known as divergence in market parlance, the private-sector lender said late evening Wednesday.
- The banking regulator assesses compliance by banks with extant prudential norms on income recognition, asset classification and provisioning (IRACP) as part of its supervisory processes.
- YES Bank has received the Risk Assessment Report for FY18 as an outcome of the IRACP process.

Bihar Khadi Board signs MoU with Amazon India

- The Bihar State Khadi and Village Industries Board signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the e-commerce giant Amazon to sell their products like saris, shirts and kurtas directly on Amazon India.
- Addressing a press conference in the city, state industries minister Jai Kumar Singh pointed out that the MoU would help create employment opportunities and promote the work of local artisans and weavers outside.

Cabinet approves leasing of land for 'Kisan Mandi'

- The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved the proposal for leasing out 1.61-acre land of the Delhi Milk Scheme in Delhi's Alipur to Small Farmers Agribusiness Consortium (SFAC) to set up "Kisan Mandi", said an official.
- The market will provide an additional marketing channel and platform to Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) and Growers Associations (GA) for direct sale of fruits and vegetables to wholesale and retail buyers in Delhi-NCR, said an official statement.

Cabinet approves continuation of Centre's tribal welfare schemes

- Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has approved the continuation of sub-schemes under Umbrella programme for the development of Scheduled Tribes from the period till March 2020.
- Briefing reporters after the Cabinet meeting, Finance Minister Piyush Goyal said, over 10 crores Scheduled Tribe people will benefit from it.
- The total layout for the programme is 11,900 crore rupees.
- The scheme will also promote efficiency in the delivery of service and enhance the reach of welfare schemes of government in service deficient tribal areas in the sectors such as livelihood, health, education, through efforts of Voluntary Organisations.

Cabinet approves proposal for Extension of tenure of NCSK beyond 31st of March, 2019

- The Union Cabinet has approved the proposal for Extension of tenure of the National Commission for Safai Karmacharis (NCSK) beyond 31st of March, 2019 for three years.
- The Union Cabinet approved the signing of Memorandum of Understanding, MoU between India and Saudi Arabia on cooperation and mutual assistance in Customs Matters.

Indo-US CEO Forum to be held in New Delhi on 14 February

- The Indo-US Commercial Dialogue and the Indo-US CEO Forum will be held on February 14, 2019 in New Delhi.
- The Indian side will be headed by Commerce & Industry and Civil Aviation Minister, Suresh Prabhu, and the US side will be led by Mr. Wilbur Ross, US Commerce Secretary.
- The two Ministers will co-chair the India-US Commercial Dialogue.

PM Modi addresses CREDAI YouthCon -19

- The Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the CREDAI YouthCon -19 on February 13, 2019 at Talkatora Stadium, New Delhi.
- The event was organised by the Confederation of Real Estate Developers' Association of India (CREDAI).
- The Prime Minister also visited the exhibition organised by CREDAI.
- YouthCon is the annual Youth Conclave of CREDAI which is held to bring together the future of the real estate industry in India.

Finance Ministry asks six public sector banks to improve on PCA parameters

- The Finance Ministry has asked the six remaining public sector banks, currently under Prompt Corrective Action (PCA), to improve on seven parameters to get the government's support for coming out of the PCA framework.
- Out of a total of 11 banks put under PCA last year, three have already moved out while another two will merge with a stronger entity. This leaves six in the list of weak banks that also face restrictions on lending.
- The banks under PCA are Allahabad Bank, United Bank of India, Corporation Bank, UCO Bank, Central Bank of India and Indian Overseas Bank.

India-US CEO Forum and Commercial dialogue held; sets up Working Groups

- India and the United States on February 14, 2019 held the India-US CEO Forum and India-US Commercial Dialogue in New Delhi. The Union Minister for Commerce & Industry and Civil Aviation, Suresh Prabhu chaired the meeting.
- However, Wilbur Ross, the Secretary of Commerce of United States, could not attend the Dialogue and Forum because of unforeseen flight cancellation. He participated in the most of the sessions remotely through teleconference.

Anoop Satpathy-led Expert Committee submits report; recommends National Minimum Wage at Rs 375 per day

- The Expert Committee led by Anoop Satpathy, Fellow of V. V. Giri National Labour Institute (VVGNI), on February 14, 2019 submitted its report on "Determining the Methodology for Fixation of the National Minimum Wage" to the Government.
- The Committee was constituted by the Union Ministry of Labour and Employment January 17, 2017 to review and recommend methodology for fixation of National Minimum Wage (NMW) and determine the base level National minimum wage/wages through an evidence-based approach.
- The Report has been placed on the Ministry's website for facilitating the process of consultation and dialogue among social partners and stakeholders for necessary approval of methodology.
- **The report recommended a balanced diet approach which is culturally edible for fixation of national minimum wage.** It proposed a particular amount of food items per day per person to constitute a national level balanced food basket: **More or less than 10 percent of 2400 calories + proteins greater than or equal to 50 gm + fats greater than or equal to 30 gm per day per person**

RBI warns of mobile data theft by 'AnyDesk' app

- Amid rising instances of fraud using the Unified Payment Interface (UPI) platform, the Reserve Bank of India has cautioned all banks and payment system operators about a new modus operandi allegedly used by scammers to target customer phones.
- In an alert dated February 14, the cyber security and IT examination cell of the central bank said that a mobile application called 'AnyDesk' was allegedly being used by fraudsters to access data on mobile devices. Once the app is installed on customer phones, it seeks permission to access controls of the phone, like all other applications.

India and Singapore to sign pact for skilling Indians in aviation

- India and Singapore will sign an agreement for skilling Indian youths in the aviation sector at the Aero India Show next week. Academies will be set up in Bengaluru and other places in India that will act as regional hubs for the training of Indian youths for domestic and overseas jobs in these sectors.
- National Skill Development Corporation of India's (NSDC) Aerospace and Aviation Sector Skill Council in collaboration with Singapore Polytechnic and a Singapore-based private sector firm will signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on February 22 to establish skill development centers.
- Aero India show 2019 will be held in Bengaluru from February 20-24.

PM Modi launches several development projects including Patna Metro Rail Project in Bihar

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated and laid the foundation stone of various infrastructure and development projects worth 33,000 crore rupees at Barauni in Begusarai district of Bihar today. He laid the

foundation stone of **Patna Metro Rail Project** at a cost of over **13,000 crore rupees** via video conferencing. The project would be completed by 2024.

- Mr Modi laid the foundation stone for the first phase of **Jagdishpur Haldia and Bokaro Dhamra gas pipeline project** under the **Prime Minister's package for Bihar**. He also kick started work of several development projects of civic works, Clean Ganga Mission and Railways also.

India raises customs duty to 200 pc on all goods imported from Pakistan

- India has raised the basic customs duty to **200 per cent** on all goods imported from **Pakistan** with immediate effect following withdrawal the Most Favoured Nation, MFN status in the aftermath of the Pulwama terror attack.
- Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said this in a tweet. The main items which Pakistan exports to India include fresh fruits, cement, petroleum products, bulk minerals and ores and finished leather.

India withdraws Most Favoured Nation status accorded to Pakistan

- India on February 15, 2019 withdrew the '**Most-Favoured Nation**' status accorded to **Pakistan** following the **Pulwama terror attack** in Jammu and Kashmir that led to the killing of **37 CRPF personnel** and injuring of many others.
- The most favoured nation (MFN) status was accorded in 1996 under WTO's General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).

IndianMoney.com unit gets licence for insurance biz

- **IndianMoneyInsurance.com**, a subsidiary of the Bengaluru-based **IndianMoney.com Group**, has received the **Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India's** insurance broking licence to enter the insurance business.
- The company, which will go live in the next few days, plans to hire 2,000 employees by the end of 2019 and set up insurance purchase centres across 500 taluk centres across India at an investment of ₹40 crore.

IBBI organises first-of-its-kind workshop for financial creditors in Mumbai

- The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI), jointly with the State Bank of India and the Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs (IICA), organised a two-day workshop on '**Committee of Creditors: An Institution of Public Faith**' in Mumbai.
- The Workshop on February 15 and 16 was unique and the first-of-its-kind, organised for the benefit of Financial Creditors, who comprise the Committee of Creditors(CoC), under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016.

SBI launches Nayi Disha for employees to maintain work-life balance

- The nations largest lender State Bank has begun a massive employee engagement programme to ensure its 2.6 lakh-strong staff does not work mechanically and is sufficiently motivated to take on newer challenges that the future will throw up, a top official has said.
- The programme christened **Nayi Disha** or the new path focuses on work-life balance and also involves the staffs immediate family members, also giving them the ability to inform the bank if an employee is not able to leave work on time.

RBI to transfer Rs 28,000 cr interim surplus to Centre

- The Reserve Bank has announced that it will transfer an interim surplus of **Rs 28,000 crore** to the central government for the half-year ended 31st December, 2018.
- In a statement issued on Monday evening, the RBI said the decision has been based on a limited audit review and after applying the extant economic capital framework.

- This is the second successive year that the Reserve Bank will be transferring an interim surplus to the government.

Indian Oil signs USD 1.5 billion deal to buy US crude oil

- In the first-ever deal by an Indian company, Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) on Monday said it has signed an annual deal worth USD 1.5 billion to import 3 million tonnes of crude oil in the fiscal year beginning April 1.
- This is the first time any Indian refiner has signed an annual contract since the country in 2017 began importing crude oil from the US.

Nitin Gadkari to inaugurate upgraded portal for maritime sector

- Union Minister Nitin Gadkari will inaugurate on Tuesday an **upgraded version of e-commerce portal Port Community System (PCS)** in Mumbai.
- The upgraded portal 'PCS1x' has been developed in record time by the Indian Ports Association, based on feedback from stakeholders using PCS.
- The minister would launch "PCS1x" at the Regional Maritime Safety Conference in Mumbai on Tuesday, the Ministry of Shipping said in a release on Monday.

LIC introduces new micro insurance plan "Micro Bachat"

- **Life Insurance Corporation (LIC)** Monday launched a new microinsurance plan 'Micro Bachat'. It is a regular premium, non-linked, participating endowment microinsurance plan, which offers a combination of protection and savings, LIC said in a statement.
- **For the first time, a microinsurance plan has been launched providing coverage up to Rs 2 lakh, it said.**
- This plan provides financial support for the family in case of unfortunate death of the policyholder during the policy term and a lump sum amount at the time of maturity for the surviving policyholders, it said.

Suresh Prabhu clears proposal to encourage investments in Start-Ups

- **Union Minister of Commerce & Industry and Civil Aviation, Suresh Prabhu** has cleared a proposal aiming at **simplifying the process of exemptions for Start-ups under Section 56 (2) (viib) of Income Tax Act.**
- The **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)** will be issuing a gazette notification on February 19, 2019 to this effect.
- Similarly, an entity will continue to be recognised as a **Start-ups, if its turnover for any of the financial years since incorporation and registration has not exceeded Rs 100 crore in place of Rs 25 crore earlier.**

Govt to infuse Rs 48,239 crore in 12 public sector banks

- **The government has approved recapitalisation of Rs 48,239 crore in 12 public sector banks in this fiscal to help them maintain regulatory capital requirements and finance growth plans.**
- In a tweet, Financial Services Secretary Rajiv Kumar said the recapitalization will help these banks perform better.
- He said, the government **will infuse over nine thousand crore rupees in Corporation Bank and six thousand 896 crore rupees in Allahabad Bank.**
- They are better-performing banks currently under the Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) supervision of the RBI.
- The government will also pump in **12,535 crore rupees in Central Bank of India, United Bank, UCO Bank and Indian Overseas Bank.**

Government clears proposal to encourage investments in Start-Ups; hikes tax exemption cap

- **Union Minister of Commerce & Industry and Civil Aviation, Suresh Prabhu** on February 19, 2019 cleared proposals to encourage investments in Start-Ups, aiming at simplifying the process of exemptions for Start-ups from the 'Angel Tax' under Section 56 (2) (viib) of Income Tax Act, 1961.
- As per the new norms, **registered startups will be exempted from tax on funding of up to Rs 25 crore compared with the existing limit of Rs 10 crore.**

- The new norms aim to catalyse entrepreneurship by enabling angel investments by innovators across all sections of society and all sectors of economy.

Commerce Minister launches 'SWAYATT' on GeM

- Union Minister of Commerce & Industry and Civil Aviation, Suresh Prabhu **launched SWAYATT initiative to promote Start-ups, Women and Youth Advantage through eTransactions on Government e Marketplace (GeM).**
- The **SWAYATT** would seek to promote inclusiveness by catapulting various categories of sellers and service providers, take proactive steps to facilitate the training and registrations of such specific category of manufacturers and sellers.

DPIIT launches second edition of States' ranking on Startup initiatives

- After the successful first edition of States' **Startup Ranking in 2018, the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) released second edition of Startup Ranking for 2019.**
- The Startup Ranking framework aims to rank the States/UTs for establishing a robust ecosystem for supporting Startups.
- The framework encourages States and UTs to identify, learn and replicate good practices from each other.

Cabinet approves Ahmedabad Metro Rail Project Phase II

- The Union Cabinet approved the **Ahmedabad Metro Rail Project Phase-II which comprises two corridors of total length 28.254.**
- The Corridor 1 is from Motera Stadium to Mahatma mandir, a length of 22.838 km and Corridor 2 is from GNLU to GIFT City at a length of 5.416 km.
- **The project will be completed at a total cost of Rs. 5384.17 crores.**

CCEA approves continuation of Khadi Gramodyog Vikas Yojana from 2017-18 to 2019-20

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs **approved to continue the existing schemes of MPDA, Khadi Grant, ISEC and Village Industry Grant, all subsumed under 'Khadi and Gramodyog Vikas Yojana' at the total cost of Rs. 2800 crore for the period 2017-18 to 2019-20.**
- It approved to bring in a new component of '**Rozgar Yukt Gaon**' to introduce enterprise-based operation in the Khadi sector and to create employment opportunities for thousands of new artisans.
- **Rozgar Yukta Gaon (RYG)** aims at introducing an 'Enterprise-led Business Model' in place of 'Subsidy-led model' through partnership among 3 stakeholders- KRDP-assisted Khadi Institution, Artisans and Business Partner.

Cabinet approves Promulgation of Banning of Unregulated Deposit Schemes Ordinance, 2019

- The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on February 19, 2019 **approved the Promulgation of Unregulated Deposit Schemes Ordinance, 2019.**
- The proposed Ordinance will immediately tackle the menace of illicit deposit taking activities in the country which at present are exploiting regulatory gaps and duping poor and gullible people of their hard-earned savings.
- **Earlier, the Lok Sabha on February 13, 2019 passed the Banning of Unregulated Deposit Schemes Bill, 2018.**

PM Modi's visit to Korea: India Korea startup hub launched in Seoul

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi **launched the India-Korea Startup Hub in Seoul during his visit to South Korea on February 21, 2019 while addressing the India-Korea Business Symposium.**
- As part of the global celebrations of the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, Prime Minister unveiled a **bust of Mahatma Gandhi at the Seoul Campus of Yonsei University.**

4TH India-Asean Expo Summit on 21 – 23 February 2019 in New Delhi

- **The 4th India-ASEAN Expo and Summit will be held on February 21-23, 2019 in New Delhi.**

- This is a flagship event of Department of Commerce, being organised with **FICCI to carry forward the momentum and to further strengthen India-ASEAN relations under the Act-East Policy.**
- The 4th India-ASEAN Expo and Summit will build upon the success of the previous edition of ASEAN-India Business and Investment Meet and Expo which was held in 2018 as a precursor to India-ASEAN Commemorative Summit.

India, Sri Lanka ink MoU to establish business centre for ICT incubators in Jaffna

- **India and Sri Lanka today signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to establish a business centre for ICT incubators in Jaffna through grant of 25 crore Sri Lankan rupees from India.**
- The centre would provide opportunities and enhance the enabling environment for **Information Communication Technology (ICT) and other professional services in the Northern region inhabited by minority Tamils.**

Merger of Vijaya Bank and Dena Bank with BoB to be effective from April 1

- **Bank of Baroda on Wednesday said the merger of Dena Bank and Vijaya Bank with itself would be effective from April 1 as per the scheme of amalgamation approved by the government.**
- Besides, the board of the bank fixed March 11, 2019, as **record date for issuing and allotting equity shares of the Bank of Baroda to the Shareholders of Vijaya Bank and Dena Bank.**
- This scheme may be called the **Amalgamation of Vijaya Bank and Dena Bank with Bank of Baroda Scheme, 2019, BoB said citing the government notification.**

NITI Aayog organises 'Conference on Future of Indian Banking'

- **NITI Aayog organised the 'Conference on Future of Indian Banking and role of technology' on February 22, 2019.**
- The conference aims to increase and elevate the discourse on the banking sector in India, and help develop insights to inform the continued evolution of the Indian banking sector.
- **The panel discussions were held with policy and banking industry experts.**

EPF interest rate hiked to 8.65 percent

- **The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO), the retirement fund manager under the Union Labour Ministry, raised the interest rate on Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) accumulations to 8.65 percent for 2018-19.**
- **This is a 10 basis point increase from the 8.55 percent EPF interest rate announced by the retirement fund for 2017-18.**
- The Central Board of Trustees (CBT) ratified the amendment in EPF Scheme 1952, as approved in the 141st meeting of Financial Investment and Audit Committee (FIAC) held on February 12, 2019, to enable accounting of Investment in Exchange Traded Funds (ETFs) (Equity & Related Investment).

India, South Korea sign 6 pacts; to step-up cooperation in infrastructure, combating global crime

- **India and South Korea signed six agreements on Friday to enhance cooperation in key areas, including infrastructure development, media, start-ups and combating trans-border and international crime, during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the country.**

List of MoUs/Documents signed between India and the Republic of Korea during the State Visit of Prime Minister to the Republic of Korea

1. MoU on release of commemorative postal stamp on Queen Hur (Suriratna)
2. MOU on Extension of Korea Plus
3. MoU on Start-up Cooperation
4. MoU between Korean National Police Agency and MHA on Combating Transnational Crime And Developing Police Cooperation
5. MoU between Korean Broadcasting System (KBS) and Prasar Bharti on Cooperation in Broadcasting

6. MoU between National Highways Authority of India and Korea Expressway Corporation

RBI stiffens rules, makes loans costlier for NBFCs to borrow

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday intervened, and made it harder for **the non banking financial companies (NBFCs) to borrow from the commercial banks, hence making the credit flow slower, and more costly, the Financial Express reported.**
- Now on, **any loan to an NBFC which is due to pay to the banks Rs 200 or above, and has no ratings, will now lure a risk weight of 150 per cent. Even NBFC which was rated previously but later un-rated, and owes Rs 100 or plus, will pull a risk weight of 150 per cent, reported the Financial Express.**
- Basically, the central bank stiffened risk-weight norms for loans to NBFCs, making them equal to other companies.
- The initiative comes on the middle of liquidity deficit in the money market. Lately, NBFCs and housing finance companies (HFCs) are facing financing and liquidity issues among issues over asset-liability imbalances and company administration and control failures at some of the organizations.

RBI to merge three categories of NBFCs to create new category

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on February 22 announced that it **will merge three categories of Non Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) into a new one.**
- According to a release, **NBFCs categorized as Asset Finance Companies (AFC), Loan Companies (LCs) and Investment Companies (ICs), will be merged into a new category called NBFC - Investment and Credit Company (NBFC-ICC).**

PM-KISAN: PM Modi launches 'Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana' from Gorakhpur, UP

- **The Prime Minister Narendra Modi on February 24, 2019 launched the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana (PM-KISAN) from Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh.**
- On the launch day itself, **the first instalment of Rs 2,000 was directly credited to the bank accounts of selected beneficiary farmers. Around 12 crore farmers are expected to benefit from PM-KISAN.**
- The Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana was announced in the Union Interim Budget 2019 by Finance Minister Piyush Goyal.
- **The First Installment of Rs 2,021 crore was directly transferred into the bank accounts of 1,010,6,880 eligible farmers of 24 States and the Union Territories.**
- **The Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) under the Scheme PM-KISAN is being done through the System of Public Finance Management System (PFMS), a web-based payment and MIS IT application of the Government administered by the Controller General of Accounts (CGA).**

RBI extends KYC compliance norms by six months

- **Reserve Bank of India Monday extended by six months the deadline for compliance with Know Your Customer (KYC) norms, for prepaid payment instrument (PPI) issuers. The earlier deadline was February 28.**
- **PPIs are instruments that facilitate purchase of goods and services, including financial services and remittance facilities, against the value stored on such instruments.**
- E-wallet companies were caught in a bind over looming deadline as companies were apprehensive that they will not be able to meet the central bank's deadline to complete KYC of all customers by February-end.

GST Council reduces GST Rate on Real Estate projects; approves 5% rate for under-construction houses

- **The Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council met on February 24, 2019 for its 33rd meeting and slashed GST rate on under-construction residential properties and the affordable housing projects.**
- In case of non-affordable houses, **the GST rate for under-construction flats and houses has been brought to 5 percent without Input Tax Credit (ITC), down from the present 12 percent.**
- In case of affordable houses, **the GST rate has been reduced to 1 percent without ITC from 8 percent.**
- The revised rates will be applicable from April 1, 2019.

CBIC constitutes three Working Groups to study and recommend measures to facilitate trade, promote exports

- The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) constituted three Working Groups to study and recommend measures to facilitate trade, promote exports and improve compliance.
- The Working Groups will focus on improving the legislative structure of customs tariff and update it to suit the emerging and future needs of the economy.

IWAI, Indian Oil sign MoU on fuel needs for national waterways

- The Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) and Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL) signed a Memorandum of Understanding on February 26, 2019 for jointly developing infrastructure for fuels, lubricating oil, LPG, natural gas and any other related fuel and gas for meeting the requirement of national waterways.
- The agreement will provide for an understanding over general modalities of mutual cooperation leading to addressing futuristic demand of any form of energy for Inland Waterways and associated services.

FAGMIL, Himachal Pradesh Government sign MoU to establish White cement Plant Project

- The FCI Aravali Gypsum and Minerals India Limited (FAGMIL) signed MoU with the Himachal Pradesh Government to establish a white cement plant near village Nohra Dhar in Sirmour district, Himachal Pradesh at a project cost of approximately Rs. 605 crores.
- It will be the 4th white cement plant in the country.

Nitin Gadkari lays foundation stone for Road Project in Phagwara

- Union Minister for Road Transport & Highways, Shipping and Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation, Nitin Gadkari laid the foundation stone for an elevated structure and vehicular underpass (VUP) on NH-44 at Phagwara City in Kapurthala district of Punjab.
- The length of this six lane project is 2.555 Kms, and approximate cost is Rs 165 crore.
- This project will bring safety and convenience to local road users.

Allahabad, Corporation, Dhanlaxmi Bank out of PCA

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Tuesday lifted lending curbs on two more public sector banks (PSBs), namely Allahabad Bank and Corporation Bank, besides also freeing private lender Dhanlaxmi Bank from the Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) Framework. Last month, Bank of India, Bank of Maharashtra and Oriental Bank of Commerce were taken out of the PCA Framework.
- In a statement, the central bank said that the Board for Financial Supervision (BFS) reviewed the performance of banks under PCA and noted that the government has infused fresh capital on February 21 into various banks, including some of the banks currently under the PCA framework.
- Of these banks, Allahabad Bank and Corporation Bank had received Rs 6,896 crore and Rs 9,086 crore, respectively. Capital infusion has shored up their capital funds and also increased their loan loss provision to ensure that the PCA parameters were complied with the regulator said.
- With the removal of Allahabad Bank and Corporation Bank, six public sector undertaking (PSU) banks — IDBI Bank, UCO Bank, Central Bank of India, Indian Overseas Bank, Dena Bank and United Bank of India are still under the PCA framework.

Brigade Group signs MoU with Technopark to build WTC Thiruvananthapuram

- Real estate developer Brigade Group on Wednesday announced signing of a memorandum of understanding with Technopark, an autonomous organisation fully owned by the Kerala state government, for developing an iconic World Trade Centre at Technocity in Thiruvananthapuram.
- Multinational companies like Nissan and Tata Consultancy Services have already taken land at the 300 acre Technocity IT campus.

Paytm Payments Bank Launches Zero Balance Current Account

- Following a six month ban on starting new accounts by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), Paytm Payments Banks has launched a zero balance current account with features such as unlimited free digital transactions and free debit card etc.
- At the end of the day, account balances above INR 1 Lakh will be automatically transferred to a current account in a partner bank. However, there is no cap on amount deposits and transactions frequency during the day. Further, the unlimited cash deposits feature will also aid small merchants who receive large chunk of their payments in cash.

DCB Bank launches Open Banking for next-generation banking solutions

- DCB Bank announced the launch of its Open Banking Platform, a significant step towards creating a collaborative ecosystem with enterprises, fintechs and app developers, and enhancing customer-service delivery.
- Over 20 startups, fintechs, merchants, enterprises and developers will partner with DCB Bank for access to its Open Banking Platform APIs as well as collaboration on innovation and customer centric products.

ICICI Bank launches new super-premium credit card 'Emeralde'

- Private Sector lender ICICI Bank announced the launch of a new addition to its 'Gemstone collection of credit cards'.
- Christened, 'ICICI Bank Emerald Credit Card', the facility offers best-in-the industry rewards and benefits for senior professionals and self-employed entrepreneurs who are always on the go.

Petroleum Minister gives Rs 34 cr of IOC for clean Ganga movement

- Petroleum Minister Dhramendra Pradhan on February 27, 2019 gave Rs 34 crore of Indian Oil Corporation for clean Ganga movement.
- After receiving the grant, Union Minister Nitin Gadkari said that nearly 40 Ganga tributaries will be cleaned.
- The Minister said, government has been able to get rid of paper and pulp industry wastage.

DAC approves acquisition of defence equipment worth Rs 2700 cr

- The Defence Acquisition Council has approved the acquisition of defence equipment for about Rs 2700 crores.
- The approval includes acquisition of three cadet training ships for the navy, which will provide basic sea training to officer cadets including women officer under trainees.

India and states

Piyush Goyal launches the IEA's 'The Future of Rail' report

- Minister of Railways, Piyush Goyal on January 30, 2019 launched the "The Future of Rail" report of the International Energy Agency (IEA).
- The Future of Rail is the first-of-a-kind report that analyses the current and future importance of rail around the world through the perspective of its energy and environmental implications.
- The report reviews the impact of existing plans and regulations on the future of rail and explores the policies that could help to realise an enhanced future of the railways.
- This first ever global report has a focus on India.

PETROTECH-2019 to be organised from February 10 to 12, 2019

- PETROTECH-2019, the 13th International Oil & Gas Conference & Exhibition, being organised under the aegis of the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas, is all set to be inaugurated on February 10, 2019.
- India's flagship hydrocarbon international conference is expected to be inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Microsoft India increases focus on North East; signs pact with Sikkim

- Microsoft India on Thursday announced plans to increase investments in the eight North Eastern states of India.
- As part of its commitment to partner the region in its transformation, **the Microsoft signed an MoU with the Sikkim Government to revamp the educational system in the state.**

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

- **Air India announced to resume its services from New Delhi to the holy city of Najaf in Iraq after 25 years.**
- Indian Ambassador to Iraq, Dr Pradeep Rajpurohit said the services will commence from February 14, 2019 and it is initially being planned for twice a week.
- **Najaf is a city some 160 kilometres from Baghdad.**

MoU inked for new innovations in fight against TB

- **An international body and a Tata Trusts-backed collaboration have signed an MoU to accelerate the roll-out of new, people-centred innovations in the fight against tuberculosis (TB) in India and other countries.**
- India has set a target for complete elimination of tuberculosis (TB) by 2025, five years ahead of the global target of 2030.
- The Stop TB Partnership and the India Health Fund (IHF) signed an MoU during the former's board meeting in Geneva, Switzerland.

BioChem USA inks MoU for setting up Biorefinery in Gujarat

- **BioChem USA and Department of Industries, Government of Gujarat on Thursday signed an MoU in the presence of Chief Minister Vijay Rupani for setting up of a Biorefinery in Dahej Petroleum Chemical and Petrochemical Investment Region (PCPIR) at an estimated investment of Rs 3000 crores.**
- According to an official release the plant will generate around 2000 employment.

India to launch communication satellite GSAT-31 aboard Ariane-5

- **The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) would be launching its latest communication satellite GSAT-31, aboard Ariane-5 (VA 247) on February 6, 2019 from French Guiana.**
- Ariane-5 is the launch vehicle of the European launch services provider Arianespace. According to Arianespace, the launch of Ariane-5 (VA 247) is scheduled for 2:31 am India time on February 6. In its first mission on 2019, Arianespace would be launching two telecommunications satellites with Ariane 5.

The launch vehicle would be carrying two communication satellites:

- Saudi Geostationary Satellite 1/Hellas Sat 4
- Hellas Sat along with GSAT-31

Gujarat govt increases DA of over 9.61 lakh employees

- **Gujarat government has announced an increase in Dearness allowance of more than 9.61 lakh employees and pensioners by 2 per cent.**
- The hike in dearness allowance will be given with retrospective effect of July 1, 2018. This was announced by Deputy Chief Minister Nitin Patel at Gandhinagar on January 31, 2019.

PM Modi visits all 3 regions of Kashmir, Jammu & Ladakh to inaugurate, lay foundation stones for various development projects

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi today visited all the three regions of Kashmir, Jammu & Ladakh to inaugurate and lay foundation stones for various development projects.
- During his day long visit to Srinagar, Jammu & Leh, PM Modi inaugurated around 7000 Crore projects related to healthcare, higher education, skill development and employment in the State.
- PM Modi had earlier visited Jammu, Srinagar and Leh on 18th May last year to lay the foundation stones for various infrastructure projects in the state. In the last leg of his day long visit, **PM Modi arrived in Srinagar**

and unveiled the plaque to mark the laying of foundation stone for Rs 1828 crore All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) coming up on 207 acres at south Kashmir's Awantipora area of Pulwama district.

- He also digitally launched various projects under **Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA)** for whole country. PM also laid foundation stone digitally for 3 Model Degree Colleges in north Kashmir's Kupwara, Baramulla and Kishtwar districts.

PM dedicates 294-km-long electrified railway lines in West Bengal, to the nation

- PM Modi dedicated to the nation the railway electrification of the **294-km-long Andal-Sainthia-Pakur-Malda and the Khana-Sainthia sections**.
- The electrification of this section will enable ease of transportation of coal, stone chips and ballast to North and Northeast India in a seamless manner, a statement from PM's office said.
- The PM launched a nearly **300-km-long electrified section of the railways in Durgapur**. He also inaugurated a **20-km-long Hijli-Narayangarh third line**.

NBCC to construct Ayurveda and Naturopathy hospital in Goa

- NBCC, a Navratna Central Public Sector Enterprises, **will construct an Ayurveda and Naturopathy hospital in Goa at a cost of over 267 crore rupees**.
- A memorandum of understanding was signed with **the Ministry of AYUSH in this regard**. In a statement, the company said, 250-bed hospital will be completed in the next 24 months.

CJI Ranjan Gogoi inaugurates Andhra Pradesh High Court new building at Amaravathy

- **The Andhra Pradesh High Court new building at Amaravathy, was inaugurated today by the Chief Justice of India, Ranjan Gogoi**. It's after functioning from Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister's Camp Office for over a month's time, the AP High Court today moved to a new building at Amaravathy on a temporary basis.
- **The two-storied building is located at Nelapadu in Amaravati region has 16 court halls and the building costing Rs 150 Crore houses a 2.70 lakh square feet office space**. Thus, Andhra Pradesh is getting its own court four and half years after the state bifurcation.

ISRO sets up Human Space Flight Centre for Gaganyaan mission

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) on January 31, 2019 **unveiled its Human Space Flight Centre (HSFC) at ISRO Headquarter campus in Bengaluru, Karnataka for its maiden manned space mission 'Gaganyaan'**.
- The space flight centre was inaugurated by **K Kasturirangan**, former ISRO Chairman, in the presence of K Sivan, current ISRO Chairman and Secretary, Department of Space.

Ministry of Coal signs MoU with Poland's Ministry of Energy

- **The Union Ministry of Coal on February 4, 2019 signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Ministry of Energy, Republic of Poland in New Delhi on cooperation in the field of coal mining**.
- The MoU was signed between Haribhai Parathibhai Chaudhary, Minister of State for Coal and Mines and Grzegorz Tobiszowski, Secretary of State for Poland's Ministry of Energy.

Special Postage Stamp on Kumbh Mela released

- **Union Minister of State for Railways and Communication, Manoj Sinha released a special postage stamp of the Indian Postal Department on Kumbh Mela**.
- The world's largest religious and cultural human congregation, **'Kumbh 2019'** began at Prayagraj (erstwhile Allahabad), Uttar Pradesh on January 15, 2019 and will go on till March 4, 2019.

UK Home Secretary orders extradition of Vijay Mallya to India

- **UK Home Secretary Sajid Javid today ordered the extradition of Vijay Mallya to India, in a major blow to the embattled liquor baron**. The 63-year-old businessman had lost a legal challenge against his extradition in a British court in December.

- Under the Extradition Treaty procedures, the Chief Magistrate's verdict was sent to the Home Secretary because only he is authorised to order Mallya's extradition.

National Road Safety Week begins; Motor car rally flagged off

- External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj and Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari today flagged off Suraksha Yatra - a motor car rally from Rajghat in New Delhi to commemorate the 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. The flag off was also part of an event to launch the 30th National Road Safety Week.
- The rally will travel through places historically associated with Gandhiji, both in India, as well as in Bangladesh and Myanmar. It will conclude at Yangon in Myanmar on the 24th of this month, covering a total distance of over seven thousand kilometre. It will take up advocacy on Road Safety concerns along the route.

Delhi government launches 'zero fatality corridor'

- The Delhi government on Monday kicked off its pilot project of creating Delhi's first 'zero fatality corridor' while also issuing actionable points to all agencies to ensure a 10% reduction in road accidents by the end of the year.
- The stretch has four blackspots to be studied — Burari Chowk, Bhalswa Chowk, Jahangirpuri Bus Stand and Mukundpur Chowk. This 3km stretch claimed 67 lives over the two years — 2016 and 2017.

Maharashtra govt sets up panel to review welfare schemes for tribals

- The Maharashtra government has set up a committee to review various schemes being implemented for the welfare of tribals in the state.
- The 17-member committee, headed by former MLA and Shramjeevi Sanghatna president Vivek Pandit, will undertake the study of various works done for providing employment opportunities, minimum wages and proper livelihood to tribals.

Government launches Shehri Samridhi Utsav to extend outreach of DAY-NULM

- The Union Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs (MoHUA) in February 2019 launched the Shehri Samridhi Utsav, an initiative that aims to extend the outreach of Deendayal Antyodaya Mission – National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NULM) to the most vulnerable.
- The event will facilitate access of Self-Help Group (SHG) members to the other government schemes.
- The Day one of Shehri Samridhi Utsav began with a series of rallies led by women's SHGs across the country. These rallies spread awareness about DAY-NULM in urban poor communities.

India's communication satellite GSAT-31 launched from French Guiana

- Indian Space Research Organisation's latest communication satellite, GSAT-31 was successfully launched by Arianespace aboard its launch vehicle Ariane 5 from the spaceport in French Guiana on February 5, 2019.
- The launch vehicle Ariane 5 VA-247 lifted off from Kourou Launch Base in Guiana Space Center (CSG) at 2:31 am (IST) carrying two telecommunications satellites. This is Arianespace's first launch of the year and the 103rd Ariane 5 mission.

Swachh Bharat Mission launches 'Darwaza Band - Part 2' campaign; Amitabh Bachchan stars in campaign films

- The Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen) on February 6, 2019 launched the 'Darwaza Band -Part 2' campaign for sustainability of the Open Defecation Free (ODF) status of villages across the country.
- The campaign was launched in Mumbai in the presence of actor Amitabh Bachchan, Maharashtra's Minister for Water Supply and Sanitation Babanrao Lonikar, Secretary of Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation Parameswaran Iyer and other dignitaries.
- The 'Darwaza Band- Part 2' campaign is supported by the World Bank and will be rolled out countrywide immediately after the launch.
- The campaign was produced by the Union Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation.

India and Germany join hands on water and waste management

- India and Germany have joined hands for cooperation on Water and Waste Management.
- During the meeting of 3rd Indo-German Working Group for cooperation on water and waste management which concluded in New Delhi today, both sides discussed potential cooperation in this area.

India and New Zealand review bilateral relations & regional cooperation

- The second foreign office consultations between India and New Zealand was held yesterday in New Delhi.
- The consultations between the two sides provided an opportunity to review the entire range of bilateral relations, including political, trade and economic ties. India reaffirmed its commitment to working closely with New Zealand in these areas.

Union Cabinet approves amendments to Cinematograph Act, 1952

- The Cabinet has approved amendments to the Cinematograph Act, 1952 to tackle film piracy and Copyright infringement.
- Briefing media, Union Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said, there are penal provisions for unauthorized camcording and duplication of films.

Cabinet approves establishment of Rashtriya Kamdhenu Aayog

- The Union Cabinet has approved the proposal for the establishment of Rashtriya Kamdhenu Aayog for conservation, protection and development of cows and their progeny.
- It will lead to the development of the cattle population in the country including the development and conservation of indigenous breeds.
- Rashtriya Kamdhenu Aayog was announced in the budget on the 1st of this month.

Cabinet approves establishment of Circuit Bench of Calcutta High Court at Jalpaiguri

- The Union Cabinet approved the establishment of Circuit Bench of Calcutta High Court at Jalpaiguri.
- It will have jurisdiction over four districts namely Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar.

CCEA approves "Broadcasting Infrastructure and Network Development" scheme of Prasar Bharti

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved the Proposal of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting regarding Prasar Bharati's "Broadcasting Infrastructure and Network Development" scheme at a cost of Rs.1054.52 crore for 3 years (2017-18 to 2019-20).
- Out of Rs. 1054.52 Crore, an amount of Rs. 435.04 Crore was approved for the continuing schemes of All India Radio and an amount of Rs 619.48 Crore was approved for the schemes of Doordarshan.

BPRD to organize 2nd National Conference of Micro Missions of National Police Mission

- The Bureau of Police Research and Development, BPRD will organise the 2nd National Conference of Micro Missions of National Police Mission in New Delhi on February 7, 2019.
- The two day Conference will discuss the issues of Skills and Competence at the grass-root level, attitudinal changes in police, gender sensitisation, harnessing technology and community policing. Former Governor of Jammu and Kashmir N. N.Vohra will inaugurate the conference.

Health Ministry reviewed the preparedness on Seasonal Influenza H1N1

- The Union Health and Family Welfare Secretary Preeti Sudan has reviewed the state of preparedness and action taken to deal with H1N1 influenza cases in New Delhi.
- The Health Ministry in a statement said till February 3, 2019, a total of 6701 cases and 226 deaths have been reported in the country.

Maharashtra declares virginity test as sexual assault

- The Maharashtra government on February 6, 2019 announced that it will soon make forcing a woman to undergo virginity test a punishable offence.

- Certain communities in the state follow a custom whereby a newly-wed woman has to prove that she was virgin prior to the marriage.

Cabinet approves proposal for higher power allocation to Telangana, Jharkhand

- The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on February 6, 2019 approved the proposal of the **Ministry of Power to allocate 85 per cent power from Telangana Super Thermal Power Project (4000MW) of NTPC Ltd to the Telangana government.**
- The cabinet also **approved the proposal to allocate 85 per cent power from the expansion project of Patratu Thermal Power Station (4000MW) of Patratu Vidyut Utpadan Nigam Limited to the Jharkhand state government.** Both the projects will be set up in two phases.

NTPC, EDMC sign MoU for waste management

- **The East Delhi Municipal Corporation (EDMC) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) on Thursday for the disposal and management of solid waste in its jurisdiction.**
- A senior corporation official said that the NTPC will be **setting up an integrated waste management plant which will have a capacity to process 2,000 MT of garbage.**

Punjab govt signs MoU with Canada province on education

- **Punjab Government on Thursday inked an MoU with the Government of Alberta, Canada.**
- The two sides also agreed to explore information exchange and cooperation in other priority areas of **energy, agriculture, environment management and technologies, beside aerospace, defence, hospitality and retail.**

5th India-Bangladesh Joint Consultative Committee Meet to be held in Delhi

- **The 5th India-Bangladesh Joint Consultative Committee Meeting will be held in New Delhi today.**
- External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj and Foreign Affairs Minister of Bangladesh Dr. A. K. Abdul Momen will co-chair the meeting.

Jammu & Kashmir Government grants Divisional Status to Ladakh Region

- The Jammu and Kashmir Governor, Satya Pal Malik on February 8, 2019 **granted the Divisional Status to Ladakh Region, while exercising its powers under Section 5 of Land Revenue Act, 1996.**
- **The Ladakh division will comprise Leh and Kargil districts with its headquarters at Leh. Till now, the Ladakh region formed a part of the Kashmir Division of Jammu & Kashmir.**

PM Modi launches DD Arun Prabha channel in Itanagar today

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said that basic infrastructure has been a long-standing demand of Arunachal Pradesh which was ignored by the previous governments.**
- Earlier today, **Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the DD 'Arun Prabha' Channel in Itanagar. It will be a 24x7 satellite television channel and is Doordarshan's second channel for the north-eastern region, after DD North East.**

Prime Minister lays the foundation stone for a National Highways Project in West Bengal

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone for the four laning of the Falakata-Salsalabari section of NH -31 D in the northern part of West Bengal.**
- **This 41.7 km long section of National Highways falls in the Jalpaiguri district of the West Bengal and will be constructed at a cost of about Rs 1938 Crore.**
- **The project will reduce the distance from Salsalabari and Alipurduar to Siliguri by nearly 50 km.**

Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban): Government institutes PMAY (U) Awards to reward top performers

- The Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs on February 8, 2019 **instituted the 'PMAY (U) awards for Implementation and Innovation' under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban) to reward the "Top Performers"** in different categories and attain the goal of 'Housing for All' in a sustained manner.
- The award scheme aims to recognise the outstanding performance and promote a healthy competition between **States and UTs, Urban Local Bodies, Beneficiaries and Housing Finance Corporations.**
- The Award has 3 broad levels. **The first level is for States, UTs and Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) for performance on key indicators of the Mission.**

Ujjwala Utsav observed; PMUY anthem 'Ujjwala Bharat Ujjwala' released

- **The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas observed the Ujjwala Utsav** to celebrate the stellar role played by all stakeholders such as district nodal officers, policy makers, distributors and beneficiaries in making Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) a success.
- The occasion also saw the launch of the PMUY anthem '**Ujjwala Bharat Ujjwala**', composed and developed by eminent singer Padma Shri Kailash Kher.
- The PMUY anthem is available on online music platforms such as **Amazon, Apple, Hungama, Wynk, Google Play, Saavn, and many others.**

5th India-Bangladesh Joint Consultative Committee Meet held in Delhi

- **The 5th India-Bangladesh Joint Consultative Committee Meeting was held in New Delhi.**
- External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj and Foreign Affairs Minister of Bangladesh Dr. A. K. Abdul Momen co-chaired the meeting.
- **The last Joint Consultative Committee Meeting between the two countries was held in October 2017 at Dhaka.**

India Pavilion inaugurated at 69th Berlin International Film Festival

- **The India Pavilion at the Berlin International Film Festival (Berlinale) 2019 was inaugurated by Director European Film Market, (EFM) Matthijs Wouter Knol.**
- Speaking on the occasion, **Mr Knol said that the stakeholders of EFM will actively consider participating in the Golden Jubilee year of IFFI.**

Urban Affairs Ministry launches Light House Project challenge

- The Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs has instituted a challenge for States and Union Territories to select six sites across the country for constructing the lighthouse projects **under Global Housing Technology Challenge- India (GHTC- India)**
- The challenge has been launched to bring about paradigm shift in housing construction technology sector. **The states and union territories that score the highest marks will be awarded lighthouse projects.**

SC directs NCM to decide on redefining 'Minority' & guidelines for identifying minorities within 3 months

- The Supreme Court on February 11, 2019 **directed the National Commission for Minorities (NCM) to take a decision within three months on a representation seeking guidelines to redefine the term 'Minority'.**
- **A bench headed by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi asked petitioner Ashwini Upadhyay to re-file his representation to the Minority Commission and directed the Commission to take a decision in this regard within three months in the context of state-wise population of a community.**

Chinook Helicopters: First batch of 4 Boeing heavy-lift helicopters arrive in India from US

- **The first batch of four Boeing heavy-lift Chinook Helicopters, CH-47F (I), arrived at the Mundra airport in Gujarat on February 10, 2019.**
- Procured from the United States, **the Chinook Helicopters are expected to provide impetus to the heavy-lift capabilities of Indian Air Force (IAF) and strengthen the defence ties with the United States.**

- **Manufactured by Boeing, the CH-47F (I) will be stationed at Chandigarh air base of the Indian Air Force.** The Chandigarh air base takes care of providing necessary items to Siachen and Eastern Ladakh sectors.

PM Modi laid foundation stone for Sela Tunnel; 7 EHV Sub-stations; 24 LT Sub-stations in Arunachal Pradesh

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi on February 9, 2019 laid the foundation stone for the **Sela Tunnel Project** in Arunachal Pradesh during his visit to Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and Tripura.
- **The tunnel will be constructed by the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) at a cost of Rs. 687 crore.**
- The Tunnel would be completed in the next three years. **It covers a total distance of 12.04 kms which consist of two tunnels of 1790 meters and 475 meters.**
- **The Prime Minister also laid the foundation stone for 7 Extra High Voltage (EHV) Sub-stations and 24 Low Tension (LT) Sub-stations in Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh.** This project is aimed at meeting the objectives of affordable 24X7 power to all, especially in the remote locations.

Sapta Shakti Command of Indian Army conducts 'Exercise Rahat' in Jaipur

- In Rajasthan, Jaipur based **Sapta Shakti Command of Indian Army** conducted a two- day Joint Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Exercise “Exercise Rahat”.
- It involves all stake holders at the national and state level.
- **This was the eighth such exercise conducted by the Indian Defence Forces.**

PM visits Assam, lays foundation stone of North East Gas Grid

- **PM visited Assam as a part of his visit to Arunachal, Assam and Tripura.**
- He laid foundation stone for **North East Gas Grid** which will ensure uninterrupted availability of natural gas across the region and boost industrial growth in the region.
- He inaugurated **Hollong Modular Gas Processing Plant in Tinsukia** which will deliver 15% of the total gas produced in Assam.

Highlights of PM Modi's visit to Hubli, Karnataka

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Hubli, Karnataka in the final leg of his one day long tour to Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.**
- He unveiled a plaque to mark the laying of foundation stone of **Indian Institute of Technology – Dharwad and Indian Institute of Information Technology – Dharwad.**
- **City Gas Distribution Project at Dharwad was dedicated to the nation on this occasion.**
- To ensure Energy Security, **1.5 MMT Mangalore Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) facility and 2.5 MMT Padur SPR facility of ISPRL were also dedicated to the nation.**
- The Doubling of 18 km long Chikjajur-Mayakonda Section was dedicated to the nation. Chikjajur-Mayakonda Section is a part of 190 km long Hubli – Chikjajur Doubling project and is located on Bengaluru – Hubballi route of South Western Railway.

Highlights of PM Modi's visit to Tiruppur, Tamil Nadu

- **The Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Tiruppur in Tamil Nadu and unveiled several development projects in the State.**
- He laid the foundation **Stone of Employees' State Insurance Corporation's (ESIC) multi speciality Hospital at Tiruppur.**
- He dedicated ESIC Hospital Chennai to the nation. This 470-bedded hospital will provide quality treatment on all disciplines of medicine.

PM Modi served 3 billionth meal to children in Vrindavan

- **The Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Vrindavan in Uttar Pradesh on February 11, 2019.**
- He unveiled the plaque to mark the serving of **3rd billionth meal by Akshaya Patra Foundation at Vrindavan Chandrodaya Mandir.**

- The Prime Minister served the 3rd billionth meal to underprivileged children from schools.
- Akshaya Patra serves as an implementing partner of **Mid-Day Meal Scheme**.

Delhi Government Launches 16 Bike Ambulances For Congested Areas

- Delhi government has launched bike ambulance services to ensure health assistance reaches on time in the congested areas of the national capital.
- The bike ambulances, which will be called the "**First Responder Vehicles**", will have a portable oxygen cylinder, first aid kit and dressing materials, air-splints, GPS and a communication device.
- Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Health Minister Satyendar Jain **launched the fleet of 16 bikes at Delhi Secretariat**.

Rajasthan government launches 'Rajiv Gandhi Career Portal'

- Rajasthan School Education Minister Govind Singh Dotasara Wednesday **launched 'Rajiv Gandhi Career Portal'** for students from classes 9 to 12.
- The portal aims to provide career guidance with information on entrance examinations, scholarships and employment-oriented courses.
- "It is a big step of the government towards providing employment-oriented education to students. **The portal is developed with support from UNICEF and is a first-of-its-kind in the country,**" Dotasara said.

India, Norway launch 'India-Norway Marine Pollution Initiative' to combat Marine Pollution

- The Union Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change on February 11, 2019 signed a Letter of Intent (LoI) with the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to launch the '**India-Norway Marine Pollution Initiative**'.
- The Joint Initiative was signed by Nils Ragnar Kamsvåg, Norwegian Ambassador to India and Anil Kumar Jain, Additional Secretary in the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.
- The launch of the initiative came after the Indian and Norwegian governments signed an MoU to establish the '**India-Norway Ocean Dialogue**' during the Norwegian Prime Minister Erna Solberg's visit to India in January 2019.
- A Joint Task Force on **Blue Economy** was also established under the aegis of the MoU to promote multi-sectoral cooperation in various aspects of Blue Economy.

HRD Ministry to take immediate steps to protect Maithili language and scripts

- The Ministry of Human Resource Development has decided to take immediate steps to implement the recommendations of a committee, which it had constituted in 2018 to make a report for the promotion and protection of Maithili language and its scripts.
- The committee has submitted its report to the Ministry. In the report, it has made several recommendations for the promotion and protection of the **Maithili language**. The report was examined in the Ministry and it has been decided to take immediate action on some of the recommendations of the committee.
- **Mithilakshar** or **Tirhuta** is the script of broader cultural **Mithila**. The scripts of **Mithilakshar, Bangla, Assamese, Nebari, Odia and Tibetan** are part of the family.
- It is an extremely ancient script and it is one of the scripts of the broader North Eastern India.
- Mithilakshar had come to its current shape by 10th Century AD. **The oldest form of Mithilakshar is found in the Sahodara stone inscriptions of 950 AD.**

President unveils life size portrait of Atal Bihari Vajpayee in Parliament

- President Ram Nath Kovind on February 12, 2019 **unveiled the life size portrait of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee at the Central Hall of Parliament.**
- The former Prime Minister provided crucial leadership in challenging situations. **The 1998 nuclear test in Pokhran and the 1999 Kargil war are examples of his firm decisions taken in the interest of the nation.**

I&B Ministry organises first annual conference of Media Units

- The Union Information and Broadcasting Ministry will organise **the first annual conference of Media Units in New Delhi on February 13, 2019.**
- The conference aims to give a unique platform to the officers of **the Indian Information Service working in different Media Units to converge at an All-India level.**
- The conference will involve discussions and deliberations upon the emerging areas of the evolving communication paradigm.
- **It will be chaired by Information and Broadcasting Minister Rajyavardhan Rathore.**

Minority Status of Aligarh Muslim University: Supreme Court refers case to 7-Judge bench

- The Supreme Court on February 12, 2019 **referred the petition seeking withdrawal of minority status of the Aligarh Muslim University to a seven-judge bench.**
- A three-judge bench headed by **Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi** referred the matter to the larger bench to determine the correctness of minority status of AMU and to define the parameters for granting minority status to the institution.

India's first Mega Aqua Food Park commissioned in Andhra Pradesh

- Union Minister of Food Processing Industries Harsimrat Kaur Badal on February 12, 2019 **commissioned Godavari Mega Aqua Food Park at Tundurru Village in Bhimavaram Mandal, West Godavari District, Andhra Pradesh through video conferencing.**
- The park is promoted by **Godavari Mega Aqua Food Park Pvt. Ltd.** It will be the first Mega Aqua Food Park operationalised exclusively for fish and marine products processing in the state of Andhra Pradesh.
- **The Godavari Mega Aqua Food Park Pvt. Ltd has been set up in 57.81 acre of land at a cost of Rs. 122.60 crores.**

Govt approves the introduction of Registration of Marriage of Non-Resident Indian (NRI) Bill, 2019

- **The Union Cabinet has approved the introduction of Registration of Marriage of Non-Resident Indian (NRI) Bill, 2019.**
- The Bill provides for amendment of the legal framework to act as a deterrent to the erring NRI spouses and creating more accountability and offer protection against exploitation of Indian Citizens married to NRIs.
- Once the Bill is passed, **marriages performed by NRIs would be registered in India or Indian Missions & Posts abroad.**

Cabinet approves allotment of land for New Viral Vaccine Manufacturing Unit in Tamil Nadu

- **The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday approved the proposal for allotment of 30 acre land to Pasteur Institute of India (PII) for establishment of New Viral Vaccine Manufacturing Unit at Coonoor in Tamil Nadu.**
- The project entails production of **Viral Vaccines (like TCA anti-Measles Vaccine, JE Vaccine) and Anti Sera (like Anti Snake Venom and Anti Rabies Sera) at the PII, Coonoor.**

NITI Aayog signs agreement to document systemic transformation in education

- **The NITI Aayog on February 12, 2019 signed a Statement of Intent (SOI) with the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation (MSDF) to codify, document and share best practices to improve learning outcomes in public school education through systemic reforms, based on their collective experiences of working with various state governments in India.**
- **The SOI was signed in the presence of NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant, by Alok Kumar, Adviser (HRD), NITI Aayog and Barun Mohanty, Managing Director (International), MSDF.**
- Under the agreement, *NITI Aayog and the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation will document the reforms pursued by various state governments that have initiated systemic reforms in education and have begun to see improved learning outcomes over the past few years.*

Defence Ministry begins process of procurement of 111 Naval Helicopters for Indian Navy

- The Defence Ministry on February 12, 2019 issued Expression of Interest to shortlist potential Indian strategic partners and foreign Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) for the procurement of 111 Naval Utility Helicopters (NUH) for the Indian Navy at an estimated cost of over Rs 21,000 crore.
- These Naval Utility Helicopters will replace Chetak Helicopters and will be utilised for albeit SAR, CASEVAC (Casualty evacuation), Low Intensity Maritime Operations (LIMO), passenger roles and torpedo drops.

Parliament passes Personal Laws (Amendment) Bill 2019

- The Parliament on February 13, 2019 passed the Personal Laws (Amendment Bill), 2018 that seeks to remove leprosy as a ground for divorce. The bill was passed after upper house of the Parliament Rajya Sabha approved it without discussion.
- The lower house of the Parliament, Lok Sabha had passed the bill on January 7, 2019. Leprosy is being removed as a ground for divorce as it is now a curable disease as against the earlier notion of it being incurable.
- The Bill seeks to uphold the rights of people with leprosy as the disease is curable.

Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana; 5,67,88,890 enrolments made till December 2018

- Under the Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY), 5,67,88,890 enrolments have been made till December 2018.
- Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana was launched on May 9, 2015.
- This Scheme is administered through both public and private sector life insurance companies in tie-up with Scheduled Commercial Banks, Regional Rural Banks and Cooperative Banks.

Bihar Government announces universal old age pension scheme-Mukhyamantri Vridhajan Pension Yojna

- The state government of Bihar has announced a universal old age pension scheme called Mukhyamantri Vridhajan Pension Yojna (MVPY) for all people above 60 years of age.
- The scheme will come into force from April 1, 2019. Except those senior citizens who have retired from government service, all will be eligible for 400 rupees monthly pension irrespective of caste, religion or community.
- The currently old age pension scheme is applicable to only the BPL category.

AYUSH Minister launches e-AUSHADHI portal

- Minister of State for AYUSH, Shripad Yesso Naik on February 13, 2019 launched the e-AUSHADHI portal, for online licensing of Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani and Homoeopathy drugs and related matters at New Delhi.
- The portal aims to increase transparency, improve information management facility, improve data usability and increase accountability.
- e-AUSHADHI is an acronym for Ayurveda, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy Automated Drug Help Initiative.

Cabinet approves revision in the list of Scheduled Tribes of Chhattisgarh

- The Union Cabinet has given its approval to the cabinet note on the proposal for official amendments in the Constitution (Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 2016 so as to modify the list of scheduled tribes of Chhattisgarh.
- The act will called the Constitution (Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 2019.

Third Indo-German Environment Forum held in New Delhi

- The third Indo-German Environment Forum with the theme "Cleaner Air, Greener Economy" was held in New Delhi on February 13, 2019.
- While inaugurating the forum, Union Environment Minister Dr. Harsh Vardhan said that India and Germany have had a rich cooperation engagement for the last 60 years which extends to sectors such as natural resource management, urban environment protection, climate change adaptation and mitigation and innovative green technologies.

IAF Carries Out Vayu Shakti Exercise at Pokhran

- The Indian Air Force today carried out an exercise in Pokhran, Rajasthan, involving around 140 fighter jets and attack helicopters.
- In the exercise, the IAF showcased firepower capability of indigenously-developed platforms like **Light Combat Aircraft, Tejas, Advanced Light Helicopter** and efficacy of **Akash surface-to-air missile** and **Astra air-to-air missile**.
- Army Chief Gen Bipin Rawat, defence attaches of several countries and top officials of defence ministry also witnessed the exercise.

President Kovind launches Digital Kisan Platform in 4th Agri Leadership Summit

- **President Ram Nath Kovind launched Digital Kisan Platform in the Fourth Agri Leadership Summit**, organised by the Haryana government at Gannaur in Sonapat district today.
- **The President visited the Agri exhibition in the International Horticulture Market and later honoured nine farmers with Krishi Rattan Pursakar and also conferred Kisan Rattan Pursakaar** on Vice Chancellor K P Singh for Haryana Agriculture University, Hisar. The President will address the participants of the Summit.

New mobile app launched for beneficiaries of PMAY (U) mission

- Minister of State (I/C) for Housing and Urban Affairs Hardeep S Puri on February 14, 2019 **launched the PMAY (U) mobile application in New Delhi**.
- **A one-minute film showcasing the impact of PMAY (U) in the lives of beneficiaries was also released on the occasion**. Speaking during the launch, the Minister emphasised that the mission intends to create a closer interface with its beneficiaries.
- **The mobile application has been developed to bring beneficiaries directly in contact with the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban) mission**.

UAE's Tabreed to build India's first district cooling system in Amaravati

- A UAE-based international cooling provider has entered into a 30-year concession with Andhra Pradesh government to build, own, operate and transfer India's first district cooling system in the state's new capital Amaravati.
- The agreement between the **National Central Cooling Company (Tabreed)** and **Andhra Pradesh Capital Region Development Authority (APCRDA)** is for a contracted cooling capacity of 20,000 refrigeration tonnes and this will be **the company's first plant outside its Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) market**, a statement released by the firm said.

Vande Bharat Express: PM Modi launches India's first semi-high speed train

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi on February 15, 2019 flagged off India's first Semi High Speed Train, 'Vande Bharat Express'** on New Delhi-Kanpur-Allahabad-Varanasi route from the New Delhi Railway Station.
- With maximum speed of 160 kmph, **Vande Bharat Express or Train-18 offers travel classes like Shatabdi Train but with better facilities with a totally new travel experience to passengers**.

Inland Waterways Authority of India launches new portal 'LADIS'

- The Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) on February 15, 2019 launched a new portal called **'LADIS' – Least Available Depth Information System in New Delhi** to ensure optimum use of national waterways.
- The portal will ensure that the **real-time data on least available depths (LADs) is disseminated for ship and barge and cargo owners** so that they can undertake transportation on the national waterways in a more planned way.
- **The LADIS portal is hosted at on IWAI's website and has been built in house by the IWAI**.

India liberalises e-visa regime, makes it more tourist friendly

- **The Union Tourism Ministry recently made a series of amendments in India's e-visa regime, liberalising it further and making it more tourist friendly**. The e-tourist Visa, which was introduced in September 2014 with 46 countries **has now been made applicable for 166 countries**.

- The existing restriction of allowing foreigner for a maximum of three times has also been removed.
- Further, e-visa will be valid for entry through 2 two more designated airports such as **Bhubaneswar** and **Port Blair**, raising the total number of such airports to 28.

NITI Aayog, SCISP agree to provide continuing momentum to India-Saudi Arabia Strategic Partnership

- NITI Aayog and Saudi Centre for International Strategic Partnerships (SCISP) have agreed to provide continuing momentum to the India-Saudi Arabia Strategic Partnership.
- A high-level delegation, led by NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant, held extensive discussions with SCISP in Riyadh. Talks were also held with senior representatives from 12 Saudi ministries during the two-day visit which concluded yesterday.

India, Argentina exchange 10 MoUs and agreements

- India and Argentina exchanged 10 Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) and agreements during the Argentine President Mauricio Macri's ongoing three-day visit to India from February 17 to 19.
- Six MoUs were exchanged between the two sides including an MoU on Defence Cooperation. Furthermore, an MoU was signed on tourism, while another was exchanged on Collaboration and Cooperation between Prasar Bharati India and the Federal System of Media and Public Contents Argentina.

List of MoUs signed between India and Argentina

1. MoU between the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of India and the Ministry of Defence of the Argentine Republic on Defence Cooperation
2. MoU between Republic of India and Republic of Argentina for cooperation in the field of Tourism
3. MOU on Cooperation and Collaboration between Prasar Bharti, India and the Federal System of Media and Public Contents, Argentina
4. MoU in pharmaceuticals between Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO), Gol, and National Administration of Drugs, Food and Medical Technology, Argentina
5. MoU on Antarctic Co-operation between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship of the Argentine Republic and the Ministry of Earth Sciences of the Republic of India
6. Work Plan on Cooperation between the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare of the Republic of India and the Ministry of Production and Labour of the Argentine Republic within the MoU signed in 2010.
7. Work Plan for the year 2019-21 between Indian Council of Agriculture Research Republic of India and the State Secretary of Agro industry of the Ministry of Production and Labour of the Argentine Republic within the MoU signed in 2006.
8. Joint Declaration of Intent on Cooperation in the field of Information & Communications Technology and Electronics between the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology of the Government of the Republic of India and the Government Secretary of Modernization of the Republic of Argentina
9. MOU between Global Centre for Nuclear Energy Partnership (GCNEP), India, and CNEA, the Secretariat of Energy, Argentina
10. Agreement for the establishment of India-Argentina Centre of Excellence for Information and Technology

India, Morocco sign four MoUs

- India and Morocco on Monday signed four MoUs following the delegation-level talks between External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj and her Moroccan counterpart Nasser Bourita in Rabat.
- Briefing media after the meeting, Mrs Swaraj said, the MoUs include setting up of Joint Working Group on Counter Terrorism, Cooperation in Housing and Human Settlement, Reciprocal facilitation of procedures for issue of Business Visa and Cooperation in Youth Matters.
- In a series of tweets, External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Raveesh Kumar said, both countries agreed to set up a Joint Working Group on Counter Terrorism to develop a comprehensive approach to combat the menace, including cross- border terrorism, terrorist financing and recruitment of terrorists.

- He said, Mrs Swaraj and her Moroccan counterpart discussed ways to enhance bilateral cooperation in a number of areas, including defence and security, counter-terrorism and trade and investment.

Government to launch 3 initiatives centering women's safety

- Women and Child Development (WCD) Ministry will on Tuesday launch three initiatives, including safety tool "Panic Button" and DNA analysis facilities, said an official on Monday. The initiatives will be jointly launched by Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh and WCD Minister Maneka Gandhi.
- The Panic Button, which was conceived in 2015, will be launched across 14 states at a cost of Rs 321.69 crore made available from the Nirbhaya Fund, said an official statement. This emergency response system was soft-launched in Himachal Pradesh and Nagaland recently.
- Safe City Implementation Monitoring (SCIM), a web portal developed by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), will also be launched at Tuesday's event which will help online track deployment of assets and infrastructure created under the Safe City projects.
- The DNA analysis centres will have facilities like refrigeration of samples, automated DNA extractor and sequencer, centrifuges and genetic analysers, among others. A sum of Rs 78.86 crore has been sanctioned for this initiative.

Jindal Stainless sets up first dedicated facility for Railways in Chennai

- Jindal Stainless, a subsidiary of JSL Lifestyle Ltd, commissioned its first dedicated facility for the railways in Chennai Monday and expects a revenue of Rs 300 crore.
- Demonstrating its robust engagement with the Indian Railways, Jindal Stainless, through its subsidiary JSL Lifestyle Ltd, commissioned its first dedicated facility for Railways in Chennai, the company said in a statement here.
- The company is expecting an initial revenue of nearly Rs 100 crore annually from this facility and the revenue is expected to touch nearly Rs 300 crore annually once the enhanced capacity reaches 7,200 tonne, it said.

Gujarat Govt comes up with a special board for Transgenders to provide social security

- The Gujarat government has formed a special board for the transgender community, an official release said Monday. The 'Transgender Welfare Board' has been constituted by the Department of Social Justice and Empowerment to provide social security to the community, it said.
- The new board will have the state social justice and empowerment minister as its chairman. It will have 16 other members, including two transgender-women representatives, two male transgenders, two from the eunuch community and two representatives of NGOs. The rest of the members will be government officials.

Rajnath Singh launches pan-India number 112 for women safety

- Home Minister Rajnath Singh and Minister for Women and Child Development Maneka Gandhi today launched a range of citizen safety initiatives in New Delhi.
- It includes the Emergency Response Support System, ERSS, for women safety in 16 states and Union territories.
- The states include Andhra Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Jammu and Kashmir. The service has already been launched in Himachal Pradesh and Nagaland.
- Persons in distress can dial a pan-India number: 112. Under this system, all the states have to set up a dedicated Emergency Response Centre, ERC.

Bill to make Sanskrit second official language of HP passed

- The House on Saturday passed the Himachal Pradesh Official Language (Amendment) Bill, 2019, paving the way for making Sanskrit the second official language of the state.
- The Bill was tabled in the House on February 14 by Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur. Once given assent by the Governor, it will amend the Himachal Pradesh Official language Act, 1975.

Two Day One Health India Conference Inaugurated in New Delhi

- **Two day long One Health India Conference, 2019** was today inaugurated in New Delhi.
- It was inaugurated by Dr Harsha Vardhan.
- The conference plans to launch India's new One Health Initiative - an intersectoral approach to tackling the most urgent health threats in **India as well as in low and middle income countries across South and South East Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa.**

PM flags off 1st ever diesel to electric converted locomotive twin engine at Varanasi

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi on February 19, 2019 **flagged off the first ever diesel to electric converted locomotive twin engine of ten thousand Horse Power at DLW Varanasi.**
- **He also inspected an exhibition on locomotives at DLW campus.** Such locomotives will be more economical and will increase the speed of goods trains.

All Indian Cine Workers Association announces total ban on Pakistani artists

- **The All Indian Cine Workers Association has announced a total ban on all the Pakistani artists working in the film industry.**
- In a statement, the Association's General Secretary Ronak Jain said that strong action will be taken against the organisation that continues to work with Pakistani artists.

CCEA approves 'Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahabhiyan' Scheme for farmers' welfare

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on February 19, 2019 **approved the launch of 'Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahabhiyan' with the objective of providing financial and water security to farmers.**
- The Central Government will **provide a total financial support of Rs 34,422 crore for the scheme.**

The Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahabhiyan scheme consists of three components:

- Component-A: 10,000 MW of Decentralised Ground Mounted Grid Connected Renewable Power Plants.
- Component-B: Installation of 17.50 lakh standalone Solar Powered Agriculture Pumps.
- Component-C: Solarisation of 10 Lakh Grid-connected Solar Powered Agriculture Pumps.

Kerala Police Introduces India's First RoboCop

- **KP-Bot is India's first humanoid Police robot that will work at the Kerala Police Headquarters in the state capital. It has been given the Sub Inspector (SI) rank.**
- Chief Minister Vijayan welcomed the robot into the service at the police headquarters with an honorary salute Tuesday and the '**RoboCop**' responded with a perfect salute.
- **Kerala Police has become the first police department in the country to use a robot for police work.**

Cabinet approves National Policy on Electronics 2019; aims to make India global hub in ESDM Sector

- The Union Cabinet on February 19, 2019 **approved the National Policy on Electronics 2019 (NPE 2019), proposed by the Union Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY).**
- The 2019 Policy on Electronics proposes to **propel the growth of Electronics System Design and Manufacturing (ESDM) industry in the country.** It replaces the National Policy of Electronics 2012 (NPE 2012).

Cabinet approves setting up of a company under Department of Space

- The Union Cabinet on February 19, 2019 approved the **setting up of a new company under Department of Space (DoS) to commercially exploit the research and development work carried out by Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) Centers and constituent units of DOS.**
- The new company shall take license from DoS/ISRO and provide sub-license to industries for small satellite technology transfer.

Operation Digital Board launched to provide better digital education

- Government launched Operation Digital Board on the lines of Operation Blackboard to provide better digital education in schools.
- Under the initiative, 7 lakh classrooms of 9th, 10th and 11th standards and 2 lakh classrooms of colleges and Universities will be equipped with digital boards in the next three years.
- It will improve the quality of education and offer new opportunities and new ways of teaching and learning.
- It will convert the monologue classrooms into interactive ones.

Cabinet approves Swadesh Darshan Scheme: Integrated Development of Theme-based Tourist Circuits

- The Union Cabinet approved continuation of the Swadesh Darshan Scheme during 14th Finance Commission period and beyond.
- It approved Rs 2055.96 crores for 60 on-going projects completing in December 2019.
- Funding of Rs. 324.09 crore was approved for 6 projects for which substantial funds have been released and projects will be completed in September 2020.

Ordnance Factory Board gets bulk production clearance for 'Dhanush' Artillery Gun

- Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) received the bulk production clearance (BPC) from the Indian Army and the Ministry of Defence on February 18, 2018 for production of 114 'Dhanush', the first ever indigenous 155mm x 45 calibre artillery gun.
- The weapon is the first long rang artillery gun to be produced in India and it is a major success story of the 'Make in India' initiative.

Asia's premier Air show 'Aero-India' began in Bengaluru

- The 12th edition of Asia's premier Air show 'Aero India-2019' began at Yelahanka Air Force Station, Bengaluru.
- 61 aircraft, including HAL's indigenous products LCA Tejas are all set to roar in the city skies.

Kerala hosted Attukal Pongala, world's largest religious congregation of women

- In Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram hosted the Attakal Ponkala festival which is considered as one of the world's largest religious gathering of women on a single day.
- Lakhs of women prepared 'Pongala'- the offering in makeshift brick stoves to worship the presiding deity of Attakal Bhagavathy temple.

Prime Minister inaugurates Virtual Experiential Museum at Varanasi

- The Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the newly established Virtual Experiential Museum (VEM) in a Centrally Protected Monument under Archeological Survey of India, Man – Mahal, situated on the bank of the Ganges at Varanasi.
- Virtual Experiential Museum has been established by the National Council of Science Museum (NCSM) working under the Ministry of Culture.

Cabinet approves creation of post of Secretary and Joint Secretary in the newly created Department of Fisheries

- The Union Cabinet approved creation of one post of Secretary in the level 17 (Rs.2,25,000 fixed per month) and one post of Joint Secretary in the level 14 (Rs.144200-218200 per month) in the newly created Department of Fisheries on permanent basis.
- The positions will ensure smooth functioning and fulfil the mandate of the newly created Department.

Cabinet approves continuation of Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana – Gramin beyond March 2019

- The Union Cabinet approved the implementation of Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana – Gramin (PMAY-G) beyond March 2019 (PMAY-G) Phase-II.
- The total target under PMAY-G Phase-II is construction of 1.95 crore houses by 2022.

Cabinet approves Implementation of National Rural Economic Transformation Project under DAY-NRLM

- The Union Cabinet approved the Implementation of an Externally Aided Project namely **“National Rural Economic Transformation Project” (NRETP) under the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM) through loan assistance from World Bank.**
- The technical assistance provided by NRETP will enhance the livelihoods promotion and access to finance and scale-up initiatives on digital finance and livelihood interventions.

Cabinet approves modifications in National Programme for Mid-Day Meal in Schools

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved the revision of **norms under ‘Mid Day Meal Scheme’ with an outlay of Rs 12,054 Crore for 2019-20 in addition to the subsidy of about Rs 8000 crore borne by Department of Food & Public Distribution.**
- The Cooking cost is enhanced to Rs. 4.35 and Rs. 6.51 per child per school day, thus Cooking cost is enhanced by Rs 361 crore.

Cabinet approves Phase-II of Grid Connected Rooftop Solar Programme

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved **the Phase-II of Grid Connected Rooftop Solar Programme for achieving cumulative capacity of 40,000 MW from Rooftop Solar (RTS) Projects by the year 2022.**
- The programme will be implemented with **total central financial support of Rs.11,814 crore.**

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman’s India visit

- The Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, **Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, who is also the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence of Saudi Arabia, visited India on February 19-20, 2019.**
- This first ever visit by his Royal Highness followed the official visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in April 2016 at the invitation of King Salman bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud; the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques (Head of State & Government).

List of MoUs/Agreements signed

- MoU on investing in the National Investment and Infrastructure Fund
- MoU on Cooperation in the field of Tourism between the Union Ministry of Tourism, and the Saudi Commission for tourism and national heritage of the kingdom of Saudi Arabia
- MoU for Cooperation in the field of housing
- Framework Cooperation Program between Invest India and Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority (SAGIA) on enhancing bilateral investment relations
- MoU for Cooperation on Broadcasting between Prasar Bharati and Saudi Broadcasting Corporation (SBC) for exchange of audio visual programme
- Another agreement was signed by Saudi Arabia to join the International Solar Alliance (ISA), launched by Prime Minister Modi

India’s fighter jet ‘LCA Tejas’ now fully combat-ready; gets Final Operational Clearance

- Landmark day for India’s defence sector, **India’s first self-made fighter jet, Light Combat Aircraft Tejas MK I (LCA Tejas) on February 20, 2019 received the Final Operational Clearance for induction into the Indian Air Force (IAF) as a fully-weaponised fighter jet.**
- The formal declaration of Final Operational Clearance (FOC) of the aircraft was made by Dr G Satheesh Reddy, Chairman of Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and Secretary of Defence (R&D).

MHA announces to conduct ‘All India Citizens Survey of Police Services’ to test public perception of police

- The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on February 21, 2019 **announced to conduct a pan-India survey called ‘All India Citizens Survey of Police Services’ to gauge public perception of police.**
- The survey will be conducted by the **Bureau of Police Research and Development with the help of the National Council of Applied Economic Research in a period of nine months.**

MHA approves entitlement of air travel to all personnel of CAPFs

- In a significant decision, the Ministry of Home Affairs **approved the entitlement of air travel on Delhi-Srinagar, Srinagar-Delhi, Jammu-Srinagar and Srinagar-Jammu sectors to all the personnel of Central Armed Paramilitary Forces (CAPFs).**
- The decision will immediately benefit approximately **7,80,000 personnel of the CAPFs in the ranks of Constable, Head Constable and ASI who were otherwise not eligible earlier.**
- This includes journey on duty and journey on leave, i.e; **while going on leave from Jammu and Kashmir to home and return.**

Mahatma Gandhi Scholarships awarded to 150 Sri Lankan students

- Sri Lanka's 150 students from all 25 districts were awarded the prestigious Mahatma Gandhi scholarships for study in India.
- India recently opened up new trilingual school in Polonnaruwa and Saraswathy College in Kandy.

Ravi Shankar Prasad inaugurated VIVID 2019

- The 'VIVID-Vision Insight and Voices as India goes Digital'- the District Informatics Officer (DIO) meet was **inaugurated by National Informatics Centre (NIC) on February 21, 2019.**
- VIVID started in 2017, as an annual event, with the objective to empower NIC officials in the field of technology.

Union Minister of State Sadhvi Niranjana Jyoti inaugurates 1st Mega Food Park of Tripura

- Union Minister of State for Food Processing Industries **Sadhvi Niranjana Jyoti inaugurated Sikaria Mega Food Park Pvt Ltd at Village Tulakona in Agartala.**
- **This is the first Mega Food Park in the state of Tripura.**
- The Mega Food Park has been set up in 50 acre of land at the cost of Rs. 87.45 crore.

Environment Ministry, University of British Columbia sign MoU on forestry science

- The Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) and University of British Columbia (UBC), Canada signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for next 10 years in New Delhi.
- The MoU will help in exchange of students, researchers and faculty, developing research projects, livelihood opportunities and augment income of the forest based communities.

President promulgates four Ordinances including Ordinance banning Triple Talaq; Unregulated Deposit Schemes

President Ram Nath Kovind on February 21, 2019 promulgated the four ordinances, namely:

- The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Second Ordinance, 2019
- The Indian Medical Council (Amendment) Second Ordinance, 2019
- The Companies (Amendment) Second Ordinance, 2019
- The Banning of Unregulated Deposit Schemes Ordinance, 2019

Union Home Minister inaugurates "Waste to Wonder" Park in South Delhi

- The Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh inaugurated the **"Waste to Wonder" Park under the South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC).**
- The main attractions of the **"Seven Wonders Park"** are the different sized tall replicas of the Taj Mahal (20 ft.), the Great Pyramid of Giza (18 ft.), the Eiffel Tower (60 ft.), the Leaning Tower of Pisa (25ft.), Rio de Janeiro's Christ the Redeemer statue (25 ft.), Rome's Colosseum (15 ft.), and New York's Statue of Liberty (30 ft.).

BEL signs Teaming Agreement with Hughes India for Helicopter SATCOM Solutions

- The Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) and Hughes India entered into a Teaming Agreement for design, development, supply, installation, integration and commissioning of **Satellite Communication solutions for helicopters under the Ministry of Defence at Aero India 2019, Bengaluru.**
- The Teaming Agreement will enable MoD's strategic users to get enabled with helicopter-based Satellite Communication links for real-time and assured communications using ISRO's Ku band satellites.

NABH revamps Entry-Level Certification process for Hospitals

- The National Accreditation Board for Hospitals and Healthcare Organizations (NABH) revamped Entry-Level Certification Process to make it simpler, digital, faster and user-friendly.
- The revised process is driven through a new portal called **HOPE - Healthcare Organizations' Platform for Entry-Level-Certification** with a focus to promote quality by enrolling a wide range of hospitals across the country including **Healthcare Organizations (HCOs) and Small Healthcare Organizations (SHCOs).**
- The aim is to create a momentum for HCOs and SHCOs that want to avail benefits associated with **Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) and Ayushman Bharat- Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana** by getting themselves NABH certified.

Vice President inaugurates Nellore FM Station

- Vice President M. Venkaiah Naidu inaugurated Nellore All India Radio FM Station in Andhra Pradesh and asserted that radio broadcasting has made a comeback in the era of continuous bombardment of visual content.
- Apart from broadcasting entertainment programmes in Telugu, the FM station would provide important information to farmers and other sections.

Vice President inaugurates Krishnapatnam port-Obulavaripalle rail line; initiates various railway projects

- Vice President M. Venkaiah Naidu initiated a series of railway projects including the inauguration of the much-awaited new railway line between Venkatachalem -Vellikallu and Obulavaripalle - Cherlopalli (part of Krishnapatnam - Obulavaraipalle rail line project).
- He laid the foundation stones for redevelopment of Nellore railway station and passenger amenities at all railway stations from Krishnapatnam to Rapuru station.
- The other passenger oriented initiatives that were launched include Nellore-Chennai Central MEMU service and high speed Wi-Fi at Nellore, Guntur and Renigunta railway stations.

President unveils statue of Mahatma Gandhi at Dakshina Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha, Chennai

- President Ram Nath Kovind on February 21, 2019 unveiled a statue of Mahatma Gandhi at the Dakshina Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha in Chennai.
- The Dakshina Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha, founded by Mahatma Gandhi, completed 100 years. It has worked for the promotion of Hindi in the southern states.
- By putting up a statue of Mahatma Gandhi, the Sabha paid respects to the Father of the Nation in his 150th year.

Jitendra Singh addresses launch of 'Shisht Bharat Campaign'

- The Union Minister of State of Development of North-Eastern Region (DoNER), Jitendra Singh addressed the launch of 'Shisht Bharat Abhiyan' organised by an NGO.
- The theme of the event was to discuss the importance of moral science education in schools and colleges and to include Moral Science as a subject in the educational curriculum.

India decides to stop its share of river waters which flow into Pakistan

- Union Minister for Water Resources, Nitin Gadkari announced that the Government has decided to stop the share of river waters which flow into Pakistan.

- According to the Indus Waters Treaty, subject to certain conditions, India has the right to use water flowing in eastern rivers, namely, **the Beas, the Ravi and the Sutlej while Pakistan controls the right to use water in western rivers, namely, the Indus, the Jhelum and the Chenab.**

President approves amendments to Indian Stamp Act, 1899 for rationalisation of stamp duty

- **President gave his assent to the Amendments to the Indian Stamp Act, 1899 which were introduced as part of the Finance Act, 2019.** The Finance Bill 2019 was passed by both the Houses of Parliament, Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, on February 12, 2019 and February 13, 2019 respectively.
- **The amendments propose to create the legal and institutional mechanism to enable states to collect stamp duty on securities market instruments at one place by one agency on one Instrument.**

In a first, India invited as 'Guest of Honour' to OIC meet, Sushma Swaraj to attend

- **External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj will attend the inaugural meeting of the foreign ministers' conclave of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC),** a powerful grouping of Muslim majority nations, as India has been invited to attend the plenary in Abu Dhabi.
- **Swaraj will attend the plenary in Abu Dhabi next month. This is the first time that India has been invited to an OIC meeting as a guest of honour.**

Over 12 lakh people treated for free under Ayushman Bharat; 10000 Wellness Centres operational

- **Indu Bhushan, the CEO of Ayushman Bharat, on February 22, 2019 announced that over 12 lakh people received free treatment under the Ayushman Bharat - Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY),** while around two crore beneficiary e-cards have been issued since the launch of mission in September 2018.
- **The announcement was made during the 25th edition of Medical Fair India (MFI) 2019 held in Delhi, organised by Messe Dusseldorf India, a fully owned subsidiary of Messe Düsseldorf GmbH.**

Delhi government launches 'Connect Delhi' for Najafgarh

- **The Delhi government on Friday launched the first phase of the "Connect Delhi" initiative covering the Najafgarh area of the national capital.**
- **"Connect Delhi" is an initiative to rationalise the bus and feeder services in the city with a vision that all residential areas and villages of Delhi are connected with a reliable public transport facility within 500m of walking distance, at a frequency of 15 minutes.**
- **Speaking to the media, Delhi Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot said whenever there was a discussion about buses, it was mostly about the numbers.**

Kamal Nath Government Launches Farm Loan Waiver Scheme in Madhya Pradesh

- **Kamal Nath government on Friday started doling out funds by launching the ambitious project formally from Ratlam district in Madhya Pradesh.**
- **In the first phase of loan waiver, 25.49 lakh farmers would receive the waived off loan amounts in their accounts while starting off the waiver. Nath transferred over Rs 134 crore into the bank accounts of 40,000 plus farmers in Ratlam. He also laid foundation of over Rs 197 crore worth developmental works in the district.**
- **Under the Jai Kisan loan waiver scheme, farmers who had unpaid farm loans as on March 31, 2018 would be covered and those who had paid their dues by December 12, 2018 would also benefit through proportionate amount to be transferred in their accounts.**

PM Modi dedicates National War Memorial to the nation

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi on February 25, 2019 dedicated the National War Memorial to the nation in a solemn ceremonial function in New Delhi.**
- **The National War Memorial, located near the India Gate in New Delhi, is a fitting tribute to the soldiers who laid down their lives defending the nation, post-independence.**
- **The Memorial commemorates the soldiers who participated and made the supreme sacrifice in Peace Keeping Missions, and Counter Insurgency Operations.**

The layout of the National War Memorial comprises four concentric circles, namely:

- Amar Chakra or Circle of Immortality
- Veerta Chakra or Circle of Bravery
- Tyag Chakra or Circle of Sacrifice
- Rakshak Chakra or Circle of Protection

Aero India 2019 culminates; Drone Olympics held

- The 12th biennial edition of International Aerospace and Defence Exhibition, Aero India 2019 culminated on February 24, 2019 at Air Force Station Yelahanka in Bengaluru.
- For the first time, the 2019 edition of Aero India combined the defence and civil aviation segments into a holistic event with the co-involvement of the defence and civil aviation ministries. The 12th edition of Aero India intended to be a “Runway to a billion opportunities” and put India on the Global map.
- The theme of 2019 Aero India exhibition is ‘The Runway to a Billion Opportunities’ that aims to bolster business in the international aviation sector and provide a platform to showcase India’s aeronautical advancements.

Prime Minister Modi to confer National Youth Parliament Festival 2019 Awards

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will confer the National Youth Parliament Festival 2019 awards to the winners on February 27, 2019 at Vigyan Bhawan.
- Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Sports, Rajyavardhan Rathore had launched the National Youth Parliament Festival 2019 on January 12, 2019 in order to encourage the youth in the age group of 18-25 years to engage with public issues and understand the common man’s point of view.
- The themes of the festival were “Be the Voice of New India” and “Find solutions and contribute to policy”.

Union Home Minister to inaugurate various residential and office buildings of CAPFs, CPOs and Delhi Police

- The Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh will inaugurate 29 infrastructure projects (both residential and non-residential buildings) of Central Armed Police Forces (BSF, CRPF, CISF, ITBP, NDRF & SSB).
- The projects of the Delhi Police and the Central Police Organizations (Land Ports Authority of India and Central Forensic Science Laboratories) will also be inaugurated on the same occasion.
- These projects have been constructed at various locations across the Country at a total cost of Rs.1,714.97 crore.

Government launches Rail Drishti Dashboard to keep people informed about ongoing Railway works

- Railway Minister Piyush Goyal launched Rail Drishti Dashboard in New Delhi to keep people informed about the work going on in the Railways across the country.
- The Ministry of Railways will get suggestions and comments through the platform and will plan on future actions.
- People will get useful information from Rail Drishti through Railway WiFi facilities that are continuously expanding in the country.

Government increases Risk & Hardship allowance for CAPF personnel deployed in J&K

- Union Home Ministry announced the hike in Risk and Hardship allowance for Central Armed Police Forces personnel deployed in Left Wing Extremism states and Jammu and Kashmir.
- Troops up to the rank of Inspector will now get Rs 17,300 against the existing Rs 9,700, while the officers will get Rs 25,000 against the existing Rs 17,300 per month.

Union Minister Ashwini Kumar Choubey launches National Programme to Eliminate Viral Hepatitis

- Union minister Ashwini Kumar Choubey launched ‘National Action Plan - Viral Hepatitis’, a national programme aimed at eliminating viral hepatitis, recognized as an important public health problem.
- The programme was launched in Mumbai in presence of Amitabh Bachchan, the goodwill ambassador for Hepatitis, WHO South-East Asia Region.

Assam launches PRANAM commission to protect parents of state government employees

- Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal on February 26, 2019 launched the PRANAM Commission, which is a panel set up to look after the issues concerning a Bill brought in for the protection of parents of state government employees.
- The Parents Responsibility and Norms for Accountability and Monitoring (PRANAM) Bill, stated to be the first-of-its-kind bill in the country, aims to protect elderly parents of government employees in their times of need.
- The PRANAM Bill makes it mandatory for the state government employees to look after their parents and unmarried differently-abled siblings who do not have their own sources of income.
- Under the bill's provisions, if the PRANAM Commission gets a complaint that parents of a state government employee are being ignored, then 10 or 15 per cent of the employee's salary will be deducted by the government and paid to the parents or differently-abled siblings.

Composition of PRANAM Commission

- Chief Commissioner: V B Pyarelal
- Commissioners: Dr. Alaka Desai Sarma and Jugabala Buragohain

Exercise Sampriti 2019: India-Bangladesh joint military exercise to be held from March 2

- India and Bangladesh will be conducting a joint military exercise, 'Exercise Sampriti 2019' at Tangail, Bangladesh from March 2 to March 15, 2019.
- This will be the eighth edition of the exercise which is hosted alternately by both countries.
- As part of the ongoing India-Bangladesh defence cooperation, Exercise Sampriti is an important bilateral endeavor between India and Bangladesh.
- The exercise is aimed to strengthen and broaden the aspects of interoperability and cooperation between the Indian and Bangladesh Armies.

ISRO to launch electronic intelligence satellite 'Emisat'

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) would be launching an electronic intelligence satellite Emisat for Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) in March 2019.
- In the special mission, ISRO would also be launching 28 third-party satellites and demonstrate its new technologies like three different orbits with a new variant of Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) rocket.
- The exact date of the mission has not been specified yet.
- ISRO would be using a PSLV rocket with four strap-on motors. For the first time, it will be trying to orbit the rocket at three different altitudes.

National Cancer Institute at Jhajjar a part of AIIMS Delhi; AIIMS Rewari to come up as 22nd AIIMS in country

- The National Cancer Institute (NCI) at Jhajjar, Haryana, recently dedicated to the nation by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, is an integral part of All India Institutes of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi.
- This tertiary healthcare institute dedicated for cancer care is the second campus of the AIIMS Delhi only.
- Built at a cost of Rs. 2035 crores, NCI is the largest investment by the Government in a single hospital project and holds the unique distinction of being one of the mega healthcare projects to be completed in a record time of 3 years.

NDMA to conduct national workshop on heat wave risk reduction

- The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) is conducting a two-day national workshop on heat wave risk reduction on February 27-28, 2019.
- The workshop, to be held at Nagpur, has been organised in collaboration with the Maharashtra Government.

Government launches '2nd Edition of ISL Dictionary' for hearing impaired persons

- Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment, Thaawarchand Gehlot on February 27, 2019 launched the '2nd Edition of Indian Sign Language (ISL) Dictionary'.

- The dictionary has been prepared by the **Indian Sign Language Research and Training Centre (ISLRTC)** under **Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD)** of the **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment**.
- The second edition of dictionary includes total 6000 words. The first edition of the dictionary was launched on March 23, 2018 with 3000 words.
- **The Dictionary includes total 6000 words under the categories of academic, legal, medical, technical and everyday terms.**

National Institutes of Design inaugurated at Bhopal and Jorhat

- **Union Minister of Commerce & Industry and Civil Aviation, Suresh Prabhu inaugurated National Institutes of Design (NID) at Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh and Jorhat in Assam** through video conference from New Delhi.
- Both institutes are autonomous institutions under the **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry.**
- Four new NIDs have been set up in **Andhra Pradesh (Amaravati), Assam (Jorhat), Madhya Pradesh (Bhopal) and Haryana (Kurukshetra)** with a total outlay of Rs. 434 crore.

Government brings 42 non-scheduled cancer drugs under price control

- **The Union Government announced on February 27, 2019 that it has brought 42 non-scheduled anti-cancer drugs under price control, capping trade margin at 30 per cent, which would reduce their retail prices by up to 85 per cent.**
- This was made possible after the **National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA)** invoked extraordinary powers in public interest, under **Para 19 of the Drugs (Prices Control) Order, 2013 to bring 42 non-scheduled anti-cancer drugs under price control through trade margin rationalisation.**
- **The Department of Pharmaceuticals (DOP) stated in a notification that invoking paragraph 19 of DPCO, 2013 places a cap on trade margin of 30 per cent and directs the manufacturers to fix their retail price based on the price at first point of sale of the product of the non-scheduled formulations containing any of the 42 drugs.**
- According to NPPA's available data, **the MRP for 105 brands will be reduced up to 85 per cent resulting in a minimum saving of Rs 105 crore for the consumers.**

Indian Railways launches new facility; Rail passengers can now view reservation chart, vacant berths online

- **Union Minister of Railways & Coal, Piyush Goyal on February 27, 2019 launched a new facility for Public Viewing of Train Charts and Vacant Berths to enhance travel experience and bring greater transparency for Indian Railway passengers.**
- With this, rail passengers can view the **information about reservation chart and vacant berths through IRCTC website.**

SHREYAS: Union HRD Ministry launches Scheme to provide apprenticeship opportunities to graduates

- **The Union Minister for Human Resources Development, Prakash Javadekar on February 27, 2019 launched the 'Scheme for Higher Education Youth in Apprenticeship and Skills' (SHREYAS) for providing industry apprenticeship or training opportunities to fresh graduates of 2019.**
- **Launched primarily to skill non-technical students of BA, BSc. BCom courses, the SHREYAS programme intends to introduce BA, BSc, and BCom (Professional) courses in the higher educational institutions.**
- **These courses will be available to the students from Academic year April-May 2019.**

Appointments

India

Person	Appointed as	Organisation/State
Mohit Malhotra	CEO	Dabur India
Gupteshwar Pandey	Director General of Police	Bihar

Ajit Kumar P	Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief	Western Naval Command in Mumbai
P V Bharathi	MD & CEO	Corporation Bank
Rishi Kumar Shukla	Director	Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)
Praveen Sinha	Additional Director	Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)
Pradeep Singh Kharola	Secretary	Civil Aviation
Dinkar Gupta	Director General of Police	Punjab
Sailesh	Secretary	Ministry of Minority Affairs
Rina Mitra	Principal Advisor	West Bengal
Sushil Chandra	Election Commissioner	Election Commission of India
Flight Lieutenant Hina Jaiswal	the first Indian Woman Flight Engineer	Indian Air Force
Pramod Chandra Mody	Chairman	Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT)
Manoj Yadava	Director General of Police	Haryana
G C Anupama	first woman president	Astronomical Society of India
Anuj Sharma	Commissioner	Kolkata Police
Justice Uma Nath Singh	First Lokayukta	Nagaland
Justice DK Jain	first court-appointed ombudsman	BCCI

World

Person	Appointed as	Organisation/Country
Sanjiv Ranjan	Indian Ambassador	Republic of Columbia
Nilambar Acharya	Nepal Ambassador	India
David Bernhardt	Interior Secretary	United States of America
Nayib Bukele	President Elect	El Salvador
William Barr	Attorney General	USA
Major Gopal Mitra	first differently-abled person from India	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF)
Raya Al-Hassan	First Female Arab Interior Minister	Lebanon
Megha Tata	Managing Director	Discovery, South Asia
Muhammadu Buhari	President	Nigeria

Indexes

India climbs 8 Spots in 2019 International Intellectual Property Index; ranks 36th

- India climbed eight places in the 2019 International Intellectual Property (IP) Index, ranking at 36th position among 50 countries. India's overall score has increased from 30.07 percent in 2018 to 36.04 percent in 2019.
- In 2018 International Intellectual Property Index, India was ranked 44th out of 50 countries.
- The seventh edition of the International Intellectual Property Index, "Inspiring Tomorrow" was released by the Global Innovation Policy Center (GIPC) of U.S. Chamber of Commerce on February 7, 2019.
- The Index was topped by the United States with 42.66 points out of 45, followed by the United Kingdom (42.22) at 2nd, Sweden (41.03) at 3rd and Germany (41.00) at 4th.

Sports

Chris Gayle announces retirement from One-day Internationals

- Veteran West Indies batsman Chris Gayle has announced that he will retire from One-day Internationals after this year's World Cup in England and Wales. The announcement was made by West Indies Cricket on February 17, 2019.

- The 39-year old left-hander has scored 9,727 ODI runs, second only to the legendary Brian Lara among West Indians in 284 matches. He needs 677 more runs to surpass Lara as the West Indies' all-time record ODI run scorer, a feat he will be hoping to achieve during his fifth World Cup.
- He is currently set to play his first international since July 2018 against England on February 20.

Vidarbha Retain Irani Cup after Draw With Rest of India

- Vidarbha capped off a fairytale 2018-19 season by defending their Irani Cup title at the Jamtha Stadium in Nagpur on Saturday (February 16) thanks to a 95-run first innings lead after the match ended in a draw.
- The Ranji Trophy champions remained unbeaten through the season and showed plenty of heart as they chased a 280-run target on the final day.
- The home side became the first team since Karnataka in the 2014-15 season to defend their Irani Cup title.

Mumbai Hosts India's First-Of-Its-Kind 'Mallakhamb' World Championship

- Mumbai hosted India's first ever Mallakhamb World Championship.
- India emerged as winners in the team event at the first Mallakhamb World Championship that concluded on Sunday.
- The two-day tournament was held at Shivaji Park in central Mumbai, in which participants from 15 countries - Spain, Germany, Czech Republic, Italy, USA, Iran, Norway, England, France, Malaysia, Singapore, Japan, Vietnam, Bahrain, and hosts India - competed, a media release said.

Squash Queen Nicol David to Retire at End of Season

- Eight-time world champion Nicol David has announced she will retire at the end of the 2018-19 squash season, bringing down the curtain on the Malaysian's illustrious career.
- The 35-year-old is the most successful woman squash player of all time and spent an unprecedented nine years as world number one between 2006-2015.

ICC bans UAE-based coach Irfan Ansari for 10 years

- The International Cricket Council (ICC) banned UAE-based coach Irfan Ansari for 10 years after he was found guilty of making a "corrupt approach" to Pakistan captain Sarfaraz Ahmed in 2017.
- The ban came after the ICC Anti-Corruption Tribunal found him guilty of breaching three counts of the Anti-Corruption Code.

Nepal's Paudel Becomes Youngest Half-Centurion in International Cricket

- Aged just 16 years and 146 days, Nepal's Rohit Paudel became the youngest male player to record a half-century in international cricket when he hit 55 in 58 balls in a One-Day International against the UAE on Saturday (January 26).
- Paudel bettered the record held by Sachin Tendulkar who had made 59 in a Test against Pakistan at the age of 16 years and 213 days. In ODI cricket the record was held by Shahid Afridi who creamed a maiden 50-over century aged 16 years and 217 days in his maiden international innings against Sri Lanka.

Nepal's Sundeep Jora becomes youngest player to hit T20I fifty

- Nepal's Sundeep Jora became the youngest cricketer to score a half-century in T20 Internationals. Aged 17 years and 103 days, Jora achieved the feat during a T20I match against UAE in Dubai on Thursday. The youngster scored an unbeaten 53 off 46 balls in the match.
- The International Cricket Council (ICC) took to Twitter to announce the incredible feat.

Ricky Ponting appointed Australia's assistant coach for 2019 World Cup

- Three-time World Cup-winning former Australian captain Ricky Ponting will be part of Australia's coaching staff for the 2019 ICC World Cup.
- The news comes a day after David Saker resigned as Australia's fast-bowling coach, effective immediately.

Shane Warne named brand ambassador of Rajasthan Royals

- Australia spin legend Shane Warne has been named the brand ambassador of Rajasthan Royals for the upcoming Indian Premier League.
- Warne, who led Rajasthan Royals to its first and only IPL title in 2008, was the mentor of the side last season.
- But this year the Australian will be associated with the team in a new role.

Prajnesh Gunneswaran breaks into men's singles top 100

- India's Prajnesh Gunneswaran has made it to the top-100 of Men's Singles Tennis rankings with a jump of six places that took him to 97.
- With the feat, Gunneswaran has become the third Indian player to break into the top-100 barrier in the past decade after Somdev Devvarman and Yuki Bhambri.

Rajyavardhan Rathore inaugurated ISSF Shooting World Cup

- Sports Minister Rajyavardhan Rathore inaugurated the International Shooting Sports Federation (ISSF) World Cup in New Delhi.
- Various events in the world cup will start from February 23 and will end on the February 27, 2019.

Apurvi Chandela wins India's first World Cup gold in Women's 10m Rifle

- Apurvi Chandela on Saturday broke World Record to register India's first gold medal at the ISSF World Cup 2019.
- The 26-year-old shooter shot 252.9 in a thrilling 10m Women Air Rifle finale to bag the yellow metal on Day 1 of the tournament at Dr. Karni Singh Shooting Range in New Delhi.
- Chandela had a slow start in the final. Her first shot went 10.1.

Sanath Jayasuriya banned from cricket for two years

- Former Sri Lankan Cricket captain Sanath Jayasuriya has been banned from cricket for a period of two years.
- The information was shared by the International Cricket Council through a statement on February 26, 2019.
- The veteran cricketer has been banned from all forms of cricket for two years after he admitted to breaching the following two provisions of the ICC Anti-Corruption Code.

Prajnesh Gunneswaran rises to career-best 94th in Tennis

- In Tennis, India's Prajnesh Gunneswaran achieved his career-best ranking, rising three places to 94th in the latest list.
- Ramkumar Ramanathan dropped nine spots to 137, while Yuki Bhambri further slipped to 171.
- Saketh Myneni is placed at 250th and following him is Sasi Kumar Mukund, who has also jumped to a career-best 269th.
- In Doubles rankings, Rohan Bopanna remained at 38th and Divij Sharan at 39th, while Leander Paes jumped two spots to 73rd. Following them was Jeevan Nedunchezhiyan at 75th and Purav Raja at 96th.

Abhijeet Gupta lifts Cannes International Open trophy

- In Chess, Indian Grandmaster Abhijeet Gupta lifted the Cannes International Open trophy yesterday.
- He took an easy draw with Pier Luigi Basso of Italy in the ninth and final round. Having been tied for the top spot in the previous edition, Abhijeet won the tournament with 7.5 points.
- It was a clear point lead over nearest rivals Nikita Maiorov of Belarus, Nasuta Grzegorz of Poland and Yuri Solodovnichecko of Ukraine.

Manpreet Singh honoured with AHF's Player of the Year

- The Asian Hockey Federation has honoured Indian skipper Manpreet Singh with the 2018 Player of the Year award. Women team's striker Lalremsiami has bagged the Rising Player of The Year prize.
- Manpreet had led the Indian team to an unbeaten streak at the Asian Champions Trophy in Muscat where the team was declared joint winners with Pakistan. He also contributed to the team's silver medal win at the FIH Champions Trophy in Breda.

India Captain Mithali Raj becomes 1st female cricketer to play 200 ODIs

- India captain Mithali Raj today became the first female cricketer to play 200 ODIs, adding another achievement to her illustrious career.
- The 36-year-old is also the highest run-getter in ODIs with 6622 runs at an average of 51.33, including seven hundreds.

Viswanathan Anand finishes joint third after drawing with Vidit Gujrathi

- In Chess, five-time world champion Viswanathan Anand had to be content with a joint third-place finish after settling for a draw with compatriot Vidit Gujrathi in the 13th and final round of the Tata Steel Masters at Wijk Aan Zee, the Netherlands.
- With three victories, a defeat against winner Magnus Carlsen of Norway and nine draws, Anand ended the event on 7.5 points and will add six points to his existing rating. He is sixth in world rankings.

Awards & Honors

Railway Minister Piyush Goyal awarded 4th annual Carnot Prize

- Union Minister of Railways & Coal Piyush Goyal was on January 30, 2019 formally conferred with the fourth annual Carnot Prize by the Kleinman Center for Energy Policy at the University of Pennsylvania School of Design in New Delhi.
- The Minister had previously been unable to accept the award in the United States of America, due to the unfortunate train tragedy that took place in Amritsar.
- The 2018 Carnot Prize has been conferred in recognition of India's efforts towards eliminating energy poverty with sustainable energy solutions.

President Ram Nath Kovind confers Sangeet Natak Akademi Awards for Year 2017

- The President, Ram Nath Kovind conferred the prestigious Sangeet Natak Akademi Awards for the year 2017 on February 6, 2019 at Rashtrapati Bhawan during a special investiture ceremony.
- The General Council of the Sangeet Natak Akademi selected 42 artists from the field of Music, Dance, Theatre, Puppetry and Overall contribution/scholarship in the Performing Arts for the Sangeet Natak Akademi Awards 2017 at its meeting in Imphal, Manipur that was held on June 8, 2018.
- These 42 artists include one joint award.

Sena medals awarded to 92 army men, including Lance Naik Wani

- Lieutenant General Ranbir Singh, GOC-in-C of Northern Command presented the Sena medals to 92 army men at an investiture ceremony for their gallantry and distinguished services.
- 76 medals were presented for gallantry services, 7 medals for distinguished services and 8 for Vishist Seva.
- Lance Naik Nazir Ahmed Wani, a recipient of Ashok Chakra was also awarded Bar to Sena Medal posthumously which was received by his wife.

2019 Grammy Awards: Kacey Musgraves, Childish Gambino, Cardi B & Quincey Jones created history

- Kacey Musgraves, Childish Gambino, Cardi B and Quincey Jones created history by winning the 2019 Grammy Awards held at Staples Center in Los Angeles.
- Country singer Kacey Musgraves won the 'Album of the Year' award for her record "Golden Hour". Kacey also won awards for best country album, best country song and best country solo performance.
- Childish Gambino's "This Is America" won four awards for song of the year, best rap or sung performance, best music video and record of the year.
- "This Is America" became first rap track to get the award in the history of the Grammys.
- Cardi B became the first woman to win the Best Rap Album Grammy award for her debut 'Invasion of Privacy'.

- Lady Gaga's "Shallow" from the movie "A Star Is Born" won two awards.

Ranveer Singh and Alia Bhatt visit India Pavilion at Berlinale 2019; release IFFI 2019 Brochure

- The team of 'Gully Boy' movie including Ranveer Singh, Alia Bhatt, Zoya Akhtar and Ritesh Sidhwani visited the India Pavilion at Berlin International Film Festival (Berlinale) 2019.
- They released the IFFI 2019 Brochure and were apprised by the Indian delegation about activities planned for the Golden Jubilee anniversary of IFFI to be held in 2019.

Indian historian Sanjay Subrahmanyam wins Israel's Dan David Prize 2019

- Indian historian Sanjay Subrahmanyam on February 10, 2019 won the prestigious Dan David Prize 2019 for his work on inter-cultural encounters between Asians, Europeans and people of North and South America during the early modern era.
- He won the Israel's prestigious USD 1 million dollar award in the category of "Past Time Dimension" for his work in macro history. He shared the award in the Past category with Professor Kenneth Pomeranz of University of Chicago.

PM Modi presents Swachh Shakti-2019 Awards; inaugurates development projects in Haryana

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi on February 12, 2019 participated in Swachh Shakti 2019 event and distributed the Swachh Shakti 2019 Awards during his visit to Kurukshetra, Haryana.
- On the same occasion, he also inaugurated and laid foundation stone of several development projects in Haryana.
- The Prime Minister Modi gave away the Swachh Shakti awards to woman sarpanches from across the country in Swachh Shakti 2019 programme. He also visited the Swachh Sundar Shauchalay exhibition at Kurukshetra.
- The Swachh Shakti 2019 was attended by women panches and sarpanches from across the country.

NFDC declared Winner under Miniratna Category by Ministry of MSME

- National Film Development Corporation of India has been declared winner under the Miniratna Category (Category II) by Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME).
- National Film Development Corporation Ltd. (NFDC), incorporated in the year 1975, was formed by the Government with the primary objective of planning and promoting an organized, efficient and integrated development of the Indian film industry.
- NFDC has so far funded and produced over 300 films.

President to confer Tagore Award for Cultural Harmony

- Indian President Ram Nath Kovind would be presenting the Tagore Award for Cultural Harmony to Rajkumar Singhajit Singh, Bangladesh cultural organisation Chhayanaout and Ram Sutar Vanji for the years 2014, 2015 and 2016 respectively on February 18, 2019 at Pravasi Bhartiya Kendra, New Delhi.
- The award was instituted by the Union Government in 2012 to recognise the contributions made by Rabindranath Tagore to humanity at large with his works and ideas, as part of the commemoration of his 150th Birth Anniversary, for promoting values of cultural harmony.
- The award is conferred annually and carries an amount worth Rs one crore, citation in a scroll, a plaque and an exquisite traditional handicraft and handloom item.

Laureus World Sports Awards 2019 presented

- Laureus World Sports Awards 2019 were announced at the Laureus Awards Ceremony in Monaco.
- The Laureus World Sports Awards is an annual award ceremony honouring individuals and teams from the world of sports along with sporting achievements throughout the year.
- Ace Indian wrestler Vinesh Phogat became the first Indian to receive a nomination in the prestigious Laureus World Sports Awards.
- She was nominated for the Laureus World Comeback of the Year.

List of Awardees

Award Name	Person Won	Country	Sports related to
Sportsman of the Year	Novak Djokovic	Serbia	Tennis
Sportswoman of the Year	Simone Biles	USA	Gymnastics
Team of the Year	France's Football Team	France	Football
Comeback of the Year	Tiger Woods	USA	Golf
Breakthrough of the Year	Naomi Osaka	Japan	Tennis
Lifetime Achievement Award	Arsene Wenger	France	Manager of Arsenal Football Team
Sport for Good Award	Yuwa (Jharkhand based NGO)	India	Football

I&B minister Rathore presents National Photography Awards

- Information and Broadcasting Minister Rajyavardhan Rathore on Tuesday gave away **the 7th National Photography Awards to 13 persons in different categories at a function in New Delhi.**
- The theme for the Professional category was **Women led Development**, while the theme for **Amateur category was Fairs and Festivals of India.**
- Renowned landscape photographer Ashok Dielwali was conferred with lifetime achievement award. Photojournalist S L Shanth Kumar was awarded in the professional category. Arun Sreedhar, Kailash Mittal, Mihir Singh, Ms Ranita Roy and P V Sunder Rao were honoured with special mention awards.

Sunil Chhetri honoured with the first ever Football Ratna award

- India's national football captain Sunil Chhetri has been conferred the first ever Football Ratna honour by Football Delhi.** The governing body for football in the Capital conferred the honour on India's leading international goal scorer at a glittering ceremony at the Jawahar Lal Nehru Stadium in New Delhi.
- Football Delhi president Shaji Prabhakaran**, himself a former footballer of repute, presented the Delhi boy with the award.
- Sunil Chhetri**, who was conferred the Padma Shri on the Republic Day this year, stressed the need to continue focus on developing talent in India.

National Informatics Centre to confer Digital India Awards

- The National Informatics Centre (NIC) will organize the fifth edition of Digital India Awards on February 22, 2019.**
- The Digital India Awards have emerged over the years as a credible platform to recognize the digital presence and e-Governance efforts of various Government institutions across the country.

PM Narendra Modi receives Seoul Peace Prize for 2018

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi** on February 22, 2019 received **the prestigious Seoul Peace Prize 2018 for his contribution to international cooperation and fostering global economic growth.**
- The committee credited him for his efforts in promoting global peace and harmony through inclusive economic growth and improving quality of life.
- The award was presented to him by Kwon E-hyock, the Chairman of the Seoul Peace Prize Cultural Foundation** at a grand ceremony in Seoul, South Korea. A short film on the life and achievements of Prime Minister Modi was also screened at the event.
- With this, **PM Modi became the 14th recipient of the Seoul Peace Prize.**

Jitendra Singh presents National e-Governance Awards 2019

- Minister of State in Prime Minister's Office, **Dr Jitendra Singh on February 27, 2019 presented the National e-Governance Awards, 2019 in New Delhi.**

- The awards are given every year to recognise and promote excellence in implementation of e-Governance initiatives. The Minister gave the award in six categories.
- The initiative seeks to disseminate knowledge on effective methods of designing and implementing sustainable e-Governance initiatives.

MP: CZPDC Bhopal, WZPDC Indore bag Saubhagya award

- In Madhya Pradesh, the Central Zone Power Distribution Company, Bhopal and West Zone Power Distribution Company, Indore have been awarded the Saubhagya award under Pradhanmantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana at the National Conference of Energy Ministers. The award included Rs 100 crore each.
- The awards were presented by the Union Minister of State for Energy RK Singh on February 26, 2019.
- The Central Zone Power Distribution Company, Bhopal is the first power distribution company in the country that has illuminated more than 7 lakh 85 thousand houses while around 4 lakh houses have been electrified by the West Zone Power Distribution Company, Indore under Pradhanmantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana-Saubhagya.

PM Modi confers Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Prizes for Science & Tech

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday conferred the Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Prizes for Science and Technology for the years 2016, 2017 and 2018 in New Delhi.
- Among the ten scientists who got the prize for 2017 are Dr Deepak Gaur of Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi and Dr S Suresh Babu of Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre. There were thirteen prize winners for 2018. They include Dr Amit Kumar of IIT, Delhi and Dr Nitin Saxena, IIT, Kanpur.
- The Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Prize is the most coveted national recognition bestowed upon young scientists and engineers to honour their research and developmental work in India. It was first instituted in 1957 to honour the eminent scientist Dr Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar who was also the founder Director and the chief architect of Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, CSIR.

World

UNSC adopts resolution to extend sanctions against CAR for another year

- The United Nations Security Council has adopted a resolution to extend sanctions against the Central African Republic (CAR) for another year.
- Resolution 2454, adopted unanimously yesterday by the 15-member council, will renew the sanctions regime - an arms embargo, travel ban and asset freeze till January 31, 2020.

US urges Venezuela's Maduro to accept amnesty

- The United States has urged Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro to accept an amnesty offer from opposition leader Juan Guaido, whom Washington has recognised as President.
- In a tweet, US National Security Advisor John Bolton said Maduro should take advantage of the amnesty offer and move on.

Scientists create AI based system that translates thoughts into speech

- Scientists have first time created an artificial intelligence (AI) based system that directly translates thoughts into intelligible, recognisable speech.
- The research will help people who cannot speak regain their ability to communicate with the outside world.

Pope Francis lands in Abu Dhabi, becomes 1st pontiff to visit Arabian peninsula

- Pope Francis landed in Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), on a historic visit, becoming the first pontiff to visit the Arabian peninsula. He was received at the airport by the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed.
- The Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi said, they warmly welcome him Holy Father, Pope Francis.

- The Pope is visiting the UAE on the invitation of the Crown Prince to take part in an interfaith Conference.

Sri Lanka celebrated its 71st Independence Day

- Sri Lanka celebrated its 71st Independence Day on February 4, 2019 in Colombo.
- Maldives President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih was the guest of honour at the main function held in Colombo.
- The three branches of military performed an impressive parade along with display of defence equipments.

European nations set up transaction channel 'INSTEX' to trade with Iran

- The United Kingdom along with other European nations such as Germany and France on January 31, 2019 set up a new transaction channel called 'INSTEX' that will allow companies to continue trading with Iran despite US sanctions.
- INSTEX is short for 'instrument in support of trade exchanges'. The payment channel will create a possibility for the European countries to conduct business transactions with Iran. While the move was praised by Iran, it drew a warning from the United States.

Iran to pardon 50,000 convicts on 40th Islamic revolution anniversary

- The Iranian Judiciary Chief Amoli Larijani on February 4, 2019 said that 50,000 convicts will receive pardons from Leader Ayatollah Khamenei on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution.
- The 50,000 convicts will be pardoned or their sentences will be reduced on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of Iran's Islamic Revolution.

President Donald Trump to meet North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in Vietnam on February 27

- President Donald Trump announced on February 5, 2019 that he will hold the second summit with the North Korean leader, Kim Jong Un in Vietnam on February 27-28, 2019 as part of his administration's endeavours to denuclearise North Korea.
- Vietnam has diplomatic ties with both Washington and Pyongyang.

Trump nominates US treasury diplomat David Malpass to head World Bank

- The US President, Donald Trump has nominated senior Treasury official David Malpass as the next chief of the World Bank.
- He would replace Jim Yong Kim as the president if voted by the Directors of the World Bank Group.

Macedonia signs accord to join NATO

- Macedonia on February 6, 2019 signed an accord to join NATO to become the 30th member of the US-led alliance.
- At a formal signing of the NATO accession protocol, Macedonia's Foreign Minister Nikola Dimitrov hailed the moment as showing that the country will never walk alone once in the alliance.

Egypt's President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi elected as new chair of African Union

- Egypt's President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi on February 10, 2019 took over as the chair of the African Union (AU) following a meeting by heads of state from the continent in Ethiopia's capital city, Addis Ababa.
- The post of AU's chair rotates annually between the five regions of the continent. The Incoming AU chairman President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi is expected to focus on the fight against armed groups on the continent and rebuilding efforts of countries recovering from conflict.

Abu Dhabi adds Hindi as third official court language

- The Abu Dhabi Judicial Department (ADJD) has added Hindi as the third official language to be used in the city's courts, alongside Arabic and English.
- The Abu Dhabi Judicial Department has extended the adoption of interactive forms of statement of claims filed before courts by including the Hindi language alongside Arabic and English in labour cases.

Hungary to give life tax exemption to women with 4 children

- Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orban on February 10, 2019 **announced new measures, under which increasing financial aid and subsidies will be provided to families that have more than three children.**
- The measures were announced by the Prime Minister during his "state of the nation" speech. They are meant to encourage women to have more children and to reverse Hungary's population decline.

US President signs executive order to prioritise research in Artificial Intelligence

- US President Donald Trump on February 11, 2019 signed **an executive order directing federal agencies to prioritise research and development in Artificial Intelligence (AI).**
- The order follows huge investment pledges from China and other countries intended to advance and apply AI technology in fields ranging from warfighting to health care.
- The plan, **called American AI initiative**, requires the federal agencies to make government data and computing resources more available to AI experts while maintaining security and confidentiality.

US cargo spacecraft Cygnus released from International Space Station

- **The US cargo spacecraft Cygnus was released from the International Space Station (ISS) on February 8, 2019.**
- The cargo spacecraft was successfully released at 4:16 GMT. The operation was controlled by US astronaut Anne McClain and her Canadian colleague David Saint-Jacques.

Abu Dhabi temple's foundation stones to be laid soon

- **The Shilanyas ceremony of the Hindu temple to be built in Abu Dhabi is scheduled on the April 20, 2019.**
- **Mahant Swami Maharaj**, the spiritual leader of the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha, will be making his first official visit to the UAE from April 18 to 29.

Over 133 million new jobs may emerge by 2022: World Government Summit 2019

- **It is likely that over 133 million new jobs may emerge by 2022. However, at the same time, 75 million jobs may be displaced.**
- **During the World Government Summit 2019 in Dubai**, the Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) called on governments and institutions to collaborate closely on the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR).
- Addressing a plenary session, **'The Future of the Economy in the Age of 4IR' at the Summit**, OECD Secretary-General Jose Angel Gurría cautioned governments against creating a situation where they have to look after people who are unable to participate in the economy.

US House passes a resolution to withdraw US military support in Yemen

- **The US House of Representatives on February 13, 2019 approved a resolution that would end US support for the Saudi Arabia-led coalition in the war in Yemen.**
- The resolution would direct the US President to withdraw US military forces in or "affecting" **Yemen** within 30 days unless they are fighting al Qaeda or associated forces. It is the first time the House of Representatives has ever supported a war powers resolution.

Australia government loses bill blocking sick asylum seekers

- **Australian legislators have passed a landmark bill making it easier for asylum seekers, being held on remote Pacific islands, to get medical treatment in the country.**
- This is the first time in decades the government has lost a vote on its own legislation in the lower house as the bill was passed with an opposition amendment.

NASA declares Mars rover Opportunity officially dead

- **NASA's Mars rover Opportunity was officially declared dead on February 13, 2019, after having contributed almost 15 years of grand services.**
- The declaration **came after the long wait of eight months after the robot stopped responding to engineers back on earth after the dust storm hit the red planet.**

JP Morgan Launches 'JPM Coin' the first US bank-backed Cryptocurrency

- Setting off for Mars on the night of July 7, 2003, the golf-cart-sized robot has covered the distance of 28 miles since it has landed on the surface on January 25, 2004.

- American multinational investment bank JP Morgan has created first US bank-backed blockchain-based asset called JPM Coin for its wholesale payments business.
- Called as JPM Coin, the newly created cryptocurrency is permission blockchain-based asset which will require JP Morgan KYC. One JPM Coin will have the value equivalent to one U.S. dollar.

Iran launches 'cruise missile capable' submarine amid heightening tension with US

- Iran has launched 'cruise missile capable' submarine amid heightening tension with the United States.
- The new submarine is Iran's first in the semi-heavy category, filling a gap between the light Ghadir class and the heavy Kilo class submarines that the country possesses.

Russia, France agree to continue coordination in order to facilitate peace settlement in Syria

- Russian President Vladimir Putin and his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron have agreed to continue coordination of the two countries in order to facilitate the peace settlement in Syria.
- Putin and Macron discussed the developments in northeastern Syria and the Idlib de-escalation zone, and Putin warned that militants are preparing chemical weapon provocations, citing available data.

Heather Nauert withdraws her nomination for US new UN ambassador

- US President Donald Trump's pick to be America's new UN ambassador, Heather Nauert, has withdrawn her nomination for the post.
- US State Department Deputy Spokesperson said that President Trump will make an announcement about a new nominee soon.
- Nauert, a former anchor for Fox News, issued a statement citing family reasons for her decision. Donald Trump had announced Nauert as his choice for the UN role in December 2018.

Trump declares national emergency to build US-Mexico border wall

- US President Donald Trump on February 15, 2019 signed an executive order declaring national emergency in the nation. The move would unblock billions of dollars of federal money to construct a wall along the US-Mexico border.
- Trump explained the move by saying that it was essential to prevent the country from "invasion" of illegal immigrants, drug dealers and criminal cartels.
- However, the budget for a wall along the Mexico border is far less than what President Donald Trump had demanded.

US President Donald Trump signs order to establish US Space Force

- US President Donald Trump signed an executive order to establish its Space Force as a new armed service within the Department of Air Force.
- The Space Force will include both combat and combat support functions to enable prompt and sustained offensive and defensive space operations in all domains.

Afghanistan begins export to India via Chabahar port

- Afghanistan has begun exports to India through Iran's Chabahar port.
- At the inauguration of the new export route in Zaranj city in western Nimroz province, President Ashraf Ghani said Chabahar port is the result of healthy cooperation between India, Iran and Afghanistan.

Cuba votes on new constitution

- In Cuba, voters took part in a referendum on a new constitution that expands recognition of private property.

- The referendum contained only two options: **yes or no to the new constitution. More than eight million were registered to voters.**

Days

Day	Observed on	Theme/Info
World Wetlands Day	2 February	Wetlands and Climate Change
World Cancer Day	4 February	I Am and I Will
Safer Internet Day	5 February	Together for a better internet
International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation	6 February	#EndFGM and #Womenmatter
National Deworming Day	10 February	
International Day of Women and Girls in Science	11 February	Investment in Women and Girls in Science for Inclusive Green Growth
National Productivity Day	12 February	Circular Economy for Productivity & Sustainability
World Radio Day	13 February	Dialogue, Tolerance and Peace.
International Mother Language Day	21 February	Local languages for Global Citizenship: Spotlight on Science
World Day of Social Justice	20 February	If You Want Peace & Development, Work for Social Justice
Central Excise Day	24 February	
National Science Day	28 February	Science for the People and the People for Science
International Polar Bear Day	27 February	
World Rare Disease Day	28 February	World Rare Disease Day is observed on 29th February on Leap Years.
World NGO Day	27 February	Celebrating Diversity & Inclusion

Obituaries

Veteran Marathi actor Ramesh Bhatkar passes away

- Veteran Marathi actor Ramesh Bhatkar passed away on Monday after a battle with cancer.** He was 70.
- Bhatkar was known for his roles in the TV series "**Commander**" and "**Hello Inspector**" and worked for more than 30 years as an actor in mainstream Hindi and Marathi films such as "**Aai Pahije**", "**Kucch To Hai**" and "**Bhaves Josh Superhero**".

Noted Hindi writer Namvar Singh dies

- Noted Hindi writer Namvar Singh passed away in New Delhi. He was 92.**
- He authored over dozen books including '**Kavita Ke Naye Pratiman**', '**Chhayavad**' and '**Dusri Parampara Ki Khoj**' among others.
- He received Sahitya Academy Award for literary criticism in 1971 for '**Kavita Ke Naye Pratiman**'.