Monthly GK Digest: February 2018

India joins the Ashgabat Agreement

• The Ministry of External Affairs announced that India has been admitted to the Agreement on the Establishment of an International Transport and Transit Corridor, which is already in force among Iran, Oman, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

• All the four founding members have consented to the accession of India to the agreement.

• The approval for India to accede to the Ashgabat Agreement was given by the Union Cabinet chaired by the Indian Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi.

• This would help in diversifying India's connectivity options with central Asia and to add to it, this agreement would have a positive influence on India's trade and commercial ties with the region

• After approval of the Cabinet, India had deposited the instrument of accession with Turkmenistan in April 2016.

• Ashgabat Agreement would synchronize with India's efforts to implement the International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC) for enhanced connectivity.

About Ashgabat Agreement

• The Ashgabat agreement is a Multimodal transport agreement between Oman, Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Pakistan and India.

• The "Ashgabat Agreement," was originally signed on April 25, 2011, among the four founding members - Iran, Oman, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

• The Ashgabat Agreement envisages facilitation of transit and transportation of goods between Central Asia and the Persian Gulf.

• The basic idea behind this agreement is to create an international transport and transit corridor facilitating transportation of goods between Central Asia and the Persian Gulf.

• India formally joined Ashgabat agreement on 2nd February 2018.

• Pakistan had formally joined the Ashgabat Agreement in October 2016.

• The objective of this agreement is to enhance connectivity within Eurasian region and synchronize it with other transport corridors within that region including the International North–South Transport Corridor (INSTC).

First Revised Estimates of National Income 2016-17 Released

• The Central Statistics Office (CSO), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation has released the First Revised Estimates of National Income, Consumption Expenditure, Saving and Capital Formation for the financial year 2016-17.

• Along with this, the Second Revised Estimates for the financial year 2015-16 and Third Revised Estimates for the financial year 2014-15 (with Base Year 2011-12) were also revised as per the revision policy.

Highlights

• As per the data, nominal GDP at current prices for 2016-17 is estimated as Rs 152.54 lakh crore while that for the year 2014-15 is estimated as Rs. 124.34 lakh crore, exhibiting a growth of 10.0 percent during 2015-16 as against 10.7 percent during 2014-15.

• The First Revised Estimates for the year 2015-16 have been compiled using industry-wise/institution-wise detailed information instead of using the benchmark-indicator method employed at the time of the release of Provisional Estimates on 31st May 2016.

• The nominal GVA at basic prices has increased by 10.1 percent during 2016-17, as against 8.6 percent during 2015-16 and 10.7 percent during 2014-15.

 • Nominal Net National Income (NNI) at current prices for the year 2015-16 stands at Rs. 120.83 lakh crore as against Rs. 109.61 lakh crore in 2014-15, showing an increase of 10.2 percent during 2015-16 as against an increase of 10.7 percent in the previous year.

• Gross National Disposable Income (GNDI) at current prices is estimated as Rs. 139.29 lakh crore for the year 2015-16, while the estimate for the year 2014-15 stands at Rs. 126.91 lakh crore, showing a growth of 9.7 percent as against 10.4 percent in the year 2014-15.

 • Gross Saving during 2015-16 is estimated as Rs. 44.05 lakh crore as against Rs. 40.98 lakh crore during 2014-15. The rate of Gross Saving to GNDI for the year 2015-16 is estimated as 31.6 percent as against 32.3 percent, estimated for 2014-15.

 • Gross Capital Formation (GCF) at current and constant prices is estimated by two approaches

 • Through flow of funds, derived as Gross Saving plus net capital inflow from abroad by the commodity flow approach, derived by the type of assets

• The estimates of GCF through the flow of funds approach are treated as the firmer estimates, and the difference between the two approaches is taken as errors and omissions.

• Private Final Consumption Expenditure (PFCE) at current prices is estimated at Rs. 79.00 lakh crore for the year 2015-16 as against Rs. 72.73 lakh crore in 2014-15.

• Government Final Consumption Expenditure (GFCE) at current prices is estimated as Rs. 14.12 lakh crore for the year 2015-16 as against Rs. 12.98 lakh crore during 2014-15.

• At constant prices, the growth rates of primary (comprising agriculture, forestry, fishing, mining and quarrying), secondary (comprising manufacturing, electricity, gas, water supply and other utility services) and tertiary (services) sectors have estimated as 7.4 percent, 6.1 percent and 7.5 percent respectively during 2016-17.

World's Longest Zip Line Launched in UAE

• The United Arab Emirates claimed a record with the opening of the world's longest zip line.

• One of the smallest states in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has opened the world's longest zip line, beating the previous record by 600m.

• The Jebel Jais Flight zip line was launched from 1,680m above sea level, at the peak of the Jebel Jais Mountain. Jebel Jais is UAE's highest peak and this new project has been conducted by the by the Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority (RAKTDA).

• For such an ambitious project, it's no surprise that RAKTDA chose to team up with Toro Verde, whose adventure park in Puerto Rico holds the current world record for the longest zip line, measuring 2,530m in length.

• The longest zip line in Ras al-Khaimah measures 1.76 miles (2.83km) in length which is more than three times the length of Dubai's Burj Khalifa and the equivalent of 28 football pitches.

• It was awarded the Guinness World Record for world's longest zip line on 31st January 2018 and due to its location, it is one of the highest too.

• It was constructed in Ras al-Khaimah, one of the lesser known Emirates states as part of a push to increase tourism in the country.

• Ras al-Khaimah opened the world's longest urban zip line to attract more tourists and expatriate visitors from neighbouring emirates like Abu Dhabi and Dubai.

• Getting to the ground from the peak actually takes two zip line rides, with the initial nearly 3km ride from the peak and another shorter 1km ride to the ground.

• The Jebel Jais zip line experience consists of two lines, allowing friends and family to take part in the flight together.

Lt. Gen Anil Chauhan appointed as DGMO of Indian Army

• Lt. Gen Anil Chauhan took charge as the DGMO (Director General of Military Operations) of the Indian Army.

• He will replace Lt. Gen Anil Bhatt, who is going to take charge as the new commander of the Srinagar based 15 Corps (the Chinar corps).

• Lt. General Anil Chauhan has vast experience in counter-insurgency operations in Jammu and Kashmir and has held several important posts in the Army.

• As DGMO, Lt General Chauhan will oversee various operations of the Indian Army including those along the LoC in Jammu and Kashmir.

• He was earlier commander of the Dimapur-based 3 Corps.

• Lt. General Anil Chauhan had been commissioned into the 11th Gorkha Rifles in 1981 and had also served as military observer for UN peacekeeping mission in Angola.

• He has received many awards for his service to the Indian Army. These include the Uttam Yudh Seva Medal (2018), Ati Vishisht Seva Medal, the Sena Medal, the Vishisht Seva Medal.

About the DGMO and its role

The Indian Army as a whole consists of various Combat as well as Service Arms. Every Combat/Service Arm has a head, who is considered the senior-most officer of that arm. All infantry regiments have a senior most officer commissioned into that regiment known as the "Colonel of the Regiment". Each of these arms or service are headed by the senior most officer called the Director General (DG) of that arm. These DG's coordinate the units of their Arm and report to the COAS when necessary. This is done as the COAS cannot effectively manage such a large army. So whenever he needs info, he will call upon the DG of that particular Arm to brief him. Now, when the surgical strikes were planned, the COAS approves the plan laid out in presence of the Cabinet ministers who are present. So the strike is a "Military Operation". Hence, the DGMO is the head and the media representative and not the COAS. He plans and executes the operation.

Axis Bank Launches 'Evolve'

• Axis bank has launched the 4th edition of 'Evolve' in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu for its SME (Small and Medium Enterprises) customers.

• This edition of 'Evolve' is titled "Transform your Family Business into your dream company".

• This will empower the SMEs to understand the winning strategies and best practises that have helped some of the leading family businesses in India grow into reputable enterprise.

• This edition will span across 30 cities including Nagpur, Surat, Rajkot, Pune, Vishakhapatnam, Trichy, Kanpur, Ludhiana and Jamshedpur.

• It will equip the SMEs with new-age strategies, live case studies, operational know-how, regulatory and Government related knowledge skills.

About Evolve

Evolve is a knowledge enhancement series focused on the burgeoning Small and Medium Enterprises (SME). It was conceptualized in the year 2014. The basic objective of this initiative is to equip SMEs with new-age strategies, case-studies, operational know-how, regulatory and governmental affairs etc. that impact their business. All existing SME Customers of Axis Bank can attend any Evolve session across India. Prior registration is a must.

Previous Evolve sessions

• Three Evolve sessions have been held earlier.

• Edition 1 in 2014-2015: The topic was and Social media Marketing and Axis Bank partnered with LinkedIn, Marketing Unplugged and SMG Convonix and events took place across 38 cities.

• Edition 2 in 2015-2016: The Topic was How to Scale your business and Axis Bank partnered with Marketing Unplugged and events across 40 cities

• Edition 3 in 2016-2017: This edition of Evolve highlighted the impact of GST on SMEs and equipped them to deal with it during the time of implementation.

INS Karanj launched by the Indian Navy

• The Indian Navy launched the third Scorpene-class submarine INS Karanj at Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL) in Mumbai, Maharashtra.

• The Indian Navy's third state-of-the-art Scorpene class submarine, INS Karanj, was launched by Reena Lanba, wife of Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Sunil Lanba.

• It is named after the earlier Kalvari class INS Karanj, which was decommissioned in 2003. It was commissioned in Indian Navy on September 4, 1969 and was retired on August 1, 2003. Karanj had served the nation for 34 years and also took part in 1971 operations.

• Karanj is the third of the six Scorpene-class submarines being built by MDL under the Project 75 programme.

• The other two are INS Kalvari and Khandari.

• The first one, INS Kalvari, was commissioned on December 14 last year whereas the second one, Khandari, has already been launched and is undergoing sea trials.

• The Scorpene submarines are a primary modernisation requirement of the Indian Navy as currently it is having an ageing submarine fleet, and that too when the Chinese navy has a growing presence in the Indian Ocean.

 • Six Scorpene class submarines are being built under Project 75 by the Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDSL), Mumbai, under a $3.75 billion technology transfer signed in October 2005 with the Naval Group of France. Therefore the ships are being built in collaboration with the French shipbuilding major Naval Group formerly known as DCNS.

• The programme has been delayed by four years due to construction delays.

 • The Scorpene class is the Navy's first modern conventional submarine series in almost two decades, since INS Sindhushastra was procured from Russia in July 2000.

• All the submarines are due to be inducted gradually into the Indian Navy by 2020.

Features of INS Karanj

• INS Karanj includes superior stealth and ability to launch crippling attacks with precision-guided weapons.

• These stealth features give it an invulnerability, unmatched by most submarines.

• The attacks can be carried out with torpedoes while submerged or on the surface -- in all war theatres including the tropics, giving it an unmatched invulnerability.

• The submarine has an overall length of 67.5 metre and a height of about 12.3 metres. The hull form, fin and hydroplanes are specifically designed to produce minimum underwater resistance.

• For self-defence, it has mobile anti-torpedo decoys.

• It will undergo rigorous tests for the next one year before it is commissioned.

Khelo India School Games Launched by Modi

• Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the first Khelo India School Games (KISG) at the Indira Gandhi Stadium in New Delhi.

• The Khelo India School Games (KISG) are being held from 31st January to 8th February 2018 in New Delhi.

 • This week-long inaugural edition will be an Under-17 event where athletes have been invited to participate across 16 disciplines: Archery, Athletics, Badminton, Basketball, Boxing, Football, Gymnastics, Hockey, Judo, Kabaddi, Kho-Kho, Shooting, Swimming, Volleyball, Weightlifting, and Wrestling.

• 199 gold medals, 199 silver medals and 275 bronze medals are at stake in the Khelo India School Games (KISG).

• The ceremony showcased the rich 'Guru-Shishya' tradition of the country in grand style.

• The Khelo India programme has been introduced to revive the sports culture in the country at the grassroot level by building a strong framework for all sports played in our country and establishing India as a great sporting nation.

• Its basic aim is to encourage young talent from the schools in various disciplines and groom them as future champions

• According to Mr. Modi, it was the first step towards making the country a strong contender at the Olympic level.

• While addressing the crowd he urged the youth to take up to sports actively as it is an important tool for the development of the nation.

• He mentioned that the event will highlight the country's sporting talent and its potential to the world.
• He said that Khelo India was not only about winning medals. It is an effort to give strength to a mass movement for playing more. It would help in making sports more popular across the nation.

• It was announced that the best 1000 athletes will get a scholarship of Rs 5 lakh every year. The identified talented players in these Games will be provided an annual financial assistance of Rs 5 lakh per annum for a period of eight long years.

India and World Bank Sign $100 Million Project to Boost Economy of TN.

• The government and the World Bank signed a $100 million loan agreement to support producer organisations and enterprises, especially women entrepreneurs in Tamil Nadu.

• This would promote rural enterprises, facilitate their access to finance, and create employment opportunities for youth, particularly women, in selected blocks of Tamil Nadu across 26 districts, directly benefitting over 400,000 people.

Highlights

• The Tamil Nadu Rural Transformation Project will create an enabling environment for producer organisations and enterprises to promote businesses across the select value chains.

• Based on the analysis, communities will identify commodities and subsectors in the value chain for preparing business plans.

• 30 percent of the financing for these business plans will be through a matching grant programme from the project and the remaining 70 percent will be leveraged from other financial institutions.

- It will effectively support eligible households from socially and culturally disadvantaged groups which harness their existing assets, skills, and resources and which break their entry barriers to value-added economic activities.

- It would also help in enhancing their ability to access finance, markets, technology, and related support services.

- Not only this, it would help them graduate to value-added economic activities with higher returns such as garment manufacturing and food processing units, eco-tourism ventures, and businesses around creative industries.

Implementation of the project

- The Project will be operational in 120 blocks across 3,994 villages in 26 Districts of Tamil Nadu with 411,620 direct beneficiaries. It will work with targeted households that are already part of Self-Help Groups (SHGs).

- The project will be rolled out in a phased manner – 26 blocks will be taken up for implementation in all project districts in the first eight months, followed by 52 blocks by the end of 12 months, and the remaining 42 blocks by the end of 18 months from initiation of project implementation.

- A new platform has been developed known as the Tamil Nadu Rural Transformation Marketplace under which selected innovations and start-up ideas will be tested or scaled up.

Government e-Marketplace 3.0 launched

- The Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Government of India has launched the advanced version of the GeM - the Government e Marketplace portal.

- GeM (Government e Marketplace) 3.0, is an upgraded version of the National Procurement Portal of India.

- GeM 3.0 has undergone a digital transformation with some superior technologies. This would provide a common platform to bring together many sellers and service providers for products and services across the country.

- The earlier version GeM 2.0 was launched a pilot project in August 2016 by all the central government ministries and departments for online purchases of goods and services. Till now, 72,941 sellers and service providers have registered with the portal to sell 4,54,853 products and services.

Objective

The GeM 3.0 has been launched to keep pace with ever-evolving technological challenges and stakeholder aspirations. It would offer facilities like standardized and enriched catalogue management, powerful search engine, demand aggregation, user rating and analytics.

Enhancements in the GeM 3.0

- Market-Based generic requirements across all government agencies.

- Completely transparent transactions across all ranges

- Generic standards established through universal service levels and cost comparison enabled

- Standardization of specifications of both products and services enabling empirical price comparability
- Open and dynamic marketplace with rating based on performance of user on website

Features

- It has a powerful search engine

- It offers facilities like price comparison using third-party sites (multisource and real-time)

- e-Earnest Money Deposit(e-EMD) and e-Performance Bank Guarantee (e-PBG)

- It has a performance-based user rating and an optional OVA (Online Vendor Assessment)

- It has market-based bundling and bunching of products and services.

- It also supports multi-cart functionality and offers more facilities with Bid and RA Facility.

What is GeM?

- GeM is an Online Market platform to facilitate procurement of goods and services by various Ministries and agencies of the Government.

- It has been envisaged as National Procurement Portal of India.

- It functions under Directorate General of Supplies and Disposals (DGS&D), Ministry of Commerce and Industries.

- The basic aim is to enhance transparency, efficiency and speed in public procurement of goods and services and to eliminate corruption.

- It is completely paperless, cashless and system driven e-marketplace that enables procurement of common use goods and services with the minimal human interface. Outstanding Parliamentarian Awards to 5 MPs The Indian Parliamentary Group (IPG) has announced to confer Outstanding Parliamentarians Awards to 5 Members of Parliament. The Outstanding Parliamentarian Award was established in 1995 by Shivraj Patil who was then the Speaker of Lok Sabha. So far 18 eminent MPs have received the award. The Indian Parliamentary Group selects an outstanding sitting Member of Parliament after considering his/her overall contribution to Parliament. Details of the Award S.No. Year Name Details 1. 2013 Dr. Najma Heptulla Manipur Governor

2. 2014 Hukumdev Narayan Yadav BJP's Lok Sabha MP 3. 2015 Ghulam Nabi Azad Leader of opposition in Rajya Sabha 4. 2016 Dinesh Trivedi TMC's Lok Sabha MP 5. 2017 Bhartruhari Mahatab BJD's Lok Sabha MP

S.No.	Year	Name	Details
1.	2013	Dr. Najma Heptulla	Manipur Governor
2.	2014	Hukumdev Narayan Yadav	BJP's Lok Sabha MP
3.	2015	Ghulam Nabi Azad	Leader of opposition in Rajya Sabha
4.	2016	Dinesh Trivedi	TMC's Lok Sabha MP
5.	2017	Bhartruhari Mahatab	BJD's Lok Sabha MP

About the Outstanding Parliamentarian Award

The Outstanding Parliamentarian Award is an award given by the Indian Parliamentary Group to an outstanding sitting Member of the Indian Parliament for overall contribution in the Indian Parliament. It was instituted in 1992 by Shivraj Patil, who was the Speaker of Lok Sabha from 1991 to 1996.

About the Indian Parliamentary Group (IPG)

IPG is a 24-member autonomous body of the current and former MPs of both houses headed by the speaker. It was founded in 1949, following a Motion adopted by the Constituent Assembly on 16 August 1948. Its membership of which is open to all current or former members of the Indian Parliament. It awards the Outstanding Parliamentarian Award. It acts as a link between the Indian Parliament and its foreign counterparts

Himachal Pradesh launches Zero Budget Natural Farming project

• The Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF) project has been launched by the Himachal Pradesh government to promoteIt was officially launched on 29th January 2018 by the Governor of Himachal Pradesh, Mr Acharya Devrat in presence of the Chief Minister of HP, Jai Ram Thakur.

• The project was launched from the Palampur Agriculture University, which has dedicated 25-acre land to practice the zero budget farming model.

• The Chief Minister of Himachal Pradesh laude Sikkim for adopting organic farming and said that Sikkim should be taken as an example to adapt to organic farming methods and to use manures instead of insecticides and pesticides.

• He mentioned in his speech that the state needs to follow Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision to increase agriculture production and the income of farmers by the year 2022.

Aim of the project

The project aims to promote organic farming in the state and to increase agriculture production and the income of farmers by the year 2022. According to the state authority using pesticides and insecticides will be reduced under this project and more natural manure will be used.

Implementation

There will be a committee under the state authority. The committee members will make various policies for agricultural produce. Latest research and development will be considered while making policies.

What is Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF)?

• ZBNF is set of natural farming methods where cost of growing and harvesting plants is zero.

• It is a farming practice that believes in natural growth of crops without adding any fertilizers and pesticides or any other foreign elements. It is different from organic farming.

• The word "Zero Budget" refers to zero net cost of production of all crops. This means that farmers need not purchase fertilizers and pesticides in order to ensure the healthy growth of crops.

• The inputs used for seed treatments are locally available in form of cow dung and cow urine.

• It includes the use of 'Jeevamrutha' and 'Beejamrutha' and requires almost no monetary investment.

• The main aim of ZBNF is eliminate use of chemical pesticides and uses biological pesticides and promote of good agronomic practices.

• Farmers use earthworms, cow dung, urine, plants, human excreta and such biological fertilizers for crop protection. It lowers cost of inputs of farmers and gives better capacity to increase the incomes. It also protects soil degradation and helps in retaining soil fertility and is resilient to climate change. organic farming.

List of Wealthiest Countries: India ranks 6th

• According to a report by New World Wealth, India has been ranked sixth in the list of wealthiest countries with total wealth of USD 8,230 billion.

• The list has been topped by the United States which emerged as the wealthiest country in the world as the total wealth held in 2017 amounted to USD 64,584 billion, followed by China at the second place with USD 24,803 billion and Japan with USD 19,522 billion at third.

• Total wealth refers to the private wealth held by all the individuals living in each nation. It includes all their assets (business interests, cash, equities, property) less any liabilities.

• The report, however, excludes government funds from its figures.

• According to the report, India was the best-performing wealth market globally in 2017 as its total wealth swelled from 6,584 billion dollars in 2016 to 8,230 billion dollars in 2017, registering a 25% growth.

• Over the past decade (2007-2017) India's total wealth increased from USD 3,165 billion in 2007 to USD 8,230 billion in 2017, thus showing a jump of 160 percent.

• The report further noted that India is home to 3,30,400 HNWIs (individuals with USD 1 million or more in net assets).

Top ten countries on the list

• The United States of America ($64,584 billion)

• China ($24,803 billion)

• Japan ($19,522 billion)

• United Kingdom ($9,919 billion)

• Germany ($9,660 billion)

• India ($8,230 billion)

• France ($6,649 billion

• Canada ($6,393 billion)

• Australia (U$6,142 billion)

• Italy ($4,276 billion)

Government Signs $250 Million Loan Agreement with ADB

• The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Indian Government have signed a 250 million dollar loan to finance the construction of over 6 thousand 2 hundred kilometres all-weather rural roads in 5 states of India.

• These 5 states include Assam, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and West Bengal.

• This move has been taken under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY).

• The Joint Secretary in the Department of Economic Affairs in the Government's Ministry of Finance, Mr Sameer Kumar signed the loan agreement on behalf of Government of India.

Aim of the programme

The basic objective of the programme is to improve rural connectivity, to facilitate safer and a more effective access to livelihood, to provide socio-economic opportunities for rural communities by improving about 12,000 km rural roads across these five states.

Other Facts

• The First Tranche Loan is part of the $500 million Second Rural Connectivity Investment Program for India which was approved by the ADB Board in December 2017.

• The ADB-funded investment program will provide continued assistance to the PMGSY and support the Government's long-term goal for rural development.

• The programme is likely to have a transformative impact in terms of rural economy and would also bring in greater efficiency in terms of access and connectivity for the rural people in the five States.

• Under the project, about 2,000 technical personnel would be imparted training on road safety and maintenance.

• It will support the Government's drive for innovative approaches to reduce costs, conserve nonrenewable natural resources, and promote the use of waste materials in rural road construction.

• As far as the climatic conditions are concerned, the road designs will take into account these climate risks with measures such as greater elevation of road embankments, slope protection, and better drainage in flood-prone areas.

• Women were extensively consulted during the project design and will gain some key benefits, including improved access to healthcare, livelihoods, and schooling.

VINBAX- 1st Military Exercise between India and Vietnam

• For the first time, the armies of India and Vietnam began the six days long military exercise on 29th January 2018 in Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh.

• The exercise 'VINBAX' reflects the growing defence ties between the two countries.

• VINBAX is a six-day-long military exercise which will be held from January 29 to February 3, 2018.

• India and Vietnam have been exploring ways to strengthen defence cooperation. The Prime Minister of Vietnam Nguyen Xuan Phuc was here in India to participate in the Indian-ASEAN Commemorative Summit and was present in the Republic Day celebrations as well.

• The issue of defence and security cooperation figured prominently during the bilateral talks Prime Minister Narendra Modi had with his Vietnamese counterpart.

Background

• Defence ties between India and Vietnam were always on the go with the primary focus being cooperation in the maritime domain.

• India and Vietnam had signed a protocol on defence cooperation in 1994. The partnership was thereafter elevated to the strategic level in 2007 and later on a pact on boosting bilateral defence cooperation was signed in 2009.

• The strategic partnership was elevated to a comprehensive strategic partnership in September 2016.

Key facts

• VINBAX-2018 was Table Top Exercise to carry out training for Peace Keeping Operations under United Nations (UN) mandate.

• It was jointly undertaken between 15 officers each from Indian Army and Vietnam People's Army.

• The joint exercise was specially designed to enable and train officers from Vietnam in United Nations Peace Keeping Operations.

• VINBAX involves mutual interaction and sharing of experiences amongst both armies.

• It would also further strengthen the cultural and historical ties between both the nations and would take the bilateral relations forward to greater heights.

List of other recent military exercises

S.No. Exercise Participating Countries 1. VINBAX India & Vietnam 2. Vajra Prahar India &USA 3. Ekuverin VII India & Maldives 4. Imbax I India & Myanmar 5. Sampriti VII India & Bangladesh 6. Indra India & Russia 7. Mitra Shakti India & Sri Lanka

New e-way Bill System Comes into Force for Smooth Movement of Inter-State Goods

• A new e-way bill system has come into effect from 1st February 2018.

• Under this new e-way bill system, every transporter will have to carry a system generated bill to move goods from on place to another.

• The Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council had earlier deferred the roll-out of the e-way bill in its last meeting on 6th October 2017 due to some concerns related to the functioning of the GST Network portal.

• But, in the last GST Council meet, it was decided that the bill system would be rolled out and would become mandatory from February 1.

• The e-way bill for intra-state movement of goods will be implemented only from an uniform launch date across all states which most probably would be 1st June 2018.

Purpose of introducing e-way Bill system

• The system was introduced in order to bring in seamless inter-state movement of goods across all the states.

• E-way bill is a mechanism to ensure that goods being transported comply with the GST Law and is an effective tool to track the movement of goods and check tax evasion.

What is an e-way bill?

E-way bill is an electronic document generated on the GST portal for the movement of goods. Every registered person who causes movement of goods of consignment value more than Rs 50000 is required to furnish the details of GSTIN of recipient, place of delivery, invoice or challan number and date, value of goods, HSN code, transport document number and reasons for transportation and transporter details. E-way bill can be generated by the consignor or consignee himself if the transportation is being done in own/hired conveyance or by railways by air or by Vessel. If the goods are handed over to a transporter for transportation by road, the bill will be generated by the transporter.

Its Features

• The e-way bill system has been introduced to bring uniformity across the states for seamless inter-state movement of goods.

• Under the Goods and Services Tax, interstate transportation of goods beyond 10 kilometres with a value of 50,000 rupees and above, will mandatorily require the e-way bill.

• These bills can be generated from the GSTN portal.

• The e-way bill system is equipped to handle around 50 lakh e-way bills per day, taking into account an estimate of 10 lakh interstate bills and 35-40 intrastate bills per day.

• The software has been developed by the NIC or National Informatics Centre. Therefore while, the GSTN owns the software, it will be run and operated by the NIC.

No e-way bill is required to be generated in the cases where goods being transported by a nonmotorised conveyance, goods being transported from the port, airport, air cargo complex and land customs station to an inland container depot or a container freight station for clearance by Customs and when Consignment value is less than Rs 50,000 among others.

• The validity of e-way bill depends on the distance to be travelled by the goods. For a distance of less than 100 Km the e-way bill will be valid for a day from the relevant date or the date of issuance. For every 100 Km thereafter, the validity will be additional one day from the relevant date.

• Although the validity of the e-way bill cannot be extended, a Commissioner may extend it by way of issue of notification for certain categories of goods. If the goods cannot be transported within the validity of the bill, the transported may generate another bill after updating the details again.

Shesh Anand Madhukar Honoured with Sahitya Akademi Bhasha Samman Award

• Magahi writer Shesh Anand Madhukar was honoured with Sahitya Akademi Bhasha Samman Award 2018 who has been working extensively for the development of the language.

• He is second writer of Magahi language to be given this award.

• Madhurkar was conferred the award by Sahitya Akademi President Vishwanath Prasad Tiwari.

• The Award comprised a Rs 1 lakh cheque and a memento.

About Shesh Anand Madhukar

• Madhukar has been working extensively for the development of the Magahi language.

• He started his career as a lecturer in Hindi at the BSK College, Methan in 1966 and eventually became a reader and professor at the Saint Columba College, Hazaribagh.

• He entered the field of literature in 1960 and since then he has immensely contributed in the enrichment of the language.

• His poems have been published in leading literary magazines.

• Some of his important works in Hindi are "Magahi Kavita Ke Bimb", "Eklavya", and "Bhagwan Birsa".

• His books have been included in the graduate and post-graduate syllabus of Vinoba Bhave University, Hazaribagh.

About Magahi language

Magahi language also known as Magadhi is language spoken in Bihar-Jharkhand region of eastern India. It has been derived from ancient language Magadhi Prakrit, which was spoken in ancient kingdom of Magadha. It is believed to be the language spoken by Gautama Buddha. It was official language of the Mauryan court, in which edicts of Ashoka were composed.

Bhasha Samman

It identifies and honours literary works in those languages which are equally spoken in different parts of country by are not among 24 regional languages recognised for Sahitya Akademi Awards. The Bhasha Samman Award is an attempt to acknowledge the writers of other languages so that they could feel equally important.

World Cancer Day- 4 February 2018

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

• World Cancer Day was founded by the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC) to support the goals of the World Cancer Declaration, written in 2008.

• The primary goal of the World Cancer Day is to significantly reduce illness and death caused by cancer by 2020.

• World Cancer Day targets misinformation, raises awareness, and reduces stigma.

• Multiple initiatives run on World Cancer Day to show support for those affected by cancer.

• For 2016 to 2018, the theme for observing World Cancer Day is 'We Can. I can.'

• Under this theme, people are expected to, individually and collectively, understand and work towards lessening the impact and harmful effects of the condition globally.

• The Empire State building in United States will be lit blue and orange, after the colours of the UICC — the eighth year in a row.

• The theme will mobilise people to work towards generating more discussions on and about cancer and for making it an issue of highest concern in terms of political discussions as well.

• On our part, individuals can lessen the risk of getting diagnosed with cancer by avoiding tobacco, alcohol consumption and maintaining a generally healthy lifestyle, including a healthy diet and proper physical activity.

• It is important to get regular medical check-ups done and to be aware and spread word about the symptoms that could indicate a cancer scare.

• Further, people can render emotional support to the ones battling cancer by sharing their own stories of surviving the life-threatening condition.

Advantage Assam Global Investors Summit 2018 Inaugurated

• The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, addressed the inaugural session of Advantage Assam - Global Investors Summit 2018, in Guwahati on the 3rd of February.

• The two-day event, showcases the state's manufacturing opportunities and geostrategic advantages to foreign and domestic investors.

• The Summit has been organised by the Assam Government, in association with the industry body the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), aiming to position the state as India's Expressway to Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries.

• There are a number of focus sectors, identified by the state, which includes agriculture and food processing, organic farming, bamboo, handloom, textile and handicrafts, inland water transport, riverfront development and logistics.

• The Prime Minister said that the North-East is at the heart of the Union Government's Act East Policy. The Act East Policy envisions increased people to people contact, trade ties and other relations with ASEAN countries.

• The Prime Minister recalled the recent ASEAN India Commemorative Summit celebrating 25 years of partnership between ASEAN and India. He added that ties between India and the ASEAN countries go back thousands of years. He said it was a privilege for India to host Heads of 10 ASEAN countries as honoured guests at the Republic Day function in New Delhi.

• The Prime Minister emphasized that India's growth story would be further energised through balanced and fast-paced growth of the North-Eastern region. He said all the schemes of the Union Government are oriented towards bringing about a qualitative change in the lives of the people. He said the aim is to improve "Ease of Living."

• The Prime Minister said that the "Ayushman Bharat" scheme announced in the Union Budget is the largest scheme of its kind in the world. He said this healthcare scheme would benefit about 45 to 50 crore people. He also mentioned other steps for healthcare for the poor that have been taken by the Union Government.

• Shri Narendra Modi said that the Union Government is working towards the target of doubling farmers' incomes, by lowering input costs and enabling appropriate price for their produce. He outlined other steps being taken by the Union Government for the welfare of farmers.

• The Prime Minister mentioned the steps taken to provide affordable housing to people. He spoke of the Ujala Yojana for distribution of LED bulbs, which is resulting in significant savings on household electricity bills. He mentioned the restructuring of the National Bamboo Mission, which he said, is especially significant for the North-East.

• The Prime Minister spoke of steps taken for providing collateral free loans to entrepreneurs, under the Mudra Yojana. He spoke of steps taken in the Union Budget to provide tax relief to MSMEs.

• The Prime Minister reiterated the commitment of the Union Government to curb corruption and black money. He said the Union Government has taken up many path breaking economic reforms in last three years, which have simplified procedures for doing business. It is a result of these reforms that India today ranks 100 among 190 countries in the Doing Business Report of the World Bank, after climbing up 42 ranks.

• Quoting the great Assamese musician Bhupen Hazarika, the Prime Minister said it is our collective responsibility to achieve the vision and dreams of our freedom fighters, and create a New India by 2022.
• The Prime Minister outlined the work done to create new transportation infrastructure in the North-East.

• He congratulated the Chief Minister of Assam, Shri Sarbananda Sonowal for creating a business friendly and development friendly environment in Assam.

‘Exam Warriors’ Authored by PM Narendra Modi Released

• A book authored by Prime Minister Narendra Modi for students facing exams pressure was launched on 3rd of February by HRD Minister Prakash Javadekar and External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj in New Delhi.

• The book, titled ‘Exam Warriors’, aims to get through to students across the country on the threshold of examinations, and hopes to help them thread the needle with ease.

• The PM often addresses the concerns of students on his radio show ‘Mann ki Baat’. He also holds a special student-centric show before the board exams. The idea for the book stemmed from there, as the PM decided to make a compilation of his thoughts on the matter, coupled with his thoughts on the subject as well as relatable anecdotes.

• The book will be translated in multiple languages and will be made available across the country. The book is 208 pages thick and is being published by Penguin Randon House India.

• In the book, the PM has penned down almost 25 mantras for students as well as their parents and teachers on how to tackle exams without stress and anxiety.

• The book highlights issues of importance to students such as coping with exam related stress, keeping calm during exams as well as what to do after the exams get over, a statement by the publishing house reads.

• As the book has been written keeping young audiences in mind, it reads in an informal and conversational manner. It has also addressed issues such as prioritizing knowledge over marks and how to grapple with becoming responsible for the future

• The cover of the book was released a few days ago. It shows PM Modi waving a flag with the colours of the national flag while a bunch of children and a pet play in the foreground.

• The last 40 pages of the book puts together several asanas of yoga, and asked students to practice them to overcome stress and be fit.

• PM Modi is scheduled to interact with school and college students where he is likely to address examrelated concerns.

• Addressing 3,500 students in the national capital's Talkatora Stadium, the PM, on February 16, will answer pre-recorded questions for which a website will soon be launched.

India Clinched under-19 Cricket World Cup 2018

• India thump Australia by 8 wickets to be crowned Under-19 World Cup Champions.

• Manjot Kalra's superlative, unbeaten century helped India cruise to their fourth Under-19 World Cup title victory, after the bowlers put on an impressive show in the final against Australia at the Bay Oval in Mount Manunganui, New Zealand on 3rd of February.

• Manjot Kalra was adjudged Man of the Match in the final for his unbeaten 101.

• Shubman Gill deservedly was the Player of the Tournament for his 372 run tally at a bradmanesque average of 124.

• Captained by Prithvi Shaw, India remained unbeaten in the tournament and their class showed in the margin of victories.

• Rahul Dravid too laid hands on his first World Cup, however not as a player but as a coach.

• Shubman Gill finished as the highest rungetter while Anukul Roy was the joint hghest wicket taker in the tournament.

• ICC announced the team of the tournament which was thoroughly dominated by the Indian youngsters.

• India's top three - Prithvi Shaw, Manjot Kalra and Shubman Gill - who outperformed their opponents neck and crop, with the bat, got their due attention, as they sealed slots 1, 2 & 3 in the playing eleven chart.

• Slow left arm, Anukul Roy and tearaway pacer Kamlesh Nagarkoti also found a place in the ICC 11.

• This is India's 4th title win in the under 19 World Cup (the most by any nation) with the other wins coming in 2000, 2008 and 2012.

7th India Energy Congress held in New Delhi

• The 7th edition of India Energy Congress (IEC), the annual flagship event of WEC India and the joint event of Ministries of Power, Coal, New & Renewable Energy, Petroleum & Natural Gas, External Affairs and Department of Atomic Energy was held on February 1st-2nd 2018 in New Delhi.

• The theme for this edition of conference was Energy 4.0: Energy Transition towards 2030.

• It was organised by World Energy Council India (WEC India) and inaugurated by Union Power and New and Renewable Energy Minister R K Singh.

• The WEC India functions under the power ministry. Secretary (Power) is the chairman of the WEC India. NTPC Chairman Gurdeep Singh is the member secretary of the WEC India.

• The 7th India Energy Congress will also deliberate upon how these are driving energy transition in various parts of the world.

• Over 400 experts are expected to brainstorm on energy transition across the globe in view of technology and digital disruptions.

Sub-Themes of the conference are:

• Political and Energy Environment 2030

• Energy Investments in an uncertain world

• Sustainable Mobility

• Variable Renewable Energy Sources Integration

• Reaching the last mile

About IEC

India Energy Congress is the flagship event of World Energy Council India. It is basically an apex congregation of energy professionals from across the sector. At each edition of the congress professionals across the sector from within the country and across the globe come together to

deliberate on issues highly relevant to the sector. Delegates gain immensely from the comprehensive discussions held.

India's first MSE Sentiment Index Launched

• The Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs, Shri Arun Jaitley launched CriSidEx, India's first sentiment index for micro and small enterprises (MSEs). It is developed jointly by CRISIL & SIDBI.

• Highlighting the significant role played by the MSME sector in the creation of jobs, Arun Jaitley mentioned that the MSME sector is the backbone of the Indian economy.

• He said that the economy is witnessing a phase of consolidation after a series of structural reforms over the last two years.

• The MSME sector is one of the largest employer in India and with the number of steps taken by the government in the past 2 years, there is an increased integration of MSME sector into the formal economy.

• He said that this is one sector where people not only exhibit their entrepreneurial skills, become part of large value chains but also become job creators in the process. And that is the reason why a bulk of the jobs in manufacturing, trading have been created in this particular sector.

What is CriSidEx?

• CriSidEx is a composite index based on a diffusion index of 8 parameters and measures MSE business sentiment on a scale of 0 (extremely negative) to 200 (extremely positive).

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

• The first report based on the index was launched on today. It captured qualitative responses of 1,100 MSEs, out of which 550 were manufacturing units and the other 550 services units.

• Once a trend emerges after few rounds of the survey, CriSidEx will have 2 indices, one for the 'survey quarter' and another for the 'next quarter'.

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

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

• Between manufacturing and services, the sentiment was more positive in manufacturing, with more than half of the MSEs expecting faster growth in orders and improved capacity utilisation in January-March compared with less than a third in October-December.

First International Kala Mela inaugurated in New Delhi

• The First ever International Kala Mela was inaugurated by the Vice President of India, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu in New Delhi on 4th February 2018.

• The venue for this International Kala Mela is the premises of Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, Janpath, New Delhi.

• The International Kala Mela has been organised by the Lalit Kala Akademi in partnership with IGNCA of the Ministry of Culture.

• The eminent dignitaries present at the occasion were the Minister of State for Culture (I/C) and Environment, Forest & Climate Change, Dr Mahesh Sharma, the Administrator of Lalit Kala Akademi, Shri C.S. Krishna Setty etc.

Highlights of the Mela

• The Kala Mela will remain open for public from 4th to 18th February 2018 between 12 noon and 7.30 p.m. daily.

• More than 800 artists from across the world are taking part in the Festival.

• The First International Kala Mela provides an open forum to all the creative artists of the country and abroad.

• The basic objective behind this Mela is to promote Art and Culture, wherein artists and groups can showcase their artworks.

• Some of the countries taking part in the Mela are China, Venezuela, Peru, Portugal, Srilanka, Poland, Tunisia, Mexico, Bangladesh, Trinidad, Tobago, Fiji, France, Papua New Guinea, Czechia, UK, Spain and Brazil.

• There are around 325 stalls for Indian artists and organisations including International representations.

• The inauguration was followed by folk dance performed by various dance groups.

• This is for the first time that the Akademi has planned the International Kala Mela at such a large scale.

• It is going to prove a boon to especially those artists who cannot afford to exhibit their works of art in the Art Galleries.

About Lalit Kala Akademi

• Lalit Kala Akademi, National Academy of Art, New Delhi was set up by the Government of India as an autonomous body, on 5th August 1954.

• The Akademi was given statutory authority in 1957, under the Societies Registration Act 1860.

• Since its establishment it has been serving the entire country by promoting the creative endeavours of Indian artists and bringing their arts to bear upon a large number of people, thereby playing an important role in defining and redefining, the sensibility of an entire culture, falling under the visual arts spectrum.

"Green Good Deeds" Campaign Launched by Environment Ministry

• The "Green Good Deeds" campaign is launched by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

• The Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Dr Harsh Vardhan appealed to the teaching community to join the "Green Good Deeds" campaign.

Highlights

• He stated people in Delhi are facing problems due to air pollution and therefore people should join this campaign to sensitise others about climate change and global warming.

• Dr. Harsh Vardhan said that it is not impossible to restore our clean and green environment.

• He further stated that is not merely a technical issue, but a moral responsibility 'to restore and return the clean and green environment to the next generation.

• With this objective in mind, the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change has launched a people-oriented campaign named "Green Good Deeds."

• In his speech, he reminded the teachers of their "Green Social Responsibility" (GSR), similar to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

• Referring to the crucial role played by "Polio Sainiks" from municipal corporation schools in the Pulse Polio campaign, he highlighted the need for "Green Sainiks" to broad-base the Green Good Deeds movement and to take it down to the grassroots level successfully.

• He mentioned that the plan is to broad-base it with the involvement of teachers, students and other voluntary organisations.

• Even a mobile application named 'Dr Harsh Vardhan' has been devised and launched recently to reach out to people across India on the campaign.

• Referring to the budgetary allocation, Dr. Vardhan thanked the Prime Minister for his pragmatic vision for allocation of funds in the General Budget 2018.

• He announced that the Department of Science & Technology will launch a Mission on Cyber-Physical Systems to support the establishment of centres of excellence in areas of robotics, artificial intelligence,

digital manufacturing, big data analysis, quantum communication and internet of things. "India does not lag behind any country in the world in science & technology.

Sri Lanka Celebrated 70th Independence Day

• Sri Lanka celebrated its 70th anniversary of Independence Day on 4th February 2018. The event witnessed grand military parades and attendance of political celebrities.

• Sri Lanka tri forces held a colourful grand parade along the Galle Road, close to the Colombo Harbour to celebrate its 70th anniversary of independence from the British colonial rule in 1948.

• The event was held under the patronage of the President Maithripala Sirisena, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe and Prince Edward, Earl of Wessex and the Countess of Wessex who participated representing Queen Elizabeth II.

• Over 500 prisoners were released under a Presidential Pardon from prisons across Sri Lanka on Sunday in order to mark the 70th anniversary celebrations of the country's Independence Day.

• Around 544 prisoners serving jail terms for minor offences were released under the pardon based on their behaviour during the detention period.

About Sri Lanka's Independence Day

• Sri Lanka's Independence Day is celebrated on 4th of February to commemorate its internal political independence from British rule on that day in 1948.

• This day is a national holiday in Sri Lanka. It is celebrated all over the country through flag-hoisting ceremony, dances, parades and performances.

• The main celebration takes place in Colombo, where the President raises the national flag and delivers a nationally televised speech.

• In the President's speech, he highlights the achievements of the government during the past year, raises important issues and gives a call for further development.

• Traditionally the Sri Lanka Navy accords a 25 gun salute to the nation from the ceremonial naval gun battery at the Colombo Lighthouse.

Mahmud Hossain appointed new Chief Justice of Bangladesh

• Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain, the second senior-most judge of the Appellate Division, has been appointed as the new chief justice of Bangladesh.

• Justice Hossain was sworn in as the 22nd Chief Justice of Bangladesh at Bangabhaban in Dhaka.

• President Abdul Hamid administered the oath of office to Syed Mahmud Hossain.

• Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina along with her cabinet colleagues and Supreme Court judges witnessed the swearing-in ceremony at the presidential palace.

• The post of the chief justice fell vacant when Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha resigned on November 10 last year.

• Justice Miah had been performing as the acting chief justice since October 3 after Justice Sinha went abroad on leave.

About Syed Mahmud Hossain

Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain was born in 1954 in Bangladesh. Later on, he obtained BSc and LLB degrees and completed the six-month long "Commonwealth Young Lawyers" course at the School of Oriental African Studies and the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies of London University. He was enrolled as advocate of the District Court and the High Court Division of Supreme Court in 1981 and 1983, respectively. Hossain also acted as deputy attorney general from December 1999 until he was elevated to the bench. He became the additional judge of the High Court Division in February 2001 and the judge of the division in February 2003. In February 2011, he was elevated to the Supreme Court's Appellate Division. He has also participated in various international seminars and symposiums in Malaysia, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, India, South Korea and Hong Kong.

Agni I Missile Test Fired Successfully

•India successfully test-fired nuclear capable surface-to-surface short-range ballistic missile (SRBM) Agni-I from a defence test facility off Odisha coast for an extended range.

• The missile was launched from a road-mobile launcher placed at the launching complex-IV located in Abdul Kalam Island.

• Two weeks earlier, longest range Inter-Continental Range Ballistic Missile (ICBM) Agni-V was tested from the same test facility.

• The test for Agni I was conducted by the Strategic Forces Command (SFC) of Indian Army with logistic support from the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) for a range of about 900 km.

• The last trial of the missile was successfully conducted on November 22, 2016, from the same base.

Features of Agni I

• The missile was inducted into service in 2004 and it was the 18th version of Agni-I.

• Agni I is a surface-to-surface, single stage missile which is powered by solid propellants.

• The missile is 15-metre-long Agni-I, weighs 12 tonnes and can carry payloads up to 1,000 kg.

• It was launched as part of a regular training exercise by the armed forces.

• It is an indigenously developed short-range nuclear-capable ballistic missile with a strike range of over 700 km.

• The missile has a specialised navigation system, which ensures it reaches the target with a high degree of accuracy and precision.

• It has proved its excellent performance in terms of range and accuracy.

• The missile is also capable of carrying nuclear warheads.

About Agni I

• Agni-I is a short-range ballistic missile developed by DRDO of India under the Integrated Guided Missile Development Program.

• It is a single-stage missile which was developed after the Kargil War in order to get a better missile as compared to the 250 km range Prithvi-II and 2,500 km range Agni-II missiles.

• The Agni-I was developed by the Advanced Systems Laboratory or ASL (a premier missile development laboratory of the DRDO) in collaboration with the Defence Research Development Laboratory (DRDL) and the Research Centre Imarat (RCI). The missile was integrated by the Bharat Dynamics Limited, Hyderabad.

Sourav Ganguly's autobiography "A century is not Enough" : first look unveiled

• India most famous captain Sourav Ganguly unveiled the first look of his autobiography titled "A Century is Not Enough". The book will be released by the end of February 2018.

• The book will be co-authored by Gautam Bhattacharya and published by Juggernaut Books.

• Ganguly is one of Indian cricket's most prominent, outspoken, and controversial figures.

• The contents of the book shall draw from all the highs Ganguly enjoyed in his career as well as the lows.

• The preview of the book details the days before and during Ganguly's farewell series.

• He explains how he decided to quit after he felt that selectors were constantly putting him on trial for his place in the team.

• Ganguly was dropped from the Rest of India squad for 2008 Irani Trophy by national selectors.

• In his book he has mentioned about how guru-turned-foe Greg Chappell 'didn't exist' for him, about former captain Anil Kumble's strong support, and how he felt belittled by selectors' decision to keep testing him in matches despite scoring thousands of runs.

• Ganguly recalled the troubled days of Durga Puja in 2008 and how he had to make the toughest call of his career.

Maharashtra to become the first state to have Transgender Welfare Board

• Maharashtra will be the first such State to have Transgender Welfare Board. The Transgender Welfare Board was first conceptualised in 2014 by the previous government.

• Maharashtra government has made a provision of Rs 5 crore for welfare of the transgender community.

• The Minister of State for Social Justice Dilip Kamble announced that the Board will be set up in a month's time.

• It will look after education, employment, housing, and health schemes for transgenders and protect their Constitutional and human rights.

• The issue of setting up such a board for implementing welfare schemes for transgenders and protecting their rights was mentioned in the third women's policy of the state government, accepted by the cabinet in 2013.

• The policy promises various welfare measures for working women in the state.

• State's Women and Child Welfare Ministry was entrusted with the responsibility of setting up the board which would prepare the broad framework for implementing education, health, and housing policies as well as generating employment opportunities for transgenders.

• Since the Union Social Justice Ministry was responsible for implementing the welfare schemes for transgenders, all work related to setting up of the board and implementing welfare schemes for the community was transferred to the state Social Justice department on October 3, 2017. An amount of Rs 5 crore has been allocated for this purpose.

6 February: International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation

• The United Nations observed the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) on 6th February 2018 with the campaign #EndFGM.

• International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation is a United Nations-sponsored annual awareness day that takes place on February 6 as part of the UN's efforts to eradicate female genital mutilation.

• It was first introduced in 2003.

What is FGM?

Female genital mutilation (FGM) comprises all procedures that involve altering or injuring the female genitalia for non-medical reasons and is recognized internationally as a violation of the human rights of girls and women. It constitutes an extreme form of discrimination against women and girls. The practice also violates their rights to health, security and physical integrity, their right to be free from torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, and their right to life when the procedure results in death.

Key Facts

• UNFPA, jointly with UNICEF, leads the largest global programme to accelerate the abandonment of FGM.

• The programme currently focuses on 17 African countries and also supports regional and global initiatives.

• Globally, it is estimated that at least 200 million girls and women alive today have undergone some form of FGM.

• Girls 14 and younger represent 44 million of those who have been cut, with the highest prevalence of FGM among this age in the Gambia at 56 percent, Mauritania 54 percent and Indonesia where around half of the girls aged 11 and younger have undergone the practice.

• Countries with the highest prevalence among girls and women aged 15 to 49 are Somalia 98 percent, Guinea 97 percent and Djibouti 93 percent.

 • FGM is mostly carried out on young girls sometime between infancy and age 15.

 • FGM cause severe bleeding and health issues including cysts, infections, infertility as well as complications in childbirth increased risk of newborn deaths.

• FGM is a violation of the human rights of girls and women.

• The Sustainable Development Goals in 2015 calls for an end to FGM by 2030 under Goal 5 on Gender Equality, Target 5.3 Eliminate all harmful practices, such as the child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

• The elimination of FGM has been called for by numerous inter-governmental organizations, including the African Union, the European Union and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, as well as in three resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly.

"DASTAK" Campaign Launched by the UP Government

• Uttar Pradesh State Government, in association with United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has launched 'DASTAK' on 5th February 2018.

• It was inaugurated by the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Mr. Yogi Adityanath in Lucknow.

• 'DASTAK' is a door to door campaign to eradicate deadly Acute Encephalitis (AE) Syndrome and Japanese Encephalitis (JES) disease from the state.

• The tagline for DASTAK is "Darwaja khatkhatao, AES aur JE ko bhagao".

Highlights

• In DASTAK campaign, the state with the help of UNICEF will now literally go door to door in 38 JES and AE affected districts which mostly fall in the Tarai region of the state. This region contributes to about 60% of the total AES cases all over the country.

• For this campaign many departments of the state especially health, rural development, primary education will work together to spread awareness about the diseases through mass media communication, provide clean drinking water, initiate sanitation drive, ensure vaccination and early treatment so that disease should be nipped in the bud.

• Children of 600 schools in the affected areas will also be part of this campaign.

• Dastak is a part of the comprehensive Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) strategy embraced by the state government to beat encephalitis.

• The exercise would be undertaken in encephalitis affected districts of UP including Gorakhpur.

• Encephalitis, on an average, affects more than 4000 persons besides claiming life of over 500 each year in the state.

 • The encephalitis affects children up to 15 years of age. This campaign is an effort to protect them from this deadly disease so that these children too can play an active role in nation building.

 • A detailed programme has been prepared to combat Encephalitis. The vaccination work will be completed by March-April 2018.

• As this disease is vector borne so besides vaccination a sanitation drive will also be launched. People will be made aware to keep their surroundings clean. The educational institutions as well as NGOs will be asked to join hands.

• Mal-nourishment is another cause of spread of this disease. Therefore, pregnant women, lactating mothers and infants would be provided with nutritious food.

 • The aanganwadi workers will also be involved in this work. The school children will also be taught about this dreaded disease.

6th Bi-monthly Monetary Policy Statement released by RBI

 • The Reserve Bank of India's Monetary Policy Committee presented its last bi-monthly policy review for the current fiscal year.

• The repo rate was kept unchanged at 6 percent.

• The reverse repo rate under the LAF (liquidity adjustment facility) remains at 5.75 percent, and the marginal standing facility (MSF) rate and the bank rate at 6.25 percent.

• Earlier, there were speculations that the RBI would change its monetary policy stance from 'neutral' to 'cautious'.

• The policy is determined on the basis of global uncertainty and inflation.

• At present, there is a huge volatility triggered by rising inflation and uncertainty over the US Federal Bank rate.

• The decision of the MPC is consistent with the neutral stance of monetary policy in consonance with the objective of achieving the medium-term target for consumer price index (CPI) inflation of 4 percent within a band of +/- 2 percent while supporting growth.

• Repo Rate: 6%

• Reverse Repo Rate: 5.75%

• LAF (Liquidity Adjustment Facility): 5.75%

• MSF (Marginal Standing Facility): 6.25%

• Bank Rate: 6.25%

About Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)

The Monetary Policy Committee of India is a committee of the Reserve Bank of India that is responsible for fixing the benchmark interest rate in India. The meetings of the Monetary Policy Committee are held at least 4 times a year and it publishes its decisions after each such meeting. The committee comprises six members - three officials of the Reserve Bank of India and three external members nominated by the Government of India. The Governor of Reserve Bank of India is the chairperson ex officio of the committee. The committee was created in 2016 to bring transparency and accountability in fixing India's Monetary Policy. The committee is answerable to the Government of India if the inflation exceeds the range prescribed for three consecutive months.

DIPP Launches States' Rankings on Start-ups Initiatives

• The Minister of Commerce and industry Suresh Prabhu launched the 'States' Startup Ranking 2018' at an event organised at the Pravasi Bhartiya Kendra, New Delhi.

• The event was attended by Hon'ble Minister of State for Commerce and Industry, Shri C. R. Chaudhary, delegates from 19 States across the country, many Venture Capitalists, angel investors and Start-ups.

Aim of the initiative

The States Startup Ranking framework, launched by the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion, aims at ranking states for establishing a robust ecosystem for supporting start-ups. The framework will evaluate states on parameters such as start-up policy and implementation, incubation support, seed funding support, angel and venture funding support, simplified regulations, easing public procurement, awareness and outreach. The key objective of the Startup States Ranking framework is to encourage states to take proactive steps towards strengthening the enabling start-up ecosystems at the state level.

Highlights of the event

• A compendium of good practices for strengthening Startup ecosystem was also released by Mr Suresh Prabhu in the event.

• The handbook identifies 95 good practices implemented by Central and various State Governments.

• Mr Prabhu in his speech mentioned that the ranking framework would promote healthy competition among the states and enable them to further learn, share and adopt best practices across the seven identified key parameters.

• It would generate collaboration amongst all the stakeholders to turn the Hon'ble Prime Minister's vision to have start-ups in every district and every block a reality.

• This initiative will foster learning and healthy entrepreneurship spirit in all the states and facilitate all policy makers in formulation of policies and scheme for overall development of start-up ecosystem in the country.

• The DIPP start-up list includes Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Kerala, Rajasthan, Telangana, Karnataka, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Assam, Haryana, Punjab, Jharkhand, and Uttarakhand.

• Of these, nine states, including Delhi, Haryana, UP, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Telangana, cover over 82 per cent of the total 6,875 DIPP-recognised start-ups.

Jhulan Goswami Becomes the 1st woman in the World to take 200 Wickets in ODI

• Jhulan Goswami became the first woman cricketer in the world to take 200 wickets in ODI (One Day Internationals) during the second game vs South Africa.

• The 35-year-old achieved the feat when she took South Africa's first wicket during the second ODI of the ICC Women's Championship three-match series at the Diamond Oval in Kimberley.

• India won the 2nd ODI by a massive margin of 178 runs to take an unassailable 2-0 lead in the series.

• Goswami achieved the feat in her 166th ODI and has a career best of 6/31. She also has 40 wickets from 10 Tests and 50 wickets from Twenty20 Internationals.

• The next best Indian in the standings is Neetu David, who picked 141 wickets in a career spanning from 1995 to 2008.

• In May 2017, Goswami became the highest wicket-taker in women's ODIs, eclipsing the decade-long record held by Australian Cathryn Fitzpatrick.

About Jhulan Goswami

• Jhulan Nishit Goswami is an all-around cricketer who plays for the India national women's cricket team, Bengal Women, East Zone Women as well as the Asia Women XI women's cricket.

• She was born on 25th November 1982 in Nadia, West Bengal.

• On 1 February 2009, she was appointed to lead the team for the upcoming world cup.

• Jhulan is noted for both her batting and bowling (right arm medium) capabilities.

• She has won the ICC Women's Player of the Year 2007 and the M.A. Chidambaram trophy for Best Women Cricketer in 2011.

• In 2008, she took over the captaincy from Mithali Raj and held till 2011.

• Goswami was part of the Indian team to reach the final of the 2017 Women's Cricket World Cup where the team lost to England by nine runs.

Prithvi II Missile Successfully Launched 1

• India successfully test fired its indigenously developed nuclear capable missile Prithvi II. It was launched as part of the user trial by the Indian Army from a test range in Odisha.

• Prithvi II is a surface-to-surface missile having a strike range of about 350km.

• The launch was carried out from a mobile launcher from the launch complex-3 of the Integrated Test Range at Chandipur, Odisha.

• The missile trajectory was tracked by radars, electro-optical tracking systems and telemetry stations by the DRDO along the coast of Odisha.

Features of Prithvi II

• Prithvi-II is capable of carrying 500-1,000 kilogram of warheads and is thrust by liquid propulsion twin engines.

• It is a state-of-the-art missile which uses advanced inertial guidance system with manoeuvring trajectory to hot its target.

• The missile was randomly chosen from the production stock and the entire launch activities were carried out by the specially formed Strategic Force Command (SFC) of the Army and monitored by the scientists of Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) as part of a training exercise.

• It was inducted into the Armed Forces of India in 2003.

• It is 9 metres tall, single-stage, single fuelled missile developed by the DRDO under the IGMDP (Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme).

About Prithvi Missile

Prithvi is a tactical surface-to-surface short-range ballistic missile (SRBM) developed by DRDO of India under the Integrated Guided Missile Development Program (IGMDP). It is deployed by India's Strategic Forces Command. The Government of India launched the Integrated Guided Missile Development Program in 1983 to achieve selfsufficiency in the development and production of wide range of ballistic missiles, surface-to-air missiles etc. Prithvi was the first missile to be developed under the program.

Variants of Prithvi

The Prithvi missile project encompassed developing three variants for use by the Indian Army, Indian Air Force and the Indian Navy. Its variants are

• Prithvi I (SS-150) – Army version (surface-to-surface ballistic missile)

• Prithvi II (SS-250) – Air Force version (single-stage liquid-fuelled missile)

• Prithvi III (SS-350) – Naval version (two-stage surface-to-surface missile)

Google and NCERT Signed a Pact to Teach Digital Citizenship and Safety

• Google and National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) signed a pact to integrate a course on 'Digital Citizenship and Safety' in information and communication technology curriculum.

• It was signed on the occasion of Safer Internet Day which is observed on 6th February.

• The curriculum developed by NCERT in collaboration with Google will be used to train students from class I - class XII across 1.4 million schools in India where they will learn how to become good and responsible digital citizens.

Key Facts

- The course has been designed to teach students the social, ethical and legal aspects of Internet safety. <u>The curriculum is spread into four themes – being smart being safe being a digital citizen being future ready</u>.

- The course will also inform teachers about digital citizenship.

- The course for lower classes will focus on engaging with technology and learning the use of basic digital tools.

- In middle classes, students will be taught about the basics of the internet, concepts of account safety and distinguishing good content from bad.

- An advanced course includes topics such as privacy, device management, intellectual property and reputation management.

- Online financial literacy and cybercrime concepts will be introduced at graduation level of the course.
- The basic aim of this initiative is to encourage young children and teach them the essentials of staying safe while exploring the online world.

- This initiative aims to prepare students to identify the threats and ensure a safe web experience online.

RBI: Base Rate to be Linked with MCLR

- The Reserve Bank of India announced that it would order banks to synchronise the movement of their Base Rates with the MCLR (Marginal Cost of Fund based Lending Rates) in order to ensure that the existing borrowers do not lose out on the benefits of lower interest.

- This linking of the Base Rate with the MCLR will start from 1st April 2018 i.e. from the new financial year.

- The Marginal Cost of Funds based Lending Rates (MCLR) system was introduced on April 1, 2016, to tackle the problems of the Base Rate Regime.

- With the introduction of the MCLR system, it was expected that the existing Base Rate linked loans and other credit exposures would also migrate to MCLR system.

- The 1-year MCLR for most commercial banks as of January 2018 ranges between 7.95 percent and 9.75 percent. - The RBI announced that since MCLR is more sensitive to policy rate signals, it has been decided to harmonise the methodology of determining benchmark rates by linking the Base Rate to the MCLR with effect from 1 April 2018.

- This step has been undertaken so that the responsiveness of the credit portfolio to monetary policy signals is not hindered by the interest rate on the large part of bank portfolio is linked to base rate.

• The MCLR was introduced, under the leadership of former RBI governor Raghuram Rajan so as to calculate the benchmark lending rate in such a way that it ensures banks pass on policy rate cut benefits to borrowers in a quicker and more transparent manner.

• Under the MCLR, RBI asked all banks to follow the marginal cost of funds method to arrive at their benchmark lending rate.

What is MCLR?

The marginal cost of funds based lending rate (MCLR) refers to the minimum interest rate of a bank below which it cannot lend, except in some cases allowed by the RBI. It is an internal benchmark or reference rate for the bank. It was introduced by the Reserve Bank of India with effect from April 1, 2016. It replaced the base rate system introduced in July 2010.

Aim of MCLR

• To improve the transmission of policy rates into the lending rates of banks.

• To bring transparency in the methodology followed by banks for determining interest rates on advances.

• To ensure availability of bank credit at interest rates which are fair to borrowers as well as banks.

• To enable banks to become more competitive and enhance their long-run value and contribution to economic growth.

Base rate vs MCLR

Base rate calculation is based on the cost of funds, the minimum rate of return, i.e margin or profit, operating expenses and cost of maintaining cash reserve ratio while the MCLR is based on marginal cost of funds, tenor premium, operating expenses and cost of maintaining cash reserve ratio. The main factor of difference is the calculation of marginal cost under MCLR.

Marginal cost is charged on the basis of following factors-

Interest rate for various types of deposits

• Borrowings

• Return on net worth. Therefore MCLR is largely determined by marginal cost of funds and especially by deposit rates and repo rates

CSE ranked as top Environment Policy Think Tank in India

• The Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) has been ranked the top environment policy think tanks in India. It has secured the 16th position in global rankings, climbing up two positions from the last year.

• The rank was given by The Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program (TTCSP) of the Lauder Institute at the University of Pennsylvania.

• The TTCSP conducts a research on the role policy institutes play in governments and civil societies around the world.

• In the latest rankings, CSE is placed among the top 10 in all categories in India.

• The CSE has also made it to the first comprehensive list of leading Food and Water Security Think Tanks in the world.

• In the 'Energy and Resource Policy Think Tanks' category, the CSE has been ranked the second in India and 38th in the world.

• It has also been ranked the 6th best independent think tank in India.

• In the Top Energy and Resource Policy Think Tanks category, the CSE ranked 2nd in India and 38th in the world.

• According to the TTCSP, think tanks are public-policy research analysis and engagement organizations that generate policy-oriented research, analysis, and advice on domestic and international issues.

CSE rankings under various categories

S.No. Category India's Ranking Global Ranking 1. Top Environment Policy Think Tanks 1 16 2. Top Energy and Resource Policy Think Tanks 2 38

3. Top Science and Technology Think Tanks 5 57 4. Best Independent Think Tanks 6 123

South Asia Region Public Procurement Conference Concluded

• The Fifth edition of South Asia Region Public Procurement Conference was held in New Delhi from 5-7 February 2018. The conference was hosted by Public Procurement Division (PPD) of Ministry of Finance and All India Management Association (AIMA).

• It was held under auspices of South Asia Region Public Procurement Network (SARPPN), which is sponsored and facilitated by the World Bank, Asian Development Bank and Islamic Development Bank. The conference was inaugurated by the Union Minister of Finance and Corporate Affairs, Shri Arun Jaitley.

Background

The First Conference was held in Kathmandu in 2010, second in Islamabad (2014), third in Dhaka (2015) and fourth in Sri Lanka (2017). All eight SAR countries spend approximately $550 billion equivalent on public procurement of goods, works and services, which eventually convert to public services. The basic objective of all these conferences was to achieve mutual knowledge exchange.

Highlights of the Conference

• The theme this edition of conference was "Public Procurement and Service Delivery".

• The basic objective of this conference is to strive to improve public procurement of member countries to ensure timely and quality delivery of public services.

• It aims to enable heads of Public Procurement and other key stakeholders in 8 South Asian countries (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan) to meet and learn from one another and from experts in field of public procurement.

• It will help South Asian Governments to consider enhancements and innovations in their public procurement systems, enable efficient utilization of public resources, and ensure quality and timeliness in delivery of services.

• This Conference was attended by the Senior Government Officials of South Asian countries in addition to the World Bank (WB), Asian Development Bank (ADB), Islamic Development Bank (IDB) and other agencies.

• The Conference will deliberate upon key aspects of public procurement that help ensure delivery of these services; and identify and address areas that need improvement.

various sessions were conducted in this 3 days conference which laid emphasis on the procurement of health and education services, enhancing oversight in public procurement through complaints mechanism, audits, etc., role of ICT and PPP in public procurement, etc.

Ministry of Railways sign MoU with Ministry of AYUSH

• The Ministry of Railways has signed an MoU with Ministry of Ayush in New Delhi to augment Ayush services in Railway hospitals. The MoU is signed to augment the AYUSH system services in its zonal hospitals at New Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai and Guwahati.

• The MoU was signed between the Principal Executive Director of Health, Gajendra Kumar, on behalf of the Ministry of Railways and Advisor Manoj Nesari from Ministry of AYUSH.

Highlights of the MoU

• Under the terms of the MoU signed, Ministry of Railways will arrange for providing logistics and infrastructure in the form of Land & building, equipment, furniture, AYUSH medicines and consumables as well as Manpower as per its guidelines.

• It will organize and provide orientation training to newly recruited AYUSH Doctors and AYUSH Paramedicals.

• Ministry of AYUSH in turn will provide all other technical inputs required for introduction of AYUSH Systems in the five identified Railways Hospitals.

• The Ministry will also provide technical knowhow regarding the pharmacopoeia, medicine inventory, hospital planning.

• Guidelines of manpower requirement and Recruitment Rules; Procedures of AYUSH Doctors, AYUSH Para medical required for introduction of AYUSH Systems in five Railway Hospitals including the guidelines for contractual AYUSH doctors and paramedical staff would be aided by MoAYUSH.

• Presently Indian Railways is running 126 Homeopathic Clinics and 40 Ayurvedic Clinics through staff benefit fund under welfare section of establishment directorate.

• The MoU would not only offer the advantage of holistic healthcare for the railways employees, but also enhance the reach and awareness of these highly effective traditional medicine systems such as Ayurveda into a larger stratum of society.

RBI to Set up Ombudsman for NBFCs

• The Reserve Bank of India has announced setting up of an ombudsman for addressing customer grievances in the non-banking finance companies (NBFCs).

• This will be started in a phased manner. RBI will start with deposit taking NBFCs and widen the scope to cover NBFCs with asset size of Rs 100 crore.

• It is a move to strengthen the customer grievance redressal mechanism for Non-banking finance companies (NBFCs).

• Referring to the successful working of the banking ombudsman. RBI Deputy Governor B.P. Kanungo mentioned that the Ombudsman Scheme will be operationalised by the end of this month.

• The banking ombudsman scheme has been working well and has been accepted as a preferred mode of customer grievance redressal by public at large, which is cost free and expeditious.

• Since the NBFCs complaints were increasing, and there is no such redressal mechanism for the NBFCs unlike the banking and insurance sectors, it was decided that there should be a scheme for the non-banking financial sector also.

• The ombudsman will exercise jurisdiction over the companies it in a phased manner, starting with deposit-taking NBFCs, and at a later stage will include all non-banking finance companies which have an asset size of Rs 1 billion and above with customer interface.

• There are around 20 banking ombudsmen have been appointed with offices mostly in state capitals.

• One can file a complaint before the banking ombudsman if the reply is not received from the bank within one month after the bank concerned has received one's complaint, or the bank rejects the complaint, or if the complainant is not satisfied with the reply given by the bank.

What is NBFC?

According to the RBI, an NBFC is a company registered under the Companies Act, 1956, which could be engaged in the business of loans and advances, shares, stocks, bonds, debentures, securities, leasing, hire-purchase, insurance, or chit business. However, any institution whose principal business is that of agriculture, industrial activity, purchase or sale of any goods, or related to selling, buying or building immovable property; cannot be termed an NBFC. Apart from that, any non-banking company whose principal business is of receiving deposits—in lump sum or in instalments—in any manner, will be called an NBFC.

India ranked 44th in Global Intellectual Property Index

• India has improved its performance both in relative and absolute terms in the latest edition of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Global Innovation Policy Center's (GIPC) International IP Index.

• This index analyses the intellectual property (IP) climate in 50 world economies based on 40 unique indicators that benchmark activity critical to innovation development surrounding patent, trademark, copyright, and trade secrets protection.

• India ranked 44th of 50 economies – a jump from 43rd of 45 economies one year ago, according to the sixth edition of the Index.

• For the first time, India has broken free of the bottom 10% of economies measured, and its score represents the largest percentage improvement of any country measured.

• As against 25% (8.75 out of 35) of the possible total score in the fifth edition, India scored 30% (12.03 out of 40) in the sixth edition, representing the largest percentage improvement of any country measured.

• The factors that helped India improve its score included passing guidelines to strengthen the patentability environment for technological innovations, improving the protection of wellknown trademarks, as well as initiating IP awareness and coordination programs — thereby implementing some tenets of its 2016 National IPR Policy.

• Among key areas of weaknesses are limited framework for the protection of life sciences IP; patentability requirements outside international standards; lengthy pre-grant opposition proceedings; previously used compulsory licensing for commercial and nonemergency situations; limited participation in international IP treaties and no participation in international PPH (Patent Prosecution Highway) tracks.

• The US tops the list with 37.98 points, followed by United Kingdom (37.97) and Sweden (37.03)

President of India inaugurated the Mahamastakabhisheka Mahotsav 2018

• The President of India inaugurated the Mahamastakabhisheka Mahotsav 2018 of Gommateshwara Bhagwan Sri Bahubali Swami at Shravanabelagola, Karnataka.

• Governor Vajubhai Vala, CM Siddaramaiah, former PM H D Deve Gowda and many others were also present on the occasion.

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

• Bahubali or 'One With Strong Arms' was the son of Adinath, the first Tirthankara of Jainism.

• It is a head-anointing ceremony, of the 57-feet tall monolithic statue of Gommateshwara Bhagwan.

• The statue is anointed with flowers, turmeric, and sandalwood powder.

• The Mahamastakabhisheka ceremony in 2018 is said to be 88th in series that commenced in 981 A.D, and second Mahamastakabhisheka of 21st Century.

• While addressing the crowd, the President of India, Mr. Ram Nath Kovind said that this place is a centre of religion, spirituality and Indian culture and had been sending across the message of welfare of mankind.

• The monolith statue is a classic example of India's rich culture, architecture, artistry and workmanship.
• Mr. Kovind further mentioned that Ahimsa Paramo Dharma is completely reflected in this image. The creepers carved on Bahubali's statue are not just an indicator of his intense ascetic life, they also show how he was one with the nature and was away from pretences.

• The Mahamastakabhisheka has been going on since 981 AD. But the main celebrations will only begin on February 17 when the monolith statue of Bahubali will be bathed with precious water, sandalwood paste, coconut water, turmeric paste, milk, flower and many more.

PM Modi on a 3 Nations Visit

• The Prime Minister of India, Mr. Narendra Modi is on a 3 Nation visit to Palestine, UAE and Oman. This visit has been planned with an agenda of strengthening India's engagement with the West Asian and the Gulf region.

• This will be his fifth visit to the West Asian region since 2015.

Highlights of his visit

• Modi will first visit Jordan on 9th February 2018 which is a pit-stop in his tour to Palestine, the UAE, and Oman.

• He is scheduled to meet King Abdullah II in Amman.

• The three-nation tour will include his first-ever prime ministerial visit to Palestine, where he will hold discussions with President Mahmoud Abbas.

• Modi's Palestine visit will begin on 10 February after transiting through Jordan.

• Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas had met Modi last year and had invited him to visit Palestine.

• President Abbas has mentioned that he would discuss the possible role India can play in enhancing peace in the region.

• A formal discussion would be held between the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas.

• Efforts would be made to reach to a final agreement based on international consensus and resolutions, in which India and other countries can be part of.

• The Indian Prime Minister will lay a wreath at the memorial for Yasser Arafat, who headed the Palestine Liberation Organization and later also headed the Palestinian National Authority till his death in 2004.

• Over at least five decades, New Delhi has consistently supported the Palestinian cause, recognising it as a state in 1988.

• He will then head on to the UAE, where he will address the 6th edition of the World Government Summit.

• PM Modi will meet the Sultan of Oman on the evening of 11 February.

• On the final day of his visit on 12 February, PM Modi will interact with Omani industry players.

• Energy and security cooperation will be the top agenda of PM Modi's visit, along with trade and investments and counter-terror efforts. During his visit, Modi will also meet Indian expatriates in the UAE and in Oman.

First Hawk I flight developed by HAL

• The Hindustan Aeronautics Limited has developed the first flight of Hawk-i with indigenous Real Time Operating System (RTOS).

• Hawk-I is the first indigenous RTOS developed in India from scratch and certified by Bangalore based Center for Military Airworthiness and Certification (CEMILAC).

• Similac (Center for Military Airworthiness and Certification) is India's defence certifying agency for aircraft—manned and unmanned—its components and equipment.

• It is a part of the government-run Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).

Highlights

• The RTOS is the system software which provides a standard run-time environment for real-time applications execution in a safe and reliable manner.

• Avionics systems in India are currently developed using commercial RTOS procured from foreign suppliers.

• The RTOS is a key technology for concurrent execution of multiple applications.

• It is beneficial in the optimal use of hardware resources which is important for the increased complexity of modern avionics software.

• Importing this new technology is very costly and it provides ery limited flexibility in incorporating new features and adaptation to new hardware platforms.

• The RTOS imported are also vulnerable to cyber-attacks which may compromise the safety and security of the avionics system.

• In order to overcome this dependency and achieve self-reliance, the HAL had taken up the responsibility of designing an indigenous RTOS for safety-critical and mission-critical avionics systems.

• Its key features include address, space and time partitioning, priority pre-emptive process scheduling and health monitoring.

• The advanced features like the network stack and file system have been co-developed with IITKharagpur.

• IIT- Kharagpur also carried out formal method based verification of the RTOS kernel.

Winter Olympics starts in Pyeongchang

• The 2018 Winter Olympics Games have officially commenced at Pyeongchang in South Korea. This is the 23rd edition of the Olympic Winter Games.

• The 2018 Winter Olympics Games are officially known as the XXIII Olympic Winter Games or PyeongChang 2018.

• PyeongChang was selected as the host country in July 2011 during he 123rd IOC Session in Durban, South Africa.

• It marks the first time that South Korea has hosted the Winter Olympics, and the second Olympics held in the country, the first being the 1988 Summer Olympics in Seoul.

• These Games will be held from 9-25 February 2018 featuring 102 events in 15 sports.

• A total of 2,952 athletes from 92 National Olympic Committees are slated to compete, including the debut of countries like Ecuador, Kosovo, Malaysia, Nigeria and Singapore.

About Winter Olympics

• The Olympic Winter Games is a major international sporting event held once every four years, for sports practised on snow and ice.

• The first Winter Olympics, the 1924 Winter Olympics, was held in Chamonix, France.

• Olympic games were inspired by the ancient Olympic Games, which were held in Olympia, Greece, from the 8th century BC to the 4th century AD.

• The International Olympic Committee (IOC) was founded in 1894 by Baron Pierre de Coubertin leading to the first modern Games in Athens in 1896.

• The IOC is the governing body of the Olympic Movement.

• The Games were held every four years from 1924 to 1936, interrupted in 1940 and 1944 by World War II, and resumed in 1948.

• Until 1992 the winter and Summer Olympic Games were held in the same years. But in 1986 a decision was taken by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to place the Summer and Winter Games on separate four-year cycles in alternating even-numbered years.

• The original five sports in the event were bobsleigh, curling, ice hockey, Nordic skiing (consisting of the disciplines military patrol, cross-country skiing, Nordic combined, and ski jumping), and skating (consisting of the disciplines figure skating and speed skating).

• Some of the sports disciplines added were Alpine skiing, luge, short track speed skating, freestyle skiing, skeleton, and snowboarding, which have earned a permanent spot on the Olympic programme.

• The Winter Olympics has been hosted on three continents by eleven different countries.

• The IOC has selected Pyeongchang, South Korea, to host the 2018 Winter Olympics and Beijing, China, to host the 2022 Winter Olympics.

Biswamohan Mahapatra appointed as Non-Executive Chairman of NPCI

• The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) has appointed Biswamohan Mahapatra as Non-Executive Chairman for a period of two years with effect from 8th February 2018. • He succeeds B Sambamurthy who was the interim chairman.

• Last month NPCI had appointed Dilip Asbe as its managing director and CEO.

NPCI (National Payments Corporation of India)

• The National Payments Corporation of India is the umbrella organization for all retail payment systems in India, which aims to allow all Indian citizens to have unrestricted access to epayment services.

 • It was founded in 2008 and is owned by a consortium of major banks.

• It has its headquarters in Mumbai, Maharashtra.

• NPCI is a not-for-profit organization registered under section 8 of the Companies Act 2013.

 • It was set up as the central infrastructure for various retail payment systems in India and was envisaged by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) as the payment utility in the country.

• From a single service of switching of interbank ATM transactions through National Financial Service, the range of services has grown to Cheque Truncation System, National Automated Clearing House (NACH), Aadhaar Enabled Payment System (AePS), USSD based *99#, RuPay card, Immediate Payment Service (IMPS), Unified Payments Interface (UPI), Bharat Interface for Money (BHIM), BHIM Aadhaar, National Electronic Toll Collection (NETC) and Bharat Bill Pay.

• Presently, there are ten core promoter banks (State Bank of India, Punjab National Bank, Canara Bank, Bank of Baroda, Union Bank of India, Bank of India, ICICI Bank, HDFC Bank, Citibank and HSBC).

NITI Aayog Releases Report on "Healthy States, Progressive India"

• NITI Aayog has released a comprehensive Health Index report titled, "Healthy States, Progressive India".

• The report was released jointly by the CEO, NITI Aayog, Amitabh Kant, Secretary, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare; Preeti Sudan and World Bank India Country Director, Junaid Ahmad.

• The report ranks states and Union territories innovatively on their year-on-year incremental change in health outcomes, as well as, their overall performance with respect to each other.

 • It was an effort to better assess health outcomes across India.

• The report is the first step to establish an annual systematic tool to measure and understand the complexity of nation's performance in health.

Highlights

 • The report has been developed by NITI Aayog, with technical assistance from the World Bank, and in consultation with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW), States and UTs.

 • The States and UTs have been ranked in three categories namely, Larger States, Smaller States, and Union Territories (UTs), to ensure comparison among similar entities.

• According to the report, "in the reference year (2015-16), among the larger states, the index scope for overall performances ranged widely between 33.69 in Uttar Pradesh to 76.55 in Kerala".

• The list was topped by Kerala, followed by Punjab, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat. Rajasthan, Bihar and Odisha were among those that performed poorly on the index.

• The Health Index is a weighted composite Index, which for the larger States, is based on indicators in three domains: Health Outcomes (70%) Governance and Information (12%), Key Inputs and Processes (18%)

• Among the Larger States, Kerala, Punjab, and Tamil Nadu topped the list in terms of overall performance, while Jharkhand, Jammu & Kashmir, and Uttar Pradesh are the top three ranking States in terms of annual incremental performance.

• Jharkhand, Jammu & Kashmir, and Uttar Pradesh showed the maximum gains in improvement of health outcomes from base to reference year in indicators such as Neonatal Mortality Rate (NMR), Under-five Mortality Rate (U5MR), full immunization coverage, institutional deliveries, and People Living with HIV (PLHIV) on Anti-Retroviral Therapy (ART).

• Among Smaller States, Mizoram ranked first followed by Manipur on overall performance, while Manipur followed by Goa were the top ranked States in terms of annual incremental performance.

• Manipur registered maximum incremental progress on indicators such as PLHIV on ART, first trimester antenatal care (ANC) registration, grading quality parameters of Community Health Centres (CHCs), average occupancy of key State-level officers and good reporting on the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP).

• Among UTs, Lakshadweep showed both the best overall performance as well as the highest annual incremental performance.

• Lakshadweep showed the highest improvement in indicators such as institutional deliveries, tuberculosis (TB) treatment success rate, and transfer of National Health Mission (NHM) funds from State Treasury to implementation agency.

• The incremental measurement reveals that about one-third of the States have registered a decline in their performance in 2016 as compared to 2015.

• Common challenges for most States and UTs include the need to focus on addressing vacancies in key staff, establishment of functional district Cardiac Care Units (CCUs), quality accreditation of public health facilities and institutionalization of Human Resources Management Information System (HRMIS). Basically almost all Larger States need to focus on improving the Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB).

Advantages

Health Index has been developed as a tool to leverage co-operative and competitive federalism to accelerate the pace of achieving health outcomes. It would nudge States towards further achieving a rapid transformation of their health systems and population health outcomes.

National Deworming Initiative Launched

• The National Deworming initiative was launched by the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW).

• It was launched on the occasion of National Deworming Day (observed on 10 February).

• This year it is fourth edition of National Deworming Day after it was launched in 2015

. • Aim of the initiative

• It aims to reach more than 32.2 crore children aged between 1 to 19 years to combat parasitic worm infections. The basic objective is deworm all preschool and school-age children between the ages of 1-19 years in order to improve their overall health, cognitive development, nutritional status and quality of life.

Highlights

• The targeted children are provided with Albendazole tablets on this day.

• Dosage of half tablet to 1-2 years children and one full tablet for 2-19 years is given.

• It would help in encouraging a change in behavior I terms of cleanliness, hygiene, use of toilets, wearing shoes, washing hands etc. since it is important to reduce incidents of re-infection.

• Implementation of deforming programmes is led by the Union MoHFW. The Department of School Education and Literacy under the Ministry of Human Resource Development (HRD) and Ministry of Women and Child Development (WCD) also collaborate to implement this initiative.

• Parasitic worms or Soil-Transmitted Helminths (STH) are among the most common infections worldwide that causes parasitic infestation in children.

• STHs live in human intestines and consume essential nutrients meant for the human body.

• It causes complications among the children resulting in anaemia, malnutrition and improper mental and physical development.

About National Deworming Day

• Deworming day is a day dedicated to deworm all the school going children of the country to give them a healthy digestive system.

• It is celebrated all over India on 10th of February every year.

 • Its aim is to reduce the cases of worm infection among kids all over India.

• It was launched by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in February 2015 as part of the National Health Mission.

• Its basic objective is to combat the situation of worm infection in India.

• Kids are vulnerable to the worm infections in their childhood, so it is very necessary to save them from worm infection through good habit (hygienic) practices and deworming tablets.

• It is an initiative to make people aware about worm infections, its bad effects on the health and cure and prevent further infection through deworming tablets.

11 states declared ODF under Swachh Bharat Mission

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

 • This was stated in a written reply from the Minister of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Ramesh Chandappa Jigajinagi.

• At present, 1 states/UTs namely Sikkim, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Uttarakhand, Haryana, Gujarat, Chandigarh, Daman and Diu, Arunachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Meghalaya had been declared ODF.

 • The government is taking various steps under the SBM to make all states in the country ODF.

• The main focus is on the creation of complete ODF villages rather than only on the construction of individual toilets.

About Swachh Bharat Mission

 • Swachh Bharat Mission is centre's flagship programme, launched by the Hon'ble Prime Minister on 2 October 2014.

 • It is also known as the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan or Clean India Mission.

• The campaign was officially launched on 2 October 2014 at Rajghat, New Delhi by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

• It aims to clean up the streets, roads and infrastructure of India's cities, smaller towns, and rural areas.
• The objectives of Swachh Bharat include eliminating open defecation through the construction of household-owned and community-owned toilets and establishing an accountable mechanism of monitoring toilet use.

• It is by the Government of India, the mission aims to achieve an Open-Defecation Free (ODF) India by 2 October 2019, the 150th anniversary of the birth of Mahatma Gandhi, by constructing 12 million toilets in rural India.

• The mission will also contribute to India reaching Sustainable Development Goal Number 6 (SDG 6). **The mission contains two submissions:** Swachh Bharat Abhiyan ("Gramin" or rural), which operates under the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (Urban), which operates under the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs. 2nd National Meet on Grassroot Informatics held in New Delhi

• The National Informatics Centre (NIC) has organized a three-day National Meet on Grassroot Informatics- 'VIVID 2018' at the India Habitat Centre, New Delhi.

• The three-day event was inaugurated by the Union Minister of Electronics & Information Technology and Law & Justice, Ravi Shankar Prasad.

• The Theme for VIVID 2018 is "Cyber Security and Innovation".

• The aim of the meet is to showcase the various initiatives of NIC in creating and enhancing the security of Digital Infrastructure in the country.

• VIVID 2018 would be an extensive platform for knowledge sharing which would empower 240 NIC district officials from across the country to interact and leverage each other's experience and best practices.

Highlights

• During this three days event, DIOs gave presentations on their portals, showcasing their applications, their District initiatives and their immense contribution towards the implementation of the Digital India initiative of the Government.

• It also covered a wide range of relevant topics including Emerging Technologies (Internet of Things, Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning & Big Data Analytics), Cyber Threats & Counter Measures (Changing Digitization Paradigm & its impact on Security, Cyber Security Threats & Cyber Crimes), Critical Information Infrastructure protection (NIC-CERT), Enterprise Level Applications

• This National Conference was significant as the use of cloud services continues to accelerate, it would lead to an exponentially increasing number of potential targets.

• Not only this, the Internet of Things (IoT) is expected to increase the attack surface.

• NIC provides a multi-layered security framework for the protection of applications hosted in the Data Centres and related mobile apps as well as NIC infrastructure.

• NIC-CERT is a setup of NIC which will upscale the existing security infrastructure to prevent the rising number of cyber-attacks.

• Its main objective is to create a comprehensive framework that would integrate world-class security components and inbuilt threat intelligence for detection, prevention and incident response.

About NIC

• National Informatics Centre (NIC) was established in 1976. Since then it has emerged as a "prime builder" of e-Government / e-Governance applications up to the grassroots level as well as a promoter of digital opportunities for sustainable development.

• It is the premier science & technology organization of Government of India in informatics services and information and communication technology (ICT) applications. NIC is a part of the Indian Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology's Department of Electronics & Information Technology and has its headquarters in New Delhi.

• NIC, through its ICT Network, "NICNET", has institutional linkages with all the Ministries or Departments of the Central Government, 36 State Governments/ Union Territories, and about 708 District administrations of India. NIC has been instrumental in steering e-Government/eGovernance applications in government ministries/departments at the Centre, States, Districts and Blocks, facilitating improvement in government services, wider transparency, promoting decentralized planning and management, resulting in better efficiency and accountability to the people of India.

• At present, Neeta Verma is the Director General of NIC.

3rd Global Procurement Summit inaugurated in New Delhi

• The 3rd 2-day Global Procurement Summit, organized by the All India Management Association (AIMA) along with World Bank and Government of India, was inaugurated in New Delhi.

• During the inaugural address, Union Minister P. Radhakrishnan said that the government is committed to ensure transparency in public procurement

. • Over 200 officials with the procurement departments from across the world have attended the summit.

Highlights of the Event

• The theme of the summit is 'New Frontiers Faced in the Transformation Process of Procurement Today'.

• It aims to bring in greater cooperation across nations and sectors in sharing knowledge on procurement and skills through a more engaged interaction and peer to peer dialogue.

• The Summit provides a forum to share the learning and the success stories from different regions, which will also encourage the countries which are at early stages of reform and might be facing the teething problem.

• It would help to bring together the most senior global and regional procurement community to examine the new frontiers faced in the transformation process of procurement today.

• It is a way to present successful strategies and benchmark that procurement leaders can use to gain insight into best practices and ultimately improve the operations and performance.

• The Summit was attended by over 300 delegates from government offices, corporates, consultants and regulators from India and abroad.

• The deliberation will be done by the experts in the area of Procurement from international organizations covering countries like USA, European Union, UK, South Asian countries etc.

PNB signs Pact with National e-Governance Services

• Punjab National Bank has signed an agreement for information utility with National eGovernance Services Limited.

• The objective of the agreement is to augment the information infrastructure in India.

• The agreement will enable storing of financial information that will help substantiate defaults and verify claims.

• This will, in turn, facilitate resolution in the National Company Law Tribunal in a time bound manner.

• J.K.Gupta, General Manager, Recovery Division, Head Office of the bank, signed the agreement on behalf of PNB and S. Raghunathan, Executive Director, signed on behalf of NeSL.

About National e-Governance Plan

• The National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) is an initiative of the Government of India to make all government services available to the citizens of India via electronic media.

• NeGP was formulated by the Department of Electronics and Information Technology (Deity) and Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG).

• The Government approved the National e-Governance Plan, consisting of 27 "Mission Mode Projects" (MMPs) and Ten components, on 18 May 2006.

• It is headquartered in New Delhi and aims to take forward the Digital India initiative of the Modi government.

• Sustained efforts have been made at multiple levels to improve the delivery of public services and simplify the process of accessing them.

• e-Governance in India has steadily evolved from computerization of Government Departments to initiatives that encapsulate the finer points of Governance, such as citizen centricity, service orientation and transparency.

Indra Nooyi Appointed ICC's 1st Independent Female Director

• PepsiCo Chairman and CEO Indra Nooyi has been appointed to the International Cricket Council (ICC) Board as its first independent female director.

• Ms. Nooyi will join the Board in June 2018 to align with the term of the ICC Independent Chairman, following the unanimous confirmation of her appointment.

• The introduction of a female independent director was a constitutional change aimed at improving the governance of the sport.

• She will be appointed for a two-year term although she may be re-appointed for two further terms with a maximum six-year consecutive period of service.

About Indra Nooyi

• Indra Krishnamurthy Nooyi was born on 28th October 1955. Indra Nooyi is an alumna of IIM Calcutta of the batch of 1976. She is an Indian American business executive and the current Chairwoman and Chief Executive Officer of PepsiCo, the second largest food and beverage business in the world.

• She completed her schooling from Holy Angels Anglo Indian Higher Secondary School, Madras. She then went on to complete her bachelor's degree in Science from the Madras Christian College in 1974. She did a Post Graduate Programme (PGP) in Management from IIM Calcutta in 1976.

• In 1978, she joined the Yale School of Management and earned a master's degree in Public and Private Management. In an article she wrote in July 2017, she emphasized the importance of being a student for life. She has consistently ranked among the World's 100 Most Powerful Women. Nooyi joined PepsiCo in 1994 and was named CFO in 2001. She was named President and CEO in 2006.

Integrated Automation Aviation Meteorological Systems (IAAMS) Inaugurated

• The Indian navy has unveiled the Integrated Automation Aviation Meteorological System at INS Garuda naval air station located in Kochi, Kerala.

• The 'Integrated Automatic Aviation Meteorological System (IAAMS)' was inaugurated by Rear Admiral RJ Nadkarni, VSM, Chief of Staff, Headquarters, Southern Naval Command at INS Garuda on 09 February 2018.

• INS Garuda is the fourth air station to have been installed with this integrated system.

Aim of the project

IAAMS is an ambitious project of the Indian Navy to modernize the Meteorological infrastructure of the nine Naval Air Stations. The IAAMS project at INS Garuda will give a major fillip to aviation safety through automation of weather monitoring process.

About IAAMS

INS Garuda is the fourth station to have installed with this integrated system. The IAAMS project will modernize meteorological infrastructure of 9 NASs. Installation of the system at remaining 5 stations is expected to be completed by March 2019. It will give the project a major turn to aviation safety, through automation of weather monitoring process.

Key Points

• IAAMS is an ambitious project of the Indian Navy to modernize meteorological infrastructure of 9 NASs and is further expected to bring accuracy in weather monitoring mechanism in the Indian Navy.

• IAAMS is equipped with state-of-the-art meteorological sensors, Radar Vertical Wind Profiler, Ceilometer, Transmissometer and Automatic Weather Observation System.

• The project also undertakes automatic and continuous recording of relevant weather parameters which are important for accurate weather forecasting.

• It provides automatic dissemination of routine weather reports as per standards of World Meteorological Organization (WMO) to other air stations.

• It has also got a special alarm feature that alerts the duty staff during abnormal change of weather parameters that may affect safe Flying operations.

• INS Garuda also has a number of naval aviation training schools. The training schools train pilots and technical personnel. Aeronautical Training Institute conducts training for officers and sailors in aircraft maintenance.

• INS Garuda also has facilities for imparting training in air-borne anti-submarine operations affiliated with the Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) School

Swachh Bharat Sanitation Park inaugurated in New Delhi

• The Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation has developed a Sanitation Park in collaboration with the Environmental Sanitation Institute and Tata Trusts.

• It was inaugurated by Union Minister, Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Uma Bharti, and Secretary, Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Parameswaran Iyer in New Delhi.

• The Sanitation Park was developed at CGO Complex in New Delhi with an objective to create awareness on various safe technological options.

Highlights

• It demonstrates various options pertaining to toilet technologies and solid and liquid waste management technologies, with a brief description of these technologies.

• The Sanitation will display information regarding various interventions undertaken under the Swachh Bharat Mission, capturing the success stories and impact created under the Mission across the country.

• It presents the opportunity for the visitors to understand the various components and initiatives of SBM and familiarize themselves with different technologies.

• Sanitation is a major concern for people and especially this problem curtails in the rural areas. Women from rural areas are deprived of the sanitation facilities.

• Apart from the unreachability people in rural areas are even deprived of having appropriate sanitation facility. Therefore this initiative to develop a sanitation park will enable the masses to understand the need and requirement of having sanitation awareness.

ASH Track Mobile App launched for Managing Fly Ash

• A Web based monitoring System and a Fly Ash mobile application named ASH TRACK was launched by the Union Minister of State (IC) for Power and New & Renewable Energy, Shri R.K Singh.

• The application was launched with an objective to enable better management of the ash produced by thermal power plants by providing an interface between fly ash producers (Thermal Power Plants) and potential ash users such as – road contractors, cement plants etc.

• While addressing the crowd, R. K Singh mentioned that proper management of fly ash is important for not only the environment but for us also as the ash produced by the power plants occupies a lot of land space.

• He explained that at present, 63 per cent of the fly ash is being utilized and target is for 100 per cent utilization of the fly ash.

• Therefore he emphasized the need for education and awareness generation.

• He further said that that road contractors and construction engineers need to know the benefits of using fly ash in construction.

• He asked the officials to work out the per kilometer construction costs of roads using fly ash, and said if it is found to be expensive, then measures need to be taken to reduce the cost by way of tax structure, subsidies and transportation services.

• The minister stated that that in spite of increasing use of renewable energy, coal will remain the mainstay of Power sector in India. In fact the consumption of coal is going to increase as our economy grows.

Features of the App

• Users can download the Ash Track mobile app from Google Play Store for Android OS and from App Store for Apple IOS.

• The ASH TRACK App would be managing 200 million tones of fly ash by tracking coal based power plants situated within 100 km and 300 km from given location and availability of fly ash, along with prospective users within the same radius.

• The App gives plant-wise, utility-wise and State-wise ash utilization status in the country.

• This would allow effective monitoring and reviewing for increasing ash utilization.

• It will allow user to select power station from where he wants to take fly ash. It will also show ash availability, distance from user's location.

• It will help power plants to see location of prospective fly ash users surrounding it like – cement plants, NHAI, contractors of Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) projects, brick producers, etc.

• It will help in protecting environment in terms of reduction in fugitive emissions, saving of precious top soil and conservation of land for sustainable development.

Fly Ash

• Fly ash is end product of combustion during process of power generation in the coal based thermal power plants.

• Fly ash is a resource material for many applications of construction industries and is used in manufacturing of Portland Cement road embankment construction, bricks/blocks/tiles manufacturing and low lying area development, etc.

• Many approaches must be adopted for fly ash management in India.

• Thus promoting R&D for increasing efficiency of power plants will also help in reducing ash generation.

• Proper management of fly ash is important for environment and also for power plants as it occupies a lot of land space. At present, 63% of the fly ash is being utilized.

1st Highway Capacity Manual Released

• The Union minister Nitin Gadkari released country's first ever Highway Capacity Manual (HCM) which will guide road engineers and policy makers about road expansion.

 • The manual known as 'Indo-HCM' has been developed by CSIR-CRRI on the basis of an extensive, country-wide study of the traffic characteristics.

 • The traffic characteristics are based on different categories of roads like single lane, two-lane, multi-lane urban roads, inter- urban highways and expressways and the associated intersections on these roads.

• The manual lays down guidelines for when and how to expand or manage different types of roads and their intersections and the level of services to be put in place.

• It has been developed based on the unique nature and diversity of traffic on Indian roads.

 • While countries like the US, China, Malaysia, Indonesia, Taiwan developed their own Highway Capacity Manuals long time back, this is the first time that the manual has been developed in India.

 • The manual would help in the scientific planning and expansion of road infrastructure in the country.

 • The manual comes at a time when the government is undertaking an ambitious road network programme called Bharatmala to add 35,000 km of new highways with an outlay of Rs5.35 trillion over the next five years.

What is a Highway Capacity Manual?

The Highway Capacity Manual (HCM) is a publication of the Transportation Research Board of the National Academies of Science in the United States. It contains concepts, guidelines, and computational procedures for computing the capacity and quality of service of various highway facilities, including freeways, highways, arterial roads, roundabouts, signalized and un signalized intersections, rural highways, and the effects of mass transit, pedestrians, and bicycles on the performance of these systems. There have been six editions with improved and updated procedures from 1950 to 2016, and two major updates to the HCM 1985 edition, in 1994, 1997 and 2015.

New World Wealth Report Published: Mumbai declared the 12th richest city globally

• According to the report published by New World Wealth, Mumbai has been named among the top 15 wealthiest cities globally.

 • Mumbai is the 12th wealthiest city, followed by Toronto with a total wealth of $944 billion, Frankfurt (14th, $912 billion) and Paris (15th, $860 billion).

- The list was topped by New York with a total wealth of $3 trillion.

- Total wealth, refers to the private wealth held by all the individuals living in each city. It includes all their assets (property, cash, equities, business interests) less any liabilities. Government funds are excluded from the figures.

- Mumbai also features among the top 10 cities in terms of billionaire population.

Highlights of the report

- Total wealth held in Mumbai amounts to $950 billion.

- Mumbai is the economic hub of India.

- It is also home to the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE), the 12th largest stock exchange in the world. Major industries in the city include financial services, real estate and media.

- Mumbai is expected to be the fastest growing city (in terms of wealth growth over the next 10 years).
- Houston, Geneva, Osaka, Shenzhen, Melbourne, Zurich and Dallas were among the notable cities which missed the spot in top 15.

- Mumbai accounts for roughly 6% of Indian economy.

- It employs 10% factory employment, 30% of income tax collections, 60% of custom duty collections, 20% of central excise tax collections, 40% of foreign trade and it gives $10 billion as corporate taxes.

Bihar government bans sale of loose cigarettes

- The Bihar government has banned the sale of loose cigarettes in the state. A notification to this effect was issued by state health department's special secretary Lokesh Kumar Singh, who is also the executive director of the State Health Society.

- Copies of the notification have been sent to the DMs, SSPs and SPs concerned to act as per the Tobacco Control Act under which anyone selling loose cigarettes would be liable for fine.

- The Socio-Economic and Educational Development Society (SEEDS), which is engaged in antitobacco movement in the state, has hailed the ban.

- This would prevent adolescents and youths from smoking.

- According to a National Survey, 53.55% adults in Bihar use tobacco products and 9% of them are smokers.

- Around 12 lakh tobacco-related deaths occur in the country every year.

• This decision aims to be deterrent to kids and youngsters who start smoking by buying loose cigarettes.

• In this regard, state health department has issued notification under Section 20 of Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA), 2003.

• Bihar is the 12th state in the country to bring such a ban into effect after Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Punjab, Delhi and others.

Key facts

• As per Section 7 of the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA), 2003, pictorial warnings regarding the harmful effects of consumption of tobacco products should be mentioned on the packets of tobacco products.

• Section 20 of COTPA, 2003, already states that sale, distribution, purchase, display and advertisement of tobacco products without the essential pictorial warnings make a punishable offence.

• As the loose cigarettes don't have the pictorial warnings, thus its sale, distribution, purchase, display and advertisement under COTPA, 2003, is banned.

• All district magistrate, district tobacco control co-ordination committee, superintendent of police, are directed to ensure implementation of the same and make raiding teams for strict enforcement.

• As per Global Adults Tobacco Survey (GATS), 53.5 per cent adults consume tobacco in one or other form in Bihar while 9 per cent of this 53.5 per cent are addicted to cigarette.

National Productivity Week: February 12 to February 18

• The National Productivity Council was observed National Productivity Day and National Productivity Week till 18th February.

• It is the 60th Anniversary of the National Productivity Council and is being celebrated as Diamond Jubilee Year.

• The theme for the National Productivity Week -2018 is "Industry 4.0 Leapfrog Opportunity for India ".

• Industry 4.0 or the fourth industrial revolution as it is called, is emerging globally as a powerful force and is being called as the next industrial revolution.

• The National Productivity Week (NPW) is observed every year from February 12-18 by the National Productivity Council (NPC) to stimulate and promote productivity and quality consciousness across all sectors in India.

Highlights

- It is characterized by the increasing digitization and interconnection of products, value chains and business models.

- It would help in bringing together conventional and modern technologies in manufacturing.

- This will result in the "Smart Factory", which is characterized by versatility, resource efficiency, ergonomic design and direct integration with business partners.

- The purpose is to draw the attention of all concerned, towards the concept and encourage implementation of productivity tools and techniques with contemporary relevant themes.

- The week long celebration would include propagating productivity, quality, competitiveness and efficiency consciousness through seminars, workshops, publications, celebrations of productivity and quality events, campaigns, motivational awards and other suitable methods.

Productivity Week Celebration

NPC has selected "Industry 4.0, Leapfrog Opportunity for India" as theme and during the National Productivity Week 2018 where as "From Waste to Profits through Reduce, Recycle, and Reuse" is the theme for the year 2017, the following activities were organized by the stakeholders to propagate the productivity concept:

- Special talks, discussions, meetings, workshops/round tables focusing on problems being faced on the Productivity fronts.

- Essay/Paintings/Slogan competitions relating to theme.

- Special training programs relevant to Productivity.

- Special drive/campaign on the Productivity concept.

National Productivity and Innovation Award (NPIA) Scheme

The objectives of the scheme is to identify and bring forward innovative enterprises in above sector who through its innovative actions has introduced breakthrough changes in products, services, processes, and new methods of production for augmenting enterprise level productivity and competitiveness and can become role models for others to emulate. The broad objective is to generate consciousness amongst MSME sectors towards productivity and innovation.

Rohan More to become 1st Asian to Swim Across Ocean Seven

- Pune-based Indian long-distance swimmer Rohan More swam across the Cook Strait between North and South Islands of New Zealand in 8 hours and 37 minutes, becoming the first Asian and the youngest to complete it.

- He has become the first Asian as well as the first Indian to swim across the Ocean Seven.

• Rohan is the youngest person in the world to swim across the Ocean Seven.

• The Ocean's Seven marathon consists of seven long-distance open-water swims, which includes the North Channel, the Cook Strait, the Molokai Channel, the English Channel, the Catalina Channel, the Tsugaru Strait and the Strait of Gibraltar.

• The swimming marathon is widely considered equivalent to the Seven Summits mountaineering challenge.

• With this, More becomes the ninth person in the world to complete it.

• He fought bravely against the cold water and strong Antarctic currents to complete the swim in eight hours 37 minutes.

• He has received the Tenzing Norgay Award from the Indian Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports. The award, also known as the National Adventure Award, was presented by President Ram Nath Kovind.

• More completed his first marathon swim at the age of 11.

• He completed the Triple Crown almost twenty years later, in less than 11 months and continues to set and accomplish marathon goals.

• In 1996, he crossed 'Dharamtar to Gateway of India Channel (35 km) in seven hours and 29 minutes.

• More also completed six of the Oceans Seven swims between 2014 and 2016: English Channel (13 hours and 23 minutes), North Channel (12 hours and 43 minutes), Catalina Channel (10 hours and 17 minutes), Molokai Channel (17 hours and 28 minutes), Tsugaru Strait (10 hours and 37 minutes) and Gibraltar Strait (3 hours and 56 minutes).

World's tallest hotel Gevora opens in Dubai

• World's tallest hotel Gevora opens in Dubai which is also home to Burj Khalifa – the world's tallest building.

• Located in Dubai, the Gevora Hotel by the Al Attar Group will boast 75 floors (1,167 feet) and 528 rooms.

• The JW Marriot Marquis Hotel which opened in 2012 previously held the title.

• Gevora hotel is only one meter taller than its predecessor - Dubai's JW Mariott Marquis.

• The Gevora which is located near the DIFC cluster and Emirates Towers will allow for a better balance between Dubai and Chinese developments in Dubai.

Highlights

• The guests enter the world's tallest hotel in Dubai through gold-plated revolving doors. The decor and ambience of the hotel is every bit luxurious.

• At the rooftop of the world's tallest building is a restaurant that gives a panoramic view of the city. On the menu of the restaurant are international and local cuisines.

• Another key attraction is that Gevora hotel has the highest pools overlooking the highest building in the world - the Burj Khalifa.

• The hotel, located on the Sheikh Zayed Road near the Dubai International Financial Centre, has 528 guest rooms and suites and four restaurants. The Gevora Hotel has six elevators and a total of 3,859 stairs.

• The world's tallest hotel has all opulent comforts including pools, jacuzzis, health club and a luxury spa.

Ronaldo Becomes First Player to Score 100 Goals for One Club

• Ace footballer Christiano Ronaldo already has many records in his achievement bag and now it is going to be heavier with the record of scoring 100 goals for the same club in a match won by which Real Madrid against Paris Saint-Germain.

• The second top scorer record for one club belongs to Lionel Messi with 97 goals

Other Footballers in the list

• Raul" 66 goals

• Alessandro Del Piero: 42 Goals

• Karim Benzema: 41

Achievements by Cristiano Ronaldo

In his football career, Ronaldo has bagged 5 Ballon d'Or awards and he is the most official goals scorer in the top five European leagues (380 goals). Also, Ronaldo is the first player in history to win four European Golden Shoes. Ronaldo has won 25 trophies in his career with five league titles, four UEFA Champions League titles and one UEFA European Championship.

Highlights of Ronaldo's World Records

• Top goalscorer in the history of FIFA Club World Cup: 7 goals

• First and only player to appear in the FIFPro World XI for two different clubs.

• Only player to have won more than one FIFA Club World Cup Silver Ball.

• Only player to score more than 50 goals in six different seasons (did it consecutively)

• Only player to score more than 50 goals in 7 consecutive calendar years

• First player to score in consecutive FIFA Club World Cup finals

• Only player to score a hat trick in a FIFA Club World Cup or Intercontinental Cup final

• Most hat tricks in the FIFA Club World Cup or Intercontinental Cup (shared with Luis Suarez and Pelé)

Odisha to Sponsor Indian Hockey Teams for Five Years

• Indian Hockey Teams have got the new sponsor in the form of Odisha Government which has decided to be the promoter of the teams for the next five years.

• This news is heartwarming because, in India, where cricket fans occupy the majority, other sports remain at the backdrop.

• The announcement was made on the occasion of an event attended by Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik and members of Indian hockey teams, International Hockey Federation (FIH) and IOA President Narinder Batra, IOA Secretary General Rajeev Mehta among other dignitaries.

• Along with this association, the teams got new logo unveiled during the event. No doubt, Odisha has given our country the finest hockey players and Hockey team of Bhuvneshwar has won the Kalinga Lancers in the Hockey India League.

• Odisha's sponsorship will definitely help to promote the game and also to attract the youth toward hockey.

• The state is the host and proud title sponsor of the FIH men's Hockey World Cup to be held later this year.

KP Sharma Oli Appointed Nepal's Prime Minister

• Unified Marxist-Leninist's Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli has been appointed the Prime Minister of Nepal. He took oath in the presence of President Bidya Devi Bhandari on Thursday in the capital, Kathmandu.

• is appointment came two months after the resignation of former PM Nepali Congress Party's Sher Bahadur Deuba.

• Oli will be leading the nation for the second time as he previously held the top executive post from October 2015 to August 2016.

Oli's Background

• Born on 22, 1952 in Nepal's Jhapa, Oli was influenced a communist leader when he was a teenager and in 1970 Oli became a member of the Nepal Communist Party and began an underground life

• He was in prison for14 years for his involvement with radical communist politics. He served as home minister in 1994 and foreign minister in 2007. He became party's chairman in February 2014. Oli pledged to work towards fulfilling his election pledges and said

"I would exert my utmost efforts to further our country's national interest,"

The World Government Summit 2018 Concluded in Dubai

The sixth edition of the annual World Government Summit concluded with the presentation of awards at the summit venue at Madinat Jumeirah in Dubai.

Aim of the Summit

The summit aims at bringing together the leader from various public and private sectors to be engaged in inspirational and futuristic dialogues in order to improve the functioning of the government and the lives of the citizensThis year over 4000 delegates from more than 150 countries gather in Dubai and discussed future challenges and opportunities

The World Government Summit Awards

Best m-Government Service Award for the

• Accessible Government- India's Umang.

• Effective Mobility- UK's City Mapper.

• Protecting Human Life- UAE's Dubai Police.

• Enhancing Social & Cultural Awareness- My Hong Kong Guide

• Building Knowledge- Jordan's Edraak

• Sustainable Living Category is France's eCO2Mix

• The winner of the Edge of Government Award is Mobilizing Constructions from Kenya.

• The winner of the Global Universities Challenge is the London Business School

Military Balance 2018- India Becomes 5th-largest Defence Spenders

• London-based global think-tank International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) has released 'Military Balance 2018' in which India's has been placed on 5th largest defence suspender leaving behind the UK for the first time.

• As per the report, India spent 52.5 billion on defence and security in 2017 while UK's budget fell from USD 52.5 billion in 2016 to USD 50.7 billion last year.

• This is clear from the report that India is focusing more on the resources and equipment to increase its defence capabilities and the same will be continued in the future.

Contribution of Make in India Policy

• India's Make in India policy is highlighted in the report that solely aims at strengthening the

 • The report takes note of the Indian government's 'Make in India' policy, which aims to strengthen the defence-industrial base through measures such as "reforming the cap on foreign direct investment" (FDI) and that the country is one of the top troop contributors to UN peacekeeping operations.

• IISS says the new Indian Joint Armed Forces Doctrine issued last year sees an "emerging triad" of space, cyber and special-operations capabilities complementing conventional land, sea and air capabilities as India continues to modernize its strategic forces, particularly its delivery systems.

 • The United States again at the top position followed by China and Saudi Arabia. Russia secured the fourth place.

What is Military Balance 2018?

• The Military Balance 2018 comprises of a region-by-region analysis of the major military and economic developments that affect a country's defence policies, weapon-trading etc.

 • This year the report focused on the Russian and Chinese air-launched weapons; big data, AI and defence; Chinese military modernisation; and developments in European defence among many other themes.

• It traces the continued evolution of defence spending and military capabilities in the AsiaPacific, as well as the global spread of advanced weapons. This year's Military Balance wall chart is focused on the modernisation of US, Chinese and Russian strategic nuclear forces.

Tri-service Maritime Exercise 'Paschim Lehar' Begins

A tri-service maritime exercise "Paschim Lehar kicked off at India's western coast with the participation of 40 ships, submarines and fighter aircraft.

Aim

The sole aim of the exercise is to build interoperability among the units from Eastern Naval Command, Indian Army, Indian Air Force and the Coast Guard

Key Points

• A large number of ships, submarines and aircraft from the Western Naval Command of the Indian Navy are a part of the exercise

• The exercise includes a number of weapon firings, including missile, gun and torpedo firings during the initial phase. The second phase is structured to validate and refine the operational plans of the Western Naval Command

• The Amphibious capabilities of the Armed Forces, along with the elements of Army Amphibious Brigade will also be deployed and tested for operational tasking during the exercise.

Anti-narcotics Scheme Extended for Three Years

The government of India has decided to extend 'Assistance to States and UTs for Narcotics Control' scheme for three more years as the country still has around 40 lakh drug addicts.

What is the scheme?

The scheme was launched on October 24, 2004, to combats illicit trafficking in drugs and psychotropic substance. The scheme was launched for a period of five and later extended twice in subsequent years and now it has again been extended for three years which means the situation of drug addiction is severe.

Key Points

• Assistance will be provided to the governments and Union Territories which are contributing in controlling the inter-state and cross-border drug trafficking.

• Financial assistance will be offered to all the anti-narcotics agencies and capacity building activities that are working in the direction of strengthening their enforcement capabilities to combat illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances

Condition of Drug Addiction in India

• According to the latest assessments, there are approximately 40 lakh drug addicts in India but the actual number of drug addicts will way higher than the mentioned in the reports.

• 'Ganja', 'hashish', 'Opium' and 'heroin' are most commonly and widely used drugs but abuse of pharmaceutical preparations like 'buprenorphine', codeine-based cough syrups and painkillers like 'proxivon' has done serious harm which is giving birth to many socio-economic problems

What Strategy should be adopted?

It is of utmost importance that all the state governments should make people aware of drug menace and its consequences before it spreads like an epidemic. The supply of drug should be checked and the abuse of pharmaceutical preparations should be put under strict monitoring. Considering the situation

of drug addiction in the country, the number of rehabilitation centres and de-addiction measure should be increased.

Asha Bhosle Honoured With 5th Yash Chopra Memorial Award

Asha Bhosle, the lady who ruled Indian music industry for more than 70 years and recorded over 11000 superhit songs, has been felicitated with 5th Yash Chopra Memorial Award. The award was presented to Asha Bhosle by legendary actress Rekha who herself has won it.

About Yash Chopra Memorial Award

• The award has been constituted in the memory of renowned film director Yash Chopra who died in 2012. MP T Subbarami in association with Anu Ranjan and Shashi Ranjan are the founding members of the award which carries a cash prize of Rs 10 lakh.

• The previous recipients of the award were Lata Mangeshkar, Amitabh Bachchan, Rekha and Shah Rukh Khan.

About Asha Bhosle

• Asha Bhosle is an Indian singer who started her career in 1943 and has spanned over six decades. She has done playback singing for over a thousand Bollywood movies.

• Her work includes film music, pop, ghazals, bhajans, traditional Indian classical music, folk songs, qawwalis, and Rabindra Sangeets. In 2011, she was officially recognised by the Guinness Book of World Records as the most recorded artist in music history.

Cyril Ramaphosa Sworn in as South Africa's President

African National Congress leader Cyril Ramaphosa sworn in as the new President of South Africa after Jacob Zuma resigned from the presidency. Ramphosa ended his speech saying

"I will try very hard not to disappoint the people of South Africa,"

Why did Zuma resign?

As per Zuma's statement given in an interview, he was pressurised by his party to step down from the presidency otherwise the party would give a vote of no confidence in parliament. Zuma also expressed his disagreement with his party's decision and blamed the violence and division within the ANC. Notably, Zuma served as South Africa's President since 2009 "Even though I disagree with the decision of the leadership of my organisation, I have always been a disciplined member of the ANC. "As I leave I will continue to serve the people of South Africa as well as the ANC, the organisation I have served... all of my life." said Zuma

Cyril's focus

• In his address to parliament, Cyril stated to work with the opposition party in order to curb corruption and to aim at improving the lives of people, strengthening the state-owned enterprises.

• He will also try to pace up the stagnant economy and bring down the unemployment and economic inequality.

• His government will focus on creating new job, attracting investment and reconstructing the departments of government

Centre to Change Base Year for GDP, IIP to 2017-18

• Narendra Modi-led government of India has decided to change the base year to 2017-18 for the calculation of GDP and IIP.

• The base rate for the retail inflation will be revised to 2018 and the ministry will undertake various steps in the next fiscal beginning April that will improve the statistical system that will help meet the data requirements in the emerging socio-economic scenario. The statistics and programme implementation minister D. V. Sadananda Gowda said "During 2018-19, the ministry is proposing to initiate steps to revise the base years of gross domestic product (GDP), Index of Industrial Production (IIP) and Consumer Price Index (CPI) to accommodate and factor the changes that take place in the economic scenario of the country,"

What is GDP?

GDP stands for Gross Domestic Product which is a method of measuring a country's growth. It is the total value of the goods and services produced by all the people and companies in the country within country's boundaries. 2011-12 is the current base rate to measure India's GDP.

What is IIP?

• IIP stands for Index of Industrial Production for India. It is used to measure the growth of various sectors in an economy. It measures short terms changes in the production within a period of time

• It is compiled and published monthly by the Central Statistical Office (CSO) six weeks after the reference month ends. The current base year is 2011-2012

What is the base year?

Base year is the year against which the performance of an index is measured. For example, suppose the base year is 2010 and the initial value of an index is 100. If the index is 150 in 2019, it means that the value of the index is 50% higher in 2019 than it was in 2010. It is also called the reference year.

Theatre Olympics 2018 Commences in New Delhi

Over 25,000 artists from 30 countries have gathered in New Delhi to participate in the Theatre Olympics. India is hosting the eighth edition of this event for the very first time and thus, it is a matter of pride for the nation.

Highlights of the Event

• 51-day long theatre event was inaugurated on 17th of February by Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu at Lal Quila.

• Considered as the biggest celebration of theatre, this event works as a platform for the artists to showcase their talent and traditional forms of theatre. Around 450 shows including 65 shows by international artists, 600 ambient performances and 250 youth forum are the highlights of the event. The shows will be hosted in various cities of India along with the programmes like the 'Living Legends' series, and 'Master Classes' and two international and six national seminars.

• Olympic's theme of "Flag of Friendship" will serve to create a dialogue between Indian and global artists

History of Theatre Olympics

• The Theatre Olympics was established in 1993 in Delphi, Greece, as the first international theatre festival. With the tagline 'Crossing Millennia', Greece hosted the first theatre Olympics 1995.

• This is an initiative to connect the cultural past with the present and future, bringing the richness and diversity of theatre heritage to the experiments and research of contemporary theatre.

Youth Exchange Programme 'Watan ko Jano' Launched

• With an aim to give exposure to the youth and children of Jammu and Kashmir, the Ministry of Home Affairs has launched "Watan ko Jano" programme.

• The programmer started on 11th of February too around 200 youth on a visit to different places of the country as part of the programme to make them aware of the cultural and socioeconomic development taking place in other parts of the country.

• Most of the children and young people were chosen for the programme belonged to the weaker section of the society

• The children have visited Ajmer, Jaipur and Agra and the historical places in Delhi.

Aim of the programme

With this tour, the youth will be able to see the development of modern India. The youth have certain responsibilities towards nation when they grow up and they should take interest in education, respect elders and do something that will make their parents and country proud. Home Minister Rajnath Singh

said "Unity in diversity is the unique value of the country and these children are also a reflection of it. With this tour, the youths will be able to see the development of modern India,"

World Information Technology Congress 2018 Inaugurated

• Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated World Conference on Information Technology (WCIT-2018) in Hyderabad through video-conferencing from Delhi.

• India is hosting the event for the very first time in partnership with NASSCOM, WITSA and the government of Telangana. Business delegations from 25 countries are attending the event themed 'Amplify digital-Disrupt the core'.

• In his inaugural speech, Modi highlighted India'sprogress in Information technology "With one lakh villages linked with optical fibre, over 100 crore mobile phones, 120 crore Aadhar and 50 crore Internet users India is best placed to leverage power of technology and leapfrog into future," he said. The theme of this edition of the conference is 'Future Enterprises.'.

• Sophia the humanoid, who is a Saudi citizen, is also attending the conference key attraction. This will be her second sojourn in the country, having attended the TechFest at the IIT Bombay late last year.

What is World Information Technology Congress?

 • The World Congress on Information Technology (WCIT) is the largest and the most reputable international event among worldwide IT leaders aiming at bringing together the high-level officials from different countries, heads of multinational organizations, universities and scientific research centres, non-governmental organizations' representatives and many more.

• The event includes discussions of legal, political and economic trends affecting IT business processes, presentations of innovative solutions, B2B meetings and so on.

• The WCIT has been held since 1978. Armenia will host the 9th edition of WCIT 2019.

40 Indian Languages and Dialects On The Verge of Extinction

• It is saddening that, in India, which is considered to have an enriched variety of language, there are over 40 languages groaning under the fear of extinction.

• According to a report released by Census Directorate, More than 40 languages or dialects in India are considered to be endangered and are believed to be heading towards extinction as only a few thousand people speak them

• The report says that in India around 22 scheduled and 100 non-scheduled languages are spoken by majority of people and on the darker side 40+ languages are spoken by less than 10,000 people

UNESCO's List

A list prepared by UNESCO of 42 languages or dialects in India that are endangered and they may be heading towards extinction

11 from Andaman and Nicobar Islands

• Great Andamanese

• Jarawa,

 • Lamongse

• Luro

• Muot

• Onge

• Pu

• Sanenyo

• Sentilese

 • Shompen

• Takahanyilang

7 from Manipur

• Aimol

• Aka

• Koiren

 • Lamgang

 • Langrong

• Purum

• Tarao

4 Himachal Pradesh

 • Baghati

 • Handuri

- Pangvali

- Sirmaudi

Other Languages in Endangered Category

- Manda, Parji and Pengo (Odisha),

- Koraga and Kuruba (Karnataka)

- Gadaba and Naiki (AP)

- Kota and Toda (Tamil Nadu)

- Mra and Na (Arunachal Pradesh)

- Tai Nora and Tai Rong (Assam)

- Bangani (Uttarakhand)

- Birhor (Jharkhand)

- Nihali (Maharashtra)

- Ruga (Meghalaya)

- Toto (West Bengal)

Government Approves Auction Of Commercial Coal Mining To Private Firms

The government of India has allowed private companies to mine the fossil fuel for commercial use and this ended the monopoly of state-owned Coal India Ltd. This approval is considered be a major reform since coal sector's nationalisation in 1973.

Importance of the reform

It will bring efficiency into the coal sector by eliminating monopoly and starting competition and lower power tariffs. Investments will be pushed giving way for employment generation.

Who approved the proposal?

Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) under the Chairmanship of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in order to bring competitiveness and technological advancement and hence bringing economic development.

Process

• A methodology for the auction of coal mines/blocks for sale of coal has been approved under the Coal Mines (Special Provisions) Act, 2015 and the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957.

• The auction will be an ascending forward auction whereby the bid parameter will be the price offer is Rs./tonne which will be paid to the State Government on the actual production of coal. There shall be no restriction on the sale and/or utilisation of coal from the coal mine

• Lagre, medium, as well as small mines, would be offered to private companies for mining.

Benefits

• Energy security through assured coal supply

• Accountable allocation and affordability

 • Transparency and Ease of doing business

• Proper Utilisation of Natural Resources

• Bringing down power tariffs

India's Coal Bearing Capacity

• West Bengal, Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, and Madhya Pradesh are the major coalbearing sates. India is believed to have reserves of 300 billion tonnes. The Supreme Court had in September 2014 cancelled 204 coal mines allocated to the different Government and private companies since 1993 under the provisions of Coal Mines (Nationalisation) Act, 1973.

• Chardham Mahamarg Pariyojana: Silkyara Bend-Barkot Tunnel Approved

• Construction of 4.531 km long 2-Lane Bi-Directional Silkyara Bend - Barkot Tunnel has been approved by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs. The tunnel will have an escape passage including approaches on Dharasu -Yamunotri section between Chainage 25.400 Km. and Chainage 51.000 Km in Uttarakhand.

Highlights of the Project

• It will fall along NH-134 in the state of Uttrakhand.

• This is funded under NH (O) Scheme of Ministry of RT&H and forms part of ambitious Chardham Plan are funding the production.

 • The expected construction period is 4 years with an estimated cost of Rs. 1119.69 crore.

• The tunnel will provide all-weather connectivity to Yamunotri which is one of the Char Dham Yatra.

• It will reduce the travel distance from Dharasu to Yamunotri by about 20 km and travel time by about an hour.

• Keeping in view the environment protection, the trees removed to construct the tunnel will be comparatively very less.

• The project aims at the construction of 4.531 Km long two-lane Bi-Directional tunnel (along with 328m approach road) with escape passage on Dharasu –Yamunotri in the State of Uttarakhand.

Maharashtra to Launch Asmita Yojana on Women's Day

On the occasion of International Women's Day, Maharashtra government will attempt to remove the taboo associated with the topic of menstrual hygiene with increased awareness by launching Asmita Yojana. The scheme will be formally launched on March 8

Objective of the scheme

• The scheme will be launched with an objective of providing sanitary napkin packets at Rs. 5 to the girls of Zilla Parishad schools.

• The women of rural areas can avail at sanitary napkin packets at Rs. 24 and Rs. 29

Launch

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and Bollywood actor Akshay Kumar will be present at the launch. Akshay Kumar's recently released film "Padman" envisaged to create awareness about menstrual hygiene among rural women.

Background

Asmita Yojana was launched in 2017 by Women and Child and Rural Development Minister Pankaja Munde to awareness about hygiene during periods among girls in the age group of 11 to 19 years and women in general in rural areas of Maharashtra. The state government has appointed "Umed'- the Maharashtra State Rural Livelihood Mission, as a nodal agency for effective implementation of the scheme

Implementation

• Beneficiary girls will be given "Asmita Cards".

• Participating Self Help Groups (SHGs) will be entitled to the task of the supply and sale of sanitary pads and counselling the girls and women.

• Hygiene campaign will also be launched across the state to increase awareness among young girls on the usage of sanitary pads.

• Creation of employment opportunities for women in rural areas and create awareness about health and education

N Gopalaswami Committee to Select Top 20 Educational Institutes of Eminence

Former Chief Election Commission N Gopalaswami of India along with a panel of top international and Indian academicians will shortlist India's best higher educational institutes. The selected institutes will be prepared to aim at the international glory.

About the panel

• The University Grant Commission of India formed a four-member expert committee and assigned the task to conduct the evaluation of the application by the institute and then shortlist the 20 Institute of Eminence.

• The committee was constituted as per the UGC (Institutions of Eminence Deemed to be Universities) Regulation 2017 and UGC (Declaration of Government Educational Institutions as Institutions of Eminence) Guidelines 2017.

Members of the committee

• N Gopalaswami is the chairperson

• Tarun Khanna, Jorge Paulo Lemman Professor, Harvard Business School

• Pritam Singh, former director of IIM, Lucknow and MDI, Gurugram

• Renu Khator, chancellor, University of Houston System

Institutions of Eminence

• It is a flagship project for internationalisation of Indian campuses launched by the Ministry of Human Resource Development on September 2017.

• By March-April 2018, 20 (10 each from the public and private category) institutions will be accorded the status of 'Institutions of Eminence' with a mandate to achieve world-class status over a period of 10 years.

Eligibility

As per the guidelines issued by the UGC, those institutions in the top 50 of the National Institute Ranking Framework (NIRF) rankings or those who have secured ranking among top 500 of the Times Higher Education World University Rankings, QS University Rankings or Shanghai Ranking Academic Ranking of World Universities are eligible to apply.

Benefits

The IoE group will enjoy unprecedented administrative and financial autonomy in a wide range of matters, including faculty and staff salaries, student fees, course offerings and content, among others. Other than adhere to a reasonably flexible set of guidelines, they will also be completely free of University Grants Commission (UGC) regulations.

Light Transport Aircraft "Saras" Completes Second Test Flight Successfully

India's indigenously built light transport aircraft Saras completed its second test flight successfully in Bengaluru. Wing Commander U P Singh, Group Captain R V Panicker and Group Captain K P Bhat of the Indian Air Force commanded the test flight from HAL airport. This test flight is second of the 20 test flights planned for Saras PT1N before being frozen for production.

Key Features

• It is designed and developed by the CSIR-National Aerospace Laboratories and will be 20-25% cheaper than the other imported aircraft in the same category.

 • The seating capacity will be for 19 persons and it will cost around 40 to 45 crore

• Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) will produce the military versions of Saras while the civil version will be produced by identified private industries.

• Saras Mk2 is considered ideal commuter for central government's UDAAN scheme a variety of applications like air taxi, aerial search and survey, executive transport, disaster management, border patrol, coast guard, ambulance and other community services

What is Saras?

• It is named after Indian crane Saras

• It is an indigenous aircraft developed by the National Aeronautics Laboratories (NAL), which is overseen by the Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR).

• The plane is capable of executing both day and night missions. It can be used for transporting civilians, freight, and in remote sensing exercises.

• It can take off and land from semi-prepared airfields and even on grass runways.

• The aircraft has been designed to travel at 425 km/h and it has a maximum continuous flight time of around five hours. The Indian Air Force has expressed interest in acquiring at least 15 aircraft, while CSIR-NAL is pushing for at least 50.

• The revised version of the plane is equipped with a more modern avionics system, improved radar, linear wing flap actuator, environment control, engine flap actuators, better flight control system, a larger metallic rudder for enhanced control, redesigned landing-gear actuators, a brand-new brake system, and a fire resistant design for the aircraft's nacelle.

• In its first high-speed taxi trial earlier this month, the aircraft was the in the air for about 40 minutes and reached an altitude of 8,500 ft and touched 269 km/h.

Government Launches Swajal Programme and Gangotri Swachh Iconic Place Project

Union Minister of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Uma Bharti, launched the Bagori Ganga Gram project, New Swajal Project at Bagori and Gangotri Iconic Place in Uttarakhand

Aim of the projects

• The projects aim at cleanliness, providing basic amenities to the people of Ganga bank villages and generating employment.

• People were urged to plant trees on the river bank is also the responsibility of people.More than 1.5 lac saplings are ready to be planted in Ganga Catchment area in Uttarkashi this year.

• Swajal Project is a community-owned drinking water programme for sustained drinking water supply.

Gangotri Swachh Iconic Place

 Gangotri Swachh Iconic Place project It aims to make Gangotri as Swachh Iconic Place (SIP). The SIP is a drive under the Swachh Bharat Mission and aims to improve the sanitation and cleanliness of 100 most iconic places in the country. The focus of the project will be to improve the basic infrastructure such as sanitation, waste collection, solar lamps, providing potable water, among others. Besides these, we will also carry out beautification of the place.

International Mother Language Day: 21 February

• International Mother Language Day (IMLD) is observed on 21 February every year to promote awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity and promote multilingualism.

 • The day was announced by UNESCO on 17 November 199 and formally recognized by the United Nations General Assembly in a resolution establishing 2008 as the International Year of Languages

Theme of 2018

• 2018 Theme: Linguistic diversity and multilingualism count for sustainable development

• It is very important for the sustainable development that the leaners get the education in their mother tough and in another language It is through the mastery of the first language or mother tongue that the basic skills of reading, writing and numeracy are acquired. Local languages, especially minority and indigenous, transmit cultures, values and traditional knowledge, thus play an important role in promoting sustainable futures.

• International Mother Language Day also supports target 6 of Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): "Ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy."

Khajuraho Dance Festival Begins in Madhya Pradesh

• Globally acknowledged India's Khajuraho dance fest is being held at Khajuraho temple, a UNESCO world heritage site in Chhatarpur district of Madhya Pradesh.

 • The 44th edition of the event commenced with a glittering ceremony and the performance of Raja-Radha Reddy – Kuchipudi dancing couple.

• The festival being organised by the culture department of the Madhya Pradesh government will conclude on February 26, 2018

• During the fest will classical dances, including Kathak, Odissi, Bharatnatyam, Kuchipudi, Kathakali and Mohiniattam will be showcased

• Modern Indian contemporary dance forms were added in the festival in the recent times.

 • During the festival, dance performances are held in an open-air auditorium, usually in front of the Chitragupta Temple dedicated to the Sun God and the Vishwanatha Temple dedicated to Lord Shiva.

About Khajuraho Dance Festival

• Khajuraho dance festival is organised annually by the Madhya Pradesh Kala Parishad.

• The one-week long festival of classical dances is held against the spectacular backdrop of the magnificently lit Khajuraho temples in Chhatarpur district of Madhya Pradesh

Khajuraho Group of Monuments

• The Khajuraho temples were built by the Chandela dynasty between 950 AD and 1050 AD. The Khajuraho Group of Monuments are world-wide known for their erotic sculptures. The temples are famous for their nagara-style architectural symbolism and their erotic sculptures.

 • Historical records note that the Khajuraho temple site had 85 temples by the 12th century, spread over 20 square kilometres. Of these, only about 25 temples have survived, spread over 6 square

kilometres.Kandariya Mahadeva Temple is decorated with a profusion of sculptures with intricate details, symbolism and expressiveness of ancient Indian art

• The Khajuraho group of temples were built together but were dedicated to two religions, Hinduism and Jainism, suggesting a tradition of acceptance and respect for diverse religious views among Hindus and Jains in the region.

Corruption Perception Index 2017- India Ranks 81

Corruption Perception Index has been released by Berlin-based non-government organisation Transparency International (TI) and India is placed at 81st rank in it with 40 points. The Corruption Perception Index 2017 also singled out India as one of the "worst offenders" in the Asia-Pacific region.

What is Corruption Perception Index 2017?

It is an index that ranks countries according to the extent of corruption prevailing in it. It was created in 1955 and ranked 180 countries on a scale of zero to 100, with zero indicating high levels of corruption and 100 indicating low levels.

Highlights of the Report

• The report says the many countries in the world are in the clutches of wide-spread corruption. In Asian-pacific countries, journalists, activists, opposition leaders and even staff of law enforcement or watchdog agencies are threatened and murdered

• "Philippines, India and the Maldives are among the worst regional offenders in this respect. These countries score high for corruption and have fewer press freedoms and higher numbers of journalist deaths," it added.

• Despite attempts to combat corruption, most countries were moving too slowly with their effort. In the past six years, many countries have made little to no progress

• This year, the index found that more than two-thirds of countries score below 50, with an average score of 43.

Best and Worst Scorer

• New Zealand and Denmark ranked highest with scores of 89 and 88 respectively.

• Syria, South Sudan and Somalia rank lowest with scores of 14, 12 and 9 respectively.

• The best performing region is Western Europe with an average score of 66.

• The worst performing regions are Sub-Saharan Africa (average score 32) and Eastern Europe and Central Asia (average score 34).

Uttar Pradesh Becomes 1st State to Clear Projects Digitally

• A digital platform Nivesh Mitra has been launched in Uttar Pradesh during state's first Investor's Summit. Nivesh Mitra launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi will allow investors to apply for the project clearance online.

• With the launch of Nivesh Mitra, Uttar Pradesh has become first Indian state where projects will be cleared digitally without human interference.

Features of Nivesh Mitra

• It is a digital platform that will enable investors to apply for project clearances online which means the chances of corruption will be relatively low.

• The single-window system with absolutely no human interface.

• 20 departments are projected under its ambit and application for 70 clearances can be made through this portal.

• The clearance will be done in a time-bound manner and the process will be monitored at the highest level.

• With Nivesh Mitra and the Investors Summit, Uttar Pradesh may well be on its way towards removing its 'Bimaru' tag and heralding a new era of prosperity for its citizenry.

CM Yogi Aditya Nath's Efforts

• Uttar Pradesh CM Yogi Adityanath has been trying to improve state's image across the nation by using various policies and strict decisions. First Investor's Summit was an attempt to attract investors towards UP and consequently, his government signed MoUs worth Rs. 4.28 lakh crores and business stalwarts such as Ambani and Adani have promised investments worth thousands and thousands of crores.

• The state government is also planning to fill the vacancies in its police department and teaching staff which is expected to generate further employment for its youth.

• The Uttar Pradesh Police's heavy crackdown on criminals is directed towards creating an environment where businessmen feel safe to invest in the state.

• Chief Minister has vowed to create 40 lakh jobs in the next 3 years.

Parivartan Scheme launched in Haryana

The state government of Haryana, with a view to addressing major 10 issues including cleanliness and pollution, has launched Parivartan Scheme. The scheme will be launched in 46 development blocks of Haryan

Issues to be addressed

• The scheme will address the 10 major issues that include facilitation of financing, making agriculture profitable and sustainable, improving health services, implementing Swachh Bharat, decongesting market areas, engaging the youth, checking air pollution, ensuring availability of identity-related services, effective policing, and ensuring road order and conduct.

• Implementation

• 46 top officials of the state, including those from the IAS, IFS and IPS cadres, have been allotted one block each

• These officers will undertake works in the 10 selected common fields and one field of their choice, Khattar said.

• For each of the 10 fields, there are three to seven parameters on which the performance of the officers would be assessed.

• Some of these parameters include making a 10 km-long stretches accident free, one town or mahagram stray cattle free, ensuring delivery of caste certificates to all school students and ensuring charge sheets are filed in all FIRs of heinous crime.

• A maximum of 39 marks would be available for 38 parameters covering these 10 fields and scoring would be done by the officers.

• A maximum of four marks has been kept for 'Any Field of Officers Choice' and another seven marks would be given on the basis of social audit by the Haryana Governance Reforms Authority (HGRA),

• A strong work force of about 3 lakh employees and directed administrative secretaries to utilise their services to ensure benefits of government schemes and programmes reach people of these 46 blocks, which comprise over one-third of the state's total area.

Special Package Launched to Tackle Insurgency in Arunachal Pradesh

• Rajnath Singh, Union Home Minister of India, has sanctioned a special package to strengthen the security in the three districts of Arunanchal Pradesh.

• The package is sanctioned to tackle insurgency, create new posts and purchasing of vehicle and equipment in Tirap. Changlang and Longding. The announcement was made on the event organised to celebrate the 31st statehood day of Arunachal Pradesh on 20th February 2018.

Highlights

• The Home Ministry will sanction funds at the earliest to built 20+ police stations in the three districts.

• The ministry will look after the proposal sent by state government of Arunanchal Pradesh for setting up ITBP Battalion.

• A Rs 50,000 crore project for roads and bridges for Arunachal Pradesh has already been sanctioned by Union Minister of Road Transport and Highway Nitin Gadkari which would be sanctioned within the next two years.

Future Projects for Arunachal Pradesh

• Four state roads in Arunachal have already been announced as national highways

• Foundation stone for railway line to Pasighat would be laid soon and the Railways ministry had already announced survey of railway line from Bame-Ruksin-Tezu-Parashuram Kund via Rupai and Marupang to Tawang.

• To boost telecom and IT connectivity in Arunachal Pradesh, work on band line in 5035 km area is on. Ducting has been completed in 2300 km, while cables have been laid in 1300 km.

• Centre had already given 75 per cent subsidy for two MI-75 choppers in operation in the state, while subsidy for another small chopper would be approved soon.

• Commercial flights will be made operational from Pasighat Advance Landing Ground (ALG) soon

About Arunachal Pradesh

• It is also known as the Orchid State of India or the Paradise of the Botanists. Geographically, it is the largest of the north-eastern states known as the Seven Sister States.It was established on 20 February 1987

• Itanagar is the largest and the capital city of the state

History of Arunachal Pradesh Statehood Day

• February 20th is celebrated as the statehood day of Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram. Arunachal Pradesh, earlier named NEFA (North-East Frontier Agency), was created in 1955. It became a full fledged state of the Union of India on 20 February 1987.

• Mizo Hills was turned into a Union Territory in 1972. Following the Mizoram Peace Accord (1986), Mizoram was declared a full-fledged state of India on 20th February, 1987.

RBI Sets Up Committee Under YH Malegam to Monitor Bad Loans

• PNB Bank Fraud has stunned the common man as well as the bank regulatory organisation Reserve Bank of India. Stunned by the 11,400 crore fraud, RBI has formed a committee under the chairmanship of Y H Malegam.

• Malegam who served as the Central Board of Directors of RBI will enquire about the issue associated with the classification of bad loan, rising incidents of frauds and potency of the audits.

• RBI has privately warned the bank of possible misuse and asked them to implement the precautionary methods about the potential malicious use of SWIFT infrastructure.

Responsibility of the committee

The panel will search for the reasons of divergence observed in asset classification and provisioning by banks vis-à-vis the RBI's supervisory assessment. The committee will recommend the steps needed to prevent it, factors leading to an increasing incidence of frauds in banks and the measures (including IT interventions) needed to curb and prevent it and the role and effectiveness of various types of audits conducted in banks in mitigating the incidence of such divergence and frauds

Members of the committee

• Bharat Doshi

• S Raman

• Nandkumar Saravade

• A K Misra

• RBI's Role

 In a statement issued on Tuesday, the RBI said,

"the RBI as part of its ongoing efforts for strengthening of the supervisory framework in the country, has been issuing necessary instructions to banks from time to time on a variety of issues of prudential supervisory concern, including the management of operational risks inherent in the functioning of banks. The risks arising from the potential malicious use of the SWIFT infrastructure, created by banks for their genuine business needs, has always been a component of their operational risk profile.

TAPI Gas Pipeline Work Begins in Afghanistan

• The joint venture of Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India TAPI gas-pipeline work has officially started in Afghanistan.

 • The inaugural ceremony was attended by Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and Turkmen counterpart Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov joined Pakistani premier Shahid Khaqan Abbasi and India's minister of state for external affairs Shri M. J. Akbar in the ancient Afghan city of Herat.

• The prime objective of TAPI gas pipeline is to raise hopes for regional cooperation and peace among the four nations

Importance of TAPI Gas Pipeline

• TAPI Gas Pipeline is an eight billion dollar project aimed at linking the energy-rich nations Turkmenistan to India and Pakistan through Afghanistan. It is supported by the United States and the Asian Development Bank. Turkmenistan has been trying to tout the project since the 1990s but starting work on the pipeline has been delayed because of the problem of crossing Afghanistan.

• Turkmenistan owns the fourth largest natural gas reserves and thus the pipeline will help to export the natural gas to India and Pak. Galkynysh, the world's second-biggest gas field, will feed the TAPI (Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India) pipeline. The pipeline will allow Turkmenistan to find new consumers in Asia and cut its dependence on Beijing, which buys about 35 billion cubic metres (bcm) of gas annually. In 2016, Turkmenistan's major buyer of natural gas Russia ceased to purchase the gas completely.

Turkmenistan–Afghanistan–Pakistan–India Pipeline

• The Turkmenistan–Afghanistan–Pakistan–India Pipeline (TAPI), also known as TransAfghanistan Pipeline from the Caspian Sea. It is a natural gas pipeline being developed by the Galkynysh – TAPI Pipeline Company Limited. The natural gas from the Galkynysh Gas Field in Turkmenistan will be transported through Afghanistan to India and Pakistan. It is expected that the project will be operationalised in 2019.

• Out of the total 1,814 km., the pipeline will run for 214 km in Turkmenistan, 774 km in Afghanistan along the Kandahar-Herat highway, 826 km in Pakistan through Quetta and Multan and finally reaching the settlement of Fazilka, in India located near the India-Pakistan border.

India Impose Anti-Dumping Duty on China's Ceramicware

• India, in order to save domestic producers, has imposed anti-dumping duty on China's ceramic tableware and kitchenware.

• The duty imposed on shipping tableware and kitchenware shipped from China will attract an anti-dumping duty of USD 1.04 per kg making imports expensive.

The notice states

"The anti-dumping duty imposed shall be levied for a period not exceeding six months (unless revoked, amended or superseded earlier),"

Reasons

• All India Pottery Manufacturers Association (AIPMA) and the Indian Ceramic Society alleged that the products are being dumped in India which is harming domestic producers. They asked for the anti-dumping duty to be imposed.

• After an investigation, the DGAD recommended imposition of a definitive anti-dumping duty on the imports. DGAD concluded that ceramic tableware and kitchenware, excluding knives and toilet items, are being exported from China to India "below its normal value, resulting in dumping".

• Based on the recommendations, the revenue department in the finance ministry has imposed the duty. The domestic industry, it observed, has suffered material injury due to dumping.

Other Anti-Dumping Duty Imposes

 The government also extended by one year till June 6, 2018, the anti-dumping duty on imports of 'plain gypsum plaster boards' from China, Indonesia, Thailand and the UAE.The anti-dumping duty on import of plain gypsum plaster boards was first imposed in 2013 and the DGAD has recommended extension of the same.

What is an anti-dumping duty?

• Anti-dumping duty is the penalty imposed on the products imported at low prices in order to protect the local industries from unfair competitions.

 • Anti-dumping duties are evaluated generally in an amount equal to the difference between the importing country's FOB price of the goods and (at the time of their importation) the market value of similar goods in the exporting country or other countries.

RBI Launches Ombudsman Scheme for NBFCs

In the Monetary Policy Statement released in February 2018, Reserve Bank of India announced to launch Ombudsman Scheme for Non-Banking Finance Companies which has been launched officially.

Why?

 • The purpose of launching Ombudsman for NBFCs is to resolve the complaints against the nonbanking finance companies registered with RBI under section 45-IA of the RBI Act, 1934

 • The scheme will provide a cost-free and expeditious complaint redressal mechanism relating to deficiency in the services by NBFCS covered under the scheme.

Implementation

• Initially, all the deposit-taking NBFCs will be covered under this scheme. After analysing the result of the first step, RBI would extend the scheme to cover NBFCS having an asset size of Rs one billion and above with customer interface. The scheme provides for an appellate mechanism under which the complainant/NBFC has the option to appeal against the decision of the Ombudsman before the appellate authority.

• The offices of the NBFC Ombudsmen will function at four metro centres - Chennai, Kolkata, Mumbai and New Delhi and will handle complaints of customers in the respective zones.

What is Ombudsman?

An ombudsman, ombud, or public advocate is an official who is charged with representing the interests of the public by investigating and addressing complaints of maladministration or a violation of rights. The ombudsman is usually appointed by the government or by parliament, but with a significant degree of independence.

RBI Directs Banks to Link SWIFT to CBS by April 2018

PNB's 11,400 crore scam raised the question on banks' core banking solutions and thus threatened the people's trust in banks. To deal with the situation and to tighten the internal controls in banks Reserve Bank of India has directed the banks to integrate SWIFT (Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication) with its core banking solutions (CBS) by April 30 There is already a mandate from RBI that you need to comply with this straight through processing and combining SWIFT to CBS, who have not done. Everybody has started (sic)," PNB fraud has led many banks to review their internal processes and have started centralising and linking their processes to CBS. Each bank will have to review their control systems and technology separately, as their problems and loopholes may differ. "The risks arising from the potential malicious use of the SWIFT infrastructure, created by banks for their genuine business needs, has always been a component of their operational risk profile. RBI had, therefore, confidentially cautioned and alerted banks of such possible misuse, at least on three occasions since August 2016, advising them to implement the safeguards detailed in the RBI's communications, for pre-empting such occurrences. Banks have, however, been at varying levels in implementation of such measures,"

What is SWIFT Code?

The Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT) provides a network that helps financial institutions worldwide to send and receive information about financial transactions in a secure and reliable environment. The Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial SWIFT transports financial messages in a highly secure way and does not hold accounts for its members or perform any form of clearing or settlement. SWIFT does not help in funds transfer rather it sends payment orders which must be settled by correspondent accounts that the institutions have with each other.

Assam to Mark September 22 as Rhino Day

The government of Assam has declared to mark September 22 as Rhino Day to spread public awareness on protection of the one-horned pachyderm. The decision was taken during the 10th meeting of State Board for Wildlife.

Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal has said

"A day dedicated to the approximately 2,500 rhino population in the state will be a tribute to the rhinoceros — the pride of Assam,"

• The state government to launched a Rhino Project in line with National Rhino Project to protect rhinos from the threat of poaching.

• The wildlife board is directed to raise a quick response team to rush to the sites where animal deaths have occurred unnaturally. The board will also initiate a survey of elephant corridors in the state with the help of the World Wildlife Fund.

• "Once the elephant corridor mapping in completed, we will hold a meeting with the Ministry of Railways to take remedial steps like creating tunnels or overpass for the elephants," said the CM

About Indian Rhinoceros

The Indian rhinoceros or the greater one-horned rhinoceros and great Indian rhinoceros are listed as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List. The populations are fragmented and restricted to less than 20,000 km2 (7,700 sq mi). They are found in Kaziranga, Orang, Pobitara, Jaldapara (in Assam), Dudhwa (UP) National Park. Kaziranga National Park hosts two-thirds of the world's Great One-horned rhinoceros.

Blue Coloured Bal Aadhaar Card Launched

• The nodal agency for issuing Aadhaar Card, Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) has rolled out Bal Aadhaar for the kids under the age of 5 years.

• The blue-colored Bal Aadhaar will have no biometric identification, like Iris scan or fingerprint scans, as their parents would be accompanying them anywhere such identification is required. Once the kid crosses 5 years of age, then a regular Aadhaar would be issued, which will have the biometric details.

• This card will be linked with his/her parent's UID. A biometric update is mandatory at age 5, at age 10 and again at age 15. If your child is above the age of 5, then you have to carry the child's birth certificate and valid school ID.

What is ADHAAR Card?

• Aadhaar is a 12-digit unique identification number issued by Indian government to every citizen.

• The Unique Identification Authority of India functioning under the Planning Commission of India, is responsible for managing Aadhaar numbers and Aadhaar identification cards. The motive of issuing Aadhar is to provide a single and unique identification number consisting of all the details like demographic and biometric information. Though, it is not the only idenfication proof and also does not replace the need of Voter ID, PAN Card and Driving License, but it can be used for KYC norms of banks and other organisations

RISE Scheme: IITs to Get 25% of Government Loans

Revitalising Infrastructure and Systems in Education (RISE) scheme announced in this year's budget has been launched under which the Indian Institute of Technology will get 25% loans on offer under the new funding model.

Funding

• Under this scheme, ll centrally-funded institutes (CFIs), including central universities, IITs, IIMs, NITs and IISERs, can borrow from a Rs 1,00,000 crore corpus over the next four years to expand and build new infrastructure. A quarter of this amount — Rs 25,000 crore — will be set aside exclusively for the 23 IITs. • 20,000 crore, will be secured for central universities.

• While the National Institutes of Technology (NITs) can borrow up to Rs 11,300 crore, the new IIMs will get Rs 4,500 crore, and five IISERs Rs 5,000 crore.

• Rs 9,000 crore will be available for building robust research ecosystems, like world-class laboratories, in CFIs.

• All financing for infrastructure development at CFIs will be done through the Higher Education Funding Agency (HEFA), which was set up by the government as a Section 8 company last year to mobilise funds from the market and offer 10-year loans to centrally-run institutes.

Implementation

• All financing for infrastructure development at CFIs will be done through the Higher Education Funding Agency (HEFA), which was set up by the government as a Section 8 company last year to mobilise funds from the market and offer 10-year loans to centrally-run institutes.

• All the infrastructure and research projects sanctioned by HEFA are to be completed by December 2022. Funding agency will release money directly to the vendors or contractors on certification by the executing agency and the educational institute.

Repayment

• Loans taken from HEFA, under the RISE programme, must be paid back over 10 years. There will be different modes of loan repayment for different institutes, based on their internal revenue.

• Central universities set up before 2014 will be eligible to borrow through the 90:10 window, which means that they will have to repay 10 per cent of the principal amount from their internal resources. The remaining principal amount and the interest accrued on the loan will be paid by the government to HEFA.

• IITs and IIMs which are over a decade old will repay the whole principal amount over 10 years, and the interest will be paid by the government. Technical institutes set up between 2008 and 2014 can avail loans through the 75:25 window. In other words, they will have to give 25 per cent of the principal amount. The balance principal and loan interest will be taken care of by the central government.

China Elected as Vice President of FATF

• China has been elected as the vice-president of Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and India congratulated China for acquiring an important position in the global money-laundering watchdog.

• FATF had in its plenary session on 23 February decided to put Pakistan back on the "grey list", subjecting it to direct monitoring and intense scrutiny by the International Co-operation Review Group (ICRG) on terror financing, pending a further review in June.

Indian foreign ministry spokesman Raveesh Kumar tweeted :

"Congratulations to China on its election as Vice President of Financial Action Task Force at the#FATF plenary mtg. on 23 February 2018. We remain hopeful that China would uphold & support the objectives & standards of FATF in a balanced, objective, impartial & holistic way(sic)."

• Notably, in the past, China, serving as a permanent UN Security Council member, has singlehandedly blocked resolutions to get Jaish-e-Mohammed chief Maulana Masood Azhar, designated a terrorist, despite resolutions moved by India and the US.

• China has also blocked India's entry into the elite Nuclear Suppliers Group, despite appeals by India at the highest levels.

What is FATF?

• Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering or FATF was formed in 1989 during G7 Summit in Paris in order to tackle the problem of money laundering. FATF was assigned the task to study money laundering trends and monitoring legislative, financial and law enforcement activities taken at the national and international level. At the time of its formation, FATF had 16 members, which by 2016 had grown to 37.

• In its first year, FATF issued a report containing forty recommendations to more effectively fight money laundering. These standards were revised in 2003 to reflect evolving patterns and techniques in money laundering. The FATF's primary policies issued are the Forty Recommendations on money laundering from 1990 and the 9 Special Recommendations (SR) on Terrorism Financing (TF).

• The mandate of the organisation was expanded to include terrorist financing following the September 11 terror attacks in 2001.

Laureus Sports Awards 2018- Winners

• The gala ceremony of Laureus World Sports Awards 2018 took place at the Salle des Etoiles in Monte Carlo, Monaco where ace tennis player Roger won two awards including his sixth sportsman of the year award.

• Federer the World Sportsman of the Year and the World Comeback of the Year award leaving behind Rafael Nadal, Cristiano Ronaldo, Mo Farah, Lewis Hamilton and Chris Froome.

• Serena Williams grabbed the World Sportswoman of the Year ahead of Garbine Muguruza, Allyson Felix, Katie Ledecky, Caster Semenya and Mikaela Shiffrin. This was her fourth win at the Laureus having previously claimed the award in 2003, 2010 and 2016.

• F1 team Mercedes-AMG won the Team of the Year award beating the likes of Real Madrid, Golden State Warriors, and France's Davis Cup team.

Other Awardees

• Exceptional Achievement: Francesco Totti

• World Action Sportsperson of the Year: Armel Le Cleac'h

• Sport for Good: Active Communities Network

• Team of the Year: Mercedes F1

• World Breakthrough of the Year: Sergio Garcia

• World Sportsperson of the Year with a Disability: Marcel Hug

• Sporting Inspiration Award: J.J. Watt

• Best Sporting Moment: Chapecoense (Eternal Champions)

• Lifetime Achievement: Edwin Moses

About Laureus Sports Awards

• The annual award ceremony is the event established in 1999 by Laureus Sport for Good Foundation founding patrons Daimler and Richemont. Mercedes-Benz and IWC Schaffhausen are the supporting partners.Individuals and teams from the world of sports are awarded during the event.

• Swiss tennis player Roger Federer holds the record for the most awards with six.

National Science Day- 28 February 2018

• India is celebrating the discovery of Raman Effect today in the form of National Science Day observed on 28th February every year.

• Indian scientist Sir Chandrasekhara Venkata Raman or CV Raman discovered the Raman Effect on this day in 1928. For this discovery, he was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1930.

• We celebrate National Science Day to make people aware of the importance of science in our day to day life. The day also gives an opportunity to the scientific-minded citizens in the country to showcase their work in organized shows. Students showcase various science projects. National and state science institutions demonstrate their latest researches.

• The theme for National Science Day 2018 is "Science and Technology for a sustainable future."

RBI Raises Currency Derivative Trade Limit to $100 Million

• India's central banking institution, the Reserve Bank of India, has raised the exposure limit under exchange traded currency derivatives (ETCD) trading for all residents and foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) to $100 million across all currency pairs involving the Indian rupee. • This decision will help the entities indulged in forex transaction to maintain their currency risk in a more efficient manner. • Earlier, a limit of $15 million for USD-INR and $5 million for other currency pairs of Indian rupee with Euro, Japanese Yen and British Pound was imposed by RBI The Official Notification said "It has now been decided to permit persons resident in India and FPIs to take positions (long or short), without having to establish existence of underlying exposure, up to a single limit of $100 million equivalent across all currency pairs involving INR, put together, and combined across all exchanges...These limits shall also be monitored by the exchanges, and breaches, if any, may be reported to the Reserve Bank of India" • In the case of any violation, the participant shall be liable to any action that may be warranted as per the provisions of Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999. • RBI has been liberalising the norms for ETCD markets. Steps taken for the same are:

• Instead of the statutory auditor's certificate, a signed undertaking to the effect from the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) or the senior most functionary responsible for the company's finance and accounts and the Company Secretary (CS) may be produced.

• In the absence of a CS, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or the Chief Operating Officer (COO) can co-sign the undertaking along with the CFO.

• Importers were allowed to take appropriate hedging positions up to 100 per cent of the eligible limit.

What is an exchange traded derivative?

It is a financial instrument that trades on a regulated exchange, and whose value is based on the value of another asset. These are derivatives that are traded in a regulated fashion. These derivatives can be used to hedge exposure or speculate on a wide range of financial assets like commodities, equities, currencies, and even interest rates.

Inclusive Internet Index 2018: India ranks 47th

• According to a report released by Facebook, India has a poor quality and low usage of internet connectivity and ranked the nation to 47th place.

• Facebook commissioned the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) to create a comprehensive "Inclusive Internet Index," in which India secured 12th position out of 23 middle Asian countries when it comes to internet connectivity.

• The index which covered 91% of the world's population and 86 countries, reported that men are 33.5% more like to have internet access than the women and this gap widens in the countries having low income.

• The index evaluated a country's Internet inclusion across four categories: availability, affordability, relevance and readiness. It said that internet connectivity will help in bringing people online and offering them life changing opportunities but there are approximately 3.8% people in the world have no access to internet.

• Notably, the global internet connectivity has seen an upward movement as 8.3% more people are connected to the internet as compared to last year.

• According to Facebook, mobile Internet services are increasingly vital in many low-income countries and the cost of accessing the Internet is also falling

Top 5 Nations in Four Categories

Ranking Overall Ranking Availability Affordability Relevance Readiness 1st Sweden Singapore Canada Poland Malaysia 2nd Singapore Sweden United States Chile Chile 3rd United States Denmark Sweden Bulgaria Mexico 4th Denmark Netherlands United Kingdom South Korea Sweden 5th South Korea Switzerland France Sweden Belgium India's Ranks 47th 62nd 39th 37th 23rd