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People don’t need to be saved or rescued. People need knowledge of their own power and how to access it.
Pakistan, India exchange list of nuclear installations
• India and Pakistan on Tuesday exchanged the list of nuclear installations and facilities covered under the Agreement on the Prohibition of Attack against Nuclear installations between them.
• In a statement, the External Affairs Ministry said, the list was exchanged through diplomatic channels simultaneously at New Delhi and Islamabad
• Under the 1988 agreement, the two countries inform each other of nuclear installations and facilities on the first of January every year.

US, Israel quit UNESCO citing bias
• The United States and Israel officially quit the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) with the close of 2018. The countries had announced their decisions in 2017 of withdrawing from the agency, accusing it of bias against Israel.
• America has demanded fundamental reform in UNESCO, which was co-founded by it after World War II to foster peace. Israel joined the agency in 1949. It is best known for its World Heritage program, which designates cultural sites and aims to preserve traditions
• The withdrawals will not greatly impact UNESCO financially since it has been dealing with a funding slash ever since 2011 when both Israel and the US stopped paying dues after Palestine was voted in as a member state.

Qatar will cease to be a member of OPEC
• Qatar will cease to be a member of the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries today. The country had sent an official notification to the OPEC expressing its wish to pull out and to focus on its liquefied natural gas production in December.
• The decision came amid the ongoing diplomatic and economic blockade imposed on the country by its Persian Gulf neighbours and several Arab states.
• These countries accuse Doha of supporting terrorism and interfering in their internal affairs. Qatar has strongly refuted these allegations.

Bangladesh: Awami League registers landslide victory in Parliamentary elections
• Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina’s Awami League has registered a landslide victory in Parliamentary elections.
• The ruling Awami League-led grand alliance bagged 266 seats and its ally Jatiya Party secured 21. The opposition National Unity Front (UNF) with BNP being its key partner got only seven seats. Independent candidates won in two seats. The election was postponed in one seat due to the death of a candidate.

Afghanistan presidential election delayed until July 20
• Afghanistan’s presidential election will be delayed until July 20 next year, three months later than the ballot had been scheduled to be held.
• The announcement by the Independent Election Commission comes after weeks of speculation that the vote would be postponed to create space for US-led efforts to end the 17-year war with the Taliban.
• The presidential ballot was originally scheduled for April 20.
China develops its own 'Mother of All Bombs'
• China has developed a massive bomb, said to be the country's answer to the US-built 'Mother of All Bombs', the most powerful non-nuclear weapon, as per a report by official media.
• A state-run Global Times reported that China's defence industry giant NORINCO for the first time showcased the aerial bomb, the country's largest non-nuclear bomb.
• The daily said it is dubbed as the Chinese version of the "Mother of All Bombs" due to its huge destruction potential that is claimed to be only second to nuclear weapons.
• Although China is using the same nickname for its bomb, said to weigh several tonnes, the Chinese weapon is smaller and lighter than its American counterpart.
• To match the US weapon, Russia developed the "Father of All Bombs" which is both bigger and thermobaric, meaning it uses gas to create a huge fireball rather than a shockwave.

James Jeffrey to Replace Brett McGurk as Top U.S. Envoy in ISIS Fight
• Ambassador James Jeffrey will replace Brett McGurk as the United States Special Envoy to Defeat ISIS.
• McGurk resigned in late 2018 over disagreements with President Donald Trump's strategy to resign from Syria, leaving office on Dec.

Egypt opens West Asia's largest cathedral in its New Administrative Capital
• Egypt has opened West Asia's largest cathedral in its New Administrative Capital, 45 kilometres east of Cairo.
• President Abdul Fattah al-Sisi inaugurated the newly-built Cathedral of Nativity and also a mosque yesterday on the eve of Coptic Christmas.
• The ceremony was attended by Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas and a host of Arab dignitaries.
• It included recorded video messages of support from the region's top Christian clerics as well as Pope Francis.

Malaysia’s king abdicates in historic first
• Malaysia’s king has abdicated in a historic first for the country that ended weeks of speculation about his future after he took medical leave.
• Sultan Muhammad V’s decision marks the first time a king has abdicated in the country since it gained independence from Britain in 1957.
• Malaysia is a constitutional monarchy, with a unique arrangement where the throne changes hands every five years between rulers of the nine Malaysian States headed by centuries-old royalty. The rotating monarchy system has been in place since independence from Britain in 1957, and Sultan Muhammad V is the first monarch to have renounced the throne.

U.S., China hold crucial talks to ease trade war
• Delegates from the US and China on Monday began the crucial face-to-face negotiations here to ease a bitter trade war between the world’s two largest economies amid growing concerns about China’s slowing economy and its impact on American businesses.
• The US and China have been locked in an escalating trade spat since early 2018, raising import tariffs on each other's goods.

OVL makes oil discovery in Colombia
• ONGC Videsh Ltd., the overseas arm of State-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corp. (ONGC) has
made a second oil discovery in Colombia that has increased prospects of its onland block in the South American nation.
- OVL is the operator of the block with 70% stake while Petrodorado South America S A Sucursal (PDSA) of Colombia holds the remaining 30%.
- The well was spudded on November 7, 2018, and the company completed drilling on December 15, 2018.

Norwegian PM arrives in New Delhi
- Prime Minister of Norway Erna Solberg has arrived in New Delhi on a three-day state visit to India.
- She was accompanied by senior officials from her government and a large business delegation.
- She will participate in the Indo-Norwegian Business Conference.
- She will hold talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. She will also call on President Ram Nath Kovind and Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu. External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj will call on the visiting dignitary.
- The Norwegian Prime Minister will deliver the Inaugural address at the Raisina Dialogue.

India secures extradition of bookie Sanjeev Chawla
- India secured another legal victory in the U.K. as a judge at the Westminster Magistrates’ Court has said that the extradition of alleged bookie Sanjeev Chawla can proceed, and referred the case to Home Secretary Sajid Javid for a final decision.
- The extradition of businessman Vijay Mallya was ordered last month.

World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim to step down on February 1
- In a surprise move, World Bank President Jim Yong Kim on Monday announced that he will step down from his position on February 1 - much before the end of his term in 2022.
- Kim, 58, has been in this position for over six years now.
- The president of the Washington-based World Bank has always been an American citizen nominated by the United States, which is the largest shareholder of this multilateral financial institution.
- Kristalina Georgieva, World Bank CEO, will assume the role of interim President effective February 1.

Sheikh Hasina sworn in as Bangladesh Prime Minister for fourth term
- Sheikh Hasina was sworn in as Bangladesh’s Prime Minister for a record fourth term Monday after a crushing election victory marred by deadly violence and claims of widespread rigging.
- Ms. Hasina, 71, has presided over record economic growth in the South Asian country of 165 million people but critics have accused her of creeping authoritarianism.
- Her ruling Awami League party and its allies won the December 30 elections by a landslide, securing 288 seats in the 300-seat parliament compared to just seven for the main opposition.

Customers cannot be charged for availing tokenisation service: RBI
- The Reserve of India (RBI) has allowed all card payment networks to offer tokenisation service. However, the central bank has made it clear that no charges should be recovered from the customer for availing this service.
- Tokenisation involves a process in which a unique token masks sensitive card details. The token is then used to perform card transactions in contact-less mode at Point Of Sale (POS) terminals,
Quick Response (QR) code payments, etc.
- The RBI has allowed card payment networks to offer card tokenisation services to any token requestor, that is, a third party app provider. A card holder can avail these services by registering the card on the token requestor’s app and after giving ‘explicit consent’.

Nandan Nilekani to head five-member RBI panel on digital payments
- The Reserve Bank of India has appointed a five-member panel headed by Nandan Nilekani to suggest ways to improve digital payments.
- The committee will submit its report in 90 days from its first meeting.
- Former Deputy Governor of RBI H.R. Khan, former Vijaya Bank MD and CEO Kishore Sansi, former Secretary of Information and Technology Aruna Sharma and Sanjay Jain, Chief Innovation Officer, Center for Innovation, Incubation & Entrepreneurship (CIIE), IIM Ahmedabad, are the other members of the panel.
- The panel would assess the current levels of digital payments in financial inclusion, suggest measures to strengthen the safety and security of digital payments, provide a road map for increasing customer confidence to use digital transactions, and suggest a medium-term strategy for deepening of digital payments.

Raisina Dialogue begins in New Delhi
- Norway Prime Minister Erna Solberg has pitched for promoting Ocean economy and said that resources in the ocean should be used properly.
- Delivering her inaugural address at Raisina Dialogue in New Delhi on Tuesday evening in presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Ms. Solberg said, rapid climate changes in the Arctic area will have a far-reaching global impact and the world has a responsibility to protect the ocean.
- Calling for promoting blue economy, Ms. Solberg said, ocean-based industries help provide jobs. She also said there is a need to improve the health of the oceans.

Sushma Swaraj meets Iranian counterpart
- External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj on Wednesday met her Iranian counterpart Javed Zarif.
- The two leaders held a wide-ranging discussion on important bilateral issues and shared perspectives on the regional situation.
- On the sidelines of Raisina dialogue, Mrs Swaraj also met Foreign Minister of Mongolia Damdin Tsogtbaatar.
- Mrs Swaraj had a productive meeting with her Mongolian counterpart and took stock of positive developments in a relationship in areas of energy, renewable energy, development partnership, capacity building and culture.

US-China talks to resolve trade war concludes in Beijing on positive note
- The extended US-China talks to resolve the trade war between the two greatest economy concluded in Beijing on a positive note on Wednesday.
- After the talks concluded, Ted McKinney, US Under Secretary for Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs said the discussions went just fine, without elaborating.
- Meanwhile, confirming the conclusion of the trade talks, China's foreign ministry spokesman Lu Kang told a media briefing that the extension of the talks indicates that both sides are serious about this consultation.
US Secretary of State arrives in Baghdad to meet PM
• US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo Wednesday arrived in Baghdad on a surprise visit to meet Iraqi Prime Minister Adil Abdul-Mahdi.
• Pompeo also met other Iraqi officials, including the speaker of parliament Muhammad Al Halbusi.
• The US Secretary of State’s visit to Baghdad is part of his West Asia tour.
• Mr. Pompeo plans to reassure allies about America’s commitment to the region despite US President Donald Trump’s decision to withdraw troops from Syria.

Congo: Opposition leader Felix Tshisekedi wins presidential election
• In Congo, opposition leader Felix Tshisekedi has won the long-delayed presidential election.
• The electoral commission announced today that Tshisekedi has won with 38.57 percent of more than 18 million ballots cast.
• If Tshisekedi’s victory is confirmed by the constitutional court, Democratic Republic of Congo will see its first peaceful democratic transfer of power since it gained independence from Belgium in 1960.

Cabinet approves Currency Swap Agreement with Japan
The Union Cabinet has approved India’s Currency Swap Agreement with Japan. The $75-billion bilateral currency swap arrangement is a milestone in mutual economic cooperation and special strategic and global partnership between two countries.

Currency Swap Agreements
A Currency swap agreement is a foreign exchange agreement between two parties to exchange a given amount of one currency for another and, after a specified period of time, to give back the original amounts swapped.

Sino-Indian Digital Collaboration Plaza
The Sino-Indian Digital Collaboration Plaza (SIDCOP), an initiative to bring Indian IT companies and Chinese enterprises closer to each other on a single AI enabled platform. This is a partnership by National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM) with Municipal Governments of Guiyang and Dalian.

Indian IT enterprises are world renowned for their expertise in business transformation and operational optimization by using IT tools in complex business environments.

SIDCOP, which is a boundary-less marketplace offers this opportunity for Chinese enterprises in order to assist them in operational optimization and adopting industry best practices in business solutions.

India, 5 Central Asian nations back inclusive peace process in Afghanistan
• India and the five Central Asia nations have backed an inclusive peace process in Afghanistan that is Afghan-owned and Afghan-led. The understanding was reached at the first ever India-Central Asia Dialogue in Uzbekistan capital Samarkand yesterday.
• The Dialogue was chaired by External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj and her Uzbek counterpart Abdulaziz Kamilov. It was attended by the Foreign Ministers of Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan and the First Deputy Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan.
• Ms Swaraj reiterated India’s commitment to the economic reconstruction of war-torn Afghanistan.

UN experts urge Pakistan not to execute mentally ill prisoner
• UN experts have urged Pakistan not to carry out arbitrary execution of mental illness prisoners.
The execution of Khizar Hayat, sentenced to death in 2003 for killing a colleague, was suspended by Pakistan's Supreme Court on Saturday, just three days before the 55-year-old was due to be hanged.

The UN experts said, Hayat, who has spent more than 15 years in custody, has been kept in solitary confinement since 2012, urging the government to halt the execution and questioning the veracity of his conviction.

Iran launches satellite which failed to reach orbit in final stage

- Iran launched a satellite this morning, however, it failed to reach the orbit in the final stage.
- The Payam satellite was successfully launched with the Basir satellite carrier.
- The satellite failed to reach the required speed on detachment from the rocket in the third stage.

India and Mongolia Sign a Powerful MoU at ICMEI

The Embassy of Mongolia and International Chamber of Media and Entertainment Industry (ICMEI), India have further strengthened the relationship between India and Mongolia by signing a MoU in the field of art and culture. The MoU was signed in the presence of H.E. Gonchig Ganbold Ambassador of Mongolia to India and Dr. Sandeep Marwah, President ICMEI. The MoU will enable the two countries to work together on different segments including print, radio, television, cinema, animation, Performing and Fine Arts, tourism, hospitality, education, environment, solar energy, skill development, PR events and advertising, Fashion and Design, and Journalism. During the event, the deserving students from Mongolia were handed over the first scholarship of a short-term course of Asian Academy of Film and Television which also includes boarding and lodging for three months.

Rio named as World Capital of Architecture for 2020 by UNESCO

The Brazilian city of Rio de Janeiro has been named as the World Capital of Architecture for 2020 by the UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Rio will be the first city to receive the title under a programme launched together by UNESCO and the International Union of Architects (UIA) in November 2018. Earlier Paris and Melbourne secured the position. According to UNESCO, the World Capital of Architecture is intended to become an international forum for debates about pressing global challenges from the perspectives of culture, cultural heritage, urban planning, and architecture. As one of the oldest cities in Brazil, Rio has a mix of modern and colonial architecture, with world-renowned sites like the statue of Christ the Redeemer and contemporary constructions like the Museum of Tomorrow.

Indians can visit Nepal and Bhutan producing Aadhaar as Id Proof

The Union Home Ministry has tweaked the travel document norms for visiting Nepal and Bhutan. As per new norms, Indian can travel to Nepal and Bhutan by producing Aadhaar as Identity proof but this is only for those Indians aged under 15 and over 65 years. Indians other than in those age brackets will not be able to use Aadhaar to travel for Nepal and Bhutan.

World Integrated Medicine Forum 2019 on Homeopathy

Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for AYUSH Shri Shripad Yesso Naik, will inaugurate the 2nd World Integrated Medicine Forum 2019 on the 'Regulation of Homeopathic Medical Products; Advancing global collaboration' organised on 23-25 January 2019 at Goa.

Themes for the Forum 2019
The forum is organised by Central Council for Research in Homeopathy, under the Ministry of AYUSH. The themes of the forum are:

• Regulatory collaborations.
• Converging on minimum regulatory & legal standards.
• Advancing safety and quality standards.
• Regulatory trend towards standardization and minimizing complexity.
• Recognizing homeopathy as a distinct holistic medical system and Veterinary homoeopathy.

National Girl Child Day
National Girl Child Day (NGCD) is celebrated in India on January 24th with an aim to raise awareness about Child Sex Ratio (CSR) levels and promote the empowerment of girls.

Objectives
• The key objectives of National Girl Child Day are as follows:
• To spread awareness about the declining Child Sex Ratio (CSR) in the country and carry out campaigns to improve the same.
• To empower the girl children with new opportunities via schemes and campaigns.
• To create a positive environment around valuing the girl child.

Theme of NGCD-2019
The theme of National Girl Child Day-2019 is “Empowering Girls for a Brighter Tomorrow”

Regional variations in the World Economic Forums Public Opinion Survey
The findings from the World Economic Forum’s public opinion survey register regional variations on the various issues. Few of them are listed below:
• When asked how important it is for countries to work together towards a common goal, a global average of 76 per cent said they believe it is either extremely important or very important.
• The favourable sentiments were strongly felt in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, where 88 per cent share the same view. On the other hand, 61 per cent of Western Europeans and 70 per cent of North Americans said they consider cooperation to be extremely or very important.
• When asked whether their country has a responsibility to help other countries in the world, South Asia had the highest levels of concurrence with 94 per cent answering positively compared to a global average of 72 per cent. While the North Americans and Western Europeans were the least effusive, with only 61 per cent and 63 per cent respectively answering in the affirmative.

Climate march held in Belgium for urgent action to prevent global warming
• At least 70,000 people braved cold and rain in Brussels yesterday to demand the Belgian government and the European Union increase their efforts to fight climate change.
• The event has been described as Belgium's biggest climate march ever.
• Trains from across the nation were so clogged that thousands of people did not make the march in time.

UAE, Iraq discuss methods to counter extremism and terrorism
• UAE and Iraq have discussed methods of countering extremism and terrorism, in addition to a number of issues of mutual concern during a meeting in Baghdad.
• The first meeting of the UAE-Iraq Political Consultative Committee was held at the level of senior officials of the foreign ministries of both countries.
• Khalifa Shaheen Al-Marar, Assistant Foreign Minister for Political Affairs, who chaired the UAE
side, stressed the importance of this round of consultations to enhance aspects of joint cooperation between the two countries.

**South Asian Nitrogen Hub**
The British government has announced a research project, South Asian Nitrogen Hub to study nitrogen pollution in India and South Asia. The project led by UK’s Centre for Ecology and Hydrology will partner with 50 organisations from the UK and South Asia. The Indian Institutions partnering the study are:
- National Institute of Oceanography
- Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University
- Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology
- Jawaharal Nehru University
- Aligarh Muslim University
- National Physical Laboratory
- TERI University
The project aims to study the impact of different forms of nitrogen pollution, particularly looking at nitrogen in agriculture in eight countries of South Asia which includes India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Maldives.

**Nari-Shakti is the Oxford Dictionaries Hindi Word of the year for 2018**
The Oxford Dictionaries announced that the word ‘Nari Shakti’ which is derived from Sanskrit has been chosen as the Hindi Word of the year for 2018. The Announcement was made during a session at Jaipur Literature Festival which is being held at Diggi Palace in Jaipur, Rajasthan.

**World Steel Association Report**
The World Steel Association has released a Report highlighting various trends related to the Industry, they are:
- China is the largest producer of crude steel and it accounts for more than 51 per cent of global production. China’s share has been increased from 50.3 per cent in 2017 to 51.3 per cent in 2018.
- The production in China increased by 6.6 per cent from 870.9 MT in 2017 to 928.3 million tonnes (MT) in 2018.
- India has replaced Japan as the world’s second-largest steel producing country.
- The Steel production in India increased by 4.9 per cent from 101.5 MT in 2017 to 106.5 MT in 2018.
- The global crude steel production increased by 4.6 per cent from 1,729.8 MT in 2017 to 1,808.6 MT in 2018.
- Other countries in the Top 10 list of steel producing nations include US at United States, at the 4th position as the country produced 86.7 MT of crude steel in 2018, South Korea (72.5 MT, 5th place), Russia (71.7 MT, 6th), Germany (42.4 MT, 7th), Turkey (37.3 MT, 8th), Brazil (34.7 MT, 9th) and Iran (25 MT, 10th).

**Australia Day: January 26**
Australia celebrates 26th January as Australia Day which marks the landing of the First Fleet, a convoy of 11 ships carrying convicts, at Port Jackson in 1788. It also marks the founding of the colony New South Wales.
How the Australia Day came into being?
On the 30th anniversary of the founding of the colony in 1818, the Governor of New South Wales celebrated the day with a 30-gun salute and a holiday for all government employees. Initially, the celebrations were confined to New South Wales. The first founding day was celebrated on 1838, 50 years after the First Fleet arrived in New South Wales. By 1926, almost all states of Australia were celebrating the Australia Day and it was being referred to as Anniversary Day in New South Wales. From 1946, January 26 was celebrated as Australia Day all over the country with the public holiday.

UAE, Saudi central banks launch common digital currency called 'Aber'
- The central banks of the UAE and Saudi Arabia have launched a common digital currency called "Aber", which will be used in financial settlements between the two countries through Blockchains and Distributed Ledgers technologies.
- It will establish an additional means for the central financial transfer systems of the two countries and enable banks to directly deal with each other in conducting financial remittances.
- Through this digital currency, both the United Arab Emirates Central Bank (UAECB) and the Saudi Arabian Monetary Authority (SAMA) are studying the impact on the improvement and reduction of remittance costs and the assessments of risks.

Myanmar parliament approves step toward charter change
- Myanmar’s parliament has voted to create a committee to propose amendments to the country's military-enacted constitution, which grants the armed forces the power to block any change.
- The proposal to form the committee was presented by a member of the ruling National League for Democracy party of leader Aung San Suu Kyi, which took power in 2016 after more than five decades of military or military-backed rule.
- The 2008 constitution gives the military control of national security ministries and 25 per cent of legislative seats, enough to prevent any constitutional changes, which require the support of more than 75 per cent of lawmakers.

US, China begin trade talks in Washington
- Top trade officials from the US and China have begun talks in Washington for defusing the escalating tariff war.
- The Chinese delegation is headed by Chinese Vice Premier Lie, while the American side is led by US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer.
- The White House said, US welcomes the Chinese delegation and US President Donald Trump will meet them at the end of the two-days talks.
- US and China have just a month remaining in a 90-day truce declared in December. Should the talks fail, US import duties on 200 billion dollars in Chinese imports are due to more than double on 2nd March.

South Korea bans single-use plastic bags in supermarkets
- The South Korean government ban on the use of disposable plastic bags at big supermarkets came into effect on January 1 in a bid to protect the environment and encourage recycling.
- The revised law affects about 2,000 supermarkets over 165 square metres in size, all of which used to provide disposable plastic bags for free.
National

ISRO launches Samwad with students to engage them on space science activities
- Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has launched Samwad with Students as part of its outreach programme. The Indian Space agency will engage youngsters across the country in activities concerning space science under this programme.
- During the inauguration in Bengaluru yesterday, 40 students and 10 teachers from select schools interacted with ISRO Chairman Dr. K Sivan about the Indian Space Programme and their benefits to the common man.
- The Chairman asked students to study science and mathematics with absolute seriousness which would enable them to take up challenging careers.

8th Global Kokan festival foresees vision 2025 for Kokan Development
- To facilitate the development of the region, Kokan Bhumi Pratisthan will be organaising the 8th Global Kokan Festival which will be held at Mumbai Exhibition Center in Mumbai.
- This mega event will be inaugurated by Chief Guests Suresh Prabhu (Union Minister of Commerce, Industry and Civil Aviation), Anant Geete (Union Cabinet Minister for Heavy Industries and Public Sector Enterprises) and Vinod Tawde (Minister Of Higher & Technical Education and Cultural Affairs).
- Global Kokan festival is hosted by Jaykumar Rawal (Minister of Tourism) and Subash Desai (Minister for Industries and Mining), Deepak Kesarkar (Minister of State for Home (Rural), Finance and Planning), and Ravindra Chavan (Minister of State - Ports, Medical Education, Information and Technology, Food and Civil supplies, Consumer protection).
- The inaugural day will see the announcement of launch of "Vision 2025" for Kokan region, a special white paper documenting the issues faced by people of Kokan region. The detailed report will be launched after 3 months with full study of the region in term of infrastructure, Business, tourism, etc.

1st January - DRDO day
- The DRDO was established in 1958 with just 10 laboratories to enhance the research work in defence sector.
- DRDO Chairman Dr G Satheesh Reddy said that the country is self-reliant in areas of missiles, radars, sonars and torpedoes and many other systems.
- Mr Reddy said, the Organisation has been working over the years to develop state of the art weapon system for the country’s armed forces.

PM Modi renames Ross, Neil & Havelock Islands in Andaman and Nicobar
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the renaming of three islands of Andaman and Nicobar on the occasion of 75th anniversary of Tricolour hoisting by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose in Port Blair.
- Ross Island has been renamed as Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Dweep, the Neil Island would now be known as Shaheed Dweep and the Havelock Island as Swaraj Dweep.
- Mr Modi also released a commemorative stamp, its first-day cover and a 75 rupees coin on this special day. He also announced setting up of a deemed university after Netaji Bose.
Cabinet gives ex post facto approval to India’s Approach for COP 24, Katowice, Poland

- The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has given its ex-post facto approval to the negotiating stand of India at the 24th Conference of Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) held in Katowice, Poland from 2-15 December 2018.
- The Indian delegation was led by Dr. Harsh Vardhan, Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.
- The key focus of meeting was to finalize guidelines for implementation of Paris Agreement in post 2020 period. India’s approach was guided by principles and provisions of UNFCCC and Paris Agreement particularly the principles of Equity and Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capability (CBPR-RC).

PM to inaugurate Indian Science Congress at Jalandhar

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the Indian Science Congress at Jalandhar on January 3, an annual congregation that witnesses deliberations by top scientific minds of the country.
- The theme for ISC-2019 is ‘Future India-Science and Technology’ and it will be hosted by the Lovely Professional University (PLU), Jalandhar from January 3-7

Cabinet approves restructuring of National Health Agency as the National Health Authority

- Union Cabinet has approved the restructuring of National Health Agency as the National Health Authority for better implementation of Pradhan Mantri - Jan Arogya Yojana.
- National Health Authority will be chaired by Union Health Minister to enable the decision making at a faster pace, required for smooth implementation of the scheme.
- National Health Authority will have full accountability, authority and mandate to implement the Pradhan Mantri - Jan Arogya Yojana through an efficient, effective and transparent decision-making process.

Assam CM welcomes Cabinet decisions on Assam Accord

- Assam Chief Minister Sarbanand Sonowal has welcomed the Union Cabinet's decision to implement the Assam Accord signed in 1985.
- The Union Cabinet yesterday approved the setting up a high-level committee for implementation of clause 6 of the Assam Accord and measures envisaged in the Memorandum of Settlement, 2003 and other issues related to the Bodo community.

Cabinet approves amendment to Trade Unions Act, 1926

- The Cabinet has approved amendment to the Trade Unions Act, 1926 to make provisions regarding recognition of trade unions.
- The approval will facilitate recognition of Trade Unions at Central and State level.
- The proposed bill will ensure that the nomination of workers’ representatives in tripartite bodies by the government will become more transparent.

Ten-day Indian Panorama Film Festival to open on 4th January, 2019

- The Indian Panorama Film Festival is being organized from 4th to 13th January, 2019. The ten-day Festival is being organized by the Directorate of Film Festivals, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting at Siri Fort Auditorium II, New Delhi.
- The directors of the opening feature film ‘Olu’ and of the opening non-feature film ‘Kharvas’ viz.
Shri Shaji N Karun and Shri Aditya Suhas Jambhale will be present on the occasion.

• All the films selected under the Indian Panorama section in the 49th International Film Festival of India will be screened during the Festival. A total of 26 Feature Films and 21 Non-Feature Films will be screened.

Setting up of Space Technology Park and Museums

• The ISRO has plans to set up Space Galleries in various locations in the country. The Space Galleries are expected to disseminate the knowledge about space science and technology amongst the citizens of our country.
• The Gallery will consist of interactive methods/models describing the principles of Space science and technology.
• Initially, Space Galleries are planned to be established at Birla Science Centre at Hyderabad, Nehru Science Centre at Mumbai and National Science Centre at PragatiMaidan in New Delhi. In addition to this, ISRO has taken initiatives to establish space gallery in all the national museums/science centres (under Ministry of Culture) across the country in a phased manner.
• In addition to the Space Galleries, ISRO is planning to establish Knowledge centres, mobile exhibitions, competitions amongst students and various talks/lectures on Space Science/technology related aspects.

Parliament passes NCTE amendment Bill

• Parliament has passed the National Council for Teacher Education (Amendment) Bill, 2018, with the Rajya Sabha approving it on Thursday.
• The bill seeks to grant retrospective recognition to Central and State institutions which had conducted teacher education courses without approval by the Council.
• This will be a one-time measure to ensure that the future of about 17 thousand students having degrees from such institutions is secured.
• All institutions running teacher education courses, such as B.Ed, have to obtain recognition from the Council.

First-ever Kisan Cricket League to commence on Feb 20

• In a bid to encourage cricket among rural Indian aspirants, the first-ever Kisan Cricket League - The Lal Bahadur Shastri Memorial Cup of Hope - will be held from February 20 to March 20.
• The event introduces a fresh short format cricket tournament aimed at engaging rural dwellers between 17-24 years of age to take up the sport.
• Kisan Cricket League will have eight teams - Mighty Himalayans, Frontier Gabroos, Awadhi Brothers, Eastern Eagles, Western Tharyans, Oruvan Thalaivas, Sahyadri Rangers and a special team for tribal youngsters, The Birsa Boys.

East Siang District achieves 100% electrification under Saubhagya Scheme

• In Arunachal Pradesh, East Siang District has achieved 100 percent electrification under the Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana - Saubhagya Scheme.
• Pasighat Electrical division has electrified 2,662 households which were earlier left out till the end of December last year. The power department has electrified 1,483 villages under Deen Dayal Upadhyaya-Gram Jyoti Yojana in the state so far.

Cyclonic storm PABUK likely to cross Andaman Sea on Jan 5
• Cyclonic storm “PABUK” is very likely to emerge into the Andaman Sea around forenoon on 5th January.
• India Meteorological Department IMD said thereafter it is very likely to cross the Andaman Islands around Sunday evening.

Swachh Survekshan 2019 launched across 4,237 Urban Local Bodies
• The Minister of State (I/C), Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Shri Hardeep S Puri has officially kicked off the Swachh Survekshan 2019, the fourth edition of the annual cleanliness survey of Urban India.
• This year, the survey will be conducted across 4,237 towns and cities between January 4 - 28, 2019. The completely digital and paperless survey will be completed in a record time of 28 days.
• As a prelude to encouraging cities to improve urban sanitation, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) had conducted ‘Swachh Survekshan-2016’ survey for ranking 73 cities in January 2016.
• This was followed by ‘Swachh Survekshan-2017’ conducted in January-February 2017 where 434 cities were ranked.
• The third round of survey ‘Swachh Survekshan-2018’ was a quantum leap of scale - conducted across 4,203 cities, in a record time of 66 days, and became the largest ever sanitation survey in the world, impacting around 40 crore people.

NGT imposes Rs 100 Cr fine on Meghalaya govt
• The National Green Tribunal has imposed a fine of 100 crore rupees on Meghalaya government for its failure to curb illegal coal mining in the state.
• The amount of the fine has to be deposited with the Central Pollution Control Board within two months. The action comes after a high-level committee submitted an adverse report to a bench headed by NGT chairperson AK Goel.
• The report stated that majority of the mines in the state are operating without a lease or licence.

Lok Sabha passes Aadhar, Companies Amendment Bill
• The Lok Sabha on Friday passed Aadhaar and other laws (Amendment Bill) 2018 and Companies Amendment Bill 2018. The Aadhaar Bill seeks to amend the Aadhaar Act, 2016, the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885, and the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002.
• It provides for voluntary sharing of the 12-digit identification number for obtaining new mobile phone connections and opening bank accounts. The government move comes in the wake of the Supreme Court’s judgment.
• The Apex court in September last year struck down Section 57 of the Aadhaar Act that made seeding of the biometric ID with SIMs and bank accounts mandatory, stating that it had no legal backing.
• The Companies (Amendment), Bill, 2018 replaces the Ordinance promulgated in November last year.

Govt allocates Rs 10,900 cr for development of 40 satellite launch vehicles in next 4-years
• Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) Chairman Dr K Sivan has said that the Union Government has allocated 10,900 crore rupees for the development of 40 satellite launch vehicles in the next four years.
• Pointing out that the Centenary year celebrations of ISRO founder Dr Vikram Sarabhai will be held
next year, Dr Sivan said that ISRO will rededicate itself to become a world class organization, capable of addressing the varied socio economic challenges of the nation.

9-day long International Kite Festival kicks off in Ahmedabad
• In Gujarat, the nine-day long international kite festival kicked off at Sabarmati River Front in Ahmedabad
• About 500 kite fliers from 13 different states of the country and 19 cities of Gujarat are also taking part.
• The festival is also planned at Vadodara, Kevadiya, Dwarka, Surat, Rajkot, Jetpur, Songadh, Saputara and Dhordo in the coming days.

Govt notifies High-Level Committee for implementation of Clause VI of Assam Accord
• The government has notified a High-Level Committee for implementation of Clause six of the Assam Accord.
• The clause envisaged that appropriate constitutional, legislative and administrative safeguards, should be provided to protect, preserve and promote the cultural, social, linguistic identity and heritage of the people of Assam.
• The nine-member committee, comprising of eminent Assamese persons from different fields, is headed by former bureaucrat MP Bezbarauah.
• The committee will examine the effectiveness of actions since 1985 to implement Clause 6 of the Assam Accord.

Cabinet approves 10% job quota for ‘economically weaker’ upper castes
• The Union Cabinet Monday approved a 10 per cent reservation for ‘economically backward’ upper castes in government jobs.
• Ahead of the General Elections this year, the government has announced reservation in jobs for those belonging to the upper castes and earning less than Rs 8 lakh per year.
• A bill to amend Article 15 and 16 of the constitution will be moved in Parliament to this effect.
• The Supreme Court has capped the quota for caste-based reservation for government jobs at 50%.

Polavaram project enters Guinness Book of World Record for concrete pouring
• The Polavaram project in Andhra Pradesh on Monday entered the Guinness Book of World by pouring 32,100 cubic metres of concrete in 24 hours.
• The concrete work to make the spillway began at 8 am on Sunday and concluded at 8 am this morning.
• The project beat the existing record of 21,580 cubic metres which was achieved by Abdul Wahed Bin Shabib, RALS Contracting LLC and Alfa Eng. Consultant (all UAE), in Dubai between May 18 and 20 in 2017.

AAI bans single-use plastic items at 129 airports across country
• Airports Authority of India (AAI) has imposed a ban on single-use plastic items at its 129 airports across the country.
• In a statement, the AAI said various steps have been taken to eliminate single-use plastic items at passenger terminals and city side.
• The AAI said, on the basis of a third-party assessment carried out by Quality Council of India
(QCI), 16 of its airports have been declared as Single-Use Plastic Free.
- Single-use plastic items are used only once and then thrown in the trash.

**Private FM channels to broadcast AIR News from today**
- Private FM channels will be able to broadcast All India Radio News from today. Information and Broadcasting Minister Rajyavardhan Rathore will launch the sharing of news at a function.
- The Minister said, the radio has gained popularity again due to 'Mann Ki Baat' Programme of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- Colonel Rathore said, AIR FM covers 50 per cent of population in the country and private FM channels are being given opportunities in different cities and towns.

**Maharashtra to host 2nd edition of Khelo India Youth Games**
- Maharashtra is all set to host the second edition of Khelo India Youth Games which will officially begin tomorrow in Pune.
- More than 9000 players from different states will participate in 18 different games at Khelo India Youth Games.
- It has already been announced that Youth Olympic Gold Medallist in shooting Manu Bhaker and Saurabh Chaudhari, as well as weight lifter Jeremy Lalrinnunga will be among the cream of India’s youth sporting talent competing at these games.

**Navy’s new air base in north of Port Blair**
- Later this month, the Indian Navy will commission a new airbase 100 miles north of Port Blair in the strategically located Andaman and Nicobar islands.
- The base, INS Kohassa, will be commissioned by Navy Chief Admiral Sunil Lanba on January 24.
- This will be India’s fourth air base and the third naval air facility in the archipelago, which are more closer to Southeast Asia than to the Indian mainland, overlooking key sea lanes of communication and strategic choke points.

**Govt launches Web- Wonder Women Campaign**
- The government launched Web- Wonder Women Campaign to celebrate the exceptional achievements of women who have influenced and impacted society through social media.
- The Campaign aims to recognize the fortitude of Indian women stalwarts from across the globe who have used the power of social media to run positive campaigns to steer a change in society.
- The Campaign invites entries from across the world till 31st of this month. Indian-origin women, working or settled anywhere in the world, are eligible for nomination.

**Agreement for Renukaji dam multipurpose project Signed**
The Agreement for the construction of Renukaji Dam Multi-Purpose Project was signed by six states, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Delhi, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh in the presence of Union Water Resources Minister Nitin Gadkari.

**Features of the Project**
The important features of the project are:
Renukaji Dam Multi-Purpose Project is a storage project on the Giri river which is tributary of the Yamuna at Sirmour district of Himachal.
A 148 m-high rock-filled dam would be constructed across the river Giri.
The project also involves the generation of 40 MW of power during peak flow to be executed by Himachal Pradesh Power Corporation Ltd (HPPCL).

India Manufacturing Barometer 2019 Report
The India Manufacturing Barometer 2019 Report has been prepared by Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) in association with PwC.
The report was prepared based on the survey of companies which contribute approximately 12 per cent to the manufacturing Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the country from the automobiles, chemicals, electrical machinery, food processing, leather, pharmaceuticals and textiles sectors.
Findings of the Report
The important findings in the India Manufacturing Barometer 2019 are:
India would witness faster growth in the next 12 months driven by expanding domestic market, technology and increased spending.
Around 74 per cent of companies surveyed believes that the next 12 months will see faster growth in their sector.
Around 58 per cent of those surveyed believes that their sector would grow faster by at least 5 per cent.

RBI tweaks Gold Monetisation Scheme
The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has made changes with the Gold Monetisation Scheme (GMS) to allow charitable institutions, central government entities and state government entities to deposit gold under GMS.
Now the entities allowed to deposit gold under the scheme include Resident Indians [Individuals, HUFs, Proprietorship & Partnership firms, Trusts including Mutual Funds/Exchange Traded Funds registered under SEBI (Mutual Fund) Regulations, Companies, charitable institutions, Central Government, State Government or any other entity owned by Central Government or State Government.

West Bengal exits Ayushman Bharat scheme
The government of West Bengal has decided to exit from the Centre’s ambitious Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Aarogya Yojana.
Reasons cited by the West Bengal for the Withdrawal
The letter of the West Bengal government to the Secretary of the Department of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India has cited the following reasons for the withdrawal:
The Government of India was issuing entitlement letters to the beneficiaries without the knowledge of the state government.
Prior to the launch of the Ayushman Bharat scheme, West Bengal had well established Swasthyasathi. It was agreed to retain the name of Swasthyasathi, this was even acknowledged in the MoU between the State and the Ministry of Family and Health, Government of India. But the centre has unilaterally changed the name of the scheme to Ayushman Bharat- Pradhan Mantri Jan Aarogya Yojana.

National Clean Air Programme Launched
The Union Environment Minister Harsh Vardhan launched the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP). The programme aims to tackle the challenge of increasing pollution in the cities and towns.
Features of the Programme
The important features of the programme are:
It is a five-year action plan with a tentative target of 20-30% reduction in concentrations of PM10 and PM2.5 by 2024, with 2017 as the base year.
The plan covers 102 non-attainment cities, across 23 states and Union territories, which were identified by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) on the basis of their ambient air quality data between 2011 and 2015.

India-Myanmar Joint Training Exercise Begins In Chandimandir
Second edition of the India-Myanmar bilateral army exercise, IMBEX 2018-19, commenced at Chandimandir Military Station, that houses the headquarters of the Western Command, Chandigarh. The aim of this joint training programme, spread over six days, is to train the Myanmar delegation for participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations under the UN flag.

NIC Command and Control Centre Inaugurated
The Minister for Electronics and IT (MeitY) Ravi Shankar Prasad inaugurated the National Informatics Centre (NIC)’s Command and Control Centre (CCC) and its Centre for Excellence in Artificial Intelligence.
Role of Centre’s Command & Control Centre
National Informatics Centre hosts over 10,000 e-Governance applications and offers Data Centre and Cloud services to the Government.
The Command and Control Centre is set up as a specialized facility with a nationwide view of ICT infrastructure for effective monitoring and management of the performance & availability of all these critical services. The Command and Control Centre will increase the agility of NIC’s nationwide ICT infrastructure.

25th edition of Partnership Summit 2019
Vice President of India M Venkaiah Naidu will inaugurate the 25th edition of Partnership Summit 2019 in Mumbai. The two-day summit will provide a platform for discussions between Indian and global leaders on economic policy and growth trends in India. It will also offer new partnerships and investment opportunities in sectors like Artificial Intelligence, big data, agri and food processing, defence and aeronautics, renewable energy and tourism.
The theme of the sessions will vary from reforms and deregulation to infrastructure development as a necessity for growth. With an aim to showcase a New India, the summit is being organised by Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Maharashtra Government and Confederation of Indian Industry.

Armed Forces Veterans Day
The Armed Force are celebrating the Veterans Day on 14 Jan to honour the veterans of the Army, Navy and Air Force. To mark the occasion, veteran rallies will be held country wide at Armed Forces stations. The main celebration in Delhi will take place at the Manekshaw Centre, Delhi Cantt. Raksha Mantri and Raksha Rajya Mantri will grace the occasion amongst many other eminent officials associated with the Veterans affairs.

Indus Food 2019
INDUS FOOD-II with the theme of ‘World Food Supermarket’ will be held on 14th and 15th January, 2019, at India Expo Mart, Greater Noida. The event is aimed at promoting India as a strong and
reliable exporter of food and beverage products to the world. INDUS FOOD 2019 will promote value addition to India’s agriculture exports and integrate Indian farmers and agricultural products with global value chains. With more than 700 buyers from 70 countries visiting INDUS FOOD-II and more than 500 food suppliers, the event will lead to greater interaction of Indian exporters with global customers leading to enhanced product development and better price realization in international markets.

**Army Tech Seminar (ARTECH 2019)**

In its quest for modernization through optimum use of emerging technologies, Indian Army organised the Army Technology Seminar-2019 (ARTECH 2019) on the theme “Disruptive Impact of Emerging Technologies on Land Warfare” at Manekshaw Centre, Delhi Cantt on 11 Jan 2019. The seminar was aimed to bring together stakeholders in the military, academia and industry to provide perspective on the available and emerging technologies which could have an impact on warfighting. An exhibition showcasing military innovations developed by field Army, DRDO, Academia and industry was also organised during the seminar.

**Sanskriti Kumbh, a 29 days Cultural extravaganza begins at Kumbh Mela Area, Prayagraj**

The biggest cultural festival named Sanskriti Kumbh is celebrating the conglomeration of Spiritual Consciousness and Cultural Heritage of India in the main premises of Kumbh Mela area in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh. The Ministry of Culture, Govt. of India is organizing Sanskriti Kumbh with intent to showcase the rich Cultural Heritage of India in all its rich and varied dimensions viz. Performing Arts-Folk, Tribal and Classical art forms, Handicrafts, Cuisines, Exhibitions etc. all in one place. Kumbh Mela is one of the oldest and largest congregation in the world. Kumbh Mela is attended by millions of people irrespective of all caste, creed, sex and region. The significance of Kumbh Mela has been enhanced at the Global level as the UNESCO has inscribed Kumbh Mela on the list of Intangible Cultural heritage for humanity in 2017. This time Kumbh is being organized in the city of Prayagraj which is located at the confluence of the Ganges, the Yamuna and Mystic river of Saraswati in Uttar Pradesh.

**Chamling launches ‘One Family One Job’ scheme in Sikkim**

Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Kumar Chamling on January 12 launched the ‘One Family One Job’ scheme which entitles one government job for every family in the state. At a "Rojgar Mela" (employment fair) organised at the Paljor stadium in Gangtok, over 12,000 unemployed youths were handed out appointment letters on January 12. However, the letters were awarded only to members of those families which do not have a government job at present. The task of providing employment was entrusted to the Department of Personnel. Sikkim is also the only state in the country that gives the highest salaries to state government employees.

**PM releases Commemorative Coin of Rs. 350 to mark birth anniversary of Guru Gobind Singh jee**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi released today a commemorative coin of Rs. 350 in the national capital to mark the birth anniversary celebrations of Guru Gobind Singh jee. He lauded the lofty ideals and values of the Guru Gobind Singh jee – the selfless service to humanity, devotion, heroism and sacrifice and urged the people to follow his path.
He added that the Commemorative Coin is a small effort on our part to show our respect and reverence to him. He urged the people to make a resolve to walk the talk on the 11-point path shown by Guru Gobind Singh ji Maharaj.

**Hunar Haat 2019**
Finance Minister Shri Arun Jaitley and Union Minority Affairs Minister Shri Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi inaugurated “Hunar Haat” in Delhi. “Hunar Haat” is a great effort at projecting the talent of Indian artisans. Shri Jaitley took a glimpse of indigenous exquisite pieces of Handicraft & Handloom work and also encouraged master artisans who have come here from every corner of the country.
On the occasion, Shri Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi said that “Hunar Haat” has proved to be a “credible brand” of “Indigenous Talent” of Indian artisans and craftsmen. “Hunar Haat” has ensured “Development with Dignity” of artisans and craftsmen of the country.

**International Kite Festival and Second International Sweet Festival**
Inaugurating the fourth International Kite Festival and Second International Sweet Festival at Parade Grounds in Secunderabad on Sunday, he said that festivals are occasions for social bonding and inculcate a spirit of communal harmony and national integrity. They symbolise renewal, rejuvenation and revival of our traditions and heritage and bring in the sense of togetherness, unity, love and brotherhood in today’s fast-paced world.
Calling Makar Sankranthi, which is a harvest festival, a celebration of life and vitality, he said the important festival holds great historical and religious significance. It is the festival of Sun God who is often regarded as the symbol divinity and wisdom. Those who celebrate this occasion of thanksgiving and merry-making revel in anticipation and joy, he said.

**National Youth Day: Tallest Vivekananda statue set for launch**
Every year, January 12 is celebrated as National Youth Day (Yuva Diwas) across the country with great pomp and fervour.
In 1984, the government said that “the philosophy of Swamiji and the ideals for which he lived and worked could be a great source of inspiration for the Indian youth” and since then, Swami Vivekananda's birth anniversary is being celebrated as National Youth Day.

**Rajyavardhan Rathore launches National Youth Parliament Festival 2019**
Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports, Col Rajyavardhan Rathore launched the National Youth Parliament Festival 2019 at a function in New Delhi.
The theme of the festival is- Be the Voice of New India and Find solutions and contribute to policy.
Addressing the media in New Delhi, Col Rathore said, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in his Mann Ki Baat programme in December 2017, had shared the idea of organising Youth Parliaments for young people.

**Gujarat becomes 1st state to implement 10% quota to EWS**
- Gujarat Government has announced that the benefits of 10 per cent quota for Economically Weaker sections of general category in educational institutions and government jobs will be applicable from midnight tonight.
- However, it is pertinent to mention here that the benefits of the fresh quota will not be applicable
for which the process had begun before January 14, 2019, like for which the process of written, oral, computer proficiency or preliminary tests have already been conducted.

Puducherry To Ban Single-Use Plastic From March 1
• Puducherry government has decided to ban the production, sale and use of single-use plastic products in the Union Territory from March 1
• Neighbouring Tamil Nadu government had announced in June, 2018 that it would ban the use of plastic items including non-biodegradable carry bags from January 1, 2019

PM Modi greets soldiers, ex-servicemen and their families on occasion of Army Day
• Prime Minister Narendra Modi has greeted the soldiers, ex-servicemen and their families on the occasion of Army Day.
• Mr Modi said, he bows to their indomitable courage and bravery.

2-day Global Aviation Summit 2019 to take off in Mumbai today
• A two-day Global Aviation Summit 2019 will take off in Mumbai today.
• This will be the first-of-its-kind event in the world with participation from more than 86 countries.
• India is among the fastest growing aviation sector.
• Vision 2040 for aviation sector and the Air Cargo Policy will also be unveiled during the summit.
• The Global Aviation Summit with a theme “Flying for all - especially the next 6 Billion”, being organised by Ministry of Civil Aviation in association with FICCI.

World's largest religious and cultural human congregation - Kumbh Mela begins in UP
• The world's largest religious and cultural human congregation -Kumbh 2019 began at Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh early this morning.
• The Mela commenced with the holy dip at Sangam, the confluence of rivers Ganga, Yamuna and mythical Saraswati.
• According to the Mela's administration, 75 lakh to one crore devotees have taken the Royal bath since early morning.

SC issues notice to Centre against order allowing agencies to monitor computers
• The Supreme Court has issued notice to the Centre on a plea challenging the government's notification authorising 10 central agencies to intercept, monitor and decrypt any computer system.
• A bench comprising Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi and justices Ashok Bhushan and S K Kaul yesterday sought the Centre's response within six weeks and said it would hear arguments on the interim stay after the parties are served the notices.

Pariksha Pe Charcha: PM to interact with students, teachers & parents on Jan 29
• Prime Minister Narendra Modi will interact with students, teachers and parents on 29th of this month.
• The 2nd edition of the Pariksha Pe Charcha will be an interesting conversation with students, parents and teachers on exams, life and more.
• He urged students to participate in the unique contest on MyGov open forum and get a chance to be at the event in Delhi.
• Students can register on MyGov.in open forum and participate in the contest. The competition is
only for students studying from classes 9 to 12, graduate and undergraduate college students, their parents and teachers.

9th International Micro irrigation conference begins in Aurangabad today
• In order to promote Micro irrigation amongst farmers, Ministry of Water resources and River development is going to organize the 9th International Micro irrigation conference from today in Aurangabad, Maharashtra.
• The conference will focus on the theme of “Micro Irrigation and Modern Agriculture”.
• The conference will discuss, deliberate and strategize with eminent stakeholders including farmers, to create awareness about the use of Micro Irrigation on a large scale.
• 740 delegates including 100 foreign delegates from 56 countries and as many 100 Agricultural scientists will also attend the conference.

PM Modi Inaugurates 13-Km Long, Two-Lane Kollam Bypass In Kerala
• Prime Minister Narendra Modi officially declared open the much-awaited Kollam bypass on National Highway-66 on Tuesday.
• The 13-km-long, two-lane bypass, with a project cost of Rs. 352 crore, will cut the travel time between Alappuzha and Thiruvananthapuram districts of Kerala and is expected to decongest the traffic in Kollam town.

Doordarshan's channel 'DD Science' along with internet-based channel 'India Science' launched today
• Science and Technology Minister Dr. Harshvardhan today launched DD Science and India Science channels in New Delhi.
• DD Science is Doordarshan's first ever daily slot on Science and Technology, while India Science is an internet-based channel.
• Doordarshan reaches over 3 crore houses in the country and would be an impactful medium for popularisation of science.
• Addressing the gathering, CEO Prasar Bharati Shashi Shekhar Vempati said these channels dedicated to science will enhance the spirit of enquiry in children.

ISRO starts Human Space Flight centre
• Gaganyaan, the great Indian human leap to space by 2022, will soon get cracking under a new Human Space Flight Centre and a dedicated team around five months after it was first unveiled.
• A team of 800 to 900 people is to be deployed over time to carry it out.
• Indian Space Research Organisation named Unnikrishnan Nair, who led its Advanced Space Transportation Programme at the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre, as the man to steer it - as also the director of the new centre.
• R.Hutton, who has helmed the PSLV light lift vehicle programme, also from Thiruvananthapuram, is the project director in that set-up.

Government to set up over 460 more Eklavya Model Residential Schools across the country
• The government will soon set up over 460 more Eklavya Model Residential Schools across the country.
• The government is spending about 25 thousand crore rupees on these schools.
Eklavya Model Residential Schools have expanded into a major education system in the country after Vidyalaya and Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas.

15th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas to be held in Varanasi from January 21-23
- The 15th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas will be organised in Varanasi from January 21-23, 2019.
- This year, the participants will also have the opportunity to participate in Kumbh Mela at Prayagraj and Republic Day celebrations at New Delhi. Prime Minister of Mauritius, Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, will be the Chief Guest of the Convention.

Magnitude 6 quake jolts Nicobar Islands region
- A strong earthquake of magnitude 6 hit the seismologically prone Andaman and Nicobar Islands on January 17.
- There was no tsunami alert issued as sea levels around the Andaman Nicobar archipelago showed no major rise.
- The earthquake hit the region at 8.43 am and its epicentre was Nicobar Islands region.

SBI, other banks agree to finance Nagpur-Mumbai Samruddhi Corridor
- A consortium of banks led by State Bank of India has agreed to provide finance for Nagpur-Mumbai 'Samruddhi Corridor' expressway project.
- SBI has agreed to lend the highest amount, 8,500 crore rupees.
- Other lenders include Punjab National Bank, Bank of Baroda, Bank of Maharashtra as well as the Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) of India.
- The estimated cost of the project, being constructed by the Maharashtra State Road Development Corporation, is around 50,000 crores, of which around 26,000 crores are required for the construction of the expressway.
- The corridor will have 25 toll plazas, and the toll will be collected for 40 years.

Indigenous attack helicopter crosses milestone
- The indigenously developed Light Combat Helicopter has crossed a milestone, successfully firing an air-to-air missile at a moving target, and it is now ready for induction.
- The helicopter has been developed by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited.
- This is the first time in the country that a helicopter has carried out an air-to-air missile engagement. None of the helicopters in the military services in the country has demonstrated such a capability.
- During the tests conducted recently at the integrated test range at Chandipur, Odisha, the helicopter scored a direct hit on an aerial target and destroyed it. The LCH is the only attack helicopter in the world capable of operating at altitudes as high as Siachen Glacier.

2nd World Orange Festival begins in Nagpur today
- The second World Orange Festival will be organised in Nagpur from today to 21 of this month.
- The festival, while offering its famed oranges to the world, will also showcase and brand the exquisite fruit in order to boost its export.
- Agricultural experts and scientists from various countries will participate in the workshops and guide farmers.

Prabhu inaugurates 10th edition of India Rubber Expo 2019
• Union Minister for Commerce and Industry, Suresh Prabhu inaugurated the 10th edition of the India Rubber Expo - 2019 in Mumbai
• The three-day event being held at the Bombay Exhibition Centre is one of the most anticipated events in the rubber industry’s calendar.
• Stating that the National Rubber Policy will be unveiled soon to address issues concerning the sector and also to boost productivity, Mr Prabhu said the rubber industry can also contribute significantly in India’s efforts to become a 5 trillion dollar economy.

PM Modi to inaugurate National Museum of Indian Cinema
• Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the National Museum of Indian Cinema (NMIC) in Mumbai
• The state-of-the-art Museum has been built at a cost of over 140 crore rupees.
• The objective of the Museum is to take its visitors through an absorbing journey of over a century of Indian cinema in a story telling mode with the help of visuals, graphics, artifacts, interactive exhibits and multimedia expositions.

PMRPy crossed milestone of one crore beneficiaries
• The Pradhan Mantri Rozgar Protsahan Yojana, PMRPy has crossed the milestone of one crore beneficiaries as on the 14th of this month.
• The Centre’s flagship scheme launched on 7th August, 2016 incentivises employers to promote employment generation.
• An official release said one lakh 24 thousand establishments have benefitted from the scheme.
• Under the scheme, government pays full employers’ contribution of 12 per cent towards Employees’ Provident Fund and Employees’ Pension Scheme for a period of 3 years to new employees registered with EPFO, with salary up to 15,000 rupees per month.

ISRO to share its expertise in space sector, train 45 countries in nano-satellite making
• India will train participants from 45 countries in nano-satellite making through a new capacity building programme.
• The programme named Unispace Nanosatellite Assembly and Training by ISRO (UNNATI) was flagged off by Minister of State in Deparment of Space Jitendra Singh in Bengaluru.
• ISRO will train 90 officials from 45 countries in three batches. The first batch will have 30 participants from 17 countries.
• The programme is the space agency’s initiative to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the first United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE50) in 1968.

Rakesh Asthana, three others moved out of CBI
• In a first move before the appointment of the new CBI Director, the Modi administration shunted out four top officials, including controversial Special Director Rakesh Asthana, from the country’s premier investigation agency with immediate effect.
• Besides Mr. Asthana, booked in a bribery case by then CBI Director Alok Verma, the others removed are A.K. Sharma, M.K. Sinha and Jayant Naiknavare.

Visit of the Prime Minister of Denmark to India for Vibrant Gujarat Summit 2019
The Prime Minister of Denmark, H.E. Mr Lars Løkke Rasmussen, is visiting India on 18-19 January, 2019 for "Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit-2019" where Denmark is participating as a Partner Country. Prime Minister Rasmussen is accompanied by a business delegation including CEOs of major Danish companies. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi and Prime Minister Rasmussen held bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the Vibrant Gujarat Summit in Gandhinagar on 18 January 2019. The two Prime Ministers had earlier met during the first India- Nordic summit in Stockholm in April 2018.

Prayagraj Kumbh Mela becomes effective platform for Information dissemination on Welfare schemes
A number of exhibitions by Bureau of Outreach and Communication [BOC] of Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and State Departments have been setup to Inform, Educate & Communicate about various Welfare schemes implemented by the Government.
BOC has set up a very high tech exhibition at Triveni Road in sector 1 at Kumbh's exhibition ground. Most of the panels are on Ek Bharat Shreshta Bharat, Swatchh aur Samridh Bharat, Bapuaur Sardar Ke Sapno Ka Bharat etc. These exhibitions are digital and interactive in nature. Displays on lives of Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi and Iron Man of the country, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel are inspiring the visitors to go into details through digital panels. Some posters depicting achievements of Government are also exhibited with photographs.

India to host the 14th session of the Conference of Parties to United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)
Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, India will host the 14th session of the Conference of Parties to United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) in 2019 to address the issues of land degradation and desertification. The event will be participated by more than 100 countries and it is likely to be held in the month of October 2019.

Nagpur, the city of Oranges to host the 4-day 2nd World Orange Festival for the first time
The 4-day 2nd world Orange Festival commenced in Nagpur, the city of oranges, for the first time. The festival will also showcase and brand the exquisite fruit in order to boost its export.

Tamil Nadu State Cabinet approved the building rules
Tamil Nadu State Cabinet cleared the Combined Development Regulation and Building Rules. The salient features of the building rules include simplified application forms for planning permission, standardization of development rules and elimination of the scope for discretion on the part of planning authorities. The State Law Department is carrying out a scrutiny of the Rules. Once the law department approves the Rules, the final order will be issued by the State’s Housing and Urban Development Department. The State Cabinet also gave its nod to provisional allocations for various departments and the process of preparation of the Budget speech. Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami chaired the meeting, which was attended by Deputy Chief Minister and Finance Minister O. Panneerselvam and others.

India para-powerlifter fails dope test, banned for 4 years
Indian para-powerlifter Vikramsingh Adhikari has been handed a four-year ban by the International Paralympic Committee for a second anti-doping violation. The 39-year-old Adhikari, who took part in the 2000 Sydney Paralympics, returned positive for Clomiphene in a urine sample provided on 28th
February 2017 following his participation at the 8th Fazza 2017 World Para Powerlifting World Cup in Dubai. Paralympic Committee of India Vice-President Gursharan Singh said that the latest result was that of the 'B' sample test. Clomiphene, which can be used to accelerate testosterone secretion, is included on the World Anti-Doping Agency 2017 Prohibited List under the category S4. Hormone and Metabolic Modulators is prohibited both in and out-of-competition.

**Maharashtra touches 200 medals in Khelo India Youth Games 2019**

In the Khelo India Youth Games 2019, Maharashtra touched a new milestone of 200 medals. Haryana defeated Delhi and is currently securing the second position. Haryana, who topped the medals tally at last year’s Games, bagged an incredible 10 gold medals along with eight silver and 15 bronze yesterday. They with 48 gold medals, 45 silver and 54 bronze, are second in the medals’ tally, pushing Delhi with 47 gold, 33 silver and 47 bronze to the third spot. Maharashtra, who also had a good day with eight gold medals, five from boxing, two from tennis and one from table tennis, reached 200 medals with 76 gold with 57 silver and 67 bronze.

**Madhu Babu Pension Yojana**

The government of Odisha announced a hike of Rs 200 per month in the social security pension under Madhu Babu Pension Yojana (MBPY).

The Madhu Babu Pension Yojana (MBPY) is a pension scheme under the Department of Social Security and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities for the disabled, old age persons in the state of Odisha. The Scheme was instituted by merging the two pension schemes i.e. namely, Revised Old Age Pension Rules, 1989 and Disability Pension Rules, 1985.

**Beneficiaries of the Scheme**

The Beneficiaries of the Madhu Babu Pension Yojana are:
- Person of 60 years of age and above.
- A widow (irrespective of age).
- A leprosy patient with visible signs of deformity (irrespective of age).

**National Museum of Indian Cinema Inaugurated (national news)**

The Prime Minister Narendra Modi has inaugurated the National Museum of Indian Cinema (NMIC) at Films Division of India premises in Mumbai.

**National Museum of Indian Cinema (NMIC)**

The National Museum of Indian Cinema (NMIC) aims to conserve the film heritage of India. The important aspects of NMIC are:
- NMIC is housed in two buildings, the New Museum Building and the 19th-century historic palace Gulshan Mahal – in the Films Division campus in Mumbai.
- The museum provides a glimpse of the evolution of Indian cinema in a storytelling mode with the help of visuals, graphics, artifacts, interactive exhibits, and multimedia expositions.
- Posters have been on display at NMIC to map the journey of Indian cinema over the last century.

**RailTel project turning railway stations into digital hubs (National News)**

The Indian Railways (IR) has one of the world’s largest public WiFi networks in RailWire WiFi. As a measure to PM’s Digital India initiative, across 746 railway stations in India RailWire WiFi has been set up with around 2.6 crore users logins in a month, and over 9,491 Tetra Byte (TB) of aggregated data consumption under RailTel project. The network, provided by RailTel, a ‘Mini Ratna’ central PSU (Public Sector Undertaking) under the Ministry of Railways, is not only one of the largest but
also one of the fastest public WiFi networks. RailTel has provided high-speed WiFi at 414 A, A1 and C category railway stations across the country, in association with Google as the technology partner. Free WiFi services to commuters are being provided under ‘RailWire’, RailTel’s retail Broadband initiative.

Prime Minister to inaugurate 15th Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas Convention in Varanasi on 22 January, 2019
The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi will inaugurate the 15th Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas Convention at Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh tomorrow on 22 January, 2019. For the first time, the three day long convention is being organized in Varanasi from 21-23 January, 2019. The theme of PBD Convention 2019 is "Role of Indian Diaspora in building New India". In reverence to the sentiments of the larger diaspora to participate in Kumbh Mela and Republic Day celebrations, the 15th PBD Convention is being organised from 21 to 23 January 2019 instead of 9th January. After the Convention, participants will visit Prayagraj for Kumbh Mela on 24th January. They will then proceed to Delhi on 25th January and witness the Republic Day Parade at New Delhi on 26th January 2019.

About Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas:
The 1st PBD was celebrated on 9th January, 2003 in New Delhi. January 9 was chosen as the day to celebrate PBD as it was on this day in 1915 that Mahatma Gandhi, had returned to India from South Africa.
PBD now celebrated once in every two years, provides a platform to the overseas Indian community to engage with the government and reconnect with their roots. During the Convention, Pravasi Bharatiya Samman is conferred on the selected overseas Indians for their significant contributions to various fields both in India and abroad.

India's richest 1% get richer by 39% in 2018; just 3% rise for bottom-half: Oxfam
Indian billionaires saw their fortunes swell by 2,200 crore a day last year, with the top 1 per cent of the countries richest getting richer by 39 per cent as against just 3 per cent increase in wealth for the bottom-half of the population, an Oxfam study said on Monday. Globally, billionaires’ fortunes rose by 12 per cent or $ 2.5 billion a day in 2018, whereas the poorest half of the world’s population saw their wealth decline by 11 per cent, the international rights group said. Between 2018 and 2022, India is estimated to produce 70 new dollar millionaires every day, Oxfam said. “It (the survey) reveals how governments are exacerbating inequality by underfunding public services, such as healthcare and education, on the one hand, while under taxing corporations and the wealthy, and failing to clamp down on tax dodging on the other,” Oxfam India CEO Amitabh Behar said.

India to soon have own standard of apparel size: Smriti Irani
Union minister Smriti Irani on January 20 said Indian textiles and garments industry would soon get its own country-specific apparel size. “In the apparel export segment, one of the biggest challenge is that the UK has its size, the US has its size, and Europe has its size of measurement. But, India does not have it , she said. Irani said the central government, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has allotted over Rs 1,800 crore in the last 4.5 years to Gujarat for upgradation of technology in the textile sector.
**Logo for Tripura tea unveiled**
The Chief Minister of Tripura Biplab Kumar Deb unveiled the official logo of Tripura Tea. The Tripura Tea logo features Neermahal, the iconic landmark of Tripura.

About Neermahal
Neermahal was built by then Tripura King Bir Bikram Kishore Debbarman Manikya in the middle of Rudrasagar Lake, as his summer residence. It is located in Melaghar, around 53 km west of Agartala. This is the largest water palace in India and one of two water palaces in India. The other water palace of India is located at Jal Mahal in Rajasthan.

**Tamil Nadu Defence Industrial Corridor Inaugurated**
The Union Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman inaugurated the Tamil Nadu Defence Industrial Corridor. During the inauguration, investments worth over Rs 3,038 crore in this defence corridor were announced. Lockheed Martin, a global security giant, also announced its intention to invest in the corridor.

About the Corridor
• The important features about the Tamil Nadu Defence Industrial Corridor are:
• It is also called as Tamil Nadu Defence Production Quad as the nodal cities of Chennai, Hosur, Salem, Coimbatore and Tiruchirappalli form a quadrilateral with one of them at the centre.
• The five nodal cities already have existing defence ecosystem in the form of ordnance factory boards, vendors working with defence PSUs, and other allied industries.

**Tripura, Manipur and Meghalaya celebrate 47th Statehood Day**
The states of Tripura, Manipur and Meghalaya celebrated their 47th Statehood Day on 21st January. The states of Tripura, Manipur and Meghalaya became full-fledged states on January 21, 1972.

**State Reorganisation of North-East**
At the time of Independence, India’s North-East region composed of three kinds of entities mentioned below:
Assam Province of British India.
Princely states of Manipur and Tripura.
North East Frontier Province (NEFA).

**PM pays tributes to Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose on his Jayanti**
The Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has paid tributes to Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose on his Jayanti.
“I bow to Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose on his Jayanti. He was a stalwart who committed himself towards ensuring India is free and leads a life of dignity. We are committed to fulfilling his ideals and creating a strong India”, the Prime Minister said.

**PM to inaugurate the Subhash Chandra Bose museum at Red Fort**
The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi will inaugurate the Subhash Chandra Bose museum at Red Fort, New Delhi on 23 January 2019.
The Museum on Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose and Indian National Army provides a detailed account of Subhash Chandra Bose and the history of Indian National Army. It also showcases various artefacts related to Subhash Chandra Bose and INA. The artefacts include wooden chair and sword used by Netaji, medals, badges, uniforms and other artefacts related to INA.
The Central Organisation for Modernisation of Workshops (COFMOW) achieved best ever performance in the year 2018
The Central Organisation for Modernisation of Workshops (COFMOW) is Indian Railways’ centre of excellence for procurement of modern and advanced machine tools, building ‘State of the Art’ rolling stock maintenance and manufacturing facilities for modernizing Indian Railway workshops. Timely procurement of modern M&P and completion of works has been given a big boost during the last quarter which will significantly improve the outcome by use of technology. This will support Indian Railways drive for modernization of its rolling stock manufacturing and maintenance infrastructure, and soon, to come in terms of the National Policy for Advance Manufacturing (NPAM) and Industry 4.0.

Rashtriya Bal Puraskar
The Rashtriya Bal Puraskar was presented by President Ram Nath Kovind
President conferred awards to 26 awardees including one joint award for National Child Award (now renamed as Bal Shakti Puraskar) under the category of innovation, scholastic, sports, arts & culture, social service and bravery. 2 individuals and 3 institutions will also be awarded under National Child Welfare Awards category (now renamed as BalKalyanPuraskar).
The awardees were chosen by the National Selection Committee under the Chairpersonship of Smt Maneka Sanjay Gandhi, Minister of Women and Child Development.

Pravasi Teerth Darshan Yojana
Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the Pravasi Teerth Darshan Yojana. The features of the Pravasi Teerth Darshan Yojana are:
• Under the scheme, a group of Indian diaspora will be taken on a government-sponsored tour of religious places in India twice a year.
• The first batch of 40 people participated in the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas 2019 held in Varanasi.
• Those selected would be taken to religious places of all major religions in India.
• The government will bear all the expenses including the airfare from their country of residence.
• People of Indian-origin aged 45 to 65 can apply can avail the benefits under the scheme.

India Ratings report on state’s finances: Key Facts
A Fitch Group company, India Ratings has released its report on states finances. The important findings of the report are:
• Loan waiver and other support measures for farmers are expected to raise the aggregate fiscal deficit of states to 3.2 per cent in 2018-19.
• Further, the fiscal deficit would increase by 40 basis points (100 basis points or bps equal to 1 per cent) in the financial year 2019-20.
• The competitive populism in the nature of farm loan waivers and other financial support schemes is expected to take centre stage in the run-up to the next general elections and this would have a larger impact on fiscal and revenue deficit to gross state domestic product ratios for Madhya Pradesh, Kerala and Rajasthan, among non-special category states, in the financial year 2019-20.
• The states revenue account on aggregate is expected to clock a deficit of 0.5 per cent of GDP in the financial year 2019-20 due to higher growth in revenue expenditure than in revenue receipts.

Godavari-Cauvery link project
The Union Minister for Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation Nitin Gadkari
announced that the Centre would soon take up a major project to Link Rivers Godavari and Cauvery. The detailed project report for linking rivers Godavari-Krishna-Pennar-Cauvery has been finalised and will be presented before the cabinet soon for approval.

Objectives of the Project
The objectives of the project are:
• The project aims to make good use of about 1100 tmc ft of Godavari water that is currently getting drained into the Bay of Bengal.
• The project would take the water from river Godavari to the tail end of Tamil Nadu.
• The government aims to raise finances for the project either from the World Bank or the Asian Development Bank as the project cost is about Rs 50,000 crore to Rs 60,000 crore.

Centre to renovate, develop around 400 abandoned airstrips across country
• Centre has decided to renovate and develop around 400 abandoned airstrips across the country to strengthen air-connectivity.
• The Airports Authority of India prepared a Memorandum of Understanding in this regard and sent it to all the 29 states and seven Union Territories expressing its willingness to develop those airstrips along with the respective state governments.
• Union Civil Aviation department Secretary said that Jharkhand is the first state in the country where an MOU was signed to develop one such abandoned air strip at Dhalbhumgarh.

India, Maldives agree to continue close cooperation on maritime security, counter-terrorism & medical cooperation
• India and Maldives have agreed to continue their traditionally close cooperation on issues of maritime security, counter-terrorism and medical cooperation.
• This was decided during the meeting between Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and her Maldivian counterpart Mariya Ahmed Didi in New Delhi on Thursday.
• Both sides held substantive discussions on further strengthening bilateral defence cooperation.

ISRO successfully launches PSLV C44 carrying Kalamsat & imaging satellite Microsat R; PM congratulates scientists
• The Indian Space Research Organisation successfully launched the PSLV C 44 carrying kalam sat and Microsat R last night at 11.37 precisely.
• The rocket precisely injected the Microsat R in its designated orbit.
• Kalamsat is a ten cm cube weighing one kilogram communication satellite with a life span of two months. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has congratulated the space scientists for another successful launch of PSLV.
• India also becomes the first country to use the fourth stage of a space rocket as an orbital platform for micro-gravity experiments.

South Africa President Cyril Ramaphosa to be Chief Guest at R-Day Parade
• South Africa President Cyril Ramaphosa will be the Chief Guest at the Republic Day Parade. He is the second President of South Africa after Nelson Mandela to be the Chief Guest at the parade.
• Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Ramaphosa will hold delegation level talks on bilateral, regional and global issues of mutual interest.
• Both the leaders will also address the India-South Africa Business Forum today with the objective to grow business ties between the two countries.
Father of the Nation Mahatma Gandhi is revered in the African nation as he had an important role in the non-violent movement in South Africa.

9th National Voters' Day to be celebrated across country today
- The 9th National Voters’ Day will be celebrated across the country today for enhanced participation of citizens in the electoral process on 25th January
- The National Awards for the Best Electoral Practices will be conferred on Officers for their outstanding performance in the conduct of elections.
- The National Voters’ Day is celebrated all over the country on January 25 every year since 2011 to mark the Foundation day of Election Commission of India, which was established on 25th January 1950.
- In view of the upcoming Lok Sabha Elections, No Voter to be Left Behind has been selected as the theme for the National Voters’ Day.

Botha announces immediate retirement from all forms of Cricket
- Former South Africa all-rounder Johan Botha has announced his immediate retirement from all forms of Cricket.
- The 36-year-old Botha, who received his Australian citizenship in 2016, failed to take a wicket during yesterday's nine-wicket loss to the Sydney Sixers.
- Botha played for South Africa in five test matches, 78 one-day internationals and 40 T20 Internationals from 2005 to 2012.

RBI okays Ravneet Gill as Yes Bank MD & CEO
- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has approved the appointment of Ravneet Gill as the MD & CEO of private sector lender Yes Bank.
- Mr. Gill is currently the India chief of foreign lender Deutsche Bank.
- The present MD & CEO of Yes Bank Rana Kapoor’s term ends on January 31.

Ronojoy Dutta named new Indigo CEO
- InterGlobe Aviation Limited, which owns and operates low cost airline IndiGo, has named global aviation professional Ronojoy Dutta as its new CEO.
- The position was lying vacant since the resignation of the former CEO Aditya Ghosh in April 2018. IndiGo co-founder Rahul Bhatia was holding charge as interim CEO during the period.

Assam Rifles creates history by showcasing "Nari Shakti" at parade
- The all-women Assam Rifles contingent created history this year by participating for the first time in a Republic Day parade.
- Contingents of the Navy, India Army Service Corps and a unit of Corps of Signals were all led by women officers.
- Capt Shikha Surabhi from the Corps of Signals became the first woman to perform bike stunts, alongside her male teammates as part of daredevils.
- For the first time, a lady officer, Lt. Bhavana Kasturi. led a contingent of the India Army Service Corps and Capt Bhavna Syal, a third-generation officer in the armed forces, led the transportable satellite terminal's contingent.

SC upholds constitutional validity of Insolvency laws
The Supreme Court has upheld the Insolvency & Bankruptcy Code, IBC's constitutional validity in its 'entirety' and rejected petitions challenging the bankruptcy laws. The decision is a setback to defaulting promoters hoping for a chance to remain in control of their firms.

A bench of Justices R F Nariman and Navin Sinha refused to tweak any of the provisions of the IBC, which was challenged in a batch of petitions filed by several companies.

Justice Nariman, who penned the verdict, said the experiment contained in the Code passes constitutional muster. Lauding the working of IBC, the court said the economy's rightful position has been regained and the defaulters' paradise is lost by the IBC.

PM Modi dedicates Kochi Refinery project to Nation
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday dedicated to the nation the Integrated Refinery Expansion Complex of BPCL at Kochi in Kerala.
- Prime Minister also laid a foundation stone for Petrochemical Complex.
- PM also inaugurated Mounded Storage Vessel at IOCL LPG bottling plant, Kochi.
- PM also laid the foundation stone for Skill Development Institute at Etumannoor.
- Integrated Refinery Expansion Complex will be a modern expansion complex and transform Kochi refinery into the largest PSU Refinery in India with world class standards. It will be equipped for the production of cleaner Fuels for India. It will double the production of LPG & diesel and commence production of feedstock for petrochemical projects in this plant.

Piyush Goyal named interim Finance & Corporate Affairs minister
- Railway Minister Piyush Goyal has been given additional charge of Finance and Corporate Affairs ministry in view of indisposition of Arun Jaitley
- President, as advised by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, directed that during the period of Jaitley's indisposition, the portfolios of the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Corporate Affairs.

India’s fastest indigenous train renamed as Vande Bharat Express
- India’s fastest indigenous train which will run from Delhi to Varanasi has been named as Vande Bharat Express.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will flag off the semi high-speed train soon.
- It is a train built completely in India by Indian engineers in a span of 18 months and it is an example that it is possible to make world-class trains under Make in India.
- The 16-coach train has been built by the Integral Coach Factory, Chennai and cover the distance in 8 hours.
- It will have two executive chair cars and it will have a superior quality of air suspension for the comfortable journey of the passengers.

Bharat Parv showcasing spirit of Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat begins at Red Fort
- Fourth edition of Bharat Parv, showcasing the spirit of Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat began at Red Fort in Delhi
- It will continue till 31st of this month. The five-day event is a part of Republic Day Celebrations and the objective of this festival is to generate a patriotic fervour and promote the rich cultural diversity of the country.
- The major highlights of this year's Bharat Parv are the replica of the Statue of Unity and a Gandhi Gram in which 10 painting artists will create paintings on the theme of 'Ideology of Mahatma Gandhi'.
Union Minister Gadkari inaugurates Atal Setu in Goa
• Union Minister Nitin Gadkari today inaugurated four-lane, 5.1-kilometer long “Atal Setu”, the third Cable bridge across river Mandovi in Panaji, Goa.
• Expressing happiness over the completion of the bridge, Chief Minister of Goa Manohar Parrikar said they should be positive about every development project.
• This is the third bridge across Mandovi River. This bridge would overcome the bottlenecks and curb traffic jams at Panaji Circle and Panaji entrance. It is reported that about 66,000 vehicles use this route every day.

Supreme Court refuses to stay amendments to SC/ST Act
The Supreme Court has refused to stay the amendments to Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Amendment Bill, 2018. These amendments were brought in to nullify the safeguards instituted by the Supreme Court to prevent its misuse.
Safeguards proposed by Supreme Court
Expressing concerns over the misuse of the various provisions under the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, the Supreme Court had proposed following safety mechanisms:
• Provision of anticipatory bail
• Approval of Senior Superintendent of Police to arrest those accused under this act.
• Deputy Superintendent of Police (DySP) to conduct a preliminary enquiry to find out whether there is a prima facie case under Act.

Yuva Swabhiman Yojana
The government of Madhya Pradesh has announced the Yuva Swabhiman Yojana to provide employment for the unemployed youth from the economically weaker sections of the society.
About the Scheme
The features of the Yuva Swabhiman Yojana scheme are:
• It aims to provide employment to the youth belonging to the weaker section of the society mainly in urban areas of the state.
• The scheme aims to provide 100 days of employment to youngsters from economically weaker sections of the society in urban areas.
• The youths would also be given skill training by the government.
The component of skill training has been added to enable the youth to explore the available opportunities. To enhance the job opportunities the government of Madhya Pradesh has also announced changes in industrial policy with a clause under which industries would be eligible to get the state government incentives only if they hire 70 per cent staff from Madhya Pradesh.

Ministry of Defence Launches ‘RDP INDIA 2019’
Asia new initiative in sync with the Digital India campaign of the Government, Ministry of Defence had launched a mobile app 'RDP India 2019' on the Republic Day, with the intent of making available the highlights of the Republic Day event, not only to the spectators at Rajpath, but also to the general public all over the world.
This app contains information about the Parade on Rajpath, New Delhi, including Order of the March, details of the tableaux presented by different States and Ministries, children cultural performances, fly past and names of recipients of Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar 2019. It was extremely
informative to the spectators witnessing the Parade and was widely appreciated. The app also had the provision for live streaming of the Parade.

The Kumbh contributes to infrastructure Development at Prayagraj City
- Kumbh and Mahakumbh have always proved very significant contributors to the Prayagraj district in terms of infrastructure development and growth in civic amenities. But this year Prayagraj Kumbh has changed the face of entire city and suburbs.
- Investment of crores for the infrastructure development in the town by Prayagraj Development Authority has not only widened most of the roads particularly Sangam, Public places and historical buildings bound roads but has also beautified most of the squares. Ths squares have been left with artistic sculptures and statues. Encroachments occupying the roads for last several years have been removed amicably and even religious constructions on the roads have been removed without any trouble.
- Vehicular Transport has been strengthened and roads have been freed from traffic jams due to removal of encroachments. About 3000 encroachments have been removed from about 65 roads in different parts of the Prayagraj town. These illegal constructions were continuing for last several years. About 150 kilometres of road has been constructed in the city area under the drive to widen roads. Connectivity from all railway and bus stations and Airport has been strengthened connecting most parts of the city.
- About five over bridges have been constructed in view of the Kumbh at different places and it has smoothened road traffic at railway crossings and places like Allahabad High Court. A new civil Airport has come to facilitate the visiting devotees and tourists. Newly constructed Airport has linked Prayagraj to several important cities including Kolkata, Nagpur, Indore, Lucknow, New Delhi, Bengaluru, Ahmadabad, Dehradun and Patna with Air services.

National Conclave on Technical Textiles at Mumbai
Ministry of Textiles will hold National Conclave on Technical Textiles on 29th January 2019 in Mumbai. The event will also be a curtain raiser for TechnoTex 2019. The conclave will be presided over by the Union Minister of Textiles, Smriti Zubin Irani. The release of HSN codes by Government of India for technical textiles will be one of the major highlights of the conclave. Several panel discussions will be held on subjects like administrative consolidation of technical textiles items, manufacturing possibilities and import substitution, benefits of standardization and global best practices, technical textiles codes for New India, investment opportunity in technical textiles sector and research & development in technical textiles by eminent panellists drawn from various Central Government departments, NITI Aayog, IITs and textile industry.

Minister of Railways & Coal Shri Piyush Goyal Announces ‘Vande Bharat Express’
Minister of Railways & Coal, Shri Piyush Goyal announced the name Vande Bharat Express for Train 18, acknowledging it is made-in-India status. He called it a ‘vandaniya’ step towards realisation of New India vision. This train set has been manufactured by Integral Coach Factory (ICF) in the period of 18 months under ‘Make in India’ program. Since the launch of Rajdhani trains, Vande Bharat Express is the next major leap for Indian Railways in terms of speed and convenience. It is India’s first semi-high speed train equipped with world class passenger amenities. It can achieve high speeds (max speed of 160 kmph) due to faster acceleration & deceleration and
will reduce journey time by 25% to 45%. Scheduled commute between New Delhi & Varanasi will take approximately 8 hours making it 40-50% faster than the fastest train currently connecting these two cities.

**Two Day International Stock Taking Conference on Tiger Conservation inaugurated in New Delhi**

The 3rd Stock Taking Conference on Tiger Conservation was inaugurated in New Delhi today. Third in a series of Stock Taking Conferences, this is the second to be held in India after 2012 and is expected to have wide ranging discussions on the status of the Global Tiger Recovery Program (GTRP) by the 13 tiger range countries besides deliberations on combating wildlife trafficking. Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Dr. Harsh Vardhan, who is also the Chairman of the National Tiger Conservation Authority said on the inauguration that conservation of tigers is a duty which has to be meticulously pursued and more innovative ways needs to be devised so that we can better the targets adopted by tiger range countries in 2010 at St. Petersburg, Russia. “The New India that we envisage is not only for humans but for every aspect including wildlife”, said Dr. Vardhan.

**National Conference on “Prison Design” to begin in Visakhapatnam**

The first ever National Conference on “Prison Design” will begin in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh tomorrow (29th January 2019). The two-day conference is being hosted by the DG Prison, Andhra Pradesh on the behalf of State and is being sponsored by the Bureau of Police Research & Development (BPR&D). The Deputy Chief Minister (Home & Disaster Management), Andhra Pradesh, Shi N. Chinarajappa will inaugurate the National Conference. This conference aims to provide a platform to the Sr. Police officers, Prison officers and Architects from Prison Department and Police Housing Corporation to meet and deliberate upon on the various issues relating with planning, Design and Constructions of prison keeping in view the safety and security need as well as administrative ease of day to day functioning of the prison. The idea of conference is also to incorporate new construction technology, Information and Communication Technologies and modern safety and security gadgets in Prison Administration, besides ensuring conducive living environment in a holistic sense.

**Atal Setu of Goa**

Chief Minister of Goa Manohar Parrikar inaugurated the “Atal Setu” on the Mandovi river in Goa. The important features of the bridge are:

- It is a four-lane 5.1-km long cable-stayed bridge connects state capital Panaji with north Goa.
- This four-lane bridge weighs at 2.5 lakh tonnes is equivalent to the weight of 570 Boeing aircraft.
- The bridge has been built by 1 lakh cubic metres of high strength, high performance concrete enough to fill 40 Olympic size swimming pools.
- 13,000 tonnes of corrosion resistant reinforcement steel, 32,000 square metres of structural steel plates and 1,800 kilometres of high tensile pre-stressing strands have gone into making the bridge.
- The bridge utilizes 88 high tensile strength cables in the state-of-art single place harp type cable stay system and a real-time force monitoring mechanism.

**Steel Ministry to set up Safety Directorate**
Ministry of Steel, Government of India, held its Parliamentary Consultative Committee meeting in Goa today chaired by the Minister of Steel, Chaudhary Birender Singh. The issues discussed at the meeting were mining activities of CPSEs under Steel ministry and safety in Steel Plants. At the end of the Parliamentary Consultative Committee meeting, the Steel Minister addressed media persons and emphasized the importance of safety in the production of iron and steel which is a complex and hazardous activity. The Minister said that recognizing the need to prevent injuries and accidents and provide a healthy working environment and also guard against all possible hazards and risks, it has been decided to set up a Safety Directorate which will become operational soon. This directorate will oversee the safety standards in the steel industry. Steel Minister said both its CPSEs, Steel Authority of India Limited and Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Limited (RINL), have comprehensive safety policies.

Union Minister Patnaik launches Rs 1,100 crore Infra projects in Ganjam district
Shri Naveen Patnaik laid the foundation stone for 231 projects worth Rs 715 crore and inaugurated 48 projects in the Ganjam District of Odisha. Some of the Major Projects inaugurated by Naveen Patnaik are a 10-bedded geriatric ward (Rs 40 crore), bleaching store (Rs 29.64 crore), district vaccine store (Rs 79 crore) and Construction of OPD for eye department at the district headquarter hospital and city hospital. Foundation stone for various projects was laid during the visit of Naveen Patnaik including Railway over the bridge at Jagannathpur and Ambapua with an estimated cost of Rs 30 and Rs 35 crore respectively and 9 Major Rail project (Rs 113.51 crore). Foundation stone was also laid for the development of infrastructure of 11 tourism projects costing Rs. 4.78 crore in the district.

NGMA to organize 1st edition of Night at the Museum
- National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA) New Delhi will today organize the first edition of Night at the Museum.
- The event will be organised in collaboration with the India Art Fair from 8:00 PM to 11:00 PM.
- NGMA will conduct guided tour of its prestigious permanent collection which is on display at the permanent gallery.
- Highlight objects include works of art of Rabindranath Tagore, Amrita Sher-Gil, Raja Ravi Verma, Nandalal Bose and Jamini Roy.

Four highway projects worth over Rs 3000 cr launched in Rajasthan
- In Rajasthan, Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari inaugurated and laid the foundation stone of four National Highway projects worth over 3 thousand 237 Cr. rupees.
- These include three projects in Bikaner and one in Nagaur District.
- 24 thousand Km Highways will be constructed in first phase of Bharatmala Project.
- Foundation stone of two projects were laid down in the function, which include National Highway from Raisinghnagar to Poogal and Khajuwala to Poogal and Poogal to Naukha-Bap sections of NH-911.

All religion prayer organized at Sabarmati Gandhi Ashram in Gujarat
- Gujarat is paying rich tribute to its son of soil father of the nation Mahatma Gandhi on his death anniversary today.
- All religion prayer has been organized at Sabarmati Gandhi Ashram this morning.
- Several functions have been organized at Kirti Mandir in Porbandar- the birthplace of Mahatma
Gandhi.
  • People will also observe two minutes silence at 11 am in respect to the father of the nation Mahatma Gandhi.

**India improves its global corruption ranking in 2018: Study**
  • India has improved its ranking on a global corruption index in 2018 by three points and moved to 78th position with a score of 41.
  • In the list of 180 countries, China and Pakistan lagged far behind at 87th and 117th position, respectively.
  • According to the rankings released by an anti-corruption watchdog, Denmark is the least corrupt country followed by New Zealand while Somalia, Syria and South Sudan are the most corrupt countries in the world.

**Govt embarks on ambitious programme to ensure 100% electrification of Railways grid in next 5 years**
  • Government has embarked on an ambitious programme to ensure 100 per cent electrification of Railways grid in the next five years.
  • The step will help reduce carbon emissions and supplement the efforts to fight climate change. Mr Goyal was speaking in New Delhi today after he was conferred with Carnot Prize by a US-based Centre for Energy Policy.
  • The award recognizes role of exceptional leaders in advancing mission of cultivating energy policy innovation.

**PM Modi dedicates National Salt Satyagraha Memorial to the nation**
  • Prime Minister Narendra Modi dedicated National Salt Satyagraha Memorial to the nation at Dandi village, situated in South Gujarat on Arabian sea coast.
  • At the memorial site, he also unveiled statues of Mahatma Gandhi and 80 Satyagrahis who had marched with him during the historic Dandi Salt March in 1930.
  • A dedication ceremony on Bapu’s death anniversary has acquired special significance as Dandi village is to receive a big push from the government to be developed as a place of national importance and tourist interest like Statue of Unity.

**India’s 1st Geographical Indication Store opened in Goa**
  • Union Civil Aviation minister Suresh Prabhu on Monday inaugurated India’s 1st Geographical Indication store at Goa International Airport in Dabolim.
  • The store is located on the first floor on Departure Terminal, and jointly set up by Airports Authority of India and The Cashew Export Promotional Council of India.
  • Union Minister informed that currently there are 270 GI registered products in the country and the store will be a boon for the global tourists.

**CBI books Chanda Kochhar, Venugopal Dhoot**
  • The CBI has booked former ICICI Bank CEO and MD Chanda Kochhar, her husband Deepak Kochhar and Videocon group MD Venugopal Dhoot in connection with alleged cheating and irregularities in loans sanctioned by the bank to the group in 2012.
  • It is alleged that Videocon promoter Venugopal Dhoot allegedly invested crores of rupees in Nupower months after the Videocon group got Rs 3,250 crore as loan from the ICICI Bank in 2012.
Govt infuses nearly Rs 11,000 cr capital in public sector banks
- The government has infused 10,882 crore rupees in four public sector banks, including UCO Bank and Syndicate Bank. It is part of 28,615 crore rupees capital infusion to be done in seven public sector lenders.
- UCO Bank has received 3,074 crore rupees in the equity by way of preferential allotment yesterday. Besides, Bank of Maharashtra got 4,498 crore rupees, Syndicate Bank 1,632 crore and the Central Bank of India 1,678 crore.
- The government has already announced infusion of 10,086 crore rupees in Bank of India, 5,500 crore in Oriental Bank of Commerce and 2,159 in United Bank of India.

RBI offers relief to MSMEs; allows restructuring of debt up to Rs 25 crore
- Reserve Bank has allowed a one-time restructuring of existing debt of up to 25 crore rupees for the companies which have defaulted on payment but the loans given to them have continued to be classified as standard assets.
- The decision will help the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) which are facing cash crunch in the wake of demonetisation and GST implementation.
- To be eligible for the scheme, the aggregate exposure, including non-fund based facilities of banks and NBFCs, to a borrower should not exceed 25 crore rupees as on January 1, 2019, and the restructuring has to be implemented by 31st of March 2020.

RBI Financial Stability Report
Indian banking sector has begun to show improvement in asset quality of scheduled commercial banks (SCBs) during July-September quarter this year.
- This positive sentiment was attributed to a host of factors including credit growth of banks coupled with improvement in the asset quality of the banks.
- The FSR reflects the collective assessment of the Sub-Committee of the Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC) on risks to financial stability, as also the resilience of the financial system.
- According to the report, credit growth of scheduled commercial banks (SCBs) has improved between March 2018 and September 2018, driven largely by private sector banks.
- The report also projected that GNPA ratio may decline to 10.3 per cent in March 2019, from 10.8 per cent in September 2018.

Moody's downgrades Yes Bank ratings
- Moody's Investors Service on Tuesday downgraded Yes Bank's ratings to non-investment grade and changed outlook to negative from stable on the back of various resignations from the Board.
- The resignations, when seen in conjunction with RBI's September directive to restrict the term of the bank's MD & CEO Rana Kapoor, till January 31, 2019, have raised concerns over corporate governance.
- Moody's has downgraded foreign currency issuer rating to 'Ba1' from 'Baa3', and also the bank's baseline credit assessment (BCA) and adjusted BCA to 'ba2' from 'ba1'. The rating implies that these instruments are non-investment grade, speculative.
- Headquartered in Mumbai, Yes Bank had total assets of Rs 3.7 lakh crore at September 30, 2018.
On November 14, Yes Bank non-executive chairman Ashok Chawla resigned as his name figured in a CBI chargesheet filed in the Aircel-Maxis case. Another independent director Vasant Gujarathi too tendered his resignation on the same day.

Cabinet approves first-ever three way merger in Indian Banking
- The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has approved the scheme of amalgamation for amalgamating Bank of Baroda, Vijaya Bank and Dena Bank, with Bank of Baroda as the transferee bank and Vijaya Bank and Dena Bank as transferor banks.
- The amalgamation will be the first-ever three-way consolidation of banks in India, with the amalgamated bank being India’s second largest Public Sector Bank.
- The amalgamation will help create a strong globally competitive bank with economies of scale and enable realisation of wide-ranging synergies.

Banks get a breather on bad loans
- For the first time since the bad loan saga began to play out six years ago, Indian banks have reported a decline in the proportion of loans gone bad for the half-year ended September 2018.
- Their aggregate Gross Non-Performing Asset (GNPA) ratio dipped from 11.5% in March 2018 to 10.8% in September 2018. The GNPA ratio captures the proportion of loans in a bank’s books on which borrowers haven’t repaid dues for more than 90 days.

Nandan Nilekani to head five-member RBI panel on digital payments
- The Reserve Bank of India has appointed a five-member panel headed by Nandan Nilekani to suggest ways to improve digital payments.
- The committee will submit its report in 90 days from its first meeting.
- Former Deputy Governor of RBI H.R. Khan, former Vijaya Bank MD and CEO Kishore Sansi, former Secretary of Information and Technology Aruna Sharma and Sanjay Jain, Chief Innovation Officer, Center for Innovation, Incubation & Entrepreneurship (CIIE), IIM Ahmedabad, are the other members of the panel.
- The panel would assess the current levels of digital payments in financial inclusion, suggest measures to strengthen the safety and security of digital payments, provide a road map for increasing customer confidence to use digital transactions, and suggest a medium-term strategy for deepening of digital payments.

Raisina Dialogue begins in New Delhi
- Norway Prime Minister Erna Solberg has pitched for promoting Ocean economy and said that resources in the ocean should be used properly.
- Delivering her inaugural address at Raisina Dialogue in New Delhi on Tuesday evening in presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Ms. Solberg said, rapid climate changes in the Arctic area will have a far-reaching global impact and the world has a responsibility to protect the ocean.
- Calling for promoting blue economy, Ms. Solberg said, ocean-based industries help provide jobs. She also said there is a need to improve the health of the oceans.

India to become world’s third largest consumer market by 2030: WEF
- A report by World Economic Forum today said that India is set to become the world’s third largest consumer market behind only USA and China by 2030.
- The report said consumer spending in India is expected to grow from 1.5 trillion US dollar at present to six trillion US dollar by 2030.
• The report said that with the annual GDP growth rate of 7.5 percent, India is currently the world's sixth largest economy.
• The report titled ‘Future of Consumption in Fast-Growth Consumer Market - India’ also noted that growth of the middle class will lift nearly 25 million households out of poverty.

**Industrial production falls to 0.5% in November**

Industrial production in November grew at just 0.5 per cent compared to 8.1 percent in October, as per data released by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) Friday. Factory output had grown by 8.5 per cent in November 2017. The last low was in June 2017, when IIP growth contracted by 0.3 per cent. The October IIP was also revised to 8.4 per cent from 8.1 per cent earlier by the CSO.

The Index of Industrial Production (IIP) is an index which details out the growth of various sectors in an economy such as mineral mining, electricity and manufacturing. The all India IIP is a composite indicator that measures the short-term changes in the volume of production of a basket of industrial products during a given period with respect to that in a chosen base period.

**Reserve Bank of India slaps Rs 1 crore penalty on Bajaj Finance**

• The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has imposed a penalty of Rs 1 crore on Bajaj Finance Ltd, a non-banking financial company (NBFC), for violating “fair practices code”.
• This action is based on deficiencies in regulatory compliance and is not intended to pronounce upon the validity of any transaction or agreement entered into by the NBFC with its customers.
• Bajaj Finance is into businesses such as consumer finance, SME finance and commercial lending.

**IMF growth Prospects for India**

The World Economic Outlook of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has given the following prospects about the growth trends for India:

• IMF has retained its growth projection for the country at 7.5 per cent for 2019-20 and said it is likely to accelerate to 7.7 per cent in 2020-21. This brings cheers for India as the world growth rates have been revised downwards.
• India will remain the fastest-growing economy in the world, at least for the next two years.
• India’s growth rate is poised to pick up in 2019, benefiting from low oil prices and a slower pace of monetary tightening than previously expected as inflation pressures ease.
• The projection by IMF is higher than the Central Statistics Office’s (CSO) estimate of 7.2 per cent and lower than the RBI’s estimate of 7.4 per cent. IMF’s estimates are in line with the World Bank’s estimate of 7.3 per cent.

**Awards and Recognitions**

**Young entrepreneurs honoured with National Entrepreneurship Awards**

• Commerce Minister Suresh Prabhu on Friday honoured outstanding young entrepreneurs with National Entrepreneurship Awards in New Delhi.
• The awards aim to recognize and honour outstanding young first-generation entrepreneurs and those who have contributed immensely in building the entrepreneurship ecosystem.
• A total of 43 awards were given this year. Speaking on the occasion, Mr Prabhu said, the government will provide full support to the young entrepreneurs to enhance their business.
AP govt bags CBIP award for Polavaram project
- The Andhra Pradesh government on Friday bagged the Central Board of Irrigation and Power (CBIP) award for speedy execution of Polavaram multipurpose project on the Godavari river.
- AP Water Resources Minister Devineni Umamaheswar Rao received the award in the category of “Best Implementation of Water Resources Project” for better planning, implementation and monitoring at an event.

WCD minister Maneka Gandhi confers National Anganwadi Awards
- Women and Child Development Minister Maneka Gandhi today conferred National Awards to 97 Anganwadi workers for their exceptional achievements for the year 2017-18 in New Delhi.
- The award is given to motivate the Anganwadi workers and recognize their exemplary services in the field of child development and related areas under the Integrated Child Development Services Scheme.

'Bohemian Rhapsody' wins best film
The Golden Globes 2019 was held at the The Beverly Hilton, Beverly Hills, California, United States
Complete list of winners
Film
- Drama- “Bohemian Rhapsody”
- Actress, Drama- Glenn Close, “The Wife”
- Actor, Drama- Rami Malek, “Bohemian Rhapsody”
- Comedy or Musical- “Green Book”
- Actor, Comedy or Musical- Christian Bale, “Vice”
- Actress, Comedy or Musical- Olivia Colman, “The Favourite”
- Actress-Supporting Role- Regina King, “If Beale Street Could Talk”
- Actor-Supporting Role- Mahershala Ali, “Green Book”
- Foreign Language Film- “Roma”
- Best Director- Alfonso Cuaron, “Roma”
- Screenplay- Nick Vallelonga, Brian Currie, Peter Farrelly, “Green Book”
- Animated- “Spider-Man- Into the Spider-Verse”
- Original Score- Justin Hurwitz, “First Man”
- Original Song- “Shallow,” “A Star Is Born”
Television
- Drama- “The Americans”
- Actress, Drama- Sandra Oh, “Killing Eve”
- Actor, Drama- Richard Madden, “Bodyguard”
- Musical or Comedy- “The Kominsky Method”
- Actress, Musical or Comedy- Rachel Brosnahan, “The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel”
- Actor, Musical or Comedy- Michael Douglas, “The Kominsky Method”
- Limited Series or Movie Made for Television- “The Assassination of Gianni Versace- American Crime Story”
- Actress, Limited Series or Movie Made for Television- Patricia Arquette, “Escape at Dannemora”
- Actor, Limited Series or Movie Made for Television- Darren Criss, “The Assassination of Gianni Versace- American Crime Story”
- Actress, Supporting Role, Limited Series or Movie Made for Television- Patricia Clarkson, “Sharp Objects”
First-ever Philip Kotler Presidential award presented to PM
• The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, today received the first-ever Philip Kotler Presidential award, at 7 Lok Kalyan Marg, in New Delhi.
• The Award focuses on the triple bottom-line of People, Profit and Planet. It will be offered annually to the leader of a Nation.

Namita Gokhale wins Sushila Devi Literature Award
• Writer Namita Gokhale has won the Sushila Devi Literature Award for her novel "Things to Leave Behind".
• She was awarded in the 'Best Book of Fiction Written by a Woman Author' category at the inaugural edition of Bhopal Literature and Art Festival (BLF).

WCD shortlists 26 children for National Award this year
• The Women and Child Development Ministry have shortlisted 26 children for the national award this year for their bravery, social service and exceptional achievement in the fields of innovation, sports and arts.
• The National Selection Committee, under the Women and Child Development Minister Maneka Gandhi, finalised the names of awardees for Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar 2019.
• The Committee also finalised the names of two individuals and three institutions for Bal Kalyan Puraskar.

WHO Goodwill ambassador Yohei Sasakawa to get Gandhi Peace Prize for 2018
• Gandhi Peace Prize for 2018 will be conferred on Yohei Sasakawa who is Goodwill Ambassador of the World Health Organization for Leprosy Elimination.
• The award will be given to Mr Sasakawa in recognition of his work towards the eradication of the disease in India and across the world.
• Ekal Abhiyan Trust has been chosen for the award for the year 2017 while Akshaya Patra Foundation and Sulabh International will share the award for 2016. Vivekananda Kendra, Kanyakumari bagged the award for 2015.

Indian-American Gurinder Singh Khalsa,presented with the prestigious Rosa Park Trailblazer award
Indian-American philanthropist and entrepreneur, Gurinder Singh Khalsa(45), has been presented with the prestigious Rosa Park Trailblazer award for his campaign that forced US authorities change their policy towards headgear of the Sikh community.

Sheikh Saud International Prize for Materials Research awarded to C N R Rao
The first Sheikh Saud International Prize for Materials Research has been awarded to C N R Rao. The award will be presented to Rao by Sheikh Saud bin Saqr Al Qasimi ruler of Ras Al Khaimah emirate during the International Workshop on Advanced Materials at Ras Al Khaimah on February 25. C N R Rao
Chintamani Nagesa Ramachandra Rao popularly known as C N R Rao is an Indian scientist who has made significant contributions in material research.
He has authored over 1,600 research papers and 50 books. His areas of research include transition metal oxides and other extended inorganic solids, metal-insulator transitions, nano-materials.
including nanotubes and graphene, artificial photosynthesis and hydrogen generation by photocatalysis and thermal means.

**Ranjani Murali won Womans Voice Award at AKLF 2019**
US Based Indian poet Ranjani Murali was awarded the “Woman’s Voice Award” on the last day of Apeejay Kolkata Literary Festival (AKLF). The main Objective of the award is to recognize and encourage creative writing by women in India. The Award carried a cash prize of Rs 1 Lakh along with a citation. Ranjani Murali’s second book “Clearly you are ESL” won the Great Indian Poetry Collectives (GIPCs) Editor’s Choice award.

**Pranab Mukherjee, Nanaji Deshmukh Bhupen Hazarika awarded Bharat Ratna**
- Social activist Nanaji Deshmukh, Music maestro Bhupen Hazarika and former President Pranab Mukherjee have been awarded with country's highest civilian honour Bharat Ratna.
- The President also approved conferment of 112 Padma Awards, including 4 Padma Vibhushan, 14 Padma Bhushan and 94 Padma Shri Awards.
- Folk artist Teejan Bai, President of Djibouti Ismail Omar Guelleh, Industrialist Anil kumar Manibhai Naik and theatre actor Balwant Moreshwar Purandare will be honoured with Padma Vibhushan.
- Former CAG V K Shunglu, Akali Dal leader Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa and Foreigner John Chambers are among those who will be given Padma Bhushan. Journalist Kuldip Nayar will be honoured with Padma Bhushan posthumously.
- For Padma Shree, Actor Manoj Bajpayee, Prabhu Deva, cricketer Gautam Gambhir, footballer Sunil Chhetri, Archer Bombayla Devi Laishram, archaeologist K K Muhammed are among those chosen for the awards this year. Actor Kader Khan has been awarded Padma Shree posthumously.

**President Ram Nath Kovind confers Ashoka Chakra on Nazir Wani**
- Lance Naik Nazir Ahmad Wani, a militant-turned-soldier who laid down his life fighting a group of terrorists in Shopian in Kashmir in November, was awarded the Ashoka Chakra by President Ram Nath Kovind.
- The award — India’s highest peacetime gallantry honour — was received by Wani’s wife and mother at the Republic Day celebrations at Rajpath. Wani is the first Kashmiri to be conferred the Ashoka Chakra.
- Ashoka Chakra is the highest peacetime military decoration for valour, courageous action or self-sacrifice away from the battlefield.

**Hindi writer Chitra Mudgal among 24 honoured with Sahitya Akademi Award**
- Renowned Hindi writer Chitra Mudgal, Dogri writer Inderjeet Kesar, Kannada writer KG Nagarajappa and Kashmiri story writer Mushtaq Ahmad Mushtaq were among 24 writers, who were honoured with the Sahitya Akademi Award 2018.
- President of the Sahitya Akademi Chandrasekhar Kambar presented these awards at a function in New Delhi.
- The awards were given for 24 different languages. The award was given to Chitra Mudgal for her book 'post box no 203 Nalla Sopara', which was based on the life of a transgender.
- Inderjeet Kesar got the award for his Dogri novel- Bhagirath based on challenges faced by human beings.
• K. G Nagarajappa bagged the award for Anushreni- Yajamanike which is a collection of Kannada essays.
• Mushtaq Ahmad Mushtaq received the award for his collection of 18 Kashmiri short stories - Aakh.

Sports

ICC Test ranking: Virat Kohli, Kagiso Rabada tops 2018
• It turned out to be a glorious 2018 for India captain Virat Kohli and South Africa fast bowler Kagiso Rabada as both maintained their respective pole positions in the year-end ICC Test Player Rankings.
• Kohli, who attained a career-high 937 points during the year, which is the highest ever by an India batsman, scored 1322 runs in all. He overtook Steven Smith in August and has now held the top position for 135 days.
• Rabada, who split the top ranking with England’s seasoned fast bowler James Anderson during the year, is just six points ahead of his adversary.

Arunima Sinha becomes world’s first woman amputee to scale Mount Vinson
• Arunima Sinha, the Indian mountaineer who became the world’s first woman amputee to climb Mount Everest in 2013, has now become the first woman amputee to climb Mount Vinson (highest peak of Antarctica).
• Sinha is a national level volleyball player who had one of her legs amputated in 2011 after she was pushed from a running train by dacoits she had resisted. She had earlier said that she planned to scale six peaks in six continents.

80th National Table Tennis Championship begins in Cuttack
• 80th National Table Tennis Championship begins in Cuttack
• As many as 35 teams, including 550 players from different parts of the country are participating in the mega championship.
• Medal winners at Commonwealth Games and Asian Games Manika Batra, Senior players like Sharath Kamal, Madhuriba Patkar, Olympian Ankita Das are some of the key players who will be in the limelight during the event.

Head Constable Rani wins gold medal in Senior National's Judo C'Ship
• Lady head constable Rani of 5th Indian Reserve Battalion of Himachal Pradesh Police won a Gold medal in the Senior National Women's Judo Championship at Visakhapatnam
• She claimed top honours in the 78 kg category.
• Rani was also declared the best Judoka at the Championship.

Scripting history, India scores maiden series win in Australia
• India scripted history winning the first ever series on Australian soil beating the home team 2-1 after the fourth and final Test ended in a tame draw due to inclement weather.
• It is a rare first Down Under for India since Lala Amarnath's side visited the country back in 1947-48 months after independence to face Sir Don Bradman's 'Invincibles'
• India has also become the first ever Asian team to win a Test series in Australia.

Sunil Chhetri Becomes Second Highest International Goal-scorer
• On January 6, 2019, Sunil Chhetri made history by becoming the second highest international
goal-scorer among active players with 67 goals from 105 matches.
• He went past Argentine great Lionel Messi who has scored 65 goals from 128 matches.
• Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo is the highest scorer with 85 goals from 154 matches.

Sharath-Manika duo shocks Manav-Archana, takes title
• Sharath Kamal, featuring in the mixed doubles event after 11 years, partnered Manika Batra to outclass the top-seeded pair of Manav Thakkar and Archana Kamath in an all-Petroleum Sports Promotion Board (PSPB) final and clinch the first individual title of the 11Sports 80th inter-State and National table tennis championship.
• The tournament was held at J.N. Indoor Stadium of Cuttack

Egypt to host 2019 Africa Cup of Nations
• Egypt will host the 2019 Africa Cup of Nations between 15th June and 13th July. Confederation of African Football (CAF) President Ahmad Ahmad made the announcement in Senegalese capital Dakar yesterday.
• The CAF executive committee preferred Egypt to South Africa as replacement for original hosts Cameroon, who were dropped due to delays in preparations and concerns over security.
• Egypt will stage the biennial showpiece of African football for the fifth time.

Hockey India removed Harendra Singh as coach of India Men's Team
• Indian men's hockey coach Harendra Singh was sacked from the position and offered the task of helming the junior squad by the national federation.
• Hockey India said that it will be inviting applications for the position of chief coach and in the interim the team will be overseen by Hockey India High Performance Director David John and current Analytical Coach, Chris Ciriello.
• Harendra Singh was brought in as men's coach in May 2018 after Sjoerd Marijne was moved back to the women's camp

Bengaluru Raptors win Premier Badminton League title
• Bengaluru Raptors have won their first ever Premier Badminton League title.
• In the title clash played at Bengaluru last night, Bengaluru edged out Mumbai Rockets, with a 4-3 win.
• Star player Kidambi Srikanth, Vu Ji Trang and the Men's Doubles pair of Mohammad Ahsan and Hendra Satiawan won their matches for Bengaluru guiding them to victory.

Abhinav Shaw becomes youngest gold medallist in shooting
• At the Khelo India Youth Games in Pune today, ten year old Abhinav Shaw became the youngest gold medallist in shooting.
• He teamed up with Mehuli Ghosh to help West Bengal win the 10m air rifle mixed team event. Delhi's Devanshi Rana bagged gold in Under-21 girls 25m pistol event.
• Maharashtra once again dominated the gymnastics arena at the Games to wrap up the Under-21 category with a whopping nine medals on the last day of gymnastics events.

Shakil Ahmed sets world record in indoor rowing
• Asian Cup gold medallist Shakil Ahmed has added one more feather to his cap when he set up a world record in indoor rowing by completing one lakh metres in above-40 years category in Kolkata.
• Shakil began his record-setting indoor rowing feat in Salt Lake stadium complex at 8 a.m. yesterday and achieved the milestone of covering one lakh metres of simulated distance in 10 hours.

Stephen Constantine steps down as coach of Indian football team
• Stephen Constantine has decided to step down as the head coach of the Indian football team following team’s exit from 2019 AFC Asian Cup.
• India went down fighting against Bahrain in their last Group A match on Monday.
• The 56-year-old Constantine, who had earlier coached India from 2002 to 2005, was handed over reins of the team again in 2015. He guided India to the Asian Cup after a gap of eight years.

Gukesh becomes country’s youngest Grandmaster
• D. Gukesh completed the formalities to be the sport’s youngest Grandmaster, at present.
• He defeated Dinesh Sharma in the ninth round of the Delhi International Open Grandmasters chess tournament for his third and final GM norm.
• The country’s 59th GM is also the youngest after breaking the record of state-mate R. Praggnanandhaa set in June last year.
• For the record, Gukesh reached the landmark at the age of 12 years, seven months and 17 days. Praggnanandhaa did it in 12 years, 10 months and 13 days.
• Sergey Karjakin’s record, set in 2002, stays intact at 12 years and seven months.

India’s Satyarup becomes world’s youngest mountaineer to climb 7 peaks, 7 volcano summits
• Mountaineer Satyarup Siddhanta today conquered Antartica’s highest point, Mount Sidley.
• With this feat, he became the first Indian and youngest man to climb the seven highest peaks and volcanic summits across all continents.
• According to the in-Reach Satellite, Communicator Satyarup was carrying, he summited Mount Sidley at 6.28 in the morning Indian Standard Time at a temperature of minus 40-degree Celsius.
• He achieved the feat at the age of 35 years and 262 days. Australia’s Daniel Bull had done it at the age of 36 years 157 days.

Vinesh Phogat becomes first Indian athlete to be nominated in Laureus World Comeback of Year Award
• Ace Indian female wrestler Vinesh Phogat has become the first Indian athlete to receive a nomination in the prestigious Laureus World Comeback of the Year Award.
• She has been nominated alongside US Tour Championship winner Tiger Woods, who won his first tournament in five years.
• The Awards will be presented in Monaco on the 18th of next month.

Ankita Raina won the ITF womens tennis tournament title
India’s Ankita Raina defeated Arantxa Rus, the top seed and World No.122, of the Netherlands. She secured 6-3, 6-2 in the final of the $25,000 International Tennis Federation (ITF) women’s tennis tournament in Singapore. Results: $25,000 ITF women, Singapore: Final: Ankita Raina bt Arantxa Rus (Ned) 6-3, 6-2.

Naomi Osaka wins Australian Open Grand Slam Singles title
• Japan’s Naomi Osaka won her maiden Australian Open Grand Slam Singles title at Melbourne.
• In the Final, Osaka, seeded fourth, defeated eighth placed Czech Petra Kvitova, 7-6, 5-7, 6-4 to
become the first Asian player to achieve the world number one ranking.
  • She will surpass Romania's Simona Halep at the top of the rankings on Monday and become the youngest number one since Caroline Wozniacki in 2010.
  • The Japanese also created history by becoming the first player since 2001 to win back-to-back Grand Slam titles. Osaka, who won the US Open last year, broke American Jennifer Capriati's 2001 record.

Kartik Sharma wins New South Wales men's Amateur Golf Championship
  • India's Kartik Sharma won the New South Wales men's Amateur Golf Championship in Australia.
  • Kartik notched up a magnificent win over Australia's Nathan Barberie in the scheduled 36-hole final to emerge as champion.
  • He had been selected to represent Indian Golf Union for three events in Australia.
  • Kartik had also won the Indian golf union western India amateur golf championship 2018.

Djokovic beats Nadal to win his seventh Australian Open title
  • Novak Djokovic defeated Rafael Nadal to win his 7th Australian Open Men's Singles title at Melbourne.
  • The resurgent world No.1 outplayed the second-ranked Nadal 6-3, 6-2, 6-3 in a largely one-sided match.
  • With this, Djokovic has surpassed American legend Pete Sampras to elevate himself to outright third on the all-time Grand Slam title leaderboard.

Indonesia Masters: Saina wins after injured Marin limps out of final
  • Ace shuttler Saina Nehwal won her first Indonesia Masters title after three-time world champion Carolina Marin limped out of the final due to a leg injury.
  • The Spaniard was leading 10-4 in the first game at Jakarta today when she developed an injury in the knee.

Appointments and Resignations

LIC MD to officiate as chairman
  • Life Insurance Corporation of India MD Hemant Bhargava has been given the additional charge of the chairman after V.K. Sharma retired.
  • Mr. Bhargava took charge as MD in February 2017.

India born Gita Gopinath joins IMF as Chief Economist
  • India born Gita Gopinath has joined International Monetary Fund as its chief economist.
  • She has become the first woman to occupy the top IMF post.
  • Gopinath succeeds Maurice (Maury) Obstfeld as Economic Counsellor and Director of the IMF's Research Department. Obstfeld retired on December the 31st.
  • She is the 11th Chief Economist of IMF.

N. Ram appointed president of Alliance for Media Freedom
  • N. Ram, chairman, THG Publishing Private Limited, has been appointed president of the Alliance for Media Freedom (AFMF), a cross-media advocacy and action group of media organisations, promoters and journalists.
• The Alliance, which is dedicated to work for the cause of media freedom, media independence and the safety of the last journalist, adopted a charter that underlines the importance of creating enabling conditions to safeguard free speech guaranteed by the Indian Constitution.
  • The Alliance which has been functioning informally for the last seven months in the cause of media freedom and independence, resolved to take steps to formalise and institutionalise its existence.

Jaideep Govind appointed Secretary General, NHRC
  • Senior IAS officer Jaideep Govind has been appointed the Secretary General of National Human Rights Commission.
  • He was posted as Special Secretary and Financial Adviser in the Ministries of Rural Development, Panchayati Raj, Drinking Water and Sanitation.
  • He has held various important posts in the Government of India, including the charge of Human Rights Division in the Home Ministry.

Raja Krishnamoorthi is appointed as a new member of HPSCI for the 116th Congress (Appoints)
Raja Krishnamoorthi, a Democratic lawmaker, has been appointed as a member of a Congressional committee on intelligence. He is the first South Asian to serve in the powerful body tasked to strengthen U.S.’s national security. Mr. Krishnamoorthi, 45, who represents Illinois’s 8th Congressional District in the House. Along with him Congresswoman Val Demings of Florida, Sean Patrick Maloney of New York and Peter Welch of Vermont has been appointed as new Democratic members of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence (HPSCI) for the 116th Congress. The HPSCI oversees the activities and budget of the 17 intelligence agencies of the U.S.

Dr Poonam Khetrapal Singh appointed as Regional Director WHO SOUTH EAST Asia
Dr. Poonam Khetrapal Singh appointed Regional Director for World Health Organization South-East Asia, for a second five-year term. Her second term of office will begin on 1 February 2019. She is the first woman to become Regional Director of WHO South-East Asia Region Previous year, Thailand became the first in Asia-Pacific to eliminate mother-to-child transmission of HIV and syphilis. About World Health Organisation (WHO) Headquarters: Geneva, Switzerland
Head: Tedros Adhanom
Founded: 7 April 1948.

Science and Technology

China's lunar rover Chang’e 4 makes historic landing on dark side of Moon
  • Chinese space probe successfully touched down on the far side of the moon on Thursday, a historic first landing on a mission seen as an important step for China’s space programme.
  • Chinese state television said the Chang’e-4 lunar probe, launched in December, made the "soft landing" at 0226 GMT and transmitted the first-ever "close range" image of the dark side of the moon.
  • Previous spacecraft have seen the far side of the moon but none has landed on it.

Earth’s north magnetic pole moving at alarming rate
Rapid shifts in the Earth’s north magnetic pole are forcing researchers to make an unprecedented early update to a model that helps navigation by ships, planes and submarines in the Arctic.
Beggan said the moving pole affected navigation, mainly in the Arctic Ocean north of Canada. NATO and the U.S. and British militaries are among those using the magnetic model, as well as civilian navigation.

Beggan said the recent shifts in the north magnetic pole would be unnoticed by most people outside the Arctic, for instance using smartphones in New York, Beijing or London.

**ISRO schedules its first launch this year on Thursday next week**

- National space agency ISRO has scheduled its first launch this year on Thursday next week. PSLV C-44 will lift off from the spaceport Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota, carrying a student satellite called Kalamsat and an imaging satellite known as Microsat-R.
- One of the specialities of the mission this time would be the configuration of the rocket.
- It will carry only two strap-on motors by the sides of the first fuel stage at the bottom.
- This is the first time the launch vehicle is built in this configuration, known as PSLV-DL.
- Furthermore, after parking the satellites in the intended orbits, the fourth stage of the rocket will be taken to a circular orbit in space for carrying out certain experiments by the scientists.

**ISROs top priority is Gaganyaan**

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) announced that working on the human space flight programme Gaganyaan and launching a major student outreach apart from the scheduled missions is its top priority. A separate Human Space Flight Centre has been formed in ISRO. The Gaganyaan project will come under it and that’s how we will target the first unmanned mission in December 2020. Dr. Sivan, Chairman of ISRO, announced a Young Scientist Programme (YSP) and termed it their most important project to reach out to students. He also said that ISRO is planning to spread its wings in new areas. This year ISRO has planned 32 missions, including 14 launch vehicles, 17 spacecraft and one demo.

**Triple drug therapy**

Nagpur recently launched a pilot project to administer triple drug therapy with the long term aim of eradicating lymphatic filariasis. The World Health Organization (WHO) is recommending three drug treatment to accelerate the global elimination of lymphatic filariasis. The treatment, known as IDA, involves a combination of ivermectin, diethylcarbamazine citrate and albendazole. It is being recommended annually in settings where its use is expected to have the greatest impact.

**Lymphatic filariasis** - Caused by infection with parasitic worms living in the lymphatic system.

**NASA's Opportunity rover completes 15 years on Mars**

- The US space agency said it has travelled 45 kilometres and logged its 5,000th Martian day back in February 2018. John Callas, project manager for Opportunity, however, said that at present the agency does not know the rover’s status.
- The six-wheeler rover had landed in a region of Mars called Meridiani Planum on January 24, 2004. The solar-powered rover went silent since a global dust storm in June last year.
- However, Opportunity's mission continues, in a phase where mission engineers at NASA laboratories are sending commands to as well as listening for signals from the rover.

**Obituary**
Veteran Actor Kader Khan Dies At 81
- Veteran actor Kader Khan died in a hospital in Canada on Monday. He was 81.
- Born in Kabul, Afghanistan on October 22, Kader Khan was best known for his work as an actor and a writer in numerous films.
- He has worked with directors like Manmohan Desai and Prakash Mehra.
- He has featured in over 300 films

Ramakant Achrekar dies in Mumbai
- Ramakant Achrekar, childhood coach of master blaster Sachin Tendulkar, died on Wednesday.
- Achrekar, 87, who is known to shape Tendulkar’s career, took his last breath at his Shivaji Park residence in Dadar, Mumbai.
- Besides Tendulkar, he also coached some prominent players in Vinod Kambli, Pravin Amre, Sameer Dighe and Balwinder Singh Sandhu.

Former Defence Minister George Fernandes passes away in New Delhi
- Former Defence Minister and Anti-Emergency Crusader George Fernandes passed away in New Delhi. He was 88.
- One of the most prominent leaders of the socialist movement in the 1970s, George Fernandes was a senior Janata Dal leader before he founded the Samata Party.
- He was elected to the Lok Sabha 9 times and once to the Rajya Sabha.
- He also served as Union Minister for Railways, Communications and Industry.
- George Fernandes was also a trade unionist, agriculturist, and journalist. As President of the All India Railwaymen’s Federation he led the Railway strike involving 1.5 million workers in 1974, resulting in thousands being sent to jail.