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NATIONAL NEWS
Cabinet approved the National Mineral Policy 2019 on 28th February
• The Union Cabinet approved the National Mineral Policy 2019 on 28th February 2019. The policy is aimed at bringing about more effective regulation to the sector as well as a more sustainable approach while addressing the issues of those affected by mining.
  • The policy will also provide a more effective, meaningful and implementable policy that brings in further transparency, better regulation, and enforcement, balanced social and economic growth as well as sustainable mining practices.
  • It also aims to increase the share of Indian software products in global market by tenfold, pitches for nurturing of 10,000 technology start-ups in software product industry, including 1,000 such startups in tier-II and tier-III towns.

Union Cabinet approved the National Policy on Software Products
• The Union Cabinet approved the National Policy on Software Products 2019 that aims to help the industry grow at CAGR of 40% to reach $70-80 billion by 2025 while creating employment opportunities for 3.5 million people.
  • The policy aims to adopt a shift in strategy so that IT products also contribute equitably and significantly to the industry along with IT services. The government’s initial outlay of Rs.1, 500 crore is being planned for various schemes under in policy in the next seven years.

• Further, the policy proposes to create a Rs.5, 000 crore fund with industry participation to promote emerging technology such as the Internet of Things, Artificial Intelligence, Block chain, Big Data, and robotics. Of this, government contribution will be Rs.1, 000 crore.

HRD launched STARS scheme on 28th February
• The Union Human Resource Minister Prakash Javadekar launched the STARS scheme on National Science Day that is 28th February. STARS are abbreviated as Scheme for Translational and Advanced Research in Science.
  • The Ministry has allocated Rs.250 crores for the implementation of the scheme. Under the scheme 500 science projects will be funded whose selection will be made based on competition. Indian Institute of Science (IISC) will be the coordinator of the scheme.

HRD Ministry Launches SHREYAS Scheme
• Union Human Resources Development Minister, Shri Prakash Javadekar, launched the “Scheme for Higher Education Youth in Apprenticeship and Skills (SHREYAS)”.
  • Main aim to provide industry apprenticeship opportunities to the general graduates exiting in April 2019 through the National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS) in New Delhi.
  • The program will enhance the employability of Indian youth by providing ‘on the job work exposure’ and earning of stipend.
Union Bank of India reduced the MCLR by 10 basis points
• Union Bank of India, the State-run lender, said it had reduced the Marginal Cost of funds-based Lending Rate (MCLR) by 10 basis points across all tenors.
• The lender has reduced its one-year MCLR or the minimum lending rate, against which most of the consumer loans are benchmarked, to 8.60% from 8.70% earlier. The bank has set the new six-month MCLR at 8.50% and two-year at 8.70%.

RBI has formed a task force on the offshore rupee market
• The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has formed a task force on the offshore rupee market. It will be headed by former Deputy Governor Usha Thorat and will recommend steps for ensuring the stability of the currency.
• The task force shall examine the issues relating to the offshore rupee markets in depth and recommend appropriate policy measures that also factor in the requirement of ensuring the stability of the external value of the rupee. The committee would submit its report by the end of June 2019.
• The task force will assess the causes behind the development of the offshore rupee market, and study the effects on the exchange rate and market liquidity in the domestic market. It would also recommend measures to address concerns arising out of offshore rupee trading.

Growth Rate in the Core Sector witnessed decline
• The data from the Ministry of Commerce and Industries reported that the growth rate eight core sectors which include coal, crude oil, natural gas, refinery products, fertilizers, steel, cement, and electricity witnessed a decline. The core sector which had witnessed a 6.2% growth in January 2018 witnessed a growth rate of 1.8% in January.
• The decline in the output of crude oil, refinery products, and electricity pulled down the growth of eight core sectors to 1.8%. Production of crude oil, refinery products, and electricity contracted 4.3%, 2.6%, and 0.4%, respectively. Coal and cement output slowed to 1.7% and 11% in January as against 3.8% and 19.6% in January 2018, respectively. Natural gas, fertilizers and steel output grew 6.2%, 10.5%, and 8.2 % respectively. The core sector growth would impact the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) as these segments account for about 41 percent of the total industry output.

Tata Steel has been recognised as one of World’s Most Ethical Companies
• Tata Steel has been recognised as one of World’s Most Ethical Companies by the Ethisphere Institute for 2019. Ethisphere Institute is a global leader in defining and advancing the standards of ethical business practices. For the eighth time, Tata Steel has got the recognition in the ‘Metals, Minerals and Mining’ category. Tata Steel is one of the only two honourees in the ‘Metals, Minerals and Mining’ industry.
• 128 companies are recognized for exemplifying and advancing corporate citizenship, transparency and the standards of integrity in the year 2019.
The honourees are from 21 countries and 50 industries.
• The companies are listed World’s Most Ethical Companies based on 5 factors:
  ♦ Leadership and Reputation
  ♦ Ethics Compliance Programme
  ♦ Culture of Ethics
  ♦ Corporate Citizenship
  ♦ Responsibility Governance

DCB Bank launches Open Banking Platform for next generation banking solutions.
• Creating a collaborative ecosystem with enterprises, fintech and app developers, and enhancing customer-service delivery, DCB Bank announced the launch of its Open Banking Platform.
• More than 20 start-ups, fintech, merchants, enterprises and developers are set to partner with DCB Bank for access to its Open Banking Platform APIs (Application programming interface) and collaborate on innovation and customer centric products.

Mainamati Maitree Exercise 2019 held between BSF and BGB.
• Border Security Force (BSF) and Border Guards Bangladesh (BGB) concluded a three-day Mainamati Maitree Exercise 2019 as a part of confidence-building measures between the two border guards. The exercise was held in Comilla district of Bangladesh.
• The objective of Mainamati Maitree Exercise 2019 was to plan and conduct anti-smuggling and anti-criminal activity related operations with an aim to achieve better joint operational efficiency and border management in the area. The exercise involved joint patrolling, anti-smuggling drills, and simulated raids on suspected places in both the countries and checking of goods and identity at international check posts.

PNB bank ranks highest in implementation of Reforms Agenda
• Punjab National Bank (PNB) secured top spot among all public sector banks in the implementation of ‘Reforms agenda’.
• PNB topped the list with a score of 78.4 out of 100 in the EASE-index which is followed by BoB (77.8), SBI (74.6), and Oriental Bank of Commerce (69).
• The EASE (Enhanced Access and Service Excellence) report shown significant enhancement in PSB performance on the back of Government’s 4 R’s strategy - recognition, recovery, recapitalisation and reforms.

Cabinet approves setting up of 22nd AIIMS at Manethi, Haryana
• The new All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) at Manethi, District Rewari, and Haryana will be established at a cost of Rs 1,299 crore.
• Like other AIIMS in the country, the AIIMS Rewari will also be set up under the Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY).
• The new AIIMS will add 100 Undergraduate (MBBS) seats and 60 B.Sc (Nursing) seats.

IRCTC launched its own digital payment gateway 'IRCTC iPay'.
• With a view to promote Government’s Digital India
The Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) has launched its much awaited own payment aggregator system called "IRCTC iPay".

- The new system will provide payment options like Credit Card, Debit card, Unified Payment Interface (UPI) and International card.

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India's first policy to protect bank locker launched by IFFCO Tokio General Insurance.

- IFFCO Tokio General Insurance launched 'bank locker protector policy', the first stand-alone bank locker cover offered by any insurance company with a plan to protect the contents of a bank locker such as jewellery, title documents, and other valuables.
- The policy offers a cover against various risks including fire, earthquake, burglary, and holdup, infidelity by a bank staff or any act of terrorism.
- Important documents kept in a locker can also be insured under the policy as an add-on cover.
- The policy can be sold both as a retail and a group policy for banks.

7th Guinness Book of World Record Created By DEPwD in Bharuch, Gujarat.

- A National Conference on “Deendayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme (DDRS)” was inaugurated by the Union Minister of Social Justice & Empowerment Thaawarchand Gehlot. Mr. Gehlot stated that the “7th Guinness Book of World Record” has been created by the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD).

Doordarshan launches Rock the Night, a programme for rock music.

- Doordarshan today launched Rock the Night, a brand new programme for rock music. This programme will air at DD National from 5th of March. DD has envisioned Rock the Night as a platform for indie rock bands to showcase their talent.
- The show is dedicated to the soldiers who keep the nation safe. He also expressed his love for artists like Cliff Richards, The Bee Gees, and Smokie.
- The crept in the Indian indie rock bands. Director General of Doordarshan, Supriya Sahu said, DD is the heartbeat of the nation.

India’s Food grain output in 2018-19 maybe 281.37 MT: Second Advance Estimate.

- The second advance estimates for the production of most of the crops for the agricultural year 2018-19 been released by the Ministry of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare.
- Data on Production of Food Crops:
  - Food grains – 281.37 million tonnes.
  - Rice – 115.60 million tonnes.
  - Nutri / Coarse Cereals – 42.64 million tonnes.
  - Maize – 27.80 million tonnes.
  - Pulses – 24.02 million tonnes.
  - Tur – 3.68 million tonnes.
  - Gram – 10.32 million tonnes.

Cabinet approves Rs 1,450 crore for share capital of RBI in NHB.

- The National Housing Bank (NHB) has been set up to operate as the principal agency to promote housing finance institutions in India.
• Up till now, the authorised capital of NHB stands at Rs. 2,000 crore of which Rs. 1,450 crore has been subscribed by RBI. Currently, the capital is fully subscribed by RBI.

IIT (BHU) scientist discovered tadpole-like jets on Sun
• Scientists led by IIT (BHU) researcher Abhishek Srivastava have discovered tadpole-shaped jets coming out of regions with intense magnetic fields on the Sun.
• Formally called pseudo-shocks, the "tadpoles" are made entirely of plasma, which accounts for an estimated 99% of the observable universe.
• It could help understand why corona (Sun’s upper atmosphere) is over 200 times hotter than its surface.

Swine Flu cases has increased in Gujarat
• Swine Flu in Gujarat has become an epidemic as almost 100 new cases are reported from across the state per day. So far, 3000 cases and 99 deaths in two months has been reported.
• Since January 1st, 2164 people have fully recovered and have been discharged from hospitals while 853 people are under treatment for H1N1 influenza, which has already claimed 99 lives in this year since January 1st. On average, 80-100 cases and 2-3 deaths are being reported per day for the last two weeks.

Delhi Cabinet approved the reimbursement cost of fitting hydraulic lifts in CNG buses
• The Delhi Cabinet approved the reimbursement cost of fitting hydraulic lifts in 1,000 standard-floor Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) buses that are going to be procured. In a meeting chaired by Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, the Transport Department's proposal was approved to provide efficient and environmental friendly modes of public transport to Delhites.
• The hydraulic lifts are to be fitted in 1,000 standard-floor buses, enabling them to be used by differently abled people as directed by both Supreme Court and Delhi High Court. The government has made a commitment before the Supreme Court that it will bear the cost of installation of lifts in 1,000 standard-floor buses.

Cabinet approved the Ordinance for arbitration centre
• The Union Cabinet has approved the promulgation of an Ordinance for establishing the New Delhi International Arbitration Centre (NDIAC) in an effort to make India a hub of institutionalized arbitration. The establishment of institutionalized arbitration will be to the advantage of the public and public institutions in terms of quality of expertise and costs incurred.
• The NDIAC will be headed by a chairperson who will be appointed by the Centre in consultation with the Chief Justice of India. There will also be two full-time or part-time members. They will be eminent persons having substantial knowledge and experience in institutional arbitration.
• The NDIAC Bill, 2019, could not be taken up for consideration and passing by the Rajya Sabha in the recently concluded session. Therefore, the government, in view of the urgency to make India a hub of institutionalized...
arbitration and promote ‘ease of doing business’, has decided to promulgate an Ordinance: ‘The NDIAC, 2019’.

Arun Jaitley to release book titled Mann Ki Baat - A Social Revolution on Radio in New Delhi
• A book titled, ‘Mann Ki Baat - A Social Revolution on Radio’ was released by Finance Minister Arun Jaitley in New Delhi.
• The book is a compendium encompassing 50 editions of the ‘Mann Ki Baat’ programme by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on All India Radio.
• The father of the nation Mahatma Gandhi used to communicate in very simple language with people and his Salt Satyagraha had an electrifying effect.
• Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee travelled, he used to carry a small transistor along to listen to Radio News.

April 2019 to March 2020 declared as Construction Technology year
• Construction-Technology year emphasizes the role of advanced technology to meet the increasing demand for housing in the country. The declaration of Construction year aims to give the housing sector a new pace by using the latest technologies available in the world. India has even launched the Global Housing Technology Challenge to fast-track the construction of affordable housing and meet the target of constructing 1.2 crore houses by 2022.

Usha Thorat-led task force to ensure stability of external value of rupee
• The Reserve Bank of India constituted an eight-member task force on offshore rupee markets, headed by Usha Thorat former Deputy Governor, to look into issues related to the markets and recommend appropriate policy measures to ensure the stability of the external value of the rupee.
• The terms of reference of the task force include assessing the causes behind the development of the offshore rupee market; study the effects of the offshore markets on the rupee exchange rate and market liquidity in the domestic market; and recommend measures to address concerns, if any, that may arise out of offshore rupee trading.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi chairs National Security Council meet
• Prime Minister Narendra Modi chaired a meeting of the National Security Council on Sunday following heightened tensions with Pakistan.
• He Official sources said the meeting was attended by Home Minister Rajnath Singh, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley, External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj and Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.
• The NSA is tasked with advising the prime minister on matters of national security.
• It was set up by the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government in 1998, with
Brajesh Mishra as the first National Security Advisor (NSA).

**Sushma Swaraj addresses OIC Foreign Ministers plenary session in Dubai**
- External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj addressed the plenary session of the foreign ministers’ meet of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation states in Abu Dhabi.
- She presented a picture of the secular fabric of India and began the speech by saying that she stands as a representative of land that has been for ages a fountain of knowledge, a beacon of peace, a source of faiths and traditions, and home to religions from the world.

**Centre, ADB sign 926 million loan agreement to operationalize two lines of Mumbai Metro**
- The Union Government on March 1, 2019 signed a 926 million dollar loan agreement to operationalize two of the Mumbai Metro Rail System.
- The move will ease the distress of millions of commuters each day and help provide a cleaner and less congested city. The loan agreement was signed by Sameer Kumar Khare, Additional Secretary (Fund Bank and ADB), Department of Economic Affairs, on the behalf of the Indian Government and Kenichi Yokoyama, Country Director of ADB’s India Resident Mission on behalf of ADB.
- The carriages procured under this project will feature high-level safety features and automation, including surveillance systems, door closing, and train obstacle detectors.

**Govt approves Adani Powers Rs 14,000 crore Jharkhand SEZ project.**
- The government has approved a Rs 14,000-crore special economic zone (SEZ) project of Adani Power in Jharkhand, which will export the entire power generated in the Unit to Bangladesh.
- It will be ready by the end of 2022.
- The company had sought approval for setting up the project over an area of 425 hectares.
- Two supercritical units of 800 MW each would be set up with an investment of Rs 14,000 crore, which would include setting up of a water pipeline and a power evacuation system.

**PM Modi flagged off Tejas Express, fastest train between Chennai and Madurai.**
- This train will be the fastest in the Chennai-Madurai corridor and is India’s first semi-high speed fully AC luxury train.
- PM Modi also laid the foundation stone for two other projects which will boost rail infrastructure in Tamil Nadu.
- PM laid the foundation stone for the restoration of rail connectivity between Rameswaram and Dhanushkodi. The 17.20 Km railway line project is worth Rs 208 crore.
- Prime Minister also laid the foundation stone for the construction of new bridge Pamban viaduct. This will be India’s first ever vertical moving bridge. The cost of this project is Rs 250 crore.

**India signed deal with Russian firm to produce 7.5 lakh AK-203 rifles.**
• For the AK-203 Assault Rifles, the deal was signed between the OFB (Ordnance Factories Board) and the Russian company Concern Kalashnikov.
• The AK-203 rifles, the latest derivative of the AK-47 rifles, will be produced at the Indian Ordnance Factory at Amethi's Korwa.
• The new 7.5 lakh rifles will replace the indigenous INSAS rifles in the Army, Air Force and Navy.
• AK-47, officially known as the Avтомат Kalashnikova, is the most basic model followed by AK 74, 56, 100 series and 200 series.

Mukesh Ambani secured 13th place in the Forbes list of the ultra-wealthy
• In the release of the latest Forbes list of the ultra-wealthy, Mukesh Ambani, chairman of Reliance Industries, secured 13th place.
• Jeff Bezos remains the world’s richest person with a wealth of $131 billion. Secondly, Bill Gates ranks second with wealth worth $96.5 billion and Warren Buffett in 3rd position.

Geological Survey of India sets up 22 GPS stations across country
• The Geological Survey of India (GSI) launched 22 permanent global positioning system (GPS) stations across India to identify seismically hazardous zones and encourage mapping activities.
• The 22 GPS-Geodetic (pertaining to Geodesy, the science of earth measurement) observatories are located in Kolkata, Thiruvananthapuram, Jaipur, Pune, Dehradun, Chennai, Jabalpur, Bhubaneswar, Patna, Raipur, Bhopal, Chandigarh, Gandhinagar Vishakhapatnam, Agartala, Itanagar, Mangan, Jammu, Lucknow, Nagpur, Shillong and Little Andaman.
• Another 13 GPS permanent stations will be operational by March 2020.
• The organization has launched a platform called "Bhuvisamvd" under the Ministry of Mines to facilitate interaction between geo-scientists and university and college students.

TVS Motor Company won the Green Era Award for Sustainability
• TVS Motor Company won the International Sustainability award Green Era Award for Sustainability in Lisbon, Portugal. Tata Motors also won the Quality and Business Excellence Award in acknowledgment of its endeavor to create new benchmarks in product quality.

Rajnath to inaugurate an electronic surveillance project in Assam
• Home Minister Rajnath Singh is to inaugurate an electronic surveillance project in Dhubri district of Assam, a riverine and highly porous stretch along the Bangladesh border.
• The Home Ministry announced that the smart fencing will be operationalized in the 61 km riverine section of the international border in Dhubri district of Assam, where the Brahmaputra river enters into Bangladesh, in a bid to check illegal immigration and smuggling of arms, ammunition, drugs, and cattle.

Azaadi ke Diwane Museum inaugurated at Red Fort
• Azaadi Ke Diwane’ museum is dedicated to the unsung heroes of the country’s freedom struggle.
Built by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), the museum is the fifth in a series of recently inaugurated ones - the others being:
- the Subhash Chandra Bose and Indian National Army (INA) museum,
- the Yaad-e-Jallian museum,
- the Museum on 1857 (on the country’s first war of Independence)
- the Drishyakala (a museum on Indian Art) — on the sacrifices of India’s freedom fighters.

**Coal minister Goyal dedicates 1,000 MW NTPL power project to nation**
- The 1,000-MW coal-fired thermal power project of NTPL (Neyveli Tamil Nadu Power Ltd) is a joint venture between NLCIL and TANGEDCO with an equity participation of 89:11.
- Piyush Goyal also dedicated 150-MW solar power projects of NLC India Ltd (NLCIL) in Tamil Nadu.
- Tamil Nadu is the sole beneficiary of the 150 MW renewable power plants of Virudhunagar and Ramanathapuram districts commissioned and dedicated to the nation.

**RInfra wins Rs 648 crore contract from AAI to build new airport at Gujarat.**
- Reliance Infrastructure (RInfra) has bagged a Rs 648 crore contract from the Airport Authority of India (AAI) to build a new greenfield airport at Hirasar, in Rajkot district of Gujarat.
- The new airport is being constructed near National Highway-8B connecting Ahmedabad and Rajkot, nearly 36 km from the existing Rajkot Airport.

The government recently approved development of the airport at an estimated cost of 1,405 crore.
- The airport must be completed within 30 months from the date of issue of the contract.

**Over 93% of rural Indians have toilet access: Govt Survey**
- The National Annual Rural Sanitation Survey 2018-19, commissioned by the government has found that nearly 93% of rural India households have access to toilets and of these, 96.5% uses them.
- The survey also re-confirmed the Open Defecation Free (ODF) status of 90.7% villages.
- Since the launch of Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) in October 2014, 50 crore people have stopped defecating in the open.
- Swachh Bharat Abhiyan aims to completely eliminate open defecation in the country by October 2, 2019.

**Notun Disha Initiated By Tripura Government.**
- The government of Tripura announced ‘Notun Disha’ (New Direction) for assessing the academic level of students in classes III-VIII and then improving their current level.
- It was launched by state Education Minister Ratan Lal Nath.
- Training will be provided by NGOs and educational institutions to 800 teachers.

**World Bank to provide 250 Million dollar for NRETP to boost Rural incomes in India**
- The Agreement was signed by Mr. Sameer Kumar Khare, Additional Secretary, Department of Economic
Affairs, Ministry of Finance, on behalf of the Government of India and Mr. Hisham Abdo, Acting Country Director, World Bank India, in New Delhi.

- The main aim is to promote women-owned and women-led farm and non-farm enterprises across value chains; enable them to build businesses that help them access finance, markets and networks; and generate employment.
- The $250 million loan has a 5-year grace period, and a final maturity of 20 years.
- The National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) which is currently being implemented across 13 states, 162 districts and 575 blocks, has so far mobilised more than 8.8 million women from poor rural households into 7.5 lakh self-help groups (SHGs).

**Haryana Cabinet approved the 2019-20 excise policy**

- The Haryana Cabinet approved the excise policy for 2019-20, with a revenue target of Rs.7,500 crore. The decision was taken at a meeting under the chairmanship of CM Manohar Lal Khattar.
- The Excise policy emphasizes the launch of Ease of Doing Business (EODB) initiatives involving Application and Grant of Licenses online through the Department's Portal www.haryanatax.gov.in. The Policy also enables liquor manufacturers to market Indian-made foreign liquor (IMFL) in Tetra Packs (biodegradable) of 180 ML, technically called Nips.

**Maharashtra CM Fadnavis unveils states new 5-year industrial policy**

- Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis unveiled the state’s new 5-year industrial policy emphasising on high-technology and employment generating businesses.
- The policy which will be effective from 1st of April this year aims to attract investments worth 10 lakh crore rupees.
- The rate of conversion of Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) into actual investments was far higher in Maharashtra than the national average.
- The national average of converting Memorandums of Understanding into actual investments, after a period of one year from the agreements being inked, could be pegged at 30-35 per cent
- Maharashtra's average is more than 45 per cent and Magnetic Maharashtra and Make in India in the industrial sector; it has been more than 70 per cent.
- Mr Fadnavis Maharashtra has always been a leader in the industry sector adding that in the last 4-4.5 years, the state has regained its numero uno position.
- Minister for Industries and Mining Subhash Desai said new Industrial Policy aims create nearly 40 lakh jobs by 2023-24.

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

- Union Cabinet approved the proposal for promulgation of the Central Educational Institutions (Reservation in Teachers’ Cadre) Ordinance, 2019.
- The Ordinance will ensure that the Constitutional provisions of reservation for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and the socially and
educationally backward classes in the faculty recruitment will be protected.
• This will ensure that the process of recruitment of faculty is resumed and the vacancies are filled up.
• The decision will allow filling up of more than five thousand vacancies by direct recruitment in Teachers cadre.

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

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

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

Prime Minister launches key development projects at Kalaburagi and Kancheepuram
• The Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched key development projects at Kalaburagi in Karnataka and Kancheepuram in Tamil Nadu.
• At Kalaburagi in Karnataka, the Prime Minister dedicated the ESIC Hospital and Medical College, Bengaluru to the nation.
• He also inaugurated the Super Specialty Block of KIMS in Hubali, the
Income Tax Appellate Tribunal building in Bangalore and the Women’s Hostel for Students from North Eastern Region at Bangalore University.

• At Kancheepuram in Tamil Nadu, the Prime Minister launched various National Highway projects, including the foundation stone for the four-laning of NH-45C from Vikravandi to Thanjavur and the six-laning of Karaipettai – Walajapet section of NH-4.

• He dedicated the 5 MMTPA capacity Ennore LNG Terminal to the nation.

• The Prime Minister also unveiled the statue of Dr MG Ramachandran at Dr. MGR Janaki College of Arts & Science for Women, Chennai.

Uttar Pradesh gets highways projects worth over Rs 1 Lakh Crore

• Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh inaugurated National Highways projects worth Rs 1, 10, 154 crore in Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh.

• He inaugurated foundation stone for several works under Namami Gange programme worth over Rs 1969.57 crore.

• The National Highways include four-laning of Lucknow-Sultanpur section on NH-56, four-laning of Kursi Road–Ayodhya Road section of Lucknow ring road, four-laning of Ghagra Bridge to Budhanpur section on NH-233, widening of Sonoli-Gorakhpur section on NH-29E, widening of Barabanki-Jarwal Road Junction on NH-28C, etc.

• The foundation stone for construction of Lucknow-Kanpur Expressway was also laid.

• Several projects under Namami Gange programme were launched including laying of sewerage network of 214.88 km in Prayagraj at a cost of Rs 260.86 crore, laying of sewerage network of 69 km including 2 STPs of 9MLD capacity in Garh Mukteshwar, etc.

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

• A Memorandum of Understating (MoU) between Shri Vishwakarma Skill University (SVSU) and National Institute of Technical Teacher’s Training and Research (NITTTR) was signed.

• The MoU will be in force for a period of three years.

• The collaboration targets to ensure purposeful engagement of Faculty, Experts and Industry Partners for various academic activities.

• The collaboration seeks to support Vision and Mission of both Institutions related to Technical and Vocational Education, Training and Research.

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

• Uttarakhand Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat laid the foundation stone for the Dehradun-Mussoorie ropeway project.

• The 300-crore rupees ropeway project is expected to be completed in three years.

• It will be one of the world's longest ropeways, and will shorten the one-hour zigzag drive to just 15 minutes from Purkul village the base camp at Dehradun to Mussoorie.

• Poma, a French company which manufactures cable-driven projects,
will provide the technical support to the ropeway which will be built on the PPP mode.

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

**Justice SA Bobde nominated as Executive Chairman of NALSA**
- President Ram Nath Kovind nominated Justice SA Bobde of the Supreme Court as Executive Chairman of National Legal Services Authority (NALSA).
- The post is currently headed by Justice AK Sikri who retired on March 6, 2019.
- The National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) is a statutory body constituted under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 to provide free Legal Services to the weaker sections of the society.
- NALSA fulfils the provisions under the Article 39A of the constitution which provides for free legal aid to the poor and weaker sections of the society.

**PM STIAC identified 9 national missions for India’s sustainable development**
- The Prime Minister’s Science, Technology and Innovation Council (PM-STIAC) have identified nine national missions to address major scientific challenges to ensure India’s sustainable development. Through the nine missions, the PM STIAC aims to facilitate collaboration to solve complex problems.

**The identified Nine Missions are:**
- Natural language Translation
- Quantum Frontier
- Artificial Intelligence
- National Biodiversity Mission
- Electric Vehicles
- BioScience for Human Health
- Waste to Wealth
- Deep Ocean Exploration
- Agnii

**Defence Ministry announced that permanent commission for women in Indian Army**
- The Defence Ministry announced that permanent commission will be granted for Women in all the 10 branches of Indian Army. The extension of Permanent Commission to Women will provide women with a career in the Army till their retirement. The Short Service Commission entails an opportunity to serve as a Commissioned Officer for 10/14 years. At the end of 10 yrs, 3 options will be provided, either elect for a Permanent Commission or opt out or have the option of 4 years extension.
- The Women Officers will now get a permanent commission in branches such as signals, engineers, army aviation, army air defence, electronics, and mechanical engineers, army service corps, army ordnance corps, and intelligence. The Defence Ministry
had earlier approved permanent commission for women in all branches of Air Force including fighter pilots.

**Delhi government launches app**

*One Delhi to track bus, metro services*

- A commute-planning app “ONE Delhi” was launched by Kailash Gahlot, Transport Minister of Delhi.
- The app offers facilities such as:
  - Obtaining the estimated time of arrival for buses and metros.
  - Tracking the real-time location of buses and metros.
  - Providing information about their fares.
  - Providing the best route and mode of travel between two places.
  - List of tourist spots in Delhi.

**MoEFCC amended rules to ban the import of solid plastic waste**

- The Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) has amended the Hazardous and other Wastes (Management and Transboundary Movement) Rules, 2016 to completely ban the import of solid plastic waste.
- The amendment notified by the MoEFCC fixes a loophole which previously allowed the import of plastic waste into India for processing. The ban on the import of plastics is in line with the principles of sustainable development. To ensure the ban doesn’t adversely impact the ease of doing business, the amendment allows the reverse import of defective electrical and electronic assemblies and components manufactured in and exported from India, within a year of export.

- India is exploring various options to discourage the use of single-use plastics and also is emphasizing recycling of the plastic waste to reduce the burden on the environment thereby providing benefits.

**OECD has reduced the world economic growth forecasts for 2019 to 3.3 percent**

- The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has reduced the world economic growth forecasts for the year 2019. OECD has cut its 2019 forecast for global economic growth to 3.3% for the current year, down from 3.5% it predicted earlier.
- The report notes that trade tensions and political uncertainty, including Brexit and erosion of business and consumer confidence are weighing on the world’s economy thereby contributing to the slowdown. The 19-nation eurozone was particularly hard to hit, with predicted growth dropping from 1.8% to 1% which was contributed to policy uncertainty including those over Brexit.

**Government to issue Rs 20 coins for the first time**

- The Finance Ministry has announced the rollout of a new Rs. 20 coin shaped like a "dodecagon", a 12-edged polygon.
- The new coin will be heavier than all the existing coins at 8.54 grams.
- The obverse side of the coin will bear Lion Capital of Ashoka Pillar while the reverse will have the denominational value "20" with rupee symbol above.
- New series of Re 1, Rs 2, Rs 5 and Rs 10 denomination coins will also be minted.
• As per Coinage Act, 1906, the Government of India has the sole right to mint coins and the responsibility for coinage vests with the Government.
• Coins are minted at the four India Government Mints at Mumbai, Alipore (Kolkata), Saifabad (Hyderabad), Cherlapally (Hyderabad) and Noida (UP).

Odisha Government announces financial assistance for craftsmen
• Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik launched the scheme ‘Mukhyamantri Karigar Sahayata’ for financial assistance to craftsmen. The nodal department of the scheme is the Directorate of handicrafts.
• Craftsmen with 10 years of experience and having annual income below Rs.1 lakh are eligible to get assistance of Rs.800 per month.
• For craftsmen above 80 years of age would get Rs.1000 per month allowance for those has the same experience and annual income as above.
• Annual income certificate, residence proof, experience certificate and age proof are required to produce for availing the benefits of the scheme.

Cabinet approved for new hydroelectric policy
• The Union Cabinet approved a new hydroelectric policy aimed at boosting the sector, including according large hydro projects the status of renewable energy projects.
• According to the new policy, large hydro projects will also be designated as renewable energy projects. So far, only smaller projects of less than 25 MW in capacity were categorized as renewable energy. With the removal of this distinction, large hydro projects will be included as a separate category under the non-solar renewable purchase obligation policy.
• Under this policy, power purchasers will have to source a portion of electricity from large hydro projects. The new policy will increase the debt repayment period for hydro projects to 18 years from the current 12 years with the provision to introduce an escalating tariff of 2%.

Google launches ‘Bolo’ app to help children read in Hindi, English
• Google has launched a new app called Bolo, which aims to help students with their reading and comprehension skills and will help them read out aloud in English and in Hindi.
• The app features an animated character ‘Diya’, who encourages children to read stories aloud and helps if the child is unable to pronounce a word.
• Bolo will also be a free app and relies on Google’s speech recognition and text-to-speech technology.

Southern Railway gets a boost; Kerala to get a new coaching terminal in Nemom
• Minister of Railways & Coal, Shri Piyush Goyal laid the foundation stone for New Coaching Terminal at Nemom and unveiled WAP-7HS passenger locomotive through video conferencing here today. Shri Ghanshyam Singh, Member (Traction), Railway Board, Shri Rajesh Agarwal, Member (Rolling Stock), Railway Board, Shri Vishwesh Chaubey, Member (Engineering), Railway Board and other Senior
Railway Officers were present on this occasion.

- Shri Piyush Goyal said that the present Government has consistently focused on development for all areas in the country.
- The main focus has been on large scale infrastructure creation both physical and social.

**Telangana govt forms SIT to probe data theft case**

- The Telangana government formed a Special Investments in-depth probe into the alleged electoral rolls data theft.
- The Telangana government formed a Special Investments in-depth probe into the alleged electoral rolls data theft.
- The SIT will have three IPS officers, two DSPs and a few instants A YSR Congress leader had lodged a complaint with the Cyberattack.
- YSRCP president YS Jaganmohan Reddy alleged that the TDP president and chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu.

**Centre to launch work from home jobs in the IT sector**

- The government is working on a scheme to push work-from-home jobs in the IT sector by offering financial incentives to both employees and employers. Incentivising work-from-home jobs through policy-level initiatives can help in creating jobs in the ITES domain while increasing the available talent pool for the sector.
- This will create employment opportunities in the IT/ITES industry, especially for women and differently-abled persons. Currently, the scheme is proposed for a three-year period till March 31, 2022, with an outlay of about Rs.270 crore to create about 50,000 work-from-home jobs.
- The initiative is likely to be launched as phase II of the IT Ministry’s India BPO Promotion Scheme that incentivises firms to set up operations in tier-2 and tier-3 cities in the country. The scheme, launched in 2016, had an outlay of about Rs. 500 crore with an objective to create about 1.45 lakh jobs.

**Karnataka sought Rs.2,064 crore for draught relief**

- Karnataka Chief Minister H D Kumaraswamy sought early release of Rs.2,064.30 crore funds to provide relief to drought-hit farmers in the ongoing rabi season. In addition to floods, Karnataka reeled under severe drought both during Kharif (summer) and rabi (winter) seasons of the 2018-19 crop year (July-June).
- The state government has submitted a memorandum seeking Rs.2,064.30 crore drought relief fund for the ongoing rabi season as crop loss is estimated to be Rs.11,384.7 crore. The state has declared drought in 156 out of 176 talukas.
- The state has released Rs.386 crore from the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) and given priority to ensure drinking water and fodder, besides creating 1.19 crore man-days jobs under the MGNREGA scheme.

**Lok Sabha 2019 elections will start from 11th April**

- Election Commission of India announced that the Lok Sabha 2019 elections will start from April 11, in seven phases. Code of Conduct for parties kicks in from 10th March and
there are close to 90 crore eligible voters. Date of counting will be on the 23rd of May 2019.

- The election in 22 States and Union Territories will be conducted in a single phase. Two-phase elections are in Karnataka, Rajasthan, Manipur, and Tripura, while Assam and Chhattisgarh will have three phases. Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Odisha will be covered in four phases, Jammu and Kashmir in five, and Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal in seven phases. In Anantnag, the election will be held in three rounds.
- Schedule of the seven phases of Lok Sabha polls:
  ♦ Phase one – 11th April 2019
  ♦ Phase two – 18th April 2019
  ♦ Phase three – 23rd April 2019
  ♦ Phase four – 29th April 2019
  ♦ Phase five – 06th May 2019
  ♦ Phase six – 12th May 2019
  ♦ Phase seven – 19th May 2019

Date of counting- 23rd May 2019

**NPPA reduced MRP of 390 non-scheduled cancer medicines up to 87 percent**
- The National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) has reduced the MRP of 390 non-scheduled cancer medicines have been reduced by up to 87%. NPPA has asked the manufacturers and hospitals to revise the prices based on the trade margin formula. According to the price regulator, five brands will see a price reduction of about 70%, while 12 others will see a 50-70% price cut. MRP of 45 cancer medicines will reduce by 25%.
- This price reduction is expected to benefit about 22 lakh cancer patients in India.

**Ministry of power to give star rating for 2 electrical appliances**
- The Ministry of Power has announced that two more electrical appliances microwave ovens and washing machines will now be assigned star ratings based on their energy efficiency metrics.
- The program to rate microwave ovens and washing machines will be implemented on a voluntary basis and will be valid up to December 31, 2020. Star Rating of Appliances provides a basic sense of how energy efficient each product is. Higher the rating, higher is the efficiency of the appliance.

**India, ASEAN clock fastest growth for e-commerce, digital trade sectors: FICCI KPMG**
- According to India and ASEAN: Co-creating the Future’ report by industry body Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) and consulting major KPMG, India and 10 member ASEAN are among the fastest growing economies in the world.
- India and ASEAN show a faster growth rate even for e-commerce and digital trade sectors.
- Global E-commerce Sector topped by China.
- Global e-commerce sales are expected to reach 4.5 trillion dollars from 1.3 trillion dollars by 2021.
By 2025, the e-commerce market in India is expected to reach a volume of 90 billion dollars as per the report.

**Jet Airways sought Rs.750 crore from Etihad**

- Naresh Goyal, Jet Airways chairman, has sought urgent funding of Rs.750 crore from its equity partner Etihad, the reason cited was the very precarious position of the airline following the lingering cash flow issues which got amplified after the forced grounding of over 50 of its planes.
- The airline had also secured the go-ahead from the Civil Aviation Ministry to pledge its shares in Jet Privilege for securing the interim funding. The airline holds 49.9% stake in the loyalty programme while the majority is with Etihad.

**PM inaugurated Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya Institute of Archaeology.**

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the new Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya Institute of Archaeology at Greater Noida in Uttar Pradesh. He also unveiled the statue of Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya at the campus. Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya Institute of Archaeology is a state-of-the-art institution that comprises of an auditorium, an open-air theatre, and an Archaeological Museum
- Institute of Archaeology is an academic wing of the Archeological Survey of India under the Ministry of Culture. Archeological Survey of India (ASI) is the premier organization for the archaeological researches and protection of the cultural heritage in India.

- It functions under the under the Ministry of Culture. ASI regulates all archaeological activities in the country as per the provisions of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958 and Antiquities and Art Treasure Act, 1972.

**PM attended 50th Raising Day celebrations of CISF.**

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi attended the 50th Raising Day celebrations of Central Industrial Security Forces (CISF), at Indirapuram in Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh. He suggested the idea of starting digital museums at airports and metros, showcasing the work of CISF.
- Central Industrial Security Forces (CISF): Central Industrial Security Forces (CISF) came into existence in 1969 with three battalions. It provides integrated security cover to the Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) which occupied the commanding heights of the economy. Over the years CISF has grown several folds to reach 1,48,371 personnel.

**Surat Metro Project springs up expected to serve the masses by 2024.**

- The Government of India approved the Surat Metro Rail Project having two Metro Rail Corridors with a combined length of 40.35 km.
- The project will be completed in 5 years at an estimated project cost of Rs. 12020.32 Crore This project will provide continuous availability of affordable, reliable, safe, secure and seamless transport system in the urban agglomeration of the city.
- It will reduce the accidents, pollution, travel time, energy consumption, anti-
social incidents as well as regulate urban expansion and land use for sustainable development.


- Draft on Reintegration proposes a monthly stipend and jobs for those who Shun militancy by the Jammu and Kashmir government. The move is to encourage the youths hailing from Jammu and Kashmir to Shun militancy. The government proposes to offer them a monthly stipend of Rs. 6000 and jobs. The new Reintegration policy draft is under the consideration of Jammu and Kashmir administration headed by Governor Sathya Pal Malik.
- As per the government, the initiative will allow the militants who surrender ‗to encourage him to join the mainstream‘. It gives importance to rehabilitation. Militants found to have been involved in heinous crimes won‘t get the proposed benefits.

About Jammu and Kashmir

- Capital – Srinagar (summer), Jammu (winter)
- Governor – Sathya Pal Malik

Madhya Pradesh Government raises Reservation Quota of OBCs to 27 percent.

- Madhya Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel approved the ordinance to increase reservation for Other Backward Classes (OBCs) from 14 per cent to 27 per cent, making MP the only state in India to have 27 per cent quota for OBCs. At present, the state provides 20 per cent reservation to Scheduled Tribes, and 16 per cent to Scheduled Castes.

- OBCs are estimate to constitute nearly 52 per cent of the state’s population, and OBC groups have often demanded an increase in reservation to reflect their strength in the state.

Centre amended the Enemy Property Order.

- The central government has amended the guidelines for disposal of the Enemy Property Order, 2018, to facilitate usages of enemy property by the state government exclusively for public use. Enemy properties are the properties of the people who migrated to Pakistan during partition and also to China after the Sino-India war in 1962. It is estimated that there are 9,280 such properties which were left behind by people who went to Pakistan and 126 such properties were left by the Chinese nationals.
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Venkaiah Naidu conferred Honorary Doctorate from the University of Peace.

- Vice President Venkaiah Naidu was conferred Honorary Doctorate from the UN established the University of Peace. He is the first Indian to receive
an honorary doctorate from the University of Peace. The university has stated that the degree of “Doctor Honoris Causa” (Doctor of Philosophy) was conferred on the Indian Vice President recognising his contribution to the Rule of Law, democracy and sustainable development in India.

• The University of Peace was established in accordance with the Resolution 35/55 passed by the United Nations General Assembly in 1980. The main campus of the University of Peace is located in Costa Rica. It aims to be a forward-thinking, transformational and inspirational educational institution dedicated to the goals of quality teaching, research, and service for serving humanity in building a peaceful world.

Centre launched Pulse Polio Programme 2019 to eradicate Polio.

• The government has launched the Pulse Polio Programme 2019. Under the programme, polio drops would be administered to children less than five years of age. More than 17 crore children of less than five years across the country will be administered polio drops.

• The pulse polio programme aims to protect children from the polio disease by conducting two nationwide mass polio vaccination campaigns and two to three sub-national campaigns each year. India was declared Polio-free country in the year 2014.

• India’s last reported cases of wild polio were in West Bengal and Gujarat on 13 January 2011.

♦ Polio also known as poliomyelitis is a highly contagious viral disease caused by Poliovirus

♦ It attacks the nervous system

♦ Children younger than 5 years old are more likely to contract the virus than any other group

♦ Poliovirus spreads by food or water containing human faeces and less commonly from infected saliva.

Arcelor Mittal receives NCLT nod for taking over Essar Steel at Rs 42,000 Crore.

• A resolution plan of Rs. 42,000 crores submitted by ArcelorMittal for the acquisition of Essar Steel Ltd. was approved by the Ahmedabad bench of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT). The approval has been granted 583 days after the beginning of insolvency proceedings, against the mandatory time period of 270 days.

India stands world’s 2nd largest arms importer says SIPRI.

• According to the latest report published by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), India was the world’s second largest importer of major arms in 2014–18 and accounted for 9.5% of the global total. Saudi Arabia which holds the long-held tag as largest importer accounted for 12% of the total imports during the period.

• Russia accounted for 58% of Indian arms imports in 2014–18, compared with 76% in 2009-13. Israel, the U.S., and France all increased their arms exports to India in 2014-18. The Russian share in Indian imports is likely to sharply go up for the next five-year period as India signed several deals including S-400 air defence systems, four stealth frigates, AK-203 assault rifles, a second nuclear attack submarine on the lease, and deals for Kamov-226T utility helicopters, Mi-17
helicopters, and short-range air defence systems.

Keralas Marayur jaggery finally gets Geographical Indication tag.
- The Marayoor Jaggery, the traditional and handmade product from Idukki district of Kerala, received the Geographical Indication (GI) tag from the Central Government. In Marayur and Kanthallur grama panchayats of Kerlala, jaggery is produced without adding any chemicals.
- The distinct features of the Marayur Jaggery are high sweetness with less saltiness, high content of iron and less sodium. About Geographical Indication (GI): A Geographical Indication (GI) tag is a name or sign used on products which corresponds to a specific geographical location or origin. It can be a town, a region, or a country. It plays a very important role to increase the realm of the market.

Pinaka guided rocket system successfully test fired.
- Defence Research and Development organisation, DRDO successfully test fired the PINAKA guided WEAPON rocket system from Pokhran range in Rajasthan. This indigenously developed Guided PINAKA by DRDO will significantly boost the capability of the artillery to make precision hits. Pinaka is a multiple rocket launcher produced in India for the Indian Army. Pinaka saw service during the Kargil War, where it was successful in neutralising enemy positions on the mountain tops.

Hardeep Puri launched the Indian Urban Observatory and Video wall at New Delhi.

- Minister of State (I/C) for Housing and Urban Affairs, Hardeep S Puri, inaugurated the state-of-the-art India Urban Observatory and Video Wall at New Delhi. The India Urban Observatory will plug into the sources of data from cities, both from real-time and archival sources. It will help in getting up-to-date information on a meaningful set of indicators over various domains such as transport, health, environment, water, finance and so on, which will further assist in developing best practices, future

India-Bangladesh Jointly Inaugurated 4 Development Projects
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Bangladesh counterpart Sheikh Hasina, jointly unveiled e-plaques for development projects in Bangladesh, through video conferencing.
- This was the sixth such video conference between PM Modi and Prime Minister Hasina. E-plaques were unveiled for the following 4 development projects:
  ♦ Supply of buses and trucks,
  ♦ Inauguration of 36 community clinics,
  ♦ Inauguration of 11 water treatment plants, and
  ♦ Extension of National Knowledge Network to Bangladesh.

Facebook launched Facebook Hubs to aid start-ups.
- Facebook launched ‘Facebook Hubs’ at 20 locations in India to support the start-up ecosystem in the country.
- These hubs will help foster innovation and support for the community by hosting mentor hours and trainings, workshops, roundtable discussions.
The company has partnered with co-working company 91springboard. These hubs will be part of a global network for training and mentoring facilities for start-ups, among others.

**Six lakh employees to be trained to handle 96000 VVPAT Machines in Maharashtra.**
- For the first time in Lok Sabha elections, VVPAT (Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail) machines are to be used all over the country. In Maharashtra, 96000 VVPAT machines will be used in 48 Lok Sabha constituencies and process for training 6 lakh employees to handle these machines has begun. They will be provided with training at three levels.
- VVPAT system is complimentary for electronic voting machines (EVMs) and receipt of voting will be given to the voters through these machines. Information regarding vote cast to a particular candidate by the voter can be available after pressing a button on VVPAT machine. A receipt will be given in seven seconds after voting to the voter.

**ECI to launch cVIGIL on 18th March.**
- Election Commission of India has developed cVIGIL, a mobile app, for the upcoming Lok Sabha election. ‘cVIGIL’ stands for ‘Vigilant Citizen’.
- It is expected to be launched on 18th March 2019. It will be available on Google Playstore. Complaints regarding the model code of conduct and violations can be lodged in during election time.
- To lodge a complaint, a voter should download the app from Google Play Store. Photos and two-minute video clippings regarding the violation including threatening of voters, causing enmity between voters on caste and religious lines, character assassination of candidates, can be uploaded via the app. Complainants also have the option to remain anonymous. Within 100 minutes of filing the complaint, the complainant will receive feedback on the action taken.

**Vastradan Campaign has set the Guinness World Record.**
- Vastradan Campaign initiated by the erstwhile royal family of Udaipur has set the Guinness World Record for the largest collection of clothes for donation.
- Through the Vastradan Campaign, over 3,29,250 pieces of clothing from over 76,000 donors were collected and distributed to the needy. The campaign reached out to over 120 schools, 15 colleges and around 30 NGOs.
- The certificate for the Guinness World Record was handed over to Lakshyaraj Singh Mewar, a descendant of Rajput ruler Maharana Pratap. The campaign highlighted the empathy of the citizen's especially young boys and girls.

**WHO released the Global Influenza Strategy 2019-2030.**
- World Health Organization (WHO) released a Global Influenza Strategy for 2019-2030 aimed at protecting people in all countries from the threat of influenza, one of the world’s greatest public health challenges. The aim of the strategy is to prevent seasonal influenza, control the spread of influenza from animals to humans,
and prepare for the next influenza pandemic.
• Every year across the globe, there are an estimated 1 billion cases, of which 3 to 5 million are severe cases, resulting in 290000 to 650000 influenza-related respiratory deaths. WHO recommends annual influenza vaccination as the most effective way to prevent influenza, which is especially important for people at higher risk of serious influenza complications and for health care workers.
• The new strategy is the most comprehensive and far-reaching that WHO has ever developed for influenza and it outlines a path to protect populations every year and helps prepare for a pandemic through strengthening routine programmes.

For more than 65 years, the Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System (GISRS), comprised of WHO Collaborating Centres and national influenza centres, have worked together to monitor seasonal trends and potentially pandemic viruses and this system serves as the backbone of the global alert system for influenza.

**DRDO developed a range of Casualty Combat drugs.**
• The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has developed a range of combat drugs that can extend the golden hour till the soldier or an armoured unit is shifted to hospital after an attack. This range of drugs can bring down the death toll.
• The spectrum includes bleeding wound sealants, super absorptive dressings, and glycerinated salines. It can save lives in the event of warfare in the jungle and high altitude areas as well as in terror attacks.
• These medicines ensure that soldiers do not suffer from unwanted blood loss while being taken to better healthcare from war zones. This range of casualty drugs is aimed at enhancing the chances of survival and minimum disability by providing effective first aid care within the golden hour.

**Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO):**
♦ Formed on: 1958
♦ Headquarters: New Delhi
♦ Minister responsible: Nirmala Sitharaman
♦ Parent: Ministry of Defence
♦ It is charged with the military's research and development.

**Indias first LGBTQ Clinic and HIV treatment centre inaugurated by Humsafar Trust in Mumbai.**
• The first HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) treatment centre and holistic clinic for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) by Humsafar trust in Mumbai, Maharashtra.
• The founder of Humsafar Trust, Ashok Row Kavi announced that the center will be open for all and it will give provide counselling.

**Chennai to get second Greenfield airport.**
• The Tamil Nadu government has finally taken the first step towards building the second Greenfield airport near Chennai. Tamil Nadu Industrial Development Corporation (Tidco) Limited has issued a Request for Proposal to appoint a consultant for preparing a draft report and identify potential sites near the city.
Tidco was chosen as the nodal agency for selection of a consultant, officials said. No site has been identified yet. The consultant will identify and propose three potential sites near Chennai for the greenfield airport. The consultant will look at the air traffic projections and the demand and do a detailed master plan citing the necessary airside and land facilities and other infrastructure and industrial provisions the site will need.

Over 12 Indian states banned e-cigarettes.
- Following an advisory from the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare issued in 2018, Twelve states across India have banned Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS) or e-cigarettes.
- States of Punjab, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Jharkhand have taken steps to ban the use of ENDS.
- ENDS, more commonly known as e-cigarettes or "vapes" in India, are products that produce an aerosolized mixture containing flavored liquids and nicotine that is inhaled by the user.

Over 605 people have died of swine flu in 2019 so far: Health Ministry.
- According to data from the Union Health Ministry, as many as 605 people have died due to swine flu this year, with 75 deaths being reported last week. Over 19,380 people have tested positive for the virus. Rajasthan reported the highest number of swine flu cases (4,551) and deaths (162) followed by Gujarat (118 deaths and 3,969 cases). Delhi was third with 3,362 swine flu cases and seven deaths. Swine flu is the common name for the H1N1 influenza virus. H1N1 is a self-limiting viral, air-borne disease spread from person to person, through large droplets generated due to coughing and sneezing, indirect contact by touching a contaminated object or surface and close contact, including handshaking, hugging and kissing.

India extended USD 250 million to Nepal.
- India has extended a grant assistance of up to USD 250 million to Nepal for the reconstruction of infrastructures in the areas of housing, education, health and cultural heritage that was destroyed during the devastating April 2015 earthquake which saw the death of over 9,000 people.

India ranks 16th in terms of highest number of impacted species in hotspots.
- India was ranked 16th in the world in terms of highest number of impacted species in biodiversity-rich zones (also known as hotspots) due to human actions.
- In India, 35 species affected on an average in biodiversity-rich zones. Malaysia ranks first among countries with highest number of impacted species (on an average 125 species). Southeast Asian tropical forests — including those in India’s Western Ghats, Himalaya and north-east — are among the ‘hotspots’ of threatened species.
India bans Boeing 737 MAX 8 planes after the Ethiopian Airlines crash.
• Boeing 737 Max 8 aircraft banned by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) in the Indian airspace from 1600 hrs IST or 1030 UTC 13th March 2019. The airlines affected by this are SpiceJet which has 13 jets of the model 8 variant and Jet Airways which has 5 jets of this variant.

Thirty four edition of Aahar International Food and Hospitality Fair begins in New Delhi.
• 34th edition of Aahar- the International Food and Hospitality Fair which is organized by India Trade Promotion Organization (ITPO) begins in New Delhi on 12th March 2019. Participants from China, Germany, Hong Kong, Italy, Indonesia, Japan, Russia, Spain, USA and UK are participating in the event.

HGS and NASSCOM to launch centre of excellence for PwDs in Bangalore.
• Hinduja Global Solutions (HGS) partnered with National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM) Foundation to launch a centre of excellence in Bengaluru for training differently-abled persons (PwDs) which will train a minimum of 100 PwDs making them industry-ready over the next 12 months with a goal to place at least 50% of them in companies already sensitised for hiring them.
• The trainees will be skilled in a variety of job roles suitable for hospitality, IT or BPM and retail industries and will also be trained on soft skills, interview skills, communication skills, and English language.

Brookfield acquires RILs East West Pipeline
• India Infrastructure Trust, an infrastructure investment trust (InvIT), sponsored by Brookfield, will acquire the East West Pipeline for Rs. 3,000 crore.
• The pipeline is owned by Reliance Industries Ltd’s promoters’ family. As a part of the transaction, the InvIT would acquire 100% equity interest in Pipeline Infrastructure Private Ltd. which currently owns and operates the pipeline.
• Following this acquisition by Brookfield, the existing pipeline usage agreement has been reworked. Now, reserved capacity will be cut to 33 Million Metric Standard Cubic Meter Per Day (MMSCMD) against 56 MMSCMD and any unutilised capacity payment by RIL will be the difference between Rs.500 crore a quarter and actual revenue earned by PIPL.

DRDO successfully test fired Man Portable Anti-tank Guided Missile
• Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) successfully test-fired Man Portable Anti-Tank Guided Missile (MPATGM) in the desert ranges of Rajasthan.
• The MPATGM is a third-generation anti-tank guided missile (ATGM) comes loaded with a high-explosive anti-tank (HEAT) warhead. It has a maximum engagement range of about 2.5 kilometers. The indigenously developed missile has features like a state-of-the-art imaging infrared radar seeker with integrated avionics.
Arecanut Gets Its First GI Tag For Sirsi Supari
• Registrar of Geographical Indications, Government of India, accorded a GI tag, ‘Sirsi Supari’, to arecanut grown in Sirsi, Siddpaur and Yellapur taluks of Uttara Kannada district in Karnataka. The Totagars’ Cooperative Sale Society (TSS) Ltd, a Sirsi-based agri cooperative, is the registered proprietor of the GI ‘Sirsi Supari’.

NTPC partners with Indian Railways for fly ash transportation
• State-run National Thermal Power Corporation Ltd. (NTPC) has teamed up with the Indian Railways for fly ash transportation. The partnership is to help enhance ash utilisation at Rihand and Vindhyachal Super Thermal Power plants. NTPC had signed a memorandum of understanding with Hazipur-based East Central Railway Zone for transportation of fly ash under Indian Railways’ Special Freight Train Operator scheme.

IFFM to be from 29th March at Malappuram, Kerala
• The 77th International Film Festival of Malappuram (IFFM) organised by the Rasmi Film Society will be held at Malappuram, Kerala on March 29, 30 and 31. Actor Indrans will inaugurate the festival at the Municipal bus-stand auditorium, named after filmmaker Mrinal. Sen.V.C. Abhilash’s Aalorukkam will be the inaugural film. There will be 11 films in the World, Indian and Malayalam categories.

RInfra to sell Delhi-Agra Toll Road in Rs 3,600 crore deal
• Reliance Infrastructure (RInfra) has signed a "definitive binding agreement" with Singapore-based Cube Highways and Infrastructure for sale of its 100 per cent stake in Delhi-Agra (DA) Toll Road Pvt Ltd. The deal is valued over Rs 3,600 crore.
• In addition, NHAI claims of Rs 1,200 crore to be filed by DA Toll Road will flow directly to Reliance Infrastructure. DA Toll Road Pvt Ltd is the special purpose vehicle (SPV) of RInfra, which operates the 180 kilometre long six-lane road that connects the national capital with Agra on National Highway-2.

ECI to launch Observer App
• The Election Commission of India (ECI) is to launch the Observer App, a mobile application, that will help poll observers to submit reports.
• The poll observers will get all the important notifications and alerts through the ‘Observer App’. It will also help them get their deployment status and download the ID card. As the observers will be involved in real-time disposal of cases of violation of the Model Code of Conduct and expenditure received through another mobile application ‘cVIGIL’, those details will also be available on the ‘Observer App’.

Kent RO receives the Best Domestic Water Purifier Award 2019.
• Kent RO Systems Pvt. Ltd. has been bestowed with the Best Domestic Water Purifier Award 2018-19 for its RO (Reverse Osmosis)+ UV + UF (Ultra Filtration) technology at the Water Digest Water Awards organized at The Lalit, New Delhi. Water Digest
Water Awards is backed by the Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation and UNESCO.

• Reverse Osmosis (RO) removes the all pollutants and contaminants from water, UV also known as Ultra Violet Radiation kills bacteria and virus and Ultra Filtration, an additional layer of security which works without electricity, filters remnants of microbial bodies. Thus, a combination of all three provides multistage purification which makes the water 100% safe and pure.

Students of IIT Kharagpur developed app to detect Fake Notes.

• The Students from IIT- Kharagpur has devised a code for a Smartphone application to address the problem of detecting fake Indian currency. Detecting Fake Currency Students of IIT- Kharagpur has developed an image processing application which can detect counterfeit currency.
• A user can upload a currency note image and the mobile app would verify its authenticity using 25 features extracted from the front and rear side of the currency note. If the app finds the discrepancies with the features it reports about the failure checkpoints. Smart India Hackathon 2019 organised by Ministry of Human Resource and Development in association with AICTE, i4c and Persistent Systems. It provides an unique Open Innovation Model for identifying new and disruptive technology innovations to solve the challenges faced in the country.

NGT suspended the expansion of Udupi thermal plant.

• The Principal Bench of National Green Tribunal (NGT), New Delhi, has ordered the suspension of the Environmental Clearance of August 1, 2017, granted for the expansion of the thermal plant of Udupi Power Corporation Ltd. (UPCL) at Yellur in Udupi district by addition of 2 x 800 MW units to raise ultimate capacity to 2,800 MW. The move is after the appeal of an NGO which opposed the thermal power plant at Yellur in Udupi district. The tribunal held that clearances granted for the setting up of the power plant were illegal. It directed the State government to conduct a study of carrying capacity of the area. It also ordered the company to pay Rs.1 lakh as cost to the petitioners.

Karnataka government plans for cloud seeding project.

• The government of Karnataka is planning for cloud seeding project due to drought and to influence the upcoming monsoon and capture as much water as possible from the rain clouds. The State government has called the tenders for cloud seeding operations to enhance rainfall during the monsoons of 2019 and 2020. The cost is expected to be Rs.50 crore per year.
• Earlier Efforts of Karnataka Karnataka had undertaken a similar exercise through Project Varshadhare in 2017. Cloud Seeding is a process of intervening chemically to induce precipitation rain or snow from clouds. Cloud seeding aims to facilitate and accelerate the process by making
available chemical nuclei for condensation to take place.
• The agents used as nuclei are iodides of silver or potassium, dry ice (solid carbon dioxide), or liquid propane.

**Joint exercises to be conducted by US army and NSG in Hyderabad.**
• The US military forces and the Indian National Security Guard (NSG) is conducting joint exercises in Hyderabad. This would be a part of the US-India security partnership. The aim of these exercises is to enhance preparedness and tackle any crisis that affects the public health and safety. The exercise is witnessing participation by the 1st Battalion and the 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) stationed out of Okinawa, Japan. The exercise will be overseen from the US Embassy, New Delhi and US Special Operations Pacific Command at Camp HM Smith in Hawaii.

**President Ram Nath Kovind inaugurated festival of Innovation and Entrepreneurship in Gandhinagar.**
• President of India Ram Nath Kovind inaugurated the Festival of Innovation and Entrepreneurship (FINE) in Gandhinagar, Gujarat. 10th Biennial National Grassroots Innovation awards were also distributed by the President on the occasion.
• The event will provide a platform to the innovators for building the linkages with potential stakeholders whose support can improve the prospects in the coming years for the betterment of the society. FINE is a unique initiative of the Office of the President of India to recognize, respect and reward grassroots innovations and foster a supportive ecosystem. President Kovind awards National Grassroots Innovators.
• For innovations in new varieties of agriculture crops, Prakash Singh Raghuvanshi from Uttar Pradesh has been awarded lifetime achievement award.

**USFDA approved Glen marks generic version of acne treatment gel.**
• Glenmark Pharmaceuticals received its final approval from the United States Food & Drug Administration (USFDA), the US health regulator, for its generic version of BenzaClin gel used in the treatment of acne.
• The approval granted to Glenmark Pharmaceuticals Inc, USA (Glenmark) by the USFDA is for Clindamycin and Benzoyl Peroxide Gel, 1 per cent|5 per cent, a generic version of BenzaClin1 Gel, 1 per cent/ 5 per cent, of Valeant Bermuda. Citing IQVIATM sales data, Glenmark said BenzaClin Gel, 1 per cent/ 5 per cent had sales of $99.4 million in the 12-month period ended January 2019. Glenmark’s current portfolio consists of 151 products authorised for distribution in the US with 53 ANDAs (Abbreviated New Drug Applications) pending approval with the USFDA.

**India sets aspirational target for engineering exports at USD 200 bn by 2025.**
• India can achieve a three-fold "aspirational" increase in its engineering exports to reach $200 billion by 2025, if concerted efforts are made by the government and industry
to develop a conducive ecosystem, and ensuring inputs at competitive prices, according to an EEPC India-Deloitte strategy paper. India's engineering exports, which contribute 25 per cent to the overall merchandise shipments, are projected to touch about $80-82 billion in the current financial year ending March 31.

**West Bengal has maximum first-time voters in Lok Sabha polls.**
• According to Election Commission, West Bengal has the maximum number of first-time voters, around 20.1 lakh, in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. WB is followed by Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, with around 16.7 lakh and 13.6 lakh first-time voters, respectively. The number of people eligible to vote has reportedly increased by 8.4 crore as compared to 2014 General Elections. Over 1.5 crore voters are in the age group of 18-19 years. These "young voters" constitute 1.66 per cent of the total electors.

**AFINDEX 2019 held at Pune.**
• Africa-India Joint Field Training Exercise (AFINDEX-19) between the Indian Army and 16 African nations will be conducted in Pune from March 18 to 27. The joint exercise would be held at Pune's Foreign Training Node at Aundh Military Station and College of Military Engineering in Kirkee.

**Features of AFINDEX-19:**
♦ 10 personnel, each from the participating nations from the African continent and personnel of Maratha Light Infantry of the Indian Army will participate in the joint exercise
♦ The exercise aims to train the participating contingents in Humanitarian Mine Assistance (HMA) and Peace Keeping Operations (PKO) under the United Nations Charter through practical
• Contingents from Egypt, Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal, Sudan, South Africa, Tanzania, Namibia, Mozambique, Uganda, Niger & Zambia are part of the joint exercise together with officers from Rwanda, Democratic Republic of Congo and Madagascar as Observers.

**Erode Turmeric received GI tag.**
• Erode Turmeric has finally received GI tag from the Geographical Indication Registry. Erode is the city in the state of Tamil Nadu. The product to acquire GI tag has to indicate that a product of a particular origin has a certain quality or reputation or some other characteristics, which is essentially attributable to its geographical origin. The uniqueness of the Erode Turmeric:
♦ Erode Turmeric is golden yellow in colour with resistance to pests after boiling
♦ Erode turmeric contains 2.5 to 4.5% of curcumin content
♦ Erode Turmeric is grown in hot moist conditions prevalent in the area with temperature ranging from 20 degrees to 37.9 degrees Celsius with an average of 600 to 800 mm rainfall in a year Geographical Indication defines the goods as originating in the territory of a country or a region or locality in that territory, provided a given quality reputation or other characteristics of the product are attributable to its geographical origin.

**Income Tax dept cracks down on terror funding in Kashmir valley.**
• Income Tax Department conducted search actions at 5 locations in the Kashmir Valley. Few places in Jammu were also searched. In a release, the CBDT said, these actions are part of the Department’s continued drive against use of black money by disruptive elements in the State.
• It said, the operations also send a message of deterrence and obviation to those intending to vitiate the democratic process of free and fair elections. The preliminary results are extremely encouraging. In the aggregate, undisclosed cash of one crore 44 lakh and unaccounted jewellery of 2.48 crore rupees has been seized.

**NITI Aayog and USAID organised IEMF.**
• Niti Ayog in association with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) organized the first workshop on the development of the India Energy Modelling Forum (IEMF). The workshop was organized under the Sustainable Growth Pillar of the India-U.S. Strategic Energy Partnership.
• IEMF aims to improve cooperation and coordination between modelling teams, the Government of India, knowledge partners and think-tanks, build the capacity of Indian institutions, and identify issues for joint modelling activities and future areas of research. The workshop featured eight expert sessions which saw discussions around the various aspects of setting up an India-centric energy modelling platform and was attended by various central government ministries and agencies.

**New hydro policy will help to meet renewables target.**
• The Union Cabinet approval to the new hydroelectricity policy that, among other things, included large hydro projects within the ambit of renewable energy. Prior to the policy, only small hydro projects of a capacity of less than 25 MW were treated as renewable energy. Large hydro projects were treated as a separate source of energy.
• India’s renewable energy sector had an installed capacity of 75,055.92 MW as of February 2019, according to data with the Central Electricity Authority. This made up about 21.4% of the overall energy mix, with the rest coming from thermal, nuclear and large hydro sources. With the inclusion of large hydro in renewable energy, the energy mix changes drastically. Renewable energy capacity would now be 1,20,455.14 MW or 34.4% of the overall energy mix.

**NGT directed 6 states to submit action plans for bringing air quality standards.**
• The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed six States to submit by April 30 action plans for bringing air quality standards within the prescribed norms, failing which they would be liable to pay environment compensation of Rs.1 crore each. A Bench headed by NGT Chairperson Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel ordered the Chief Secretaries of Assam, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Punjab, Uttarakhand and Nagaland governments to submit their plan within the stipulated time.
Second Scorpene submarine Khanderi ready for induction.

- The Navy is set to induct the second Scorpene submarine Khanderi by early May. The remaining submarines in the series are in advanced stages of manufacturing and trials. Khanderi was launched into the water in January 2017 and has since been undergoing a series of trials.
- Also, the fourth submarine Vela is ready to be launched into the water for trials around the same time depending on the ocean tide. Mazagon Dock Limited (MDL), Mumbai, is manufacturing six Scorpene submarines under technology transfer from Naval Group of France under a 2005 contract worth $3.75 bn.
- After a series of delays in the project, the first submarine of the class Kalvari joined service in December 2017. The entire project is expected to be completed by 2020.

India and Maldives agreed to cooperate on defence, development, health.

- India and the Maldives discussed measures to strengthen ties and agreed to collaborate in the fields of defence, development cooperation, capacity building and health as External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj held talks with the country’s top leadership, including her Maldivian counterpart Abdulla Shahid.
- Ms. Swaraj and Maldivian Foreign Minister Shahid reviewed progress on important bilateral issues, including implementation of agreed outcomes of President Solih’s visit to India during 2018. She unveiled a plaque dedicating the renovated IGM Hospital to the people of Maldives in the city of Male. IGMH is the first and largest government health-care facility in the Maldives, built with Indian assistance.

Nara Lokesh, Poonam Mahajan among Indians in Young Global Leaders list.

- Andhra Pradesh IT minister Nara Lokesh, BJP MP Poonam Mahajan and Xiaomi India head Manu Kumar Jain are among the Indians featuring in the list of Young Global Leaders, according to the World Economic Forum (WEF). Telangana government’s Chief Innovation Officer Phanindra Sama, SaveLife Foundation’s Piyush Tewari and Kaleidofin’s co-Founder Sucharita Mukherjee are also in the list. The list has 127 of the world’s “most promising social activists, business leaders, public servants, artists and technologists under the age of 40”.

Climate Vulnerability Index Highest For Assam And Mizoram.

- Indian scientists have developed a common framework for the assessment of climate change vulnerability in all the states in the Himalayan region. The assessment shows that the vulnerability index is the highest for Assam (0.72) and Mizoram (0.71). Sikkim is the least vulnerable state with the index being 0.42. Assam is highly vulnerable to climate change because of factors like low per capita income, deforestation, large number of marginal farmers, least area under irrigation, lack of alternative sources of income and high rates of poverty.
Aviva Life Insurance launches Special Mentorship Programme Wings.
• Aviva Life Insurance announced the launch of ‘Wings’, a specially designed mentorship program to empower the female workforce. Wings program is an initiative of the SHE division of Aviva Life Insurance for mentoring all the women employees in Aviva.

BCCI announced Dream11 as official partner of VIVO IPL.
• The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), announced Dream11, India’s Biggest Sports Game, as the Official Partner for the VIVO Indian Premier League (IPL). This 4-year exclusive partnership will begin with the upcoming IPL 2019 season. Additionally, the ‘Official Fantasy Game’ of IPL will also be powered by Dream11.

NCLT approved ArcelorMittal to buy Essar Steel.
• The National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLT) gave a conditional nod to a Rs.42,000-crore offer by world’s largest steelmaker ArcelorMittal to buy Essar Steel. NCLT said that the acceptance of the resolution plan submitted by ArcelorMittal and partner Nippon Steel & Sumitomo Metal Corp. would be subject to its final order in the appeal filed by the promoters of debt-laden Essar Steel against the move.

Indian Navy stand behind the cyclone hit Mozambique.
• India decides to divert three Indian naval ships to the port city of Beira in Mozambique to provide humanitarian assistance to the people affected by tropical cyclone ‘#IDAI’. The coastal city of Beira on Friday, 15 March.
• The city's power grid has currently crashed, the airport has been shut and most roads are inaccessible. The Indian Navy diverted ships to the African country for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) work. The Navy Spokesperson tweeted about the mission and on being the first-respondents for disaster relief.

Assam gets digital awareness, launches i-help initiative to promote electoral literacy.
• Assam launched an initiative ‘i-help’ to promote digital electoral literacy in the state launched in view of the forthcoming Lok Sabha polls. The ‘i-help’ is a joint initiative of the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) and Common Service Centres (CSC) in Assam.
• The CSCs are internet-enabled access points spread throughout the country delivering various government and non-government digital services to the citizens and is uniquely positioned in rural areas to significantly extend the awareness and outreach activities of CEO, Assam.
• The CSC has a presence in all the 2,528 gram panchayats in the state and there are 4,587 functional centres at present.

Microsoft Launched Project Sangam To Boost Indias Swachh Bharat Mission.
• Microsoft announced that it has partnered with The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) to promote its Project ‘Sangam’ which is developed to accelerate Swachh
Bharat Mission (SBM) in India. It is one of the world’s largest Cleanliness Programme. About Microsoft Industry: Computer software Headquarters: Hyderabad, India Key people: Bhaskar Pramanik (Chairman)

NGT questioned MoEF for not furnishing proper data.
• The National Green Tribunal (NGT) questioned the Union Environment Ministry for not furnishing proper data on monitoring mechanism for compliance of conditions of environment clearance granted by the Ministry. The observations came following submissions by the Ministry that a mechanism existed to periodically monitor the compliance of environmental clearance conditions which was being strengthened.
• The tribunal had in January directed the MoEF to furnish data on the same following which it submitted that a total of 6,779 projects were monitored between 2013-2014 and 2018-19. The Ministry informed the Bench that while in 2013-14, 843 projects were monitored, in 2018-19, it was 1,002. A Bench headed by NGT Chairperson Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel instructed Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) to appear before the tribunal on April 29.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi to address 25 lakh Chowkidars.
• Prime Minister Narendra Modi will address over 25 lakh Chowkidars through audio bridge medium on Wednesday and share the colours of Holi with them. The Party’s media head and Rajya Sabha MP Anil Baluni this is a part of a series of initiatives under the ‘Main Bhi Chowkidaar’ outreach programme.

IIPHG to launch Conquer Exam, Be a Warrior app.
• Indian Institute of Public Health Gandhinagar, Gujarat, (IIPHG) joined hands with National Mental Health Program, Department of Health and Family Welfare, Government of Gujarat for developing a mobile application called as ‘Conquer Exam, Be a Warrior’ to reduce the exam pressure for the student. This application creates awareness as well as help students to analyze their weak point and overcome from the exam pressure by providing assistance.

Uttar Pradesh to take census of Otters for the first time.
• For the first time, Uttar Pradesh is taking a census of Otters in its protected areas. The census has begun in the Pilibhit Tiger Reserve (PTR).
• Otters Otters live on fish and spend much of its time in or close to water bodies. A growing or healthy population of otters means the water bodies are pollution-free. Clean water bodies mean a healthy ecosystem of the forest.
• India is home to 3 of the 13 species of otters found worldwide. These are: 1) Eurasian Otter (Lutra lutra) - IUCN status: Near Threatened 2) Smooth-coated Otter (Lutra perspicillata) - IUCN status: Vulnerable 3) Small-clawed Otter (Aonyx cinereus) - IUCN status: Vulnerable.

ICF Chennai becomes worlds largest rail coach manufacturer.
• Integral Coach Factory (ICF), the rail coach manufacturing factory at Chennai, which became famous for manufacturing Train 18, has become the single largest rail coach manufacturer in the world surpassing top Chinese manufacturers. The manufacturing facility of Indian Railways in Chennai manufactured 2,919 coaches from April 2018 to February 2019 against 2,600 coaches manufactured by top Chinese manufacturers.

• ICF has set a target to manufacture 3,200 coaches in this financial year 2019. The ultra-modern ‘Train 18’ is engine less, with self-propelled coaches like metro was indigenously made at Integral Coach Factory (ICF), Chennai. Integral Coach Factory in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, was established in 1952 and is owned and operated by the Indian Railways.

International Workshop on Disaster Resilient Infrastructure IWDRI 2019 held in New Delhi.

• International Workshop on Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (IWDRI), a two-day workshop organised by National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) in collaboration with United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), and in partnership with the Global Commission on Adaptation, United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank was held at New Delhi.

• The objectives of the workshop were to:
  ❧ Identify good practices of disaster risk management in key infrastructure sectors.
  ❧ Identify specific areas and pathways for collaborative research on DRI (Transport, Energy, Telecom and Water).
  ❧ Discuss and co-create the broad contours of the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) as well as a notional roll-out plan for the next three years.
  ❧ Build a forum for members to work on areas of common interest and make specific commitments. The first IWDRI was held in January 2018 and IWDRI 2019 built upon some of the ideas generated at the IWDRI 2018 as a crucial milestone towards the establishment of the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI).

Social Media platforms to prevent violation of Code of Ethics during polls.

• Social Media platforms and internet mobile Association of India (IAMAI) have adopted a Voluntary Code of Ethics for the forthcoming general elections. According to the code submitted to the election Committee, IAMAI and Social Media platforms, including Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter and Google, will create a high priority dedicated reporting mechanism and appoint dedicated teams during the polls for taking expeditious action on any reported violations

• No political campaign will be allowed to run on major social media platforms in the last 48 hours before polling ends. It has also been agreed to provide a mechanism for political advertisers to submit pre-certified advertisements issued by the Media Certification and Monitoring Committee.
• The code also promises to facilitate transparency in paid political advertisements. The social media companies will take action on content reported by the nodal officer, expeditiously, in accordance with the law. IAMAI will act as the liaison between social media firms and the poll panel. Our correspondent reports that the code, which comes into operation with immediate effect, has been developed to ensure free, fair and ethical use of social media platforms to maintain the integrity of the electoral process.

Shark-faced plane lands at Delhi airport for the first time.
• A shark-themed plane, an Embraer E190-E2 commercial jet, landed at the Delhi’s Indira Gandhi International Airport for the first time. Last year, the shark-themed aircraft landed at Lhasa’s Gonggar Airport (Tibet), one of the world’s highest airports at 11,713 feet. E190-E2 is manufactured by Brazilian aircraft manufacturer Embraer.

IND INDO CORPAT 2019 was inaugurated at Port Blair.
• The 33rd edition of India-Indonesia coordinated patrol (IND-INDO CORPAT) was inaugurated at Port Blair, Andaman & Nicobar Islands. The IND-INDO CORPAT 2019 is held from 19 Mar to 04 Apr 2019. Navies of both countries have been carrying out coordinated patrolling twice a year since 2002 in an effort to keep the Indian Ocean region (IOR) safe and secure for commercial shipping and international trade. It also enhances mutual understanding and interoperability between the two navies.

SpiceJet becomes first Indian low-cost airline to join IATA as a member.
• Budget carrier SpiceJet has joined global airlines’ grouping International Air Transport Association (IATA), becoming the first Indian low-cost carrier to get the membership. The membership would help SpiceJet, which has ambitious expansion plans, to have codeshares and agreements with other carriers. IATA has over 290 airlines as members. Other Indian members of the IATA include Air India, Jet Airways and Vistara.

Indian-Omani group signs USD 3.8 billion deal to build Sri Lanka refinery.
• India’s Accord Group and Oman’s oil ministry have signed a $3.85 billion deal to build an oil refinery in Sri Lanka. This is the biggest single pledge of FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) ever made in the country. The project will be located near the southern Sri Lankan port of Hambantota, which was handed over on a 99-year lease to a state-owned
Chinese company. Privately-owned Accord Group will control 70 per cent of the joint venture and the Sultanate of Oman’s Ministry of Oil and Gas the rest. The refinery is expected to produce 9 million metric tonnes of refined products a year for export from the Hambantota port, which serves the busiest East-West shipping route.

India ranked 140th in the happiest country in the world 2019 list.

- Finland has been ranked as the happiest country in the world 2019 for the second year in succession. The report was released by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network for the United Nations on March 20. India secured 140th place, seven spots down from last year, on UN World Happiness Report- 2019. Indians are not as happy in 2019 as they were in 2018 and the country figures at 140th place, seven spots down from last year, on UN World Happiness Report- 2019
- The UN’s seventh annual World Happiness Report, which ranks the world’s 156 countries on “how happy their citizens perceive themselves to be”, also noted that there has been an increase in negative emotions, including worry, sadness, and anger. Pakistan is ranked 67th, Bangladesh 125th and China is placed at 93rd position, according to the report. People in war-torn South Sudan are the most unhappy, ranked 156th, with their lives.

Mumbai social worker Gauri Sawant designated as first transgender election ambassador

- A 38-year-old transgender activist Shree Gauri Sawant from Mumbai appointed as first transgender election ambassador by The Election Commission of India. There was no separate classification of transgenders as voters till 2014 but after that transgenders were first enrolled as voters along with males and females. Automotive Tyre Manufacturers’ Association (ATMA) appointed as Mr. K M Mammen as Chairman. Automotive Tyre Manufacturers Association (ATMA) appointed as Chairman & Managing Director of MRF Ltd Mr. K M Mammen as their chairman.

Lok Sabha passed the Indian Forest Amendment Bill, 2017.

- The Lok Sabha passed the Indian Forest (Amendment) Bill, 2017. The bill replaces Indian Forest (Amendment) Ordinance, 2017 promulgated by President Ram Nath Kovind in November 2017 and amends Indian Forest Act, 1927.
- Though bamboo was taxonomically a grass, it was earlier defined as a tree under the Indian Forest Act, 1927 and its felling and transit required permission. It was a major impediment for bamboo cultivation by farmers on non-forest land.
- The bill omits bamboo grown in non-forest areas from the definition of trees. The omission thereby exempts it from requiring permits for felling or transportation of bamboo grown in non-forest areas. With this, bamboo grown in non-forest areas ceases to be a tree.
- It will encourage bamboo plantation by farmers, which will contribute to doubling farmers income by 2022. The Indian Forest Act, 1927 consolidates laws relating to forests,
the transit of forest-produce and duty to be levied on them. Under it, the definition of the tree includes palms, stumps, bamboos, brush-wood, and canes.

**Indias to fight hypothermia, Bracelets from Bengaluru saving babies in Papua New Guinea**
- Bempu is made in India Hypothermia alert device and the Bempu was invented in 2016 by Bengaluru-based Ratul Narain, who is an alumnus of Stanford University. Currently, the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) is using the device extensively in PNG, in southwestern Pacific to save newborns from extreme cold and sudden drop in temperature.
- The facility has so far been used largely in Henganofi district, Eastern Highlands province of the country. It was used for children with less than 2.5kg birth weight. Eastern Highlands province was chosen for the pilot as it’s one of the coldest terrains in PNG.

**CBSE launches app Shiksha Vani.**
- Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) launched its podcast app, ‘Shiksha Vani’. It will be used to send out major announcements made by the board and is expected to be the quickest way to information. The first official circular on the app confirmed the beginning of the evaluation process of the 2019 Board Examinations.

**ADB to invest USD 50 million in Avaada Energy for expansion of solar projects in India.**
- The Asian Development Bank (ADB) will invest $50 million in Indian renewable energy independent power producer Avaada Energy Private Limited, to expand its solar energy generation capacity in India. Avaada is a developer of utility-scale, rooftop, and off-grid solar projects. According to the ADB, this investment will contribute to the Indian government’s goal to increase the share of renewable energy generation capacity from about 20% in 2018 to 40% by 2030. It will also help to reduce India’s emission intensity of its gross domestic product by 33-35 per cent by 2030. The company has secured power purchase agreements of about 1,700 megawatts.

**India’s deepest shaft cave discovered in Meghalaya.**
- India's deepest shaft cave Krem Um Ladaw has been discovered in Meghalaya’s East Khasi Hills district during the annual ‘Caving in the Abode of the Clouds Expedition’. The cave has a 105 m deep shaft entrance passage.
- This comes a year after the world's longest sandstone cave Krem Puri was discovered in Meghalaya. With all these discoveries, Meghalaya has become on of the top caving regions of the world. Meghalaya has 1,700 caves and cave locations of which over 1000 have been explored or partially explored.

**Uttarakhand plans to introduce caravans in major spots to boost tourism.**
- The government of Uttarakhand in a bid to promote tourism will be introducing mobile caravans or motor homes equipped with every facility you can expect to find in a regular house.
The portable homes will enable you to access remote locations. The plan also includes the development of parks for the caravans to be stationed.
• These complexes will provide water, electricity and waste disposal facilities. This way, coupled with the government’s endeavour to build homestays in and around popular tourist spots, soon most Himalaya vistas will be enjoyable from your windowsill. We are working on a plan to introduce fleets of mobile caravans equipped with all facilities available in homes, which will be introduced soon.

**Corporate Affairs Ministry releases national guidelines on responsible business conduct**
• Union Ministry of Corporate Affairs released the National Guidelines on responsible business conduct and revised the National Voluntary Guidelines on social, environmental and economic responsibilities of business, 2011.
• These guidelines on responsible business conduct aim to urge businesses to actualise the following principles in letter and spirit:
  • Businesses should conduct and govern themselves with integrity in a manner that is ethical, transparent and accountable.
  • Businesses should provide goods and services in a manner that is sustainable and safe.
  • Businesses should respect and promote the well-being of all employees, including those in their value chains.
  • Businesses should respect the interests of and be responsive to all their stakeholders.
  • Businesses should respect and promote human rights.
  • Businesses should respect and make efforts to protect and restore the environment.

**CSK to donate IPL opener proceeds to families of Pulwama attack.**
• The cricket extravaganza Indian Premier League begins on Saturday with its 12th edition. Defending champions Chennai Super Kings will take on Royal Challengers, Bangalore at Chennai in the opening game. According to the CSK director, the entire ticket proceeds of this match will be given to the families of CRPF personnel killed in the February 14 terror attack in Pulwama. Another IPL team, Kings XI Punjab, recently donated five lakh rupees each to families of five CRPF soldiers killed in the Pulwama attack.

**India Post released stamp cover on Ice Stupa in Leh.**
• India Post released a special stamp cover on Ice Stupa in Leh at an event in the presence of Himalayan Institute of Alternatives Ladakh founder Sonam Wangchuk who spearheaded the Ice Stupa initiative. Ice Stupas refer to artificial glaciers. The water from these artificial glaciers melt in the springtime, just when the fields need Leh lies in the cold desert region and most villages in the region face acute water shortage in the streams whereas in June there is an excess of water and even flash flooding due to the fast melting of the snow and glaciers in the mountains. By September all farming activities end and yet a smaller stream flow throughout the winter steadily but
wastefully going into the Indus river without being of use to anybody.

- Ice Stupas are aimed at reducing water crisis in the region and also to convey a message to the world that how the Mountain people are forced to do such innovative ideas to solve the water crises, Ice Stupas also sends a message to all the people who live in big cities to not use resources in such a way that it creates problem for mountain people.

**Delhi police get hi-tech bus worth Rs 3.7 crore for emergency situations.**
- In a first-of-its-kind bus, the Delhi police inducted a Mobile Command and Control Vehicles (MCCV) with all modern equipment into service. The bus, built by Bengaluru-based firm Mistral at the cost of ₹3.7 crore, is fitted with latest equipment including Integrated Communication System (ICS), voice logger and CCTV surveillance among others.

**EV charging stations to be established in Bengaluru.**
- In order to reduce the burden for the electric vehicle users who hunt for charging stations in the city Electric Vehicles charging Stations has been planned to be established in Bengaluru, Andhra Pradesh. The 112 EV charging stations that have been proposed to provide the infrastructure needed to encourage the use of EVs will be readied by August-end.

**Daiki Aluminium Industry to set up plant in Sri City Andhra Pradesh.**
- Japan-based Daiki Aluminium Industry Co. Ltd., through its Indian subsidiary, is to set up an aluminium alloy plant at Sri City in Andhra Pradesh. Daiki Aluminium Industry India Pvt. Ltd. would make an initial investment of Rs.250 crore.
- To be built on a 20-acre plot in the domestic tariff zone, the plant is expected to go on stream by February 2020.
- The plant will produce aluminium alloy ingots. It will have an annual capacity of 84,000 tonnes. The products will be exported to automobile companies in ASEAN and Japan.
- The plant is expected to generate direct employment for about 600 people with 80% of them being women. Daiki plans to capture the demand requirements of aluminium alloy in the country and expand the market in stages.

**CBSE plan to add AI and yoga as new subjects.**
- The CBSE will introduce artificial intelligence (AI), early childhood care education and yoga as new subjects in school curriculums from the upcoming academic session. The CBSE is to introduce AI and yoga as an optional 6th subject at Class IX from the session 2019-2020 onwards. This move aims to enhance the multidisciplinary approach in teaching learning and also to sensitise the new generation, it was decided that schools may start AI “inspire module” of 12 hours in Class VIII itself.

**AIIMS launched mobile methadone vans to provide treatment to opioid addicts.**
- In a first-of-its-kind initiative, the All India Institutes of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) launched mobile methadone vans to provide treatment to opioid addicts.
vans to provide treatment to opioid addicts in inner-city neighbourhoods in New Delhi. As a pilot project, the National Drug Dependence Treatment Centre (NDTTC) of AIIMS has initiated the new service of delivering methadone through a mobile van in East Delhi.

• Opioid addiction: Opioid addiction is a long-lasting (chronic) disease that can cause major health, social, and economic problems. Opioids are a class of drugs that act in the nervous system to produce feelings of pleasure and pain relief. Some opioids are legally prescribed by healthcare providers to manage severe and chronic pain. Some other opioids, such as heroin, are illegal drugs of abuse. Opioid addiction is characterized by a powerful, compulsive urge to use opioid drugs, even when they are no longer required medically.

Goldman Sachs report says that in FY20 food inflation likely to go up to 2 percent.

• Goldman Sachs report said that food inflation in the country is likely to go up to 2% in the fiscal year 2019-20 from the 0.7% estimated for FY19.

• It can be noted that low food prices had been one of the prime factors which had aided the RBI to be more accommodative in its rate-setting recently. It also attributed that the low food prices in the last few months to the prices of cereals and vegetables which had remained low for some time. Deregulation of markets, which saw delisting of vegetables from the Agriculture Produce and Marketing Committee Act in 14 States, had helped keep vegetable prices low.

Delhi Development Authority launched the housing scheme.

• The Delhi Development Authority (DDA) launched the housing scheme for 2019, under which it will offer 18,000 flats spread across Narela and Vasant Kunj. With the online portal now open, interested buyers can get registered, following which a draw will be conducted to allot flats. The portal for online registration will be available until May 10.

• All the flats on offer under this scheme are newly constructed. Approximately 450 HIG [high-income group] flats and 1,550 MIG [middle-income group] are being offered. Additionally, 8,300 LIG [low-income group] and 7,700 EWS [economically weaker section] flats are being offered under the scheme. Those registering for the housing scheme will have to deposit an application fee ranging from Rs. 25,000 for EWS category to Rs. 2 lakh for three bedroom flats.

Chandrayaan 2 to carry NASAs laser retro reflector arrays.

• India’s lunar mission Chandrayaan 2 will carry NASA’s laser instruments. The U.S. space agency said that the laser instrument will help scientists to make precise measurements of the distance to the Moon. Chandrayaan 2 is scheduled to be launched in the month of April. NASA has confirmed that Chandrayaan 2 and Israeli lander Beresheet, due to touch down on April 11, will each carry NASA-owned laser retroreflector arrays.

HAL rolled out 16th Tejas fighter for IAF fleet.

• The Indian Air Force (IAF) ordered 40 Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas
The State-run Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL) has rolled out its 16th Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas fighter in the initial operational clearance (IOC) configuration to be inducted into the fleet of the Indian Air Force (IAF).

India extends Rs. 35.5 million financial grant to Nepal.
- India has extended a financial grant of 35.5 million Nepalese rupees for the construction of an educational campus in Nepal under the Development Partnership Programme. The building was constructed at Siddheshwar Education Public Campus in Ramechhap district. It consists of 12 class rooms, meeting hall, laboratory room and a library.
- It will enhance the poor, needy and the marginalized students’ access to education in the district and the nearby areas. Development Partnership Programme is administered by the Development Administration Partnership division of the Ministry of External Affairs.

CARE Hospitals has launched Ummeed, a Cancer screening programme.
- CARE Hospitals in association with Piramal Swasthya has launched a cancer screening programme called ‘Ummeed’ in Hyderabad, Telangana. The initiative that will help in early detection of oral, breast and cervical cancer, will be introduced in Rangareddy in the next 45 days, where in screening will be conducted free of cost.
- A fully-equipped van will be used to screen people and an all-woman team will educate the rural population about the importance of early detection of cancer.

IIT Delhi researchers developed AI based disease detector.
- Researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Delhi have created a low-power electronic hardware system, based on artificial intelligence (AI), which is capable of detecting malaria, tuberculosis, intestinal parasite and cervical cancer within a few milliseconds.
- The researchers aim to build a neuromorphic system exclusively for the healthcare sector, in places where there are limited resources and paucity of specialists. AI-based software do exist for apps used for diagnosis.
- However, this is the first time that a portable, low-power and cost-effective hardware has been developed to make AI-based systems available in areas with resource constraints.

AUSINDEX to be held off the coast of Vishakhapatnam from April 2 to 16th.
- Third Installment of the Joint Naval Exercise of India and Australia AUSINDEX is to be held off the coast of Vishakhapatnam from April 2 to 16.
- The joint exercise will focus on anti-submarine warfare, as part of efforts to ramp up bilateral naval cooperation in the strategic Indian Ocean region.
- AUSINDEX 2019 From the Australian side, HMAS Canberra (landing helicopter dock), Auxiliary Oiler Replenishment vessel, two frigates, HMAS Newcastle and HMAS Parramatta and P81 and P8 maritime patrol aircraft, will be involved in the exercise.
• A Kilo-class submarine, land-based Hawk aircraft that will provide the air attack element for the exercise, a Kamorta class anti-submarine vessel, besides a stealth destroyer will lead the Indian deployment for the exercise.
• The exercise will feature the deployment of Australian personnel on Indian ships and vice versa. The area of the exercise will be within 200 miles of Vishakapatnam. Over 1000 Australian defence personnel will take part. Australia has also proposed logistics sharing pact with India.

ISRO to launch 29 satellites including EMISAT on April 1, 2019.
• India on April 1 will launch an electronic intelligence satellite ‘Emisat’ for the Defence Research Development Organisation (DRDO) along with 28 third party satellites. ISRO, for the first time, will also demonstrate its new technologies like three different orbits with a new variant of the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) rocket.
• PSLV-C45 will take off from Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota tentatively at 9:30 AM carrying the satellites onboard.
• EMISAT, weighing 436 kg, is intended for electromagnetic spectrum measurement. The 28 international customer satellites are from four countries, viz. Lithuania, Spain, Switzerland and USA. All these satellites are being launched under commercial arrangements.

Assam launched initiatives to educate voter.
• Assam State government has launched initiatives to educate voters. Folk song competitions, quiz programmes and appeals by celebrities are some of the initiatives being undertaken by the election office in Assam for attracting women, first-time voters, people with physical disabilities and senior citizens to cast their votes.
• Sprinter Hima Das, Whitley Awardee and environmentalist Purnima Devi Barman, singer Tarali Sarma, body builder Golap Rabha and actor Kopil Bora have been roped in as State icons to create awareness about the election process.
• District election officers have been directed to reach out to the maximum number of voters in the constituencies under their jurisdiction. Polling stations with low female voter turn-out have been identified and ‘mahila voter rallies’ are being held.

Cabinet approved additional posts for NCLAT.
• Cabinet approved a proposal of six additional posts of judicial and technical members in the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT). The tribunal hears appeals against rulings of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT). The Cabinet cleared a proposal for the creation of three additional posts each for judicial members and technical members in the NCLAT. The new posts would ensure meeting the mandate provided to NCLAT by the Finance Act, 2017, the Companies Act, the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 and the time frame provided for disposal of cases.

Gujarat ATS and Indian Coast Guard capture 9 international
smugglers with heroin worth Rs 500 crore
- The Gujarat Anti-Terrorist Squad and the Indian Coast Guard captured nine international drug smugglers. The smugglers were reportedly carrying 100 kgs of contraband worth Rs 500 crore in the boat, which they had destroyed after they were trapped by the agencies. As per the press statement, the Gujarat ATS had received a tip-off that an illegal consignment of narcotic drugs, Heroin, is going to be smuggled in Gujarat through Coast.

Delhi International Airport is to be transformed with world-class amenities.
- Delhi world’s 12th busiest hub, the Indira Gandhi International Airport, transiting between the various terminals of IGI Airport, will become a breeze in a few years’ time, with the airport operator finalizing the route of an “air train” connecting the terminals as well as Aerocity, the hotel center.
- It connects the Aerocity’s Airport Metro Express station to all the major Hotels and Offices with Aerocity’s Hospitality District through an experiential walkway. It not only connects all the buildings but also provides a well-designed public space for everyone to enjoy. It promotes an active lifestyle and enables access to open spaces, shaded areas for casual breakouts and many other amenities.

MPI 2018 report says Indias poverty rate has reduced drastically.
- According to the Multi-dimensional Poverty Index 2018 report, the four poorest states namely Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh were still home to 196 million MPI poor people, which was over half of all the MPI poor people in India.
- The Multi-dimensional Poverty Index 2018 report prepared by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative makes the following observations about India:
  - India has reduced its poverty rate drastically from 55% to 28% in 10 years, with 271 million people moving out of poverty between 2005-06 and 2015-16. Jharkhand had shown the greatest improvement, followed by Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, and Nagaland. Kerala, one of the least poor regions in 2006, reduced its MPI by around 92%.

At 15,256ft, Himachal’s Tashigang is world’s highest polling station.
- The Tashigang polling station in Himachal Pradesh falls in Buddhist-dominated Lahaul-Spiti, one of the 17 assembly segments that form the Mandi Lok Sabha seat, the second largest constituency in India.
- Situated at about 29 km from the India-China border, the polling station covers two villages—Tashigang and Gete.
- As per the revised electoral rolls, the two villages have 48 voters, of which 30 are men and 18 women. Earlier the tiny settlement of Hikkim in the same district located at an altitude of about 14,400 feet was the highest polling station in the country.

Vedanta Limited has discovered oil in the Krishna Godavari basin.
- Anil Agarwal-led Vedanta Limited has discovered oil in the Krishna Godavari
basin on India’s east coast. The company has notified the management committee, Directorate General of Hydrocarbons and Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas of an oil discovery in the second exploratory well H2, located in block KG-OSN-2009/3, Krishna-Godavari Basin, east coast of India.
• Vedanta Limited holds 100% participating interest in the block. The first exploration well, A3-2, drilled in the block was a gas discovery

Adani becomes first Indian port operator to record 200 million tonnes cargo movement in 2018-19
• Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone (APSEZ) has claimed that its portfolio of nine ports and terminals handled 200 million metric tonnes (MMT) of cargo in 2018-19, becoming the first Indian port operator to achieve the milestone. The Gautam Adani-led company doubled its cargo handling from 100 MMT reached in 2013-14

India becomes the 4th country to test Anti-satellite missile system, codenamed Mission Shakti successfully.
• India successfully completed 'Mission Shakti' operation where it destroyed a live satellite on a low earth orbit (LEO) using an Anti-Satellite (ASAT) missile in three minutes. India has become the 4th country after the US, Russia and China in the world to achieve this historic feat.
• Anti Satellite weapons also called the ASAT are developed to destroy satellites. Mission Shakti is a joint programme of DRDO and the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO). Mission Shakti will help the country in standing strong and secure. It will further protect the nation from disharmony and bring peace.

Vijayawada Railway Station awarded the Gold Rating for being Clean & Eco-Friendly.
• Vijayawada railway station, one of the busiest railway junctions in India, has received Gold Rating by the Indian Green Building Council (IGBC) for Green Measures. The IGBC-CII, with the support of the Environment Directorate of Indian Railways, developed the Green Railway Stations Rating System to facilitate adoption of green concepts, thereby reduce the adverse environmental impact due to station operation and maintenance and also enhance the overall commuter experience.
• The Vijayawada station has installed 100 per cent LED lighting, the fans are five-star rated, and solar power is already being used for water heating systems.

Kolkata Dhaka ship to set sail for the first time ever.
• A regular river cruise will start between Kolkata, India and Dhaka, Bangladesh for the first time in the history of the two countries.
• The Indian ship, R V Bengal Ganga, will start its journey from a west Kolkata jetty. About 60 persons will be travelling
• The return journey will take nearly two weeks from Kolkata and the ship will pass through Sunderbans on both sides of the marine border. Another ship will simultaneously start from Bangladesh, traverse the same route and reach Kolkata, taking approximately the same time. The
border formalities will be completed at Sunderbans on the Indian side.

Adani Becomes 1st Indian Port Operator To Record 200 MMT Cargo Movement:
• Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone (APSEZ) that it has recorded cargo movement of more than 200 million metric tonnes (MMT) at nine ports along the east and west coasts, becoming the first Indian port operator to achieve the milestone. “Our projections were to reach this milestone by 2020 but we could achieve it ahead of schedule, courtesy the tech-driven operational efficiency and enhanced asset utilisation.

IIT Kharagpur, Wipro Partner For Research In 5G and AI.
• Wipro Limited (Bengaluru Based), a leading global information technology, consulting and business process services company and Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur (IIT Kharagpur), signed an MoU to collaborate on high-impact, industry-focused applied research in the areas of 5G and AI. Research outcomes from this partnership will be leveraged by Wipro to develop solutions for its customers, across industry verticals.

ECI appoints Special Central Police Observer for Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.
• Election Commission of India has appointed Shree K K Sharma (IPS 1982 Retd DG Border Security Force) as the Central Police Observer for the States of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

Chief Electoral Officer of Assam Mukesh Sahu launched a new initiative called the Enajori in Guwahati
• Chief Electoral Officer of Assam Mukesh Sahu launched a new initiative called ‘the Enajori’ at Janata Bhawan, Dispur in Guwahati for persons with disabilities with an aim that ‘No Voter to be Left behind’. The initiative to make Lok Sabha Elections accessible to Persons with Disability (PwD) voters is a joint initiative of Assam CEO and Social Welfare Department.

Hyper local connectivity app Bhonga initiated in Mumbai.
• A hyper-local connectivity app called “Bhonga” developed by Mumbai-based Company Linkus Infratech, to connect users to their neighborhood people in the city even without an Internet connection. “Bhonga” is a Marathi word which means megaphone or loudspeaker.
• This app automatically provides the lists the user living within the radius of one kilometre. The app supports voice notes as well as photos. Anyone can open their phone and send a message that is delivered to other users in the neighborhood, wherever they are.

PFC has been named as the Indias second largest Govt-owned Financial Firm after SBI
• After acquiring a majority stake in REC Ltd (formerly Rural Electrification Corporation Limited), center backed Power Finance Corporation (PFC) become India’s second largest Govt-owned Financial Firm after State Bank of India (SBI), based on market capitalization. PFC has bought the
52.63% controlling stake in REC through Rs 14,500 crore deal with Union government.
• The REC’ shares were acquired at Rs139.50 per equity share price. 70% of the deal was financed through cash inflows and the balance through debt.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS
India and Sweden intend to increase cooperation on AMR
• Swedish Minister for Health and Social Affairs, Lena Hallengren, who was on a visit to India from 22nd to 25th February 2019, met with Union Health Minister J P Nadda and discussed about Anti-microbial resistance (AMR) which poses a dangerous challenge globally.
• Anti-microbial drugs, when overused, AMR develops as microorganisms such as bacteria, virus and fungi that become resistant to drugs.
• India and Sweden signed a Memorandum of Understanding to cooperate in the field of various issues, including AMR, communicable diseases and public health, in February 2009.

NITI Aayog partnered with Adobe to enhance digital literacy
• NITI Aayog's Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) and software major Adobe has signed a Statement of Intent to collaboration enhancing digital literacy and creativity skills.
• Under the agreement, Adobe would implement the Adobe Digital Disha Programme across 100 schools under Atal Tinkering Labs (ATL) initiative. Teachers and Children across these 100 schools would benefit from the creative learning resources via free access to Adobe Spark premium.

Tamil Nadu is the first State in the country to introduce TAVI
• Tamil Nadu is the first State in the country to introduce Tran’s catheter Aortic Valve Implantation (TAVI) in the government sector. The TAVI was launched at the Tamil Nadu Government Multi Super Specialty Hospital (TNGMSSH), Omandurar Estate, in November 2018.
• Tamil Nadu State government entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with Heart Team India to perform the procedure for patients at the TNGMSSH. The procedure costs Rs.20 lakh to Rs.25 lakh in the private sector, while it is done free in the government sector.
• Conventionally, open heart surgery is performed for replacing the aortic valve for treating aortic stenosis. But not all patients such as the elderly are fit to undergo open heart surgery. This is where TAVI helps as in this procedure the valve is replaced through a keyhole procedure from the groin.

Government may offer up to Rs 2.5 lakh subsidy for 60,000 e-cars
• To promote green fuel in India via a Rs 10,000-crore package, government has reportedly proposed a subsidy of up to 2.5 lakh on around 60,000 electric cars in India, whereas hybrid cars may get 20,000 over the next three years.
• For electric buses, the subsidy would be up to Rs 60 lakh.
• This subsidy will come into effect in April.
Punjab Govt seeks Rs 412 crore for dam to stop water to Pakistan

- Punjab government has urged the central government to release Rs 412 crore for the construction of a dam at Makora Pattan on the confluence of Ravi and Ujh rivers in Gurdarpur district by considering it as a national project for stopping India’s river water flow into Pakistan.
- The construction of the dam at Makora Pattan would stop about 600 cusecs of river water flowing into Pakistan and Punjab could use this water for irrigation purposes.
- With this project, Punjab government would also be able to provide clean drinking water to 100 villages and six townships.

New railway zone, named Southern Coast Railway to be headquartered in Visakhapatnam

- Railway Minister Piyush Goyal announced a new railway zone for Andhra Pradesh.
- Railway, which will be headquartered in Visakhapatnam, will be the 18th zone in the country.
- The new zone will comprise the existing Guntakal, Guntur and Vijayawada divisions that currently fall under the South Central Railway.

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International Digital Health Symposium inaugurated by Anupriya Patel in New Delhi

- Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare, Smt. Anupriya Patel inaugurated the International Digital Health Symposium and an exhibition on Digital Health as a part of the Symposium at New Delhi.

Russia, China blocked a US resolution on Venezuela in the UN

- Russia and China vetoed a US resolution at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) on addressing the crisis in Venezuela.
- Russia's draft resolution -- which urged a settlement "through peaceful means" and insisted that all humanitarian aid be agreed by Maduro's government -- won only four votes: Russia, China, South Africa and Equatorial Guinea.
- Seven countries including the United States, European countries and Peru opposed the Russian measure and there were four abstentions.

South Korea to help U.S. and North Korea reach a deal

- South Korea’s President Moon Jae-in announced that South Korea will work with the U.S. and North Korea to ensure they reach agreement on
denuclearisation, a day after talks between the U.S. and North Korean leaders collapsed over sanctions.

• A second summit between U.S. President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, in Vietnam, was cut short after they failed to reach a deal on the extent of sanctions relief North Korea would get in exchange for steps to give up its nuclear programme.

• South Korea’s President Moon Jae-in has been an active supporter of efforts to end confrontation on the Korean peninsula, meeting Mr. Kim three times last year and trying to facilitate his nuclear negotiations with the U.S.

**NASA created a deep ocean conditions in lab to study origins of life.**

• Scientists from NASA, the U.S. space agency, have reproduced deep ocean conditions in the lab to re-create a life that could have formed on the sea floor four billion years ago.

• The study focuses on how the building blocks of life form in hydrothermal vents on the ocean floor. It could offer clues to how life started on Earth. Hydrothermal vents are places on the seafloor where warm water from under the Earth’s crust mixes with near-freezing seawater. These vents form natural chimneys, which play host to all kinds of ocean life.

• The team at NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) in California made their own miniature sea floors by filling beakers with mixtures that mimic Earth’s primordial ocean.

**Sampriti 2019, joint military exercise between India and Bangladesh, began on 3rd March**

• Sampriti 2019, the eight edition of India Bangladesh joint military exercise began on 3rd March 2019. The joint exercise is aimed to increase mutual cooperation between the armies of India and Bangladesh.

**Indian Railways celebrate Golden Jubilee of first Rajdhani Express**

• The first Rajdhani Express of the Indian Railways network has completed 50 years on March 3, 2019.

• Kolkata’s Howrah Rajdhani Express was the first Rajdhani Express train and the very first fully air-conditioned train introduced by the Indian Railways.

• The Kolkata-New Delhi Rajdhani Express embarked on its maiden journey on March 3, 1969 from Howrah, making it the country’s first fully-air-conditioned, high-speed train that covered the 1,450 km stretch in 17 hours and 20 minutes.

**PM launched ’One Nation One Card’ for all modes of travel**

• PM Narendra Modi launched the indigenously-developed National Common Mobility Card (NCMC) while inaugurating the first phase of the Ahmedabad metro train service in Ahmedabad.

• Dubbed as ‘One Nation One Card’ can be used to pay for travelling on any mode of transportation and can also be used to withdraw money and to shop across the country.

**Home Minister Rajnath Singh inaugurates BOLD-QIT project in Assam**
Home Minister Rajnath Singh inaugurated the project BOLD-QIT (Border Electronically Dominated QRT Interception Technique) on India-Bangladesh border in Dhubri District of Assam.

Border Security Force, BSF is responsible for the safeguarding of over four thousand kilometres long International Border with Bangladesh.

At various places, it is not possible to erect Border Fence due to the geographical barriers.

The 61 kilometres of the Border area in Dhubri District, where River Brahmaputra enters into Bangladesh is consisting of vast char lands and innumerable river channels thus making border guarding in this area, a daunting task especially during rainy season.

To overcome this problem, in the year 2017, the Ministry of Home Affairs decided to go for a technological solution besides the physical presence of manpower of BSF.

Sanjeev Ranjan to be designated as Secretary at MoRTH

As a part of a top-level bureaucratic reshuffle affected by the central government according to a Personnel Ministry order, Senior IAS officer Sanjeev Ranjan has been designated as secretary of Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH).

Nagendra Nath Sinha, who is a managing director in National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation will replace Sanjeev Ranjan as the new NHAI chief.

Global Consumer Confidence Survey topped by India

India ranked first in the Confidence Board Global Consumer Confidence Survey which was conducted in collaboration with a global performance management company Nielsen Holdings.

India maintained its 1st position from 3rd quarter and in the 4th quarter of 2018 India’s Consumer Confidence Index (CCI) score is 133.

South Korea has the most pessimistic consumer who are worried about rising inflation, lower wage growth, unemployment, a weak stock market and global trade uncertainties in the world.

CCI Confidence Board measured optimism towards job prospects, the health of personal finances and spending intentions in the next 12 months for the survey.

President gave assent to Ordinance for voluntary use of Aadhaar as ID proof for bank account and SIM

President Ram Nath Kovind has given his approval for an Ordinance which allows voluntary use of Aadhaar as ID proof for opening bank accounts and obtaining mobile SIM.

Rajya Sabha could not approve the Bill even though Lok Sabha has given its assent. In such a situation an ordinance is necessary as per the law.

The cabinet has approved it with effect to an Ordinance to give changes proposed in Aadhaar and two other legislation.

The amendment includes stiff penalties for violation of norms which are set for the use of Aadhaar and violation of privacy.
• The amendment also stated that anyone not offering Aadhaar cannot be denied any service.

**Abhinandan Varthaman is to be awarded the first Bhagwan Mahavir Ahimsa Puraskar**

• Indian Air Force Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman has been chosen for the first Bhagwan Mahavir Ahimsa Puraskar constituted by the Akhil Bharatiya Digambar Jain Mahasamiti. The award carries a cash prize of Rs.2.51 lakh, a memento, and a citation.
• It will be presented to Abhinandan Varthaman on April 17 the Mahavir Jayanti.
• Abhinandan Varthaman, a wing-commander in the Indian Air Force shot into limelight in the ongoing bilateral tensions between Indian and Pakistan aftermath of the Pulwama terror attack. In the dogfight that followed, he crossed into Pakistan territory wherein he was struck by missiles. He was captured by the Pakistan Military and was later handed over to India as a peace gesture.'

**Prayagraj Kumbh Mela 2019 has made into Guinness World Records**

• The Prayagraj Kumbh Mela 2019 has made into Guinness World Records in the following three sectors:
  (i) Largest traffic and crowd management plan
  (ii) Biggest painting exercise of public sites under paint my city scheme
  (iii) Biggest sanitation and waste disposal mechanism

**ISRO launches ‘Yuva Vigyani Karyakram’ for school children.**

• Indian Space Research Organisation launched “Yuva Vigyani Karyakram”, a “Young Scientist Programme” for the School Children to be studying in the ninth standard.
• ISRO Scientists will impart basic knowledge on Space Technology, Space Science and Space Applications to the young ones with the intent of arousing their interest in the emerging areas of Space activities.
• “Catch them young” residential training programme will be of around two weeks duration during summer holidays with a proposal to select 3 students from each State and Union Territory, covering CBSE, ICSE and State syllabus.
• Government asked scientific institutions in the country to mentor young minds in the area of basic science.
• It has launched the YUVA programme.

**Centre banned Jamaat e Islami of Jammu and Kashmir for 5 years**

• The Ministry of Home Affairs has banned the Jamaat-e-Islami of Jammu and Kashmir for a period of 5 years under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. The Organisation has been indulging in activities, which are prejudicial to internal security and public order and have the potential of disrupting the unity and integrity of the Country. The decision of banning the outfit was taken to avoid escalation of the secessionist movement in J&K.

**India to collaborate with 4 countries to increase 3 species of Asian rhinos**

• India is to collaborate with Bhutan, Nepal, Indonesia, and Malaysia to
increase the population of three species of Asian rhinos, including the Greater one-horned rhinoceros found in the Indian sub-continent. The five rhino range nations signed a declaration ‘The New Delhi Declaration on Asian Rhinos 2019’ for the conservation and protection of the species at the recently held Second Asian Rhino Range Countries meeting in New Delhi, India.
• The declaration was signed to conserve and review the population of the Greater one-horned, Javan and Sumatran rhinos every four years to reassess the need for joint actions to secure their future.

ISRO, French space agency CNES sign agreement on maritime security
• National space agency ISRO and its French counterpart CNES signed an agreement to set up a joint maritime surveillance system in the country.
• The two nations will explore putting up a constellation of low-Earth orbiting satellites that will identify and track movement of ships globally and in the Indian Ocean region where France has its Reunion Islands.
• They will initially share data from their present space systems and develop new algorithms to analyse them.
• The agreement comes a year after the two governments initiated broad collaboration plan during French President Emmanuel Macron’s visit in March 2018.
• The two agencies have put up two climate and ocean weather monitoring satellites Megha-Tropiques (of 2011) and SARAL-AltiKa (2013) that are considered as models.

Malaysia joins the International Criminal Court
• Malaysia ratified the Rome Statute making it the 124th State party to join the International Criminal Court (ICC).
• Even though Malaysia had helped to negotiate the Rome Statute, it has been long been reluctant to ratify it.
• The downing of flight MH17 and the Rohingya crisis have focused Malaysia’s attention on the ICC.
• After the election of Mahathir Mohamad as Prime Minister in May 2018, there has been a significant shift in the relationship between the Malaysian government and monarchy.
• The ratification has also stemmed from ambition to see Malaysia playing a more active role in ASEAN and the United Nations.

Singapore government to invest Rs 5,000 crore in Bharti Airtel
• Singapore’s government’s investment arm GIC Pvt Ltd will subscribe to shares worth Rs.5,000 crore as part of Airtel’s plans to raise Rs.25,000 crore through rights issue.
• Singapore’s Singtel also committed to buying Rs.3,750 crore worth Airtel stock.

Kaja Kallas elected as the first female Prime Minister of Estonia
• Kaja Kallas is the leader of country’s Reform Party.
• The Reform party beat the current Prime Minister Jüri Ratas’ lead Centre party, gaining 4 new seats in the parliament.
• Estonia also elected their first female president Kersti Kaljulaid in 2016.
• Estonia is a small country in the Baltic states that has been very active in the block chain field.

Punjab Cabinet decision bring smiles on faces of teachers and nurses
• Punjab government is in a fix over the job status of 2,200 master-cadre contractual school teachers who have not been paid salary since November last year when their three-year contract had expired.
• They were supposed to get regular job at the expiry of the contract, but that hasn’t happened to date.
• Finance minister Manpreet Singh Badal gave a royal ignore to the teachers, who were demanding a regular job as per the conditions notified during their appointment in November 2014.

IRDAI, NHA form working group to curb fraud in Ayushman Bharat scheme
• The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) and the National Health Authority (NHA) have formed a working group on the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PM JAY).
• In six months, it will submit a report on how to detect and deter fraud through a common repository and capacity-building.

West Bengal Chief minister unveiled Yuvashree Arpan Scheme
• Under Yuvashree Arpan, 50,000 youths will receive financial assistance of Rs 1 lakh each for setting up an enterprise.

• The Yuvashree I scheme is implemented by the state labour department.
• Launched in 2013, the state provides unemployment allowance of Rs 1,500 per month to 1,00,000 unemployed youth.
• The state government’s Khadya Sathi project was awarded the Skoch platinum award for providing service to the people under the governance category for bringing in socio-economic change.

Government doubled income tax exemption limit for gratuity to Rs 20 Lakh
• The government has doubled the income tax exemption limit for gratuity to Rs 20 lakh from the existing Rs 10 lakh.
• Gratuity law applies to all employees who work in an organization where there are 10 or more employees in a year.
• It will be implemented from March 29, 2018.
• This will increase the burden of paperwork for those who retired on March 31, 2018.

Kylie Jenner named youngest self-made billionaire of all time by Forbes magazine
• Jenner, 21, made it onto the annual Forbes list of billionaires after debuting her Kylie Cosmetics online in 2015 with $29 lip kits containing matching lipstick and lip liner.
• According to Forbes list, she was both the world’s youngest billionaire and also the youngest self-made billionaire ever.
• The richest person in the world remained Amazon.com Inc Chief
Executive Officer Jeff Bezos, whose net worth increased to $131 billion from $112 billion in 2018, according to Forbes.

**CCEA approved new rules to provide greater coal availability**
- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved new rules that will provide greater coal availability to stressed thermal power projects, based on the recommendations of the Group of Ministers constituted to look into the issue. One of the reasons for the stress was the non-availability of coal and that thermal projects without a medium to long-term power purchase agreements would not get coal supply.

**Uttarakhand CM Rawat lays foundation stone for Doon-Mussoorie ropeway project**
- Uttarakhand Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat on Wednesday laid the foundation stone for the Dehradun-Mussoorie ropeway project which is considered to be a tourist novelty.
- The Rs 300-crore ropeway project is expected to be completed in three years, the Chief Minister said at a function here.
- The ropeway will shorten the one-hour zigzag drive to just 15 minutes from Purkul village the base camp at Dehradun to Mussoorie.

**NGT ordered Volkswagen to deposit Rs.500 crore with CPCB**
- The National Green Tribunal (NGT) ordered Volkswagen India to deposit a sum of Rs.500 crore with the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) within two months for using cheat devices in its diesel vehicles.
- A bench headed by NGT Chairperson Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel enhanced the compensation amount of Rs.171 crore, which was recommended by an NGT-appointed committee, as a means of creating deterrence.
- In November last year, the green panel had directed Volkswagen to deposit a sum of Rs.100 crore as interim compensation. Coming down heavily on the company for not complying with the order, the NGT, in January, had directed Volkswagen to deposit the sum within one day.

**China hikes defence budget to USD 177.61 billion, turns second highest spender**
- China has increased its defence budget by 7.5 per cent for this year, hiking it to USD 177.61 billion from last year’s USD 175 billion.
- It is over three times India’s defence budget.
- With this increase, China becomes the highest defence spender on defence after the United States.
- India’s defence budget this year was increased by 6.87 per cent to Rs 3.18 lakh crore against last year’s allocation of Rs 2.98 lakh crore.

**France reiterates support for India’s permanent seat in reformed UNSC**
- France, which assumed the March Presidency of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), has reiterated its support for India as the permanent member of the powerful UN organ. It said that the UNSC’s enlargement is the first crucial part towards its reform.
- India has been calling for the reform of the UN Security Council along with
Brazil, Germany, and Japan for long, emphasizing that it rightly deserves a place at the UN high table as a permanent member.
• It also stressed that the UN cannot be recognised as a centre of gravity for multilateralism throughout the world unless it can step up partnerships and focus should also be made on openness to civil society, business world, NGOs and trade unions, which are all stakeholders that breathe life into the UN.

**Japanese woman honoured by Guinness World Records**
• A 116-year-old Japanese woman who loves playing the board game Othello is being honored as the world’s oldest living person by Guinness World Records.
• Tanaka was born January 2, 1903, the seventh among eight children. The previous oldest living person was another Japanese woman, Chiyō Miyako, who died in July at age 117.

**NASAs LRO spotted water molecules moving around the dayside of moon**
• NASA Scientists have observed water molecules moving around the dayside of the moon using NASA’s Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter (LRO). It is an advance that could help us learn about the accessibility of water that can be used by humans in future missions.
• Measurements from the Lyman Alpha Mapping Project (LAMP) instrument aboard the LRO of the sparse layer of molecules temporarily stuck to the surface helped characterize lunar hydration changes over the course of a day.
• Lunar water can potentially be used by humans to make fuel or to use for radiation shielding or thermal management. Water molecules remain tightly bound to the regolith until surface temperatures peak near lunar noon.

**Pulse polio programme launched in Nagaland**
• The Nagaland Health and Family Welfare Department launched the first round of 'Intensive Pulse Polio Immunization' programme. I.Himato Zhimo, Principal Secretary of Health and Family Welfare, administered the first two polio drops to an infant at Naga Hospital, Kohima marking the launch of the three-day programme.

**India launched its 3rd IT corridor in China**
• National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM) entered into a partnership with China’s Xuzhou city from Jiangsu Province in China to help develop the IT corridor. This is India’s third IT corridor in China. The corridor will facilitate partnerships between Indian and Chinese companies.
• The partnership will enable Indian software and service industry associations to enter the Chinese market and seize the development opportunities in China. The earlier two corridors launched at Dalian and Guiyang cities has brought to fore opportunities with over 300 companies where more than 10 Indian SME companies have signed deals worth 31 Million RMB (USD 4.5 million).
• The first two corridors had enabled cooperation in co-create mode in emerging technologies such as A1,
IOT, and Analytics in the Chinese market. IT corridor project between India and China strengthens India-China Digital Cooperation

Fourth session of the UN Environment Assembly to discuss curbing of plastic waste.
• The fourth session of the UN Environment Assembly has gathered in Nairobi, Kenya from 11 - 15 March 2019. In the five-day UN Environment Assembly, Countries from around the world have set their sights on a pivotal deal to curb plastic waste, a source of long-term pollution and worsening contamination of the ocean’s food chain.
• The UN wants individual countries to sign up to significantly reduce plastic production, including a phasing out of single-use plastics by 2030, a goal inspired by the 2015 Paris Agreement on voluntary reductions of carbon emissions.
• The world currently produces more than 300 million tonnes of plastics annually, and there are at least five trillion plastic pieces floating in our oceans. Microplastics have been found in the deepest sea trenches and high up the earth’s tallest peaks, and plastic consumption is growing year on year. The One Planet Summit on 14th March will bring together heads of State to lend political clout to the process.

Saudi Arabia Foreign Minister meets PM Modi.
• Saudi Arabia’s state minister for Foreign Affairs Adel bin Ahmed Al-Jubeir met PM Narendra Modi in Delhi. Jubeir’s visit to India comes days after his trip to Pakistan’s Islamabad. Saudi minister’s visit comes after Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman’s stand-alone visits to India and Pakistan soon after the Pulwama terror attack.

About Saudi Arabia:
♦ Capital: Riyadh
♦ Currency: Saudi riyal
♦ King: Mohammed bin Salman

Google celebrated 30 years of World Wide Web with doodle.
• Google on March 12 celebrated 30 years of the World Wide Web (WWW) with a doodle. On March 12, 1989, British scientist Sir Tim Berners-Lee while working at European Organisation for Nuclear Research in Switzerland, CERN, submitted a proposal for an information sharing system that would become the WWW. On April 30, 1993, CERN put WWW software in the public domain. Its popularity started spreading from November with the launch of Mosaic, the first search engine to accept pictures. That revolutionised the web, making it user friendly. Mosaic was later replaced by the likes of Internet Explorer, Google Chrome and Mozilla Firefox.

UK Parliament rejects Prime Minister’s Brexit deal for a second time.
• UK Members of Parliament rejected Prime Minister Theresa May’s Brexit deal, which sets out the terms of the UK’s exit from the European Union (EU), for the second time. MPs voted by 391 to 242 to reject the deal. The UK is due to leave the EU on March 29. Brexit is an abbreviation for "British" and "exit" referring to the UK’s decision in a June 23, 2016
referendum to leave the European Union (EU). The UK joined the European Communities (EC) in 1973 under the Conservative government of Edward Heath.

**Japan announced Rs 22 lakh for Kolkata museum.**
- The Japanese government announced a donation of some Rs 22 lakh ($31,800) to the Rabindra Bharati Museum, Kolkata in a bid to strengthen historical and cultural ties with India. Rabindranath Tagore, Asia's first Nobel Prize recipient, visited Japan in 1916, 1924 and 1929, renewing relations between the countries as India's leading cultural ambassador.

**About Japan:**
- Capital: Tokyo
- Currency: Japanese yen
- Prime minister: Shinzo Abe

**UK issued a Black hole Coin to commemorate Stephen Hawking.**
- The United Kingdom has commemorated Professor Stephen Hawking in a new 50p coin. The coin has references to the late physicist's pioneering work on black holes. The commemorative coin aims to celebrate the life and "ground-breaking" achievements of Hawking, who passed away in 2018. It is a commemorative coin and not for circulation as currency.
- The coin features Hawkins's name in capital letters above a rippling drawing of concentric circles, intended to represent a black hole. The coin was designed by British engraver and printmaker Edwina Ellis. The coin is available in gold, silver, and a double thickness silver version called a piedfort. The coin has been released by UK's Royal Mint.

**EU has added 10 countries in the Tax blacklist.**
- The European Union has expanded its tax haven blacklist by including 10 countries. The list now has 15 countries. The list was first drawn up by EU in 2017 in the wake of several scandals that pushed the EU into doing more to fight tax evasion by multinationals and the rich.
- Seven countries Aruba, Belize, Bermuda, Fiji, Oman, Vanuatu, and Dominica were moved from greylist to blacklist due to their inability towards reform commitments. Three other countries added into the list are Barbados, the United Arab Emirates, and the Marshall Islands.

**Krishna Kumari Kohli becomes the first Thari Hindu woman to be elected to the Senate of Pakistan.**
- Krishna Kumari Kohli appointed as the first female senator of Pakistan from the Hindu Dalit community. She is also the first Thai Hindu woman to be elected to the Pakistan Senate. On 8th March 2019, which was celebrated as the International Women’s Day, she chaired the session of the Upper House of Parliament.
Industrial production growth declined to 1.7% in January 2019 as per CSO report.
- The Central Statistics Office (CSO) has released the data for the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) for the month of January. The IIP data shows that: Industrial output growth stood at 1.7% in January against the 2.6% growth recorded in December 2018. Eleven out of the twenty-three industry groups in the manufacturing sector have shown positive growth during the month of January 2019 as compared to January 2018. The cumulative industrial production increased by 4% in April-January FY2019 compared with 4.1% growth in April-January FY2018.

Japan plans to stun the world in 2020 Olympics.
- Driverless cars, robot volunteers and ultra high-definition TV: Japan Inc. plans to use the Tokyo 2020 Olympics to show the world it has regained its touch for innovation and technology. The last time Japan hosted the summer games, Tokyo 1964, it stunned the visitors with its shinkansen, the sleek high-speed bullet train that has since become a byword for cool and efficient transport.
- The country used the games as a springboard to dominate the tech world. From Sharp’s LCD (Liquid Crystal Display) screens to the Sony Walkman, Japan enjoyed an unparalleled reputation in the vanguard of technological innovation. Japan’s vision for the 2020 Games includes an aspiration to make them the most innovative in history.

NASA to send women to Mars.
- NASA, the US Space agency, said that the first person to set foot on Mars is likely to be a woman. It said that women are at the forefront of the U.S. space agency’s upcoming plans.
- NASA recently announced that it will have its first all-female spacewalk at the end of the month when astronauts Anne McClain and Christina Koch will get to float around in space. NASA has the first all-female spacewalk at the end of March, which is, of course, National Women’s Month. So NASA is committed to making sure that it has a diverse set of talent. It is also looking forward to the first woman on the Moon.

Special Olympics World Games began in UAE
- Special Olympics World Games 2019 is held at Abu Dhabi, from March 14 to 21. The Games were declared open by Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi. There are 7,500 athletes from 190 countries taking part at the Games this year. Team India is the second largest contingent after the host UAE with 387 players, along with coaches and other staff. The Special Olympics takes place every two years and alternates between summer and winter.

UK removes cap on PhD level work visas
- U.K. announced in a Budget update, referred to as the annual Spring Statement, that from later this year all PhD-level highly-qualified roles will be exempt from any cap on the numbers that can apply and come to work in Britain.
- Indians are among the largest group of professionals set to benefit from a
new U.K. government plan to remove any limit on the number of PhD-level work visas to be granted. A key pillar of the plan is backing Britain to remain at the forefront of the technology revolution that is transforming the economy. In order to support that ambition, the country completely exempt PhD-level roles from the visa caps.

Vienna topped the Most Liveable Cities index for the 10th year
• The Austrian capital Vienna has topped Mercer’s index of most liveable cities for the 10th year in a row. Zurich in Switzerland, is placed second in the index, while Auckland, Munich and Vancouver came joint third. Chennai, the capital of Tamil Nadu is ranked at 105 in Mercer’s Quality Of Living Index and is the number one city from India.
• Luxembourg was named the safest city in a separate personal safety league table. Global consulting firm Mercer surveyed in 231 cities across the globe and were ranked them based on factors such as healthcare, education, public services, recreation, crime, housing and personal freedom. The ranking was based on data analysed between September and November 2018.

India gets first TIR shipment via Chabahar Port from Afghanistan.
• The first shipment under the United Nations ‘Transports Internationaux Routiers’ (TIR) convention arrived in India from Afghanistan through Iran’s Chabahar Port. TIR allows goods to be sealed in compartments and requires no need for physical checking of the contents.

• This enables shipments to pass through countries without being opened at borders. India joined the TIR Convention (the United Nations Customs Convention on International Transport of Goods under cover of TIR Carnets) on June 15, 2017. India took over the operations of a part of Shahid Beheshti Port, Chabahar in Iran in December 2018.

Geographical Indication (GI) tag granted to Coorg Arabica Coffee and 4 other varieties of Coffee by the Geographical Indications Registry.
• Geographical Indication (GI) tags have been granted to Coorg Arabica Coffee, Wayanad Robusta Coffee, Chikmagalur Arabica Coffee, Araku Valley Arabica Coffee and Bababudangiris Arabica Coffee, by the Geographical Indications Registry on 1st March 2019. Coorg Arabica Coffee is grown in Kodagu, Karnataka. Wayanad Robusta Coffee is grown in Wayanad, Kerala. Chikmagalur Arabica Coffee and Bababudangiris Arabica Coffee are grown in Chikmagalur, Karnataka.

India welcomes France’s decision to sanction Masood Azhar.
• India welcomed the decision taken by France to sanction Jaish-e-Mohammed Chief Masood Azhar. In a tweet, External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Raveesh Kumar said, Azhar who is a Pakistan-based and his outfit is UN proscribed terrorist organisation who is responsible for the Pulwama terrorist attack. Earlier, France has decided to freeze all assets of Pakistan based terror outfit Jaish-e-Mohammed, JeM chief
Masood Azhar, in the application of the country's Monetary and Financial Code.

- The French government's Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, France always been and always will be by India's side in the fight against terrorism. France has decided to sanction Masood Azhar at the national level by freezing his assets in the application of the Monetary and Financial Code.

**Vijit becomes the first Indian Coast Guard ship to visit Indonesia.**

- This visit of the coast guard ship follows from the first-ever-visit of Naval Ship INS Sumitra to Sabang in July 2018
- Vijit's visit to Sabang, Indonesia, also highlights strengthening cooperation in the area of maritime security and safety between New Delhi and Jakarta. ICGS Vijit is the 2nd in the series of 90 meter Offshore Patrol Vessels and was commissioned at Goa on 11 Dec 2010.
- Vijit’s meaning "Winner or Victorious" is the testimony of India's shipbuilding capabilities and the resolve of Govt of India to safeguard country's maritime interests.

**UNEA has adopted two resolutions piloted by India.**

- The United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) has adopted two resolutions piloted by India on single-use plastics and sustainable nitrogen management. The resolutions were passed at the fourth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) which was held in Nairobi. The theme of the fourth session of UNEA was Innovative Solutions for environmental challenges and sustainable production and consumption.

**Joint military exercise, Sary Arka Antiterror 2019, to be held in Uzbekistan.**

- The decision to hold Sary-Arka-Antiterror 2019, the first joint military exercise of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) was announced at the during the 34th meeting of the RATS council held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. The exercise is to be held Sary Arka, Kazakhstan.

**Astronomers discover 83 supermassive black holes 13 billion light-years away from Earth**

- Astronomers have discovered 83 quasars powered by supermassive black holes 13 billion light-years away from the Earth, from a time when the universe was less than 10 per cent of its present age. A professor at Princeton University in the US, Michael Strauss said, it is remarkable that such massive dense objects were able to form so soon after the Big Bang.
- A statement that the understanding of how black holes can form in the early universe, and just how common they are, is a challenge for the cosmological models. This finding, published in the Astrophysical Journal, increases the number of black holes known at that epoch considerably, and reveals, for the first time, how common they are early in the universe's history.
- In addition, it provides new insight into the effect of black holes on the physical state of gas in the early universe in its first billion years. The Supermassive black holes, found at
the centres of galaxies can be millions or even billions of times more massive than the Sun. A supermassive black hole becomes visible when gas accretes onto it, causing it to shine as a quasar.

**Cyclone Idai affected over 1.5 million people in Mozambique, Malawi, and Zimbabwe.**
- Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Malawi have been hit by a vicious cyclone that has killed nearly 150 people, left hundreds more missing and stranded tens of thousands. According to the UN and government officials, Cyclone Idai has affected more than 1.5 million people in the three southern African countries. The port city of Beira in Mozambique was hit the hardest. The deaths are mainly in Zimbabwe's Chimanimani, a mountainous area along the eastern border with Mozambique that is popular with tourists.

**Soyuz successfully placed astronauts in ISS.**
- Russian Soyuz spacecraft carrying NASA Astronaut Nick Hague and Christina Koch, and Cosmonaut Alexey Ovchinin successfully docked International Space Station (ISS). Soyuz Spacecraft is a Russian Spacecraft carries people and supplies to and from the space station. Soyuz Spacecraft also function as lifeboats and one Soyuz spacecraft is always docked to the space station, so that in case of emergency the crew can return to earth through the spacecraft.
- After the retirement of the space shuttle in 2011, the Soyuz spacecraft has become the sole means of transportation for crew members going to or returning from the orbiting laboratory. The International Space Station is a habitable artificial satellite in low Earth orbit. The ISS programme is a joint project between five participating space agencies: NASA (United States), Roscosmos (Russia), JAXA (Japan), ESA (Europe), and CSA (Canada). The ISS serves as a microgravity and space environment research laboratory.

**INCOIS and French scientists discovered existence of a new sea level oscillation.**
- Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) researchers, in collaboration with scientists from France, have discovered the existence of a "synchronous oscillation" of sea level across the entire Tropical Indian Ocean with a time period of 30 to 80 days during winter months of December to April.
- In these months, Indian Ocean routinely gains/losses 3 trillion tonnes of water from the Pacific Ocean every 30-80 days accompanied by a sea level rise/fall of 4 cm which is 30% of total sea-level change. This process is driven by intense winds hovering over a small area in the eastern Indian Ocean. This wind is associated with tropical weather phenomenon called Madden-Julian Oscillation (MJO). MJOs, being a low-pressure system, is known to facilitate cyclone formation over the Indian Ocean. The study said the waves gain more relevance since MJOs are gradually getting more intense in the warming climate.
British Army to create a new Battalion by recruiting more than 800 Nepalese Gurkha.
- The British Army has announced that it would create a new Specialised Infantry Battalion by recruiting more than 800 Nepalese Gurkha servicepersons. Gurkhas have completed 200 years of service in the British Army and currently, they comprise upto 3% of the British Army.
- Gurkha and British Army During the Anglo-Nepalese War of 1814-16, Gorkha Kingdom had inflicted heavy casualties on the British Army even though they had lost the war. British India decided to recruit these soldiers starting in 1815 and the Gurkhas have fought on the side of the British Empire in almost every war, including both World Wars.
- The Gurkhas are recruited every year by the British Army and Gurkhas are held in high esteem in the British Army. Gurkhas have the same service conditions as the regular British Army, with the option of British citizenship upon retirement.

India attacks UNSC for Progressively Undermining UN General Assembly in finding solutions for global challenges.
- India and UN General Assembly must take lead in finding solutions to the challenges faced by the world, slamming the Security Council for "progressively undermining" the authority of the 193-member global body. India's deputy permanent representative K Nagaraj Naidu said on Monday the growing number of complex challenges facing the world, like those related to peace and security, climate change and sustainable development that cut across boundaries and regions can be addressed only through a genuine multilateral and participative process.
- The prerogatives and authority of the General Assembly have been progressively undermined by the Security Council through its frequent attempts to redefine its scope of competence through wider and permissive interpretations of what constitutes a threat to international peace and security and by engaging in discussions on issues that clearly fall within the purview of the General Assembly.

Cyclothon held on the occasion of World Sparrow Day.
- A colourful cyclothon was organised in Berhampur on the occasion of World Sparrow Day, March 20th, to mark the progress of making Ganjam the first sparrow-friendly district of Odisha. The event aimed at spreading awareness about the rising number of vehicles causing air pollution, which, in turn, affects the avian population.
- A large number of cyclists donning sparrow masks along with a sparrow mascot took part in this cycle rally organised by youth environmental organisation Anchalika Vikash Parishad (AVP) and the Forest Department.

Nirav Modi was denied bail in London.
- ndian businessman Nirav Modi who was accused in the Rs.13,000 crore Punjab National Bank fraud case was denied bail in London, despite offering the court assurances including £500,000 as security. Mr. Modi is now due to appear before Emma
Arbuthnot, the Chief Magistrate of Westminster Magistrates Court, who ordered Vijay Mallya’s extradition on March 29. The hearing before District Judge Marie Mallon took place a day after Mr. Modi was arrested at a bank branch in London by the Metropolitan Police.

SAIL launched Smart Garbage Bins.
• Steel Authority of India Ltd (SAIL) has launched smart garbage bins made of stainless steel which integrates technology for smart waste management. Smart Garbage Bins The IOT (Internet of Things) enabled Gazelle sensors Smart Garbage Bins will send signals to the garbage collection vehicle about the ‘fill-up’ position of the bin. This provides for better cleaning and lower human intervention.
• These Smart Garbage Bins made up of SAIL SALEM stainless steel will be installed in underground Reinforced Cement Concrete (RCC) pits at the Smart Garbage Station. This will help prevent the spread of stink and diseases. There will be separate bins for recyclable and non-recyclable wastes. Initially, these Smart Garbage Bins will be placed at one each at Kamala Nagar in North and BhiikajiCama Place in South Delhi.

Kazakhstan renames capital Astana as 'Nursultan' after ex-President.
• Kazakhstan's Parliament has voted to rename the country's capital Astana as 'Nursultan', in honour of former President Nursultan Nazarbayev. Kazakhstan’s new President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev had proposed the move to rename the capital in honour of Nazarbayev, who announced his resignation on March 19 after 30 years in power. Nazarbayev's daughter, Dariga, was elected speaker of the Senate.

Google unveiled video game streaming service Stadia.
• Google unveiled its on-demand video-game streaming service Stadia, built for Chrome, Android and TVs, at the 2019 Game Developers Conference in San Francisco, California. Stadia's 'Crowd Play' feature will let people, watching a YouTube live stream, to actually join the streamer's game. The service will initially be launched this year in the US, Canada, the UK and Europe.

Italy to join China's Belt and Road Initiative.
• Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte pledged to make Italy the first Group of Seven nation to join China's ambitious Belt and Road initiative (BRI). This move will help rebalance Italy's trade with the Asian nation. Four Italian ports could reportedly be opened to Chinese investments for BRI. The US has warned Italy against joining the Chinese initiative.

FAO expressed its concerns over armyworms.
• The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has expressed concerns over the increasing menace of Crop-damaging armyworms in Asia. Farming in several Asian countries is under threat from Armyworms, a type of crop-damaging insects that have munched their way from America and across Africa. These flying insects arrived in India in July and have since spread to Sri Lanka, Bangladesh,
Myanmar, Thailand, and China's Yunnan province.
• These insects feed mostly on maize and can feed on several species of crops, including rice and sugarcane. Armyworms which are native to the Americas have been moving eastwards since 2016 sweeping across Africa where they caused $1-3 billion in damage, before arriving in Asia.
• The FAO had convened a meeting of officials from affected countries and experts for discussing ways to limit armyworm infestations amid a "growing sense of alarm". FAO called on the nations to work together since pest has no respect for international boundaries and it threatens food security, economy, domestic and international trade.

India signals to boycott China’s Belt and Road Forum for second time.
• China's second Belt and Road Forum for a second time, saying no country can participate in an initiative that ignores its core concerns on sovereignty and territorial integrity. India boycotted the first Belt and Road Forum (BRF) in 2017 after protesting to Beijing over the controversial China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) which is being laid through the Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) overriding New Delhi's sovereignty concerns.
• Foreign Minister Wang Yi recently said that next month China plans to hold a much bigger, second BRF which will also be attended by Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan. Speculation is rife whether India would attend the second BRF as China has deepened its commitment to expand the USD 60 billion CPEC, which aims to connect China’s Xinjiang province with Pakistan's Gwadar port with a host of road, rail, gas and oil pipelines. China has also undertaken a host of energy projects under the aegis of the CPEC.

India and Sri Lanka to conduct joint military exercise Mitra Shakti VI.
• India and Sri Lanka is to conduct joint military exercise Mitra Shakti VI from 26 March to 8 April at Sri Lanka. At the Military Exercise Mitra Shakti VI India would be represented by the Bihar Regiment. Gemunu Watch Battalion of Sri Lankan Army will be representing the Sri Lankan side. The exercise aims to build and promote close relations between armies of both the countries and to enhance the ability of joint exercise commander to take military contingents of both nations under command.

Jagmeet Singh made history in the House of Commons.
• Indian-origin Jagmeet Singh made history in the House of Commons, a component of Canada’s Parliament, as the first non-white leader of a major opposition party in the country. Singh, 40, the leader of the New Democratic Party, was elected in federal by-elections held on February 25. Singh’s first words as an elected lawmaker were about last week’s terrorist attack on two mosques in New Zealand.

First ever High-Level Dialogue on Indo-Pacific Cooperation (HLD-IPC) held in Jakarta, Indonesia.
• The Government of Indonesia hosted the first ever High-Level Dialogue on
Indo-Pacific Cooperation (HLD-IPC) in its capital city Jakarta.

- The theme of the HLD was “Towards a Peaceful, Prosperous, and Inclusive Region”.
- It was inaugurated by Indonesia’s Vice President Jusuf Kalla.
- The representatives from India, Australia, US, Brunei Darussalam, Japan, South Korea, Russia, New Zealand and China apart from 10 member ASEAN countries.
- The main objective behind this meet was to urge all participating governments to talk openly about their plans for increasing cooperation and for building trust in the Pacific Ocean and Indian Ocean region.

**New Zealand Bans Assault Weapons.**

- New Zealand imposed an immediate ban on assault weapons following the Christchurch massacre that claimed the lives of 50 mosque-goers. Prime Minister of New Zealand Jacinda Ardern announced assault rifles and military-style semi-automatic weapons would be banned with immediate effect, making a pledge to ensure that nothing like Christchurch massacre ever occurs in the Pacific nation again.

About New Zealand Capital:
Wellington Currency: New Zealand dollar.

**Operation Sunrise: India and Myanmar jointly destroy insurgent’s camps.**

- The Indian and Myanmar’s armies have, in a coordinated operation, destroyed at least 10 camps belonging to an insurgent group in Myanmar, which had become a threat to India’s mega Kaladan Project in the neighbouring country. The military action carried out was codenamed Operation Sunrise.

**Threats to Bumphead Parrot Fish in Andaman.**

- Bumphead parrotfish, Bolbometopon muricatum, is an important component of coral reef ecosystem, but is highly endangered globally. It is categorized as ‘vulnerable’ in the Red List of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). A group of researchers recently studied the distribution, abundance and dangers to this species in the waters of Andaman and Nicobar islands.

**British PM welcomes EU decision to postpone Brexit beyond 29 March.**

- British Prime Minister Theresa May welcomed the EU decision to postpone Brexit beyond 29th March. The UK will be offered a delay until 22nd May, if MPs approve the withdrawal deal negotiated with the EU next week. In a press conference along with European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, European Council President Donald Tusk said that British Prime Minister Theresa May has accepted the offer from EU.

**WHO panel calls for registry of all human gene editing research.**

- World Health Organization experts said it would be irresponsible for any scientist to conduct human gene-editing studies in people, and a central registry of research plans should be set up to ensure transparency. After its first two-day meeting in Geneva, the WHO panel of gene editing experts, which was established...
in December after a Chinese scientist said he had edited the genes of twin babies, said it had agreed a framework for setting future standards.

**Pakistan to receive over 2 billion US Dollars loan from China.**
- Cash-strapped Pakistan will receive over 2 billion US Dollars loan from China to provide a boost to its ailing economy. Pakistan's Finance Ministry has announced that all procedural formalities for the transfer of the 2.1 billion US Dollars loan being provided by the Chinese government have been completed, and the funds will be deposited in the State Bank of Pakistan's account by Monday.
- Pakistan has received 1 billion US dollars each from Saudi Arabia and the UAE, as part of the bailout packages by the two Gulf nations to help shore up Islamabad's dwindling foreign currency reserves. Islamabad is also in talks with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for a bailout package. Earlier, Pakistan officials said that Islamabad would seek around 8 billion US dollars from the IMF which would be the biggest package by the Fund for Islamabad.

**Jimmy Carter becomes longest living chief executive in American history.**
- Former US president Jimmy Carter has reached a milestone. He was elected as the 39th President. Carter is now the longest living chief executive in American history. Today is the 172nd day beyond Carter's 94th birthday. It exceeds by one day the lifespan of former President George H.W. Bush, who died last November at the age of 94 years, 171 days.

**Italy’s Earth-Watching PRISMA Satellite launched by Vega Rocket.**
- A European Vega rocket carried a new Earth-observation satellite into orbit for the Italian Space Agency lighting up the nighttime sky over its French Guiana launch site. The PRISMA Earth observation satellite lifted off at 9:50 p.m. EDT (0150 March 22 GMT) from the South America’s Guiana Space Center in Kourou, French Guiana.
- The satellite will operate in a sun-synchronous orbit, meaning that it circles the Earth in such a way that the sun is always in the same position as the satellite takes pictures of the planet below. PRISMA (an Italian acronym for Hyperspectral Precursor of the Application Mission) is designed to provide information about environmental monitoring, resources management, pollution and crop health.

**Norway to put world’s 1st wireless e-cab charging stations.**
- Norway’s capital Oslo will become the world’s first city to install wireless induction-based fast-charging systems for electric taxis, The Charging plates will be installed in the ground where taxis are parked, which will connect with receivers in taxis and allow them to charge for up to 75 kilowatts. Finland’s Fortum is working on the project with America’s Momentum Dynamics. The project aims to install wireless charging using induction technology. Charging plates are installed in the ground where the taxi is parked and a receiver is installed in the taxi. This allows for charging up to 75 kilowatts.
Indonesia launched its first mass rapid transit (MRT) system.

- Indonesian President Joko Widodo inaugurated the country's first mass rapid transit (MRT) system on 24th March. The aim is to ease the traffic congestion in the capital Jakarta. He also presided over a groundbreaking ceremony to mark the beginning of the second phase which is planned for completion by 2024. Passengers can ride for free until the end of the month. Jakarta is one of the top three traffic-congested cities in the world, according to a traffic index developed by the navigation systems company TomTom.

Seven Indian names in the 100 Most Influential People in Climate Policy list.

- The “100 Most Influential People in Climate Policy” list is comprised of seven Indian names who took important measures to combat climate change. The list is prepared by Apolitical, a peer to peer learning platform for governments. The list has been topped by Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (Congresswoman, US Congress). 7 names from India:
  - 7 names from India:
    - Piyush Goyal- Minister of Railways and Coal
    - Dr.Harsh Vardhan- Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
    - Mukta Tilak- Mayor of Pune
    - Jyoti Kirit Parikh- Executive director of Integrated Research and Action for Development
    - Sunita Narain- Director of the Centre for Science and the Environment
    - Vandana Shiva- Founder of the Research Foundation for Science, Technology, and Natural Resource Policy
    - Upendra Tripathy- Director general of the International Solar Alliance.

Thailand held its first general election after 5 years of military rule.

- Thailand held its first general election after five years of military rule. The military ousted an elected government in a coup in 2014. About 51.4 million people voted in the election. It will appoint 500 members to the House of Representatives, the lower house of the Parliament. Voters in Thailand have voted to choose their next government 24th March 2019, after five years of living under military rule. The March 24 vote comes after the ruling junta repeatedly postponed general elections after it overthrew an elected government in 2014.

Pentagon approves USD 1 billion to build 92 km of Trump’s border wall.

- Acting US defence (Pentagon) secretary Patrick Shanahan authorised $1 billion to build part of the wall sought by President Donald Trump along the US-Mexico border. The amount will go towards building 92 km of 18-foot fencing, improving roads and other measures along the border.
  - Earlier, Trump had declared national emergency over the border wall demand. Trump had sought $5.7 billion for the wall. He believes the wall will help curb crime and drug trade in the US. The wall was one of the main promises of the Trump election campaign in 2016.
IAF formally inducted four heavy-lift Chinook helicopters.
- On the lines of Indo-US deal inked in September 2015 for the purchase of 15 Chinooks by India, the first four heavy lift CH-47F (I) Chinook helicopters were inducted in the Indian Air Force, at Air Force Station, Chandigarh, in Squadron No 126 Helicopter Flight.
- These multi-role helicopters will act as life-saver during HADR (humanitarian assistance and disaster relief) missions. Regarded as one of the most modern heavy lift chopper, the payload capacity of Chinook is about 10 tonne, as it is able to lift artillery, vehicles, road construction and engineer equipment as well as troops and supplies to mountainous sectors.
- It can also lift M-777 ultra-light howitzers of the Indian armed forces. India has purchased 15 Chinooks for $1.5 billion. The delivery of remaining helicopters is expected to be completed by 2023.

GIZ Indo German Development Corporation to help in waste segregation.
- The Indo-German Development Corporation, GIZ, has been tied to help the North Delhi Municipal Corporation to carry out waste segregation activities. The tie-up, which has been facilitated through the Swachh Bharath Mission, is for a five-year period during which time the development corporation will provide technical assistance such as training.
- In order to ensure implementation of the solid waste management bylaws in the North Corporation, ward level committees were being formed, involving Resident Welfare Associations, market associations, NGOs and Ragpickers organisations to look into specific local requirements. In addition, three 'model wards' have been selected where waste segregation will be ensured within six months.

IOC and BPRL has acquired an oil block in Abu Dhabi.
- Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Bharat PetroResources Ltd. (BPRL), a subsidiary of Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd. (BPCL), acting jointly as a consortium through Urja Bharat Pte Ltd. has acquired an oil block in Abu Dhabi, where the two will invest $170 million.
- The consortium through Urja Bharat Pte Ltd. have been awarded 100% stake in the Abu Dhabi Onshore Block 1 Concession.
- The concession has been awarded by the Supreme Petroleum Council, on behalf of the Abu Dhabi government. The concession award is for 35 years. This Onshore Block 1 is located in the A1 Dhafra region around Ruwais City and the refining complex, including the coastal region to the west.

China infused USD 2.2 billion in Pakistan’s forex reserves.
- China infused around $2.2 billion in Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves for imports and external debt repayments. Pakistan has so far received a total of $9.1 billion in financial assistance from friendly countries during the current fiscal year. Pakistan has got $4.1 billion from China, $3 billion from Saudi Arabia and $2 billion from United Arab Emirates (UAE). Pakistan’s foreign
exchange reserves stood at $8.84 billion as on March 15.

LIMA 2019 Aero Expo held in Langkawi, Malaysia.
• Langkawi International Maritime Aero Expo (LIMA-2019) is held in Langkawi, Malaysia from 26 March 2019 to 30 March 2019. The event, that takes place once every two years, is one of the largest maritime and aerospace exhibitions in the Asia-Pacific.
• It is established in 1991. Indian Air Force (IAF) is participating in the Maritime Aero Expo for the first time, during which it will showcase its indigenously developed LCA fighter aircraft, Tejas.
• The anti submarine warfare corvette INS Kadmatt also participate in LIMA 2019.

World’s largest e-waste recycling hub opened in Dubai.
• Located at the Dubai Industrial Park, the 2,80,000 square feet plant will process Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE), IT asset disposition (ITAD), refrigerant gas and specialised waste. It is established by ‘Enviroserve’ company with a total cost of $5 million. It has a processing capacity of 100,000 tonnes of total integrated waste per year, of which 39,000 tonnes is e-waste.

India, US Ink Pact To Check Tax Evasion By MNCs.
• India and the US signed an agreement for the exchange of country-by-country (CBC) report. The move will give huge relief to subsidiaries of US-headquartered companies in the taxation-related matter. The agreement was signed by PC Mody, Chairman, Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT), and Kenneth I Juster, US Ambassador to India.

Boeing unveils changes to MCAS, anti stall system.
Embattled aviation giant Boeing pledged to do all it can to prevent crashes like two that killed nearly 350 people in recent months, as it unveiled a fix to the flight software of its grounded 737 MAX aircraft. Boeing gathered hundreds of pilots and reporters to unveil the changes to the Manoeuvring Characteristics Augmentation System (MCAS). Boeing unveiled the software changes at the company's massive factory in Renton, Washington, and offered reassurances.

New method to purify water used in oil refinement.
• Scientists, including one of Indian origin, have developed a process to remove nearly all traces of oil in produced water -- a byproduct from the oil refinery and extraction process. About 2.5 billion gallons of produced water is generated each day in the US.
• Handling that water is a major challenge in the oil refinery industry, particularly because it is deemed unusable for household and commercial use because of remaining contaminants. Researchers at Purdue University in the US have developed a process to remove nearly all traces of oil in produced water.

SPORTS
• National Boxing champion Deepak Singh (49kg) is the only Indian boxer
who won gold medal at Makran Cup in Boxing held at Chabahar, Iran. The five others claimed silver medals in the Makran Cup in Chabahar, Iran P. Lalitha Prasad (52kg), Commonwealth Games silver-medallist Manish Kaushik (60kg), Duryodhan Singh Negi (69kg), Sanjeet (91kg) and Commonwealth Games silver-medallist Satish Kumar (+91kg) claimed silver medals.

Chris Gayle Becomes First Player To Smash 500 Sixes In International Cricket
• West Indies opener Chris Gayle become the first batsman ever to smash 500 or more sixes in international cricket. In the 4th ODI against England in Grenada, Gayle scored 162 runs.
• His innings contained a staggering 14 sixes and powered the Windiest to their highest-ever ODI score of 389.

Sanath Jayasuriya banned for 2 years after ICC anti-corruption probe
• The former Sri Lanka captain Sanath Jayasuriya has been banned for two years from all cricket-related activity by the ICC’s anti-corruption unit.
• He was punished for refusing to co-operate with investigations concerning corruption in the country.
• Jayasuriya played 110 Tests, 445 one-day internationals and 31 Twenty20s for Sri Lanka and was also a former captain during his illustrious career between 1989-2011.
• He is also a former member of Sri Lanka’s parliament and a former deputy minister.

Shashank Shekhar claimed 10 km Nepals (COAS) Marathon and Run for Fun.
• Shashank Shekhar won the 10-kilometre race of Nepal’s Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Open Marathon and Run for Fun which was held in Nepal’s Capital- Kathmandu.

Punia won a gold medal in International wrestling tournament in Bulgaria
• India’s star wrestler Bajrang Punia won a gold medal in the 65kg freestyle final at the Dan Kolov-Nikola Petrov International wrestling tournament in Ruse, Bulgaria. Bajrang Punia defeated Jordan Olivier of USA. In the last six international tournaments, this is his 5th win.
• He was ranked the world No.1 wrestler in 65kg category by United World Wrestling (UWW) in November 2018.
• After the win, Bajrang dedicated his gold to Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman.

Cricket to be included in 2022 Asian Games
• Cricket is included in the sports programme for the 2022 Asian Games to be held in Hangzhou, China.
• The decision was reportedly taken at the Olympic Council of Asia’s (OCA) General Assembly.
• Cricket was omitted from the 2018 Asian Games in Indonesia after featuring in 2010 and 2014.
• In India’s absence, Sri Lanka - among men - and Pakistan — among women - had clinched the gold in 2014. In 2010, Bangladesh clinched the men’s title, and Pakistan the women’s title.
Roger Federer wins his 100th career title in Dubai
- Roger Federer is the second man to achieve the feat after America’s Jimmy Connors who ended his career with 109 titles.
- Twenty-time Grand Slam champion Roger Federer defeated Stefanos Tsitsipas in the final of the Dubai Tennis Championships to win his 100th career singles’ title.

Cabinet approved for the Centre for Disability Sports at Gwalior
- The Union Cabinet has approved the proposal for setting up of a Centre for Disability Sports at Gwalior in Madhya Pradesh. The Centre for Disability Sports, Gwalior will be set up at an estimated cost of Rs 170.99 crore, spread over a period of 5 years. The Centre of Disability Sports would be registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860.
- The centre would create an improved sports infrastructure to ensure effective participation of persons with disabilities in sports activities and also enable them to compete at national and international levels. It would aid in developing a sense of belonging in Divyangjan to facilitate their integration in society. A governing body consisting of not exceeding 12 members would be set up for overall superintendence and supervision of the Centre with representation for experts from National Level Sports Federations apart from experts in para games.

Tamil Nadu’s 16-year-old, P Iniyan, becomes India’s 61st chess Grandmaster

Yomif Kejelcha sets world indoor mile record with a time of 3 min 47.01 sec
- Ethiopia’s Yomif Kejelcha smashed the world indoor mile record with a time of 3 min 47.01 sec at the Bruce Lehane Invitational in Boston. The 21-year-old broke a record of a mark of 3:48.45 set by Morocco’s Hicham El Guerrouj on February 12, 1997.
- It was third time lucky for Kejelcha, who narrowly missed out on breaking world indoor records in his two previous races. He finished just 0.01 outside the world indoor mile record at the Millrose Games with a time of 3:48.46, and was then beaten to the world indoor 1,500m record in Birmingham one week later when compatriot Samuel Tefera won in 3:31.04.

Bisht won gold at the 38th GeeBee Boxing Tournament, Finland
- Kavinder Singh Bisht in the 56kg-category struck gold at the 38th GeeBee Boxing Tournament in Helsinki, Finland. Bisht defeated Commonwealth Games bronze-medallist Hussamuddin in the 56kg summit clash.
- Three-time Asian medallist Shiva Thapa, Govind Sahani, Commonwealth Games bronze-medallist Mohammed Hussamuddin
and Dinesh Dagar won silver medals at the Finland Boxing tournament.

**India retain 2nd spot in ICC T20I rankings, Rahul moves up to 5th.**
- The Indian cricket team retained its second spot in the T20I team rankings with 122 points, despite the recent series loss against Australia at home. Pakistan tops ICC T20I rankings with 135 points, with England remaining at third place with 121 points. In the T20I batsmen rankings, Indian batsman KL Rahul moved up to the fifth spot. In the T20I bowlers' list, Kuldeep Yadav, who was rested for two T20Is against Australia, dropped a place to the fifth rank. Pakistan's Babar Azam and Afghanistan's Rashid Khan remained in top positions in batsmen and bowlers' list respectively.

**Dipa Karmakar selected as Barbie Role Model.**
- Indian gymnast Dipa Karmakar was selected as Barbie role model & was presented with a one-of-a-kind doll by Barbie as the company celebrates its 60th anniversary. She was part of the ‘Shero’ program launched in 2015 by the company. Karmakar has won over 77 medals, including 67 gold ones at state, national and international levels.
- She also became India’s first gymnast to win a gold medal at an international event – the FIG Artistic Gymnastics World Challenge Cup at Mersin, Turkey. Mattel, the toy manufacturing company behind Barbie, on their 60th anniversary of Barbie, released a new range of barbies to honor female role models globally, spanning different career fields. Japan's tennis star Naomi Osaka, Brazilian surfer Maya Gabiera and Canadian ice skater Tessa Virtue are other women athletes who have been honoured.

**India to host FIFA Under-17 Women’s World Cup in 2020.**
- International Football Federation (FIFA) President Gianni Infantino announced that India will host the U-17 Women's World Cup in 2020. The tournament in India will be the seventh edition. By virtue of being the host country, India will take part in the tournament for the first time in its history. This will be the second FIFA tournament India will be hosting, after the U-17 Men's World Cup in 2017. Spain are the current champions.

**ESPN World Fame 100 list: Virat Kohli the only Indian in Top 10.**
- This year’s ESPN World Fame 100 list, an annual list of the most famous athletes on the planet, placed the Portuguese footballer Cristiano Ronaldo at the top spot, followed by former Basketball player Lebron James and FC Barcelona captain Lionel Messi. Indian skipper, Virat Kohli, stands on the seventh position and is the only Indian athlete in the top 10 club, whereas Dhoni is placed on the 13th position. There were only...
three women in the list: Serena Williams (17), Maria Sharapova (37) and Sania Mirza (93); making Sania Mirza the only Indian woman athlete to feature in the list.

**Karnataka defeated Maharashtra to win Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy.**
- Karnataka defeated Maharashtra to win their maiden Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy at the Holkar Cricket Stadium in Indore. With the win, Karnataka set a record of most number of wins in a row by an Indian domestic team as they won 14 T20 matches to lift the coveted T20 trophy.

**Narasimha appointed as mediator to resolve disputes of cricket administration by SC.**
- Supreme Court appointed senior advocate P. S. Narasimha, as a mediator for resolving various disputes related to cricket administration in the country. A bench of Justices S. A. Bobde and A. M. Spare was informed by P. S. Narasimha that former apex court judge Justice (retd) D. K. Jain has assumed charge as the ombudsman of Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI). The bench also asked P. S.

**Winners list of 2019 All England Open Badminton Championships.**
- All England Open Badminton Championships 2019 was held from 6 Mar 2019 to 10 Mar 2019 at Arena Birmingham, Birmingham, United Kingdom. The Winners in the various categories of the are: Men's Singles: Japan's Kento Momota Women's Singles: China's Chen Yufei Men's Doubles: Indonesia's Mohammad Ahsan & Hendra Setiawan Women's Doubles: China's Chen Qingchen & Jia Yifan Mixed Doubles: China's Zheng Siwei & Huang Yaqiong All England Open Badminton Championships All England Open Badminton Championships held annually in England is the world's oldest badminton tournament. The genesis of the tournament can be traced to open tournament held in the English town of Guildford in 1898, the success of this tournament paved the way for the All England's inaugural edition, which was held at London's Horticultural Halls in 1899.

**South Africa's Duminy announces retirement from ODIs after 2019 World Cup.**
- The 2019 World Cup will be Duminy's third appearance in the tournament, having featured for South Africa in 2011 in the subcontinent and in 2015 in Australia and New Zealand. Allrounder Jean-Paul Duminy had already retired from Test cricket in September 2017 after featuring in 46 matches. Duminy has played 193 ODIs so far - scoring 5047 runs at an average of 37.39 - in addition to bagging 68 wickets.

**Argentina, Colombia set to co-host Copa America in 2020.**
- Argentina and Colombia have been chosen in principle to co-host the 2020 Copa America. The 2020 Copa América will be the 47th edition of the Copa América. 2019 Copa América will be staged in Brazil between June 14 and July 7. The Copa América is the world's oldest international football tournament. The event was first held in 1916 in honour of the 100th anniversary of Argentina's
independence—with Uruguay winning the inaugural title.

Sourav Ganguly appointed as advisor of Delhi Capitals for IPL 2019.
• Former India captain Sourav Ganguly was appointed as the advisor of Delhi Capitals (formerly known as Delhi Daredevils) for the upcoming edition of Vivo Indian Premier League (IPL), where he will work closely with the team’s head coach Ricky Ponting. With Captain Shreyas Iyer, Delhi Capitals will be facing Mumbai Indians on 24th March 2019 at the Wankhede Stadium.

Diksha, 18-yr-old becomes 2nd Indian golfer to win on Ladies European Tour.
• Diksha Dagar became the second Indian woman golfer to win an event on Ladies European Tour after clinching South African Women’s Open in Cape Town. Aditi Ashok was the first Indian to win on the Ladies European Tour after clinching Hero Women’s Indian Open in Gurugram in 2016.

OCA reinstated Chess in Asian Games 2022.
• Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) decided to reinstate the Chess game to the Asian Games fold for the 2022 edition in Hangzhou. The top players welcomed the return of Chess.
• The OCA General Assembly met in Bangkok on March 3 and its president Sheikh Ahmad al-Fahad Al-Sabah officially confirmed the development to World Chess Federation (WCF) president Arkady Dvorkovich.

• Chess was a part of the Asian Games programme at the 2006 edition in Doha and 2010 in Guangzhou. India won two gold medals at Doha, and two bronze in the 2010 edition at Guangzhou.

T. Irfan became first Indian athlete to qualify for Tokyo Olympics.
• A 29-year-old Indian athlete from Kerala, K.T. Irfan qualified for the Tokyo Olympics as he finished fourth in the men’s 20 kilometre category at the Asian Race Walking Championships in Nomi, Japan. He got qualified for next year’s Tokyo Olympics.
• He made the cut after finishing fourth at the Asian Race Walking Championship at Nomi in Japan. The fourth-place finishes also ensured a berth in the upcoming International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) World Championship in Doha that begins in September. The Two other Indian race walkers, who qualified for the World Championship are Devinder and Ganapati.

For the first time ever Bengaluru FC crowned ISL Champions.
• Bengaluru FC clinched their maiden Indian Super League title as Rahul Bheke found a championship-winning header in the dying minutes of the final against FC Goa, in Mumbai. The two teams were locked 0-0 after 90 minutes. Even the first extra time saw no goals but Bengaluru got better of a 10-men Goan team 1-0, four minutes from the end of the second extra half.

India finished second in medal tally at Asian Youth Championships.
Indian youth team finish second in the overall medals tally with a total of 26 medals including eight gold, nine silver and nine bronze medals. China topped the overall medals tally with 31 medals that included 12 gold, 11 silver and eight bronze medals. Japan finished third with 20 medals that included 6 Gold, 8 Silver and 6 bronze. Asian Youth Athletics Championships 2019 was held in Hong Kong.

Indian shuttler Sai Praneeth finished runner-up at Swiss Open. Indian shuttler Sai Praneeth won the silver medal at the Swiss Open after losing the men's singles final to world number two and top-seeded Chinese shuttler Shi Yuqi in Basel, Switzerland. About 2019 Swiss Open: The 2019 Swiss Open, officially the YONEX Swiss Open 2019, was a badminton tournament which took place at St. Jakobshalle in Basel, Switzerland and had a total purse of $150,000.

Valtteri Bottas Won Australian F1 Grand Prix 2019
Mercedes’ Valtteri Bottas beat his world champion teammate Lewis Hamilton to clinch the season-opening Australian Formula One Grand Prix. Bottas, who claimed his first race win since Abu Dhabi in 2017 claimed the extra point for the fastest lap in the race.

India bags 188 medals at Special Olympics World Games.
India won a total of 188 medals at the Special Olympics World Games in Abu Dhabi. The medals include 50 gold, 63 silver and 75 bronze medals. In table tennis India won four gold and one silver medal. In Judo, Sonu Kumar from Rohtak, Haryana won the gold medal by winning all three bouts. Muskan bagged a silver.

Four Silver medals were bagged by Santoshi Vijay Kauthankan from Goa in the female category. India sent a 378-strong contingent that is participating in the 15th edition of the Games. The closing ceremony of Special Olympics World Games is scheduled for March 21.

Mukesh Ambani Tops Forbes List of Worlds Richest Sports Team Owners.
The chairman and managing director of Reliance Industries Limited (RIL), Mukesh Ambani tops with a net worth of around $50 billion. Ambani bought the Indian Premier League (IPL) team Mumbai Indians for over $100 million through RIL’s 100 percent subsidiary IndiaWin Sports. The team had won the IPL crown in 2013, 2015 and 2017.

Former Microsoft CEO, Steve Ballmer who own the Los Angeles Clippers team placed at the second spot in the list. He purchased the basketball team for about $2 billion after he retired from Microsoft. Red Bull energy drink company founder Dietrich Mateschitz followed at number three spot. He owns Red Bull Toro Rosso Honda, Formula One team Red Bull Racing and MLS club New York Red Bulls.

Gopi Thonakal qualified for World Athletics.
In marathon, India's Asian champion Gopi Thonakal has qualified for the World Athletics Championships to be held in the Qatari capital Doha in September-October this year. He achieved qualification after finishing
11th in the Seoul International Marathon, clocking his personal best time of 2 hours 13 minutes 39 seconds. Gopi’s time is the second best ever by an Indian after the four-decade old national record of 2:12:00, which is held by Shivnath Singh.

IPL franchise Rajasthan Royals to Academy in England.
- Indian Premier League (IPL) franchise Rajasthan Royals has tied up with the Star Cricket Academy in Surrey, England. The tie-up is to re-launch the facility as the ‘Rajasthan Royals Academy’. The centre has a state-of-the-art cricket centre named the Jarrett Centre.
- It is an indoor cricket training centre run by former professional batsman Siddharth Lahiri, along with his team of coaches including former England international and mentor to the academy, Keith Medlycott. The franchise is also keen to create an exchange programme across India and UK wherein the children from the UK will receive an opportunity to come to Institute of Sport, Nagpur.

Tokyo 2020 Olympics torch unveiled.
- Tokyo 2020 Olympics unveiled a cherry-blossom shaped torch for the Games as the city prepares for the famed flower season to begin in coming days. The top part of the torch is shaped in the traditional emblem of the sakura, or cherry blossom using the same cutting-edge technology as in the production of Japan’s bullet trains, the organisers said.
- The shiny rose-gold torch, which is 71 centimetres (28 inches) long and weighs 1.2 kilograms (2 pounds 10 ounces), uses aluminium construction waste from temporary housing built for victims of the 2011 quake and tsunami. Fukushima was chosen as the starting point for the Olympic torch relay. Japan has dubbed the 2020 Games the “Reconstruction Olympics” and wants to showcase recovery in regions devastated by the disaster.

India bags over 350 medals at Special Olympics World Games.
- India got more over than 350 medals at the Special Olympics World Games 2019 at Abu Dhabi in UAE, making the history for the country. The current medal tally stands at 85 Gold, 153 Silver and 124 Bronze totalling 362 medals. Some of the biggest names in world music will perform at the spectacular Closing Ceremony at Zayed Sports City.

Former hockey Captain Sardar Singh appointed in Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) standing committee.
- A total of 13 Indian Olympic Association members, including former India hockey captain Sardar Singh, have been named in various Standing Committees of the Olympic Council of Asia at its 38th General Assembly in Bangkok.
- Singh has been elected in the athletes standing committee, while IOA secretary general Rajeev Mehta was named in the culture standing committee. Hockey India secretary general Mohd. Mustaque Ahmad is in the media standing committee, while Athletics Federation of India president Adille Sumariwala and Lalit Bhanot have been elected in the sports for environment and sports standing committees respectively. All the
members have been elected for a four-year term from 2019 to 2023.

**Abu Dhabi signed to host T10 League for next five years.**
- Zayed Cricket Stadium, Abu Dhabi, will be the new home of T10 cricket for the next five years, starting with the 2019 season. The first match of the T10 League 2019 will be held on October 23. In Cricket, there are two short formats so far, that is, ODI and T-20. Now, brace for T-10. T10 was first introduced to the UAE in 2017. With eight squads vying for victory in games with an explosive pace, players featured have included Chris Gayle, Shoaib Malik, Shane Watson and Pakistan captain Sarfraz Ahmed.

**BWF badminton rankings 2019: Lakshya, Riya break into top 100.**
- Young Indian shuttlers Lakshya Sen and Riya Mookerjee broke into the top-100 among Men’s and Women’s singles players in the latest World Badminton Rankings. Making a massive jump of 28 places, Lakshya Sen is placed 76th. Riya Mookerjee climbed up 19 spots to be placed 94th. In the women's singles rankings, P V Sindhu and Saina Nehwal are static with Sindhu at sixth and Saina at ninth position.
- Japan’s Kento Momota is leading the men's chart while Chinese Taipei’s Tai Tzu Ying is topping the women’s singles list. Among men, B Sai Praneeth also moved up three places to 19th. Kidambi Srikanth remains static and is the best placed Indian in the men’s rankings at seventh. He is followed by Sameer Verma (14th), H S Prannoy (24th), Subhankar Dey (43rd), Parupalli Kashyap (48th), Ajay Jayram (52nd) and Sourav Verma (53rd).

**India to face Nepal for title clash at SAFF Women's Championship.**
- In football, India clinched the SAFF Women's Championship for the fifth time in a row, defeating hosts Nepal 3-1 in the final at Biratnagar. In the first half, Dalima Chhibber of India scored the first goal of the match which was equalled by Nepal's Sabitra Bhandari at the 33rd minute. In the second half, Grace Dengmei scored the second goal at 63rd minute and Anju Tamang scored third and decisive goal in the 76th minute.

**Neeraj Chopra to lead Indian athletics team in Asian Championships.**
- Star javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra was named to lead a 39-member Indian athletics team for next month’s Asian Championships in Doha, with sprint sensation Hima Das also making the cut in 400m despite her recent below-par show. National record holders, Mohd Anas (400m), Jinson Johnson (800m and 1500m), Dharun Ayyasamy (400m hurdles), Avinash Sable (3000m steeplechase), Tajinder Pal Singh Toor (shot put) and Annu Rani (javelin throw) as well as Dutte Chand (200m) were also among those named in the team.

**President Administers Oath Of Office to Justice PC Ghose As Lokpal Chief.**
- President Ram Nath Kovind administered the oath of office to Justice Pinaki Chandra Ghose as the country’s first Lokpal. The oath was administered at a ceremony held at
Rashtrapati Bhavan. Justice Ghose, a former Supreme Court judge, was named the country’s first Lokpal, the anti-corruption ombudsman.

**Archana Kamath clinched a silver medal at Oman Open table tennis.**
- Indian paddler Archana Kamath clinched a silver medal in the under-21 women’s singles section of the Seamaster ITTF Challenge Plus 2019 Oman Open table tennis tournament, at Muscat. Ninth-seed Archana reached her first under-21 international final, where she lost to Japan’s top-seed Satsuki Odo of Japan 11-7, 11-8, 11-6. Archana caused a couple of upsets en route to the summit clash, taking out second-seed Valerie Shcherbatykh of Russia 12-10, 11-7, 11-9 in the round-of-16, and fourth-seed Mariia Tailakova of Russia 6-11, 5-11, 11-2, 11-6, 11-9 in the semifinal.

**Paralympics high jumper Girish Gowda named as Ambassador of Karnataka LS Elections.**
- Silver Medalist in Paralympic high jump, Girish Gowda has been appointed as the ambassador of Karnataka Lok Sabha Elections 2019. He represented India in men’s high jump F-42 category during 2012 Summer Paralympics games held in London, where he clinched the silver medal. With this, he became the first Indian to win medal in this category.

**Govindaraj re-elected as BFI President.**
- K. Govindaraj has been unanimously re-elected as president of the Basketball Federation of India (BFI) at its annual general body meeting. Govindaraj announced that a new six-team women’s league will be held in the next three months.

**Manu and Saurabh won gold in 12th Asian Airgun Championship in Taoyuan, Taipei.**
- Indian shooting stars Manu Bhaker and Saurabh Chaudhary smashed the qualification world record before clinching the 10m air pistol mixed team gold in the 12th Asian Airgun Championship in Taoyuan, Taipei. The Indians then went on to win the five-team final with a score of 484.8.
- Hwang Seongeun and Kim Mose of Korea won the silver with a score of 481.1 while Wu Chia Ying and Kou Kuan-Ting claimed the bronze for the host country with a score of 413.3. This win comes a month after they won the International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) World Cup stage gold in the same event in Delhi.
- Manu Bhaker and Saurabh Chaudhary broke the record set by Russians Vitalina Batsarashkina and Artem Chernousov at the European Championships held recently.

**Infosys joined hands with Roland-Garros to provide digital solution for French Open tennis tournament.**
- IT company Infosys joined hands with Roland-Garros with a three-year partnership agreement to provide a digital solution for French Open tennis tournament, also called Roland-Garros. This agreement will enhance the game by providing fans, players and coaches with a new experience in digital technologies such as artificial intelligence, big data and analytics, mobility, virtual and augmented reality.
Four sports including Breakdancing get provisional green light for Paris Olympics 2024

• Breakdancing was among four sports given a provisional green light for inclusion in the Paris 2024 Games by the International Olympic Committee (IOC). The three other sports namely - Surfing, Skateboarding and sport climbing also got approval for provisional inclusion in Summer Olympics 2024 from IOC.

APPOINTMENTS & RESIGNATION

Ajay Narayan Jha became Member of the 15th Finance Commission.

• Shri Ajay Narayan Jha joined the 15th Finance Commission as its Member in place of Shri Shaktikanta Das resigned as a Member of the Commission after being appointed as Governor of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
• A 1982 batch IAS officer of Manipur cadre, he was the Finance Secretary to the Government of India and served as Secretary to the 14th Finance Commission, headed by former RBI Governor, Shri Y.V. Reddy.
• The 15th Finance Commission was constituted by a Presidential Order in November 2017 under the Chairmanship of Shri N. K. Singh to decide the formula for devolution of revenue between Centre and States.

Naresh Goyal agreed to step down as Jet Airways chairman

• This comes weeks after reports suggested that the cash-strapped Jet airline has agreed to most of the conditions set by its second-largest shareholder Etihad for its revival.

• Etihad had agreed to invest in Jet Airways if Goyal stepped down from the board.
• Etihad Airways owns a 24% stake in Jet Airways
• Jet airline had a gross debt of ₹8,411 crore as of September-end, including aircraft debt of ₹1,851 crore

Ravneet Gill is appointed as MD and CEO of Yes Bank

• Ravneet Gill, Former India chief of Deutsche Bank, took charge as the Managing Director (MD) and chief executive officer of private sector lender Yes Bank. He will have a three-year term.
• Mr. Gill succeeds Rana Kapoor, the co-founder of the bank, whose term ended on January 31, 2019. Mr. Ajai Kumar, one of the board members, was appointed as the interim CEO after Mr. Kapoor’s term ended. Yes Bank decided to search for a new chief executive after the RBI declined to extend Mr. Kapoor’s tenure beyond January 31, 2019, though the board had endorsed a three-year extension.

Air Marshal Raghunath Nambiar takes over as Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief of Western Air Command

• Air Marshal Raghunath Nambiar, who played a prominent role in the Kargil Operations has taken over as the Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief of Western Air Command of the Indian Air Force.
• The Air Marshal is an alumnus of the National Defence Academy and was commissioned in the Flying Branch of the Air Force as a Fighter Pilot in June 1981.
• The Air Marshal reviewed a ceremonial Guard of Honour yesterday and outlined his vision for the Western Air Command. He exhorted all personnel to work with zeal and enthusiasm so as to enable Western Air Command to fulfil the objectives of the IAF and the nation at large.
• The Air Marshal is an Experimental Test Pilot and has flown about 42 types of aircraft.

Macky Sall has been re-elected as the President of Senegal
• Macky Sall has been re-elected as the President of Senegal. He won the re-election with 58.27% of votes cast. Under the election system of Senegal if a candidate wins more than 50% votes there would be no second round voting and he would be announced the winner.

Vedanta has appointed Ajay Kapur as the CEO of its aluminium and power business
• Vedanta has appointed Ajay Kapur as the Chief Executive Officer of its aluminium and power business. He joins Vedanta from Ambuja Cements where he was the MD and CEO for its India business.
• Mr. Kapur brings with him an experience of 31 years across business verticals. He would drive key priorities for the aluminium business, which include a strong focus on volume and cost and improving efficiencies, among others.

Sheikh Ahmad re-elected as President of Olympic Council of Asia
• Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad Al-Sabah was officially re-elected for an eighth term as President of the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA).
• He won a new five-year term until 2024.
• Tsunekazu Takeda, President of the Japanese Olympic Committee, also retained his position as a vice-president.

Kummanam Rajasekharan Resigns as Mizoram Governor
• Mizoram Governor Kummanam Rajasekharan stepped down from his post. Governor of Assam, Prof. Jagdish Mukhi, has been given temporary charge of the Aizawl Raj Bhavan.
• Mr. Rajasekharan, who was former State president of the BJP in Kerala, sworn in as Governor of Mizoram in May 2018.

Santosh Jha appointed as The Next Ambassador Of India to the Republic Of Uzbekistan.
• Santosh Jha presently Deputy Chief of Mission, Embassy of India, Washington appointed as the next Ambassador of India to the Republic of Uzbekistan. Presently, Mr Jha working as Deputy Chief of Mission, Embassy of India, Washington DC USA.

Kotak Mahindra Bank has appointed KVS Manian, Gaurang Shah as board directors.
• KVS Manian and Gaurang Shah appointed as Kotak Mahindra Bank’s whole-time directors for a three-year term effective from the date of approval from the Reserve Bank of India. He is currently working as the president – corporate, an investment bank and Gaurang Shah is the
Pinaki Chandra Ghose named as India's first Lokpal.
• Pinaki Chandra Ghose is likely to be India's first anti-corruption ombudsman or Lokpal. He is the former Supreme Court judge and current member of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC). The decision was made by the PM-led high-level selection committee. Mr. Ghose was appointed as judge of the Calcutta High Court in 1997 and went on to become Chief Justice of Andhra Pradesh before his elevation to the Supreme Court in 2013. The Lokpal Act, which was passed in 2013 after a nationwide anti-corruption movement.
• The act provides for setting up of Lokpal at the centre and Lokayuktas in the States to probe corruption complaints against top functionaries and public servants. A Lokpal is an anti-corruption authority or ombudsman who represents the public interest. The Lokpal has jurisdiction over all Members of Parliament, central government employees, including the Prime Minister and the Chief Ministers in cases of corruption.

Goa Speaker Pramod Sawant sworn-in as new Chief Minister of Goa.
• Pramod Sawant (45), former Speaker of Goa legislative Assembly and MLA from Sankhelim in North Goa was sworn-in as 13th Chief Minister of Goa, succeeding Manohar Parrikar, who died on March 17 after a prolonged battle with advanced pancreatic cancer. Sudin alias Ramkrishna Dhavlikar of Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party (MGP) and Vijai Sardesai of Goa Forward Party were sworn in as Deputy Chief Ministers. Nine other leaders also took oaths as cabinet ministers.

Japanese Olympic chief quits amid corruption allegations scandal.
• Tsunekazu Takeda, the head of Japan's Olympic Committee (JOC), is stepping down over corruption allegations relating to the awarding of the 2020 Games to Tokyo. Takeda is being investigated by French prosecutors who are looking into claims that a €2 million (£1.7 million) bribe was paid to secure Tokyo's winning bid for the Olympic Games. Takeda was head of the Tokyo bidding committee when it was awarded the Games in 2013, defeating rival bids from Madrid and Istanbul.

Kazakhstan's 1st and only President resigns after 29 yrs in power.
• Nursultan Nazarbayev, Kazakhstan's first and only President, announced his resignation on March 19 after 29 years in power. He has been Kazakhstan's President since 1990 and was formally elected in 1991 after the fall of the Soviet Union. He received 98 percent of the votes. Nazarbayev would continue to chair the Security Council and remain the leader of the Nur Otan party. Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, speaker of the upper house of parliament, will take over as the country's acting president for the remainder of his term in line with the constitution.
Vice Admiral Karambir Singh is the next Chief of Indian Navy.
• The government of India appointed Vice-Admiral Karambir Singh, presently Flag Officer Commander-in-Chief (FOC-in-C) Eastern Naval Command as next Chief of the Naval Staff with effect from May 31, 2019. The present Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Sunil Lanba retires on the same day. Born on November 03, 1959, Vice Admiral Karambir Singh was commissioned on July 01, 1980 into the Executive Branch of the Indian Navy. Vice Admiral Karambir Singh is a graduate of the Defence Services Staff College, Wellington.

Tata Coffee Appoints Chacko Purackal Thomas as MD And CEO.
• Tata Coffee announced the appointment of Chacko Purackal Thomas as the managing director and chief executive officer. He will replace Sanjiv Sarin. He will assume the charge from April 1, 2019.

Jet Airways founder Naresh Goyal resigned his position.
• Jet Airways Founders Naresh Goyal and wife Anita Goyal have stepped down from the board of the cash-strapped airline. With this, Naresh Goyal ceases to be Chairman. Director Kevin Knight has also resigned. The board has accepted their resignations. The board also approved the issue of 11.4 crore equity shares to the lenders upon conversion of Re 1 of the outstanding debt. Lenders will infuse up to Rs 1,500 crore via debt instruments.

AIBA President Gafur Rahimov resigns.
• he Amateur International Boxing Federation (AIBA) President Gafur Rahimov announced his resignation. He cited the reason as the political based discussions were harming the organizations progress. Rahimov will be replaced by an interim president. Rahimov was elected in November 2018 despite being on the U.S. Treasury Department’s sanctions list “for providing material support” to a criminal organization.

Election Commission appoints K K Sharma as a Spl. Central Police Observer for LS polls in West Bengal, Jharkhand
• Election Commission of India appointed former Director General of Border Security Force K K Sharma as a Special Central Police Observer for Lok Sabha polls in West Bengal and Jharkhand. Mr Sharma will oversee the deployment and other security-related issues in these States.

Shambhu S Kumaran appointed as the next Ambassador of India to the Kingdom of Morocco
• Shambhu S Kumaran a 1995 batch of Indian Foreign Service officer appointed as next India’s Ambassador to the Kingdom of Morocco.
• Shambhu S Kumaran a 1995 batch of Indian Foreign Service officer appointed as next India’s Ambassador to Kingdom of Morocco.
• He will succeed Dr. Kheya Bhattacharya. About Kingdom of Morocco Capital: Rabat Currency: Moroccan dirham Points of interest: Majorelle Garden, Bahia Palace Spoken languages: Moroccan Arabic; Berber; ... Official
languages: Arabic; Berber     Foreign Languages: French; English; Spanish.

Maruti Suzuki board re-appointed Kenichi Ayukawa as MD and CEO for 3 years.
• This would be Kenichi Ayukawa's third three-year term as MD and CEO of Maruti. He first took over as MD and CEO of the company in March 2013 as Shinzo Nakanishi had attained the age of retirement. He played a major role in expanding the company's market share beyond 50 per cent.

Azali Assoumani re-elected as the President of Comoros.
• Azali Assoumani was re-elected as the President of Comoros after defeating his closest rival, Mahamadou Ahamada in the election held by the electoral commission of the Indian Ocean Archipelago. 66 years old, Azali Assoumani who first took office in 2016, was credited with 60.77 percent votes whereas Mahamadou Ahamada got only 14.62 percent votes.

Vice Admiral MA Hampiholi, AVSM, NM to be designated as Director General Naval Operations (DGNO)
• Vice Admiral MA Hampiholi, AVSM NM has been appointed as Director General Naval Operations (DGNO). He will succeed Satish Namdeo Ghormade. He was commissioned in the Executive Branch of the Indian Navy on 1st July 1985.
• he Flag Officer has experience as Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) specialist officer on-board INS Himgiri, Agray,and Ganga. He has experience as a Commanding officer in INS Nashak (missile vessel), INS Magar (Landing Ship Tank (Large)) and INS Talwar (stealth Frigate), Second-in-Command of INS Khukri (Missile Corvette).
• He commanded the National Coast Guard, Mauritius for two years (2003 – 05) and served as Commanding Officer of INS Mandovi.

Manohar Ajgaonkar, Vijai Sardesai designated as Goas Deputy Chief Ministers.
• Goa's Tourism Minister Manohar Ajgaonkar has been appointed as the Deputy Chief Minister of Goa. He switched to Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) from Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party, on March 27, 2019. At present he is the second deputy chief minister along with Goa Forward Party (GFP) leader and state minister Vijai Sardesai. Both will succeed Sudin Dhavalikar.

BANKING & ECONOMICS
RBI fined 7 banks for delayed SWIFT implementation
• The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has imposed a penalty on 7 Banks for delayed implementation of SWIFT-related operational controls. It fined Rs.4 crore onKarnataka Bank, Rs.3 crore on City Union Bank, Rs.2 crore on DCB Bank and Rs.1 crore on Karur Vysya Bank Ltd., Rs. 4 crore on Indian Bank, Rs.3 crore on IOB and Rs.3 crore onUnited Bank of India for the same violations.
• SWIFT is the global messaging software used for transactions by financial entities. SWIFT stands for Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication.
• RBI had directed banks on time-bound implementation and
strengthening of SWIFT-related operational controls after the Rs.14,000 crore fraud in Punjab National Bank.

**SBI and Hitachi Payment Services launched SBI PSPL to establish digital payments platform in India**
- State Bank of India (SBI) and Hitachi Payment Services Pvt Ltd, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Hitachi Ltd, launched their merchant-acquiring joint venture, SBI Payment Services Pvt Ltd. (SBIPPSPL), for establishing a digital payments platform for India and other countries in the region, in Mumbai.
  - It will facilitate the expansion of the digital payments landscape in India via its digital payments platform and offer innovative products to suit the requirements of all segments of merchants by leveraging the brand value and vast distribution network of SBI, and bring Artificial Intelligence and other technological capabilities of Hitachi to SBI Payment Services.

**National Housing Bank proposes stricter regulations for Housing Finance Companies**
- National Housing Bank (NHB), a mortgage sector regulator and a fully owned subsidiary of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has decided to impose stricter regulations on the Housing Finance Companies (HFCs) to prevent them from falling prey to liquidity and credit risks.
  - Following proposals have been put forward:
    - Increasing the capital adequacy ratio (CAR) of these companies from 12% to 15%, in a phased manner by 31st March 2022. This will be accomplished by increasing the minimum CAR to 13% by 31st March 2020, 14% by 31st March 2021 and 15% by 2022.
    - Bringing down the public borrowings to 12 times of the Net Owned Fund (NOF) from the existing 16 times, by March 2022.
    - Implementing graded reduction in the limit on the overall borrowings of Housing Finance Companies (HFCs) from 16 times of Net Owned Fund (NOF) to 14 times of Net Owned Fund (NOF) by 31st March 2020, 13 times of Net Owned Fund (NOF) by 31st March 2021 and 12 times of Net Owned Fund (NOF) by 31st March 2022.

**World Bank to provide Rs 2,200 crores for a healthcare project to Andhra Pradesh.**
- The World Bank decided to provide a loan of Rs. 2200 crores ($328-million) to Andhra Pradesh for implementation of the AP Health Systems Strengthening Project (APHSSP).
  - The loan agreement was signed between the Government of India, government of Andhra Pradesh and the World Bank.
  - The agreement was signed by Bandana Preyashi, director, Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance (GoI), Poonam Malakondaiah, Special Chief Secretary (Medical and Health, AP government) and Mohini Kak and Kari L Hurt, representatives of World Bank in India.
  - The project aims to improve the quality of healthcare, availability and accessibility of primary health services to the majority population of the state.
• The quality of healthcare delivery will be enhanced through National Quality Assurance Standards (NQAS) certifications for Community Health Centres (CHCs) and Primary Health Centres (PHCs).

United Bank, HDFC Life sign bancassurance deal
• United Bank of India, one of India’s premier Nationalized Banks signed a Bancassurance deal with HDFC Life Insurance Company. United Bank has a strong presence in rural and semi-urban areas with over 2,000 branches and offices while HDFC Life is India’s largest non-bank promoted private life insurer.
• Through this partnership, United Bank of India’s customers will be able to take advantage of HDFC Life’s expertise in Life Insurance products, distribution and customer service.
• The partnership promises to improve the overall business of both organizations.
• For the Bank’s customers, the choice of Life Insurance products will be a valuable addition.
• It will increase customer satisfaction and eventually lead to customer delight.

DBS plans to triple balance sheet size in 5 years as a WoS
• Singapore’s DBS Bank plans to grow its balance sheet size threefold in five years. DBS recently started operations in India as a wholly owned subsidiary (WoS). The bank is expected to close the financial year with a balance sheet size of Rs.50,000 crore.
• In 2018, the bank infused Rs.1,800 crore capital while transforming itself into a WoS. The total capital of the bank now stands at Rs.7,700 crore, with a capital adequacy ratio of more than 19%. The loan book, which is about Rs. 20,000 crore, is predominantly made up of corporate loans while the share of retail is less than 10%. The deposit base of the bank is about Rs. 30,000 crore.
• DBS aims to grow the retail so that it contributes 30% of the income and profitability over the next few years.

SBI to link the interest rate to RBIs repo rate
• State Bank of India is to link the interest rate it offers on savings account deposits to the Reserve Bank of India’s repo rate, an external benchmark. SBI has become the first domestic bank to do such linking. By doing so, the bank will effectively link all loan rates to an external benchmark either directly or indirectly, thereby attempting to speed up the transmission of any changes in the benchmark monetary policy rate to depositors and borrowers.
• The following changes are announced by SBI:
  ♦ Savings accounts with deposits above Rs.1 lakh would be priced at 2.75% below the prevailing repo rate of 6.25%
  ♦ Cash credit accounts and overdraft facilities over Rs.1 lakh would be priced at 2.25% over the repo rate
  ♦ For all other floating rate products, including retail and corporate loans, the impact of SBI’s decision to link savings account deposit rates to the repo rate will be felt indirectly
  ♦ For savings account holders with balances up to Rs.1 lakh and borrowers with cash credit and
overdraft limits up to Rs.1 lakh, interest rates will remain fixed.

**Korea Exim Bank to give Rs 4,100 crore loan for Vizag Metro.**
- Korea Exim Bank has come forward to extend a Rs 4,100 crore loan for Visakhapatnam Metro Rail project. The three-corridor Vizag Metro would be built over a stretch of 42.55 km at a cost of Rs 8,300 crore. About Korea Eximbank:
  ♦ Also called Export–Import Bank of Korea
  ♦ It is the official export credit agency of South Korea
  ♦ Founded: 1976
  ♦ Headquarters: Seoul, South Korea.

**RBI to become World's 10th largest holder of gold.**
- According to data provided by the World Gold Council (WGC), India has the 11th largest gold reserve and the current holding pegged at 607 tonnes. The Netherlands holds the 10th position with 612.5 tonnes, or just about 5.5 tonnes ahead of RBI.
- The top spot is occupied by US gold reserves of 8,133.5 tonnes, followed by Germany with 3,369.7 tonnes. International Monetary Fund (IMF) ranks third on the list with total gold reserves of 2,814 tonnes.

**Bank of Baroda becomes one of the first PSBs to launch creche/day-care facility for employees children.**
- Bank of Baroda become one of the first public sector banks to launch a crèche/child day-care facility for children of its employees.
- The day-care facility has been launched at its Mumbai corporate office in Bandra Kurla Complex and is being mulled further on being implemented at the head office in Vadodara, Gujarat.
  • The bank will bear 60% of the cost incurred every month and rest 40% will be borne by the parents.

**SEBI withdrew 20 percent on investments by FPI in corporate bonds.**
- Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), the markets regulator, withdrew the 20% limit on investments by Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) in corporate bonds of an entity. SEBI withdrew the restriction in accordance with a circular issued by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
  • In 2018 June, the Securities and Exchange Board of India had mandated that no FPI shall have an exposure of more than 20% of its corporate bond portfolio to a single corporate. However, in February RBI lifted the restriction in view of market feedback. To give effect to the directions of the RBI, SEBI said provisions of its June 2018 circulars with respect to exposure of more than 20% stands withdrawn with immediate effect.

**PNB Sanctions Loans worth Rs 689 cr to 1,600 MSMEs Via Online Portal.**
- State-owned Punjab National Bank (PNB) sanctioned loans worth Rs 689...
crore to over 1,600 Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) through the PSB loaning 59minutes.com portal as part of its effort to promote such industries. Under the Mudra Yojana, the bank has offered loan to over 2.69 lakh small entrepreneurs this fiscal About Bank of Baroda Founder: Dyal Singh Majithia, Lala Lajpat Rai Headquarters: New Delhi

**Bol raised Rs.660 crore by selling shares to employees**
- State-owned Bank of India (Bol) raised Rs.660.80 crore by issuing shares to employees under Employee Share Purchase Scheme (ESPS).
- The bank issued 6,25,52,188 shares of Rs.10 each to eligible employees. The Bank offered a discount of 24.28% on the applicable price to the employees and about 94.70% of total employees participated.

**HDFC Bank becomes third Indian firm to cross Rs 6 lakh crore in value.**
- HDFC Bank crossed the Rs. 6 lakh crore market capitalisation mark for the first time on March 13, becoming only the third Indian company to achieve the milestone.
- Reliance Industries is the most valued Indian company with a market value of Rs.8.50 lakh crore, followed by TCS at Rs. 7.50 lakh crore.

**About HDFC bank:**
- HDFC Bank is India’s largest private sector lender by assets.
- CEO: Aditya Puri
- Headquarters: Mumbai
- Founded: August 1994, India

**RBI to inject rupee liquidity through Forex swap.**
- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has decided to inject rupee liquidity into the system through long-term foreign exchange buy/sell swap, a first-of-its-kind instrument, used for liquidity management. The RBI would conduct dollar-rupee buy/sell swap auction of $5 billion for a three-year tenor on March 26.
- The U.S. dollar amount mobilised through this auction would also reflect in RBI’s foreign exchange reserves for the tenor of the swap while also reflecting in RBI’s forward liabilities. This move of RBI can lower the dependence on open market operations (OMO) which have been a significant amount of the overall borrowing as higher OMOs can distort the rates curve.

**Russia releases coin commemorating annexation of Crimea.**
- A new coin that features the Crimea or Kerch Strait Bridge released by Russia’s central bank, to mark Crimea’s reunification with Russia. Two million new five ruble (about $0.08, €0.07) coins were pressed which depict an outline of the peninsula which was annexed by Russia in 2014.

**RBI categorises IDBI Bank as private sector lender**
- IDBI Bank has been categorised as a private sector bank for regulatory purposes with effect from January 21, 2019.
- This follows Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) acquiring 51 per cent of the total paid-up equity share capital of the bank. In April 2005, IDBI Bank was categorised
under a new sub-group, ‘other public sector banks,’ by the RBI.
• The Bank has a high proportion of bad loans. In another release, the RBI announced that the State Bank of India, ICICI Bank and HDFC Bank will continue to be identified as Domestic Systemically Important Banks (D-SIBs). D-SIB means that a bank is ‘too big to fail’.

State Bank of India launched YONO Cash for cardless withdrawal of cash.
• State Bank of India launched ‘YONO Cash’ for cardless withdrawal of cash at over 16,500 SBI ATMs across the country. With this facility, customers can initiate the cash withdrawal process on the YONO app and set a six-digit YONO Cash PIN for the transaction. They will also get a six-digit reference number for the transaction on their registered mobile number via SMS. The withdrawal has to be completed in the next 30 minutes at the nearest ATM. The initiative will also address their concern of using debit card at the ATMs for cash withdrawals by eliminating possible risk associated with it.

RBI says Forex swap for liquidity has been received well.
• The recent decision of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to inject rupee liquidity through long-term foreign exchange (forex) swap, a first of its kind in liquidity management policy, has been received well. On 26th March auction the feedback of the forex swap will be received. The central bank will conduct a dollar-rupee buy/sell swap auction of $5 billion for a three-year tenor, on March 26.

Hyundai and Kia to invest USD 300 million in Ola.
• Hyundai Motor Company and Kia Motors Corporation together plans to invest $300 million in cab aggregator Ola. This will be the biggest combined investment by the two firms of the South Korean Hyundai Motor Group. As part of the strategic collaboration, the three companies will work on developing unique fleet and mobility solutions, besides building India-specific electric vehicles and infrastructure.
• Hyundai Motor Group expects to accelerate its transition from a ‘car manufacturer’ into a ‘Smart Mobility Solutions Provider’, as the partnership’s initiatives will allow it to engage in all aspects across the entire mobility value chain, including vehicle production, fleet operation, and mobility services.

GST Council approves transition plan for new GST rates.
• GST council approved a transition plan for new goods and services tax rates on residential properties under which developers of under-
construction buildings may either opt to shift to the revised lower rates without input tax credit or stick to the previous rates. Revenue Secretary Ajay Bhushan Pandey told media that for housing projects launched on or after the first of April this year, the developers will have to adhere to the new GST rates recommended by the council last month.

• Developers can also opt for different GST options for separate buildings in a project depending on if construction started before or after 31st March this year. Mr Pandey added that there will be no revenue loss to the government due to the new GST structure for under-construction housing.

South Indian Bank to issue Basel III compliant bonds.

• South Indian Bank plans to raise up to Rs.250 crore by issuing Basel III compliant bonds. The Committee approved the information memorandum for issuance of rated, unsecured, redeemable, non-convertible, Basel III compliant, lower tier 2 bonds up to Rs.150 crore with an option to retain an over-subscription aggregating up to Rs.100 crore, aggregating to total issue size of Rs.250 crore.

Vodafone Idea approves terms for Rs. 25,000 Crore worth Rights Issue at 60 percent discount.

• India’s largest telecom firm Vodafone Idea announced its board has approved ₹25,000 crore rights issue at a discount of around 60% to the current share prices. Vodafone Group and the Aditya Birla Group would contribute ₹11,000 crore and ₹7,250 crore, respectively. The issue will increase the number of Vodafone Idea shares by 229%. Vodafone Idea stock fell as much as 7.6 per cent to Rs. 29.60, its steepest intraday fall in almost two months.

Mizoram Assembly passed Mizoram Maintenance of Household Registers Bill, 2019 to detect illegal foreigners

• Mizoram Assembly passed a new bill named Mizoram Maintenance of Household Registers Bill, 2019 with an objective to detect foreigners illegally residing in Mizoram, who takes away the benefits of the citizen of Mizoram. As per the Bill, the Assembly will create the 2 registers namely one for the citizen residents and another for non-citizen residents of a village/area/town. This register comprises the name, details and passport size photographs of every individual in the state.

Fitch Cuts India GDP Growth Forecast For FY20 To 6.8%.

• Fitch Ratings cut India’s economic growth forecast for the next financial year starting April 1, to 6.8% from its previous estimate of 7%, on weaker than expected momentum in the economy. The rating agency also cut growth forecasts for FY20 and FY21 to 7% from 7.3% and 7.1% from 7.3%, respectively.

Defence Ministry clears proposal to buy 10 lakh 'Made in India' hand grenades for Army.

• The Rs 500 crore proposal comes shortly after the Defence Ministry cleared the acquisition of assault rifles and signed a joint venture with Russia to manufacture AK-203 rifles for the
infantry units of the Indian Army. The new hand grenades will replace the existing inventory, HE-36 grenades manufactured by the Ordnance Factory Board.

- The multi-mode grenades have been developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO). Recently, the government also signed a contract worth Rs 700 crore for procurement of 70,000 Sig Sauer assault rifles with a US manufacturer.

**RBI denies IDBI Banks proposal to name change.**
- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has turned down IDBI Bank’s proposal to change its name following the transfer of a controlling 51% stake to LIC, insurance behemoth, from the government of India. The board of IDBI Bank had, last month, sought the RBI’s approval for a change in the name of the lender to either LIC IDBI Bank or LIC Bank following the takeover by Life Insurance Corporation (LIC). However, RBI did not elaborate on the reasons for denial by the regulator for changing the name.

**PFC to buy 52.63 percent govt shares in REC for Rs 14,500 crore by March-end.**
- State-owned Power Finance Corporation (PFC) will acquire the entire 52.63 per cent shares of the government in REC for Rs 14,500 crore by the month-end, a move that will help the centre to meet its disinvestment target.
- REC Limited is a public Infrastructure Finance Company in India’s power sector. The company is a Public Sector Undertaking and finances and promotes rural electrification projects across India. The government proposes to raise Rs 80,000 crore from disinvestment during the fiscal ending March 19 and has so far raised Rs 56,473.32 crore. With completion of PFC-REC deal, the amount will increase to over Rs 70,000 crore.

**State Bank of India Signed MoU with Bank of China For Business Opportunities.**
- State Bank of India has signed a pact with the Bank of China to boost business opportunities. SBI signed an MoU to enhance business synergies between both the banks. Through this pact, both SBI and BoC will gain direct access to their respective markets of operation. Both banks’ clients will be able to use the vast combined network to expand their businesses abroad.

**Exim Bank gives USD 83 million line of credit to Congo to finance 3 solar power projects.**
- Export-Import Bank of India (Exim Bank) signed a loan agreement on behalf of the government of USD 83.11 million to Congo for financing three solar power projects in the central African country. It aims to provide support for financing three solar photovoltaic power projects with a total capacity of 35 megawatts in the three provinces — Karawa, Mbandaka, and Lusambo.

**RBI Governor called for permanent status to Finance Commission.**
- Reserve Bank of India (RBI) governor Shaktikanta Das called for permanent status to Finance Commission. RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das is also the member of
the fifteenth finance commission. The permanent status will ensure consistencies between finance commissions so that there is some certainty in the flow of funds to states.
• The permanent status will also provide for continuity between the successive finance commissions. The establishment of the finance commission through permanent status will also enable it to address issues arising from the implementation of the recommendations of the finance commission during the intervening period.
• The RBI governor also called on for a robust expenditure planning without compromising on fiscal consolidation as fiscal federalism gathers momentum in the era of uniform goods and services tax (GST). The planning is to address the socio-economic challenges without diluting the goals of fiscal consolidation.

SBI raised Rs.1, 251 crore via tier I bonds.
• State Bank of India (SBI) announced it had raised Rs.1,251.30 crore by issuing Basel III-compliant bonds. The Committee of Directors for Capital Raising, at its meeting on 22 March 2019, deliberated and accorded approval to allot 12,513 non-convertible, taxable, perpetual, subordinated, unsecured Basel III-compliant additional tier-I bonds, for inclusion in additional tier-I capital of the bank aggregating to Rs.1,251.30 crore. The bonds with a face value of Rs.10 lakh each bears a coupon rate of 9.45% per annum payable annually with a call option after 5 years or any anniversary date thereafter.

• The bonds were subscribed on 22nd March.

Forex swap auction received USD 16.31 billion by RBI.
• The first Forex swap auction by Reserve Bank of India (RBI), which was aimed at infusing primary liquidity, received $16.31 billion bidding by banks. In turn, RBI infused Rs.34,561 crore rupee liquidity.
• There is the expectation that RBI would conduct more such auctions as there is an appetite in the market, and reduce dependence on open market purchases of bonds.
• RBI has infused a significant amount of liquidity in the current fiscal through open market operations (OMOs).

RBI fined Rs 2 Crore penalty on PNB.
• The Reserve Bank of India has fined a penalty of Rs 2 crore on Punjab National Bank for non-compliance of regulatory directions with regard to SWIFT operations. SWIFT (Society For Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunications) is a global messaging software used for sharing information on inter-bank transactions by financial entities.

Demat share transfer to be effective from 1st April.
• Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) said that the transfer of shares of listed companies can be done only in dematerialised form from April 1 but investors are not barred from holding shares in the physical form.
• In December 2018, the capital markets watchdog extended the deadline for transfer of shares of listed
companies only in dematerialised (demat) form to April 1.
• Now, it has been decided not to extend the deadline. The decision that the transfer of shares has to be compulsorily in demat form was taken way back in March 2018. SEBI also said that the measure would come into effect from April 1, 2019.

**Bank of Baroda to launch Baroda Kisan.**
• Public sector Bank, Bank of Baroda has made an announcement about developing an agri-digital platform called 'Baroda Kisan'. The platform is to provide solutions for all major agricultural requirements. The project aims to provide a holistic approach towards solving agricultural plights by means of providing reliable and customised information, inputs for use, the convenience of renting farm equipment and market linkage for sale of agri-produces. Bank of Baroda has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Six companies viz.
  • Skymet Weather Services, Weather Risk Management Services, BigHaat, Agrostar India, EM3 Agri Services and Poorti Agri Services for the project. The agri-digital platform will be executed by IT Centre of Excellence (ITCoE) of Bank of Baroda in partnership with IBM India. Baroda Kisan is aimed at digitization of digital services.

**RBI to issue Regulatory sandbox.**
• The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is set to issue guidelines within two months for the fintech companies to test their new products on a small group of users before scaling up. A Sandbox is a framework set up by a regulator that allows FinTech start-ups to conduct live experiments in a controlled environment under supervision.
• Regulatory sandbox will provide a well-defined space for the companies to develop new products. It allows for experimenting with their products and fintech solutions. In case of failure, the consequences would be contained and the reasons will be analysed for betterment.

**Deposits ordinance does not cover gold schemes.**
• The Centre’s recent ordinance banning unregulated monthly deposit schemes will not affect the ongoing monthly schemes operated by jewellery and chit fund firms.
• Called the ‘Banning of Unregulated Deposit Scheme Ordinance’, it was promulgated by President Ram Nath Kovind during the last week of February 2019 to save gullible investors from losing money to Ponzi and fake deposit schemes.
• The ordinance makes such unregulated deposit schemes punishable, among other things. Ordinance: Ordinances are laws that are promulgated by the President of India on the recommendation of the Union Cabinet. They can only be issued when Parliament is not in session.
• They enable the Indian government to take immediate legislative action. Ordinances cease to operate either if Parliament does not approve of them within six weeks of reassembly, or if disapproving resolutions are passed by both Houses. It is also compulsory
for a session of Parliament to be held within six months.

**DAYS & DATE**

**International Women's Day 2019**
- International Women's Day is celebrated across the world on March 8.
- Official UN Theme of International Women's Day 2019: Think Equal, Build Smart, Innovate for Change.
- National Women's Day of India was observed on 13 February, on the date of birth of India's first women governor Sarojini Naidu.

**World Kidney Day 2019 is observed on 14th March.**
- World Kidney Day 2019 is observed on 14th March. The theme of the World Kidney Day 2019 is Kidney Health for Everyone Everywhere. Second Thursday of March every year is observed as World Kidney Day every year as a global health awareness campaign focusing on the importance of the kidneys and reducing the frequency and impact of kidney disease and its associated health problems worldwide.

**World Consumer Rights Day is observed on 15th March**
- The consumer movement marks 15th March with World Consumer Rights Day every year, as a means of raising global awareness about consumer rights and needs. The theme for World Consumer Rights Day 2019 is ‘Trusted Smart Products’.
- The day demands that the rights of all consumers are respected and protected, and to protest against market abuses and social injustices which undermine those rights. World Consumer Rights Day was inspired by President John F Kennedy, who sent a special message to the US Congress on 15th March 1962, in which he formally addressed the issue of consumer rights. He was the first world leader to do so.
- This World Consumers Rights Day highlights what consumers want and need from a connected world. This year over 100 members in over 90 countries are coming together to mark World Consumer Rights Day.

**International Day of Happiness is celebrated on 20th March.**
- International Day of Happiness is celebrated every year on March 20. The theme for IDH 2019 is ‘Happier Together’. This year the focus will be on what we have in common, rather than what divides us. It is celebrated by all 193 UN Member States. Since 2013, the United Nations has celebrated the International Day of Happiness as a way to recognize the importance of happiness in the lives of people around the world.
- It was conceptualized and founded by philanthropist, activist, statesman, and prominent United Nations special advisor Jayme Illien to inspire, mobilize, and advance the global happiness movement.

**World Down Syndrome Day observed on March 21.**
- Recognizing the need to support people suffering from Down Syndrome, the WHO (world Health
Organization) on 20th December 2007, recognized March 21st as ‘World Down Syndrome Day’. Following the decision of WHO, the United Nations General Assembly also designated the same date as “World Down Syndrome Day” on 19th December 2011.
• Since 2012 “World Down Syndrome Day” has been observed annually on 21st March. World Down Syndrome Day 2019 theme is “Leave no one behind”. Down Syndrome is a genetic disorder causing a delayed physical and mental growth in individuals.
• Children or adults suffering from Down Syndrome have lower IQ and learning ability along with characteristic facial features. A young adult with Down Syndrome has an average IQ of 50; equivalent to that of a normal 9 years old child.

World Water Day is celebrated on 22nd March.
• The World Water Day designated by the United Nations is celebrated on 22nd March every year. The first World Water Day was commemorated in 1993. The theme for World Water Day 2019 is ‘Leaving no one behind’. This is an adaptation of the central promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: as sustainable development progresses, everyone must benefit. Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6) aims to ensure availability and sustainable management of water for all by 2030. To ‘leave no one behind' focus on taking efforts towards people including those who have been marginalized or ignored. Regulatory and legal frameworks must recognise the right to water for all people, and sufficient funding must be fairly and effectively targeted at those who need it most.

World Theatre Day celebrated on 27th March.
• World Theatre Day celebrated annually on the 27th March by ITI Centres and the international theatre community.
• It was initiated in 1961 by the International Theatre Institute (ITI). On this day several national and international theatre events are organised.
• A celebrated figure of the theatre is also invited by ITI who speaks and motivates people about the theme of Theatre, a culture of peace and circulate the message in the whole world.
• This year that is in 2019 Carlos CELDRAN from Cuba, is an award - winning and highly esteemed theatre director, playwright, academic and professor, living and working in Havana, Cuba and present his work all over the world has been selected for the message 2019.

World Purple day Observed on March 26.
• Epilepsy Awareness Day which is commonly known as World Purple Day is observed on March 26 in order to encourage the people to wear the colour to increase the awareness of Epilepsy. Nearly 50 million people in the world are having Epilepsy as per the World Health Organization (WHO) which does not have a known cause.
• The day was first observed in 2008 in Nova Scotia, Canada to encourage awareness and cast away the myths on the general public about the
decease. The mission of the day is to share stories and start conversations about epilepsy and to raise funds.

India & Bolivia Sign 8 MoUs In Various Fields Including Culture, Mining, Space.
- President Ram Nath Kovind conferred with the highest State honour of Bolivia, “Condor de Los Andes en el Grado de Gran Collar” during his visit to Bolivia. President of Bolivia Evo Morales awarded him the Honour at a function held in Santa Cruz.
- On the second day of President’s three-day visit to Bolivia, India and Bolivia signed eight MoUs in the fields of culture, Visa waiver arrangement for diplomats, exchange between diplomatic academies, mining, space, traditional medicine, establishment of Centre of Excellence in IT and Bi-Oceanic Railway project.
- India offered a 100 million US Dollar Line of Credit to Bolivia for financing development projects. Both countries also agreed on the need for reform of the UN Security Council to make it reflective of contemporary realities. President is in Bolivia on the 2nd leg of his 3 nation tour.

India and Bolivia signed for the development and industrial use of lithium.
- India and Bolivia have signed an agreement for the development and industrial use of lithium during the state visit of the President Ram Nath Kovind to Bolivia.
- Lithium is a prime component used to power electric vehicles and cell phones.

- India and Bolivia agreed to forge a mutually beneficial partnership to facilitate Bolivian supplies of lithium Carbonate to India. The countries also plan to foster joint ventures for lithium battery/cell production plants in India. This agreement will make Bolivia one of the major provider of metal for India’s e-mobility and e-storage needs. Bolivia is known to have one-fourth of the world’s lithium reserves.
- The agreement facilitates mechanisms for the commercialization of Lithium Carbonate and Potassium Chloride produced in Bolivia by Yacimientos de Litio Bolivianos Corporation (YLB Corporation).

ICAT to organize NuGen Mobility Summit in November.
- The International Centre for Automotive Technology (ICAT) is to organize a NuGen Mobility Summit, 2019, at Manesar, NCR, from 27th to 29th November 2019. The summit will help in building a platform for bringing together all stakeholders in the automotive industry to understand global advancements in technologies.
- The summit aims to bring together the automotive OEMs, professionals, researchers, academic experts, vehicle system suppliers, test equipment supplier, quality managers, product planners, component developers, SAE members and students from all over the world.
- Track demonstrations, drive-touch-feel activity and lab demonstrations on upcoming vehicle technologies like connected mobility, autonomous vehicles, electric mobility, alternate fuels, intelligent transportation system, hydrogen fuel cell, hydrogen IC
engine, vehicle dynamics, advanced materials and lightweight, end of life vehicles and recycling are the uniqueness of this event.

**MRM launches campaign to garner Muslim support for strong & stable government.**
- Muslim Rashtriya Manch (MRM), a social and educational reform movement working among the Muslims in India since 2002, undertaking the campaign to create awareness among the Muslim voters to cast their vote for a strong government at the Centre to ensure the all-round development of all the citizens.
- The MRM had done a similar exercise in 2014 to secure Muslim vote to its maximum all over the country. This time too, the MRM has decided to launch such a campaign especially when the Modi government had done so much for the Muslims of India.

**BIS signed MoU with IIT-D on standardisation and conformity assessment.**
- The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) has signed MoU with the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi (IIT-D) to collaborate in the field of standardisation and conformity assessment. The MoU was signed by IIT Delhi Director Professor V Ramgopal Rao and Director General of BIS Surina Rajan. According to the MoU, IIT Delhi will provide infrastructure support for research and development projects of relevance to standardisation and BIS will provide financial support to IIT Delhi for projects.

**AWARDS**

**Mahesh Elkunchwar is to receive META Lifetime Achievement Award.**
- Mahesh Elkunchwar, an eminent Indian playwright, has been chosen for Mahindra Excellence in Theatre Awards (META) Lifetime Achievement Award 2019.
- The award would be conferred on March 12 during the Mahindra Theater Festival.
- Mahesh Elkunchwar is regarded as one of the progressive playwrights of the country and is critically-acclaimed and widely-known for having experimented with a wide range of drama and is considered a powerful force in both Indian and Marathi theatre scene. He has over 30 plays and essays to his credit including works like 'Sultan', 'Holi', 'Garbo', 'Yatanaghar', and 'Atmakatha'.

**CZPDC Bhopal And WZPDC Indore Honoured With Saubhagya Award**
- The Central Zone Power Distribution Company (CZPDC), Bhopal and West Zone Power Distribution Company (WZPDC), Indore was conferred with the “Saubhagya Award” under Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana at the National Conference of Energy Ministers by the Union Minister of State for Energy, R.K. Singh.

**BIAC India won the Women on a Mission award**
- Brandix India Apparel City (BIAC) India’s partner P. Doraswamy was conferred with ‘The Women on A Mission Award’. It was presented to him by philanthropist Sudha Narayana Murthy at the women’s summit.
organized under ‘he for she’ category in Bengaluru.
• The award was given to him for his contribution to the welfare of women workforce in Visakhapatnam by organizing free medical camps, cancer screening initiatives, distribution of free amenities.

**Arata Isozaki won Pritzker Architecture Prize**
• Arata Isozaki, a prominent Japanese architect renowned for his versatility and transnational approach to design, has won his field’s highest accolade, the Pritzker Architecture Prize.
• He is the 46th person and eighth Japanese architect to receive the Pritzker Prize.

**President Ram Nath Kovind to give Nari Shakti awards on International Womens Day**
• International Women’s Day is being observed on 08th March. Governments, NGOs and other organisations across the world observe the day on the 8th of March every year to highlight the achievements of women.
• The theme for this year’s women’s day is ‘Think Equal, Build Smart, Innovate for Change’.
• The purpose of the theme is to achieve gender equality by putting innovation by women and girls, for women and girls, at the heart of efforts.

**Maneka Gandhi felicitated the 30 winners of the Web Wonder Women contest**
• Union Minister for Women and Child Development, Maneka Gandhi, felicitated the 30 winners of the ‘Web Wonder Women’ contest organized by the Ministry of Women and Child Development in New Delhi.
• The women were selected from over 240 nominations received under the categories media, awareness, legal, health, governmental, food, environment, development, business and art.

**ACKO General Insurance honoured with Golden Peacock Award 2019**
• The new-age digital insurance company, ACKO General Insurance was awarded the prestigious Golden Peacock Innovative Product Award – 2019, for their contextual micro insurance product -“Ola Ride Insurance”.
• The award was presented to Biresh Giri, Appointed Actuary & CRO, Acko at an event in Dubai.
• Launched in March 2018, Ola Ride Insurance is a first of its kind insurance in the Indian market where Acko partnered with the leading ride-sharing company, Ola.

**India claims the First Prize at The International Golden City Gate Tourism Awards 2019 in the category of TV Cinema Spot at ITB, Berlin**
• The Ministry of Tourism, Government of India was awarded the First Prize in the category- TV Cinema Spot at the International Golden City Gate Tourism Awards 2019 held at Internationale Tourismus-Börse (ITB), Berlin.
• The awards were received by Shri Yogendra Tripathi, Secretary, Tourism.
• The awards were given for the following promotional films and TV
commercials produced under the Incredible India 2.0 Campaign:
Yogi of the Racetrack
The Reincarnation of Mr. and Mrs. Jones
Sanctuary in Paris
Maharani of Manhattan
The Masala Master Chef

S. Mubarak appointed as the next Ambassador of India to the Republic of El Salvador
• Shri B. S. Mubarak, the Indian Foreign Service officer of 2001 batch, is presently the Ambassador of India to the Republic of Guatemala.

Ex-RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan received Yashwantrao Chavan National Award
• Former Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Raghuram Rajan, for his contribution towards economic development, was awarded the ‘Yashwantrao Chavan National Award 2018‘ on March 12, 2019, which was the 106th birth anniversary of late Yashwantrao Chavan, the first chief minister of Maharashtra. About Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor – Shaktikanta Das Headquarters – Mumbai.

Axis Bank names Rakesh Makhija as new Chairman.
• Axis Bank has appointed Rakesh Makhija as Non-Executive Chairman for a period of 3 years. He will take over from Sanjiv Misra when his term ends on July 17.
• Makhija is also the Chairman of the bank’s Nomination and Remuneration Committee.

Rahul Bajaj resigns as chairman of Bajaj Finserv.
• Rahul Bajaj will step down as Chairman and Non-Executive Director of Financial services company ‘Bajaj Finserv’ on May 16. However, he will continue to serve the company as Chairman Emeritus. The 80-year-old has been at the helm of Bajaj Finserv since its inception in 2007 and the Bajaj Group for around five decades.

Ved Rahi will be awarded with Kusumagraj Rashtriya Sahitya Puruskar.
• Famous Novelist and Film Director, Ved Rahi will be awarded prestigious Kusumagraj Rashtriya Sahitya Puruskar which carries a cash prize of Rs. 1 Lakh, A memento and a citation. Ved Rahi was born in Jammu in 1933 and he had written seven novels in Dogri Language. He also wrote in Hindi and Urdu. He was given Sahitya Akademi Award in 1983 for his Novel “Aale” which was written in Dogri Language.

M.R.Kumar takes charge as Chairman of LIC
• M.R.Kumar, the newly-appointed chairman of Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC), has taken charge on 14th March. Mr.Kumar took over from Hemant Bhargava who had been the acting chairman since January 2019. Mr.Kumar had joined LIC as a direct recruit officer in 1983. The government had also named two MDs for LIC, Vipin Anand and T.C. Suseel Kumar.

Sweden’s 16-year-old Greta Thunberg nominated for Nobel Peace Prize
• Greta Thunberg, the 16-year-old Swedish student and activist has been nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize for her efforts in climate activism and fighting global warming. She began her weekly protest in August 2018 by riding her bicycle to the Swedish Parliament with "School strike for climate" sign.
• The #FridaysForFuture movement went viral and spread over 80 countries. If she were to win, she would be the youngest recipient since Pakistan's Malala Yousafzai, who was 17 when she received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2014.

Padmanaban Gopalan bagged the Commonwealth Youth Award for the Asian region
• Social entrepreneur from Tamil Nadu, Padmanaban Gopalan, founder of No Food Waste named the winner of the Commonwealth Youth Award for the Asian region worth 3,000 Pounds at a ceremony at the Commonwealth Secretariat in London. He was given the honour for his work towards achieving the UN’s Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) of Zero Hunger with his innovative system of recovering excess food to distribute to those in need.

Army Chief Bipin Rawat conferred PVSM by President Kovind
• Army Chief General Bipin Rawat was conferred with the Param Vishisht Seva Medal (PVSM), the highest military medal award in recognition of peace-time service not accounting to gallantry, by President Ram Nath Kovind. President also awarded three Kirti Chakras and 15 Shaurya Chakras to armed forces personnel for displaying gallantry.
• Two Kirti Chakras were posthumously awarded to Sepoy Vramha Pal Singh of the Rajput Regiment and Rajendra Kumar Nain, a constable with the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF). A Shaurya Chakra was also posthumously awarded to Ravindra Dhanawade by the President, who is the Supreme Commander of the armed forces.

Three Kirti Chakras and 15 Shaurya Chakras awarded by the President to Army Personnel
• President Ram Nath Kovind conferred 3 Kirti Chakras and 15 Shaurya Chakras to Armed Forces Personnel for displaying conspicuous gallantry, indomitable courage and extreme devotion to duty at the Defence Investiture Ceremony at Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi. 2 Kirti Chakras and 1 Shaurya Chakra were given posthumously. 15 Param Vishisht Seva Medals, 1 Uttam Yudh Seva Medal and 25 Ati Vishisht Seva Medals were also conferred on senior officers of the Armed Forces for their distinguished service by the President.

Manmohan Singh presented the Business Line Changemaker of the Year award to Arun Jaitley.
• Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley received the award over successful implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST). The award was also presented to the petitioners against Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), which criminalised homosexuality.
Indian Embassy in Nepal awarded 200 scholarships to meritorious Nepali students.

- The Indian Embassy in Nepal has announced 200 scholarships to meritorious Nepali students for continuing various undergraduate courses at colleges and universities. The scholarships were granted under the Golden Jubilee Scholarship scheme.
- Golden Jubilee Scholarship scheme was initiated by the Indian Embassy in Nepal to mark the completion of 50 years of India-Nepal Economic Cooperation. This year the scholarship programme covered 36 undergraduate courses including MBBS, BDS, BE, BSc and BBA. The recipients of the scholarships represent 50 districts of Nepal. Under the scheme, an MBBS/BDS student receives NRs. 4,000/- per month for five years, a BE student receives NRs. 4,000/- per month for four years and a student studying in other undergraduate courses receives NRs. 3,000/- per month for three years. Those provided scholarship included 45% of girls and 8% differently-abled students.

Former ISRO scientist Nambi Narayanan received Padma Bhushan from President.

- President Kovind presented Padma Bhushan to Shri Sankaralingam Nambi Narayanan for Science & Engineering. Shri Narayanan is an accomplished scientist with more than three decades of experience in Indian Space Research Organisation. The scientist was instrumental in developing the Vikas engine that would be used for the first PSLV that India launched.

- But, Nambi Narayanan, who was falsely implicated in the ISRO spy case, was accused of selling state secrets comprising confidential test data from rocket and satellite launches. In 1994, Narayanan was arrested by Kerala police over espionage charges, which were dismissed by CBI in 1996. The Supreme Court declared him not guilty in 1998 and ordered Kerala to pay ₹50-lakh compensation over “mental torture” in 2018.

Indian writer Raghu Karnad won Windham Campbell Prize.

- Indian Writer Raghu Karnad has won the Windham-Campbell Prize $165,000 under the non-fiction category for his debut book, The Farthest Field: An Indian Story Of The Second World War. Raghu Karnad is the second Indian to receive the award. Earlier in 2016, Jerry Pinto had won the award for his novel, Em And The Big Hoom.
- Karnad is one of the eight winners chosen across four categories: fiction, non-fiction, drama, and poetry. The other awardee in the non-fiction category was American writer Rebecca Solnit for the diverse body of work she has produced over her career. The Windham-Campbell Prize is administered by the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University in the US.
- It was established in 2013. The award was constituted with the generous gift from writer Donald Windham in memory of his partner Sandy Campbell. The jury selects two winners each for each of the category.
Irfan Ramzan Sheikh who fought against 3 terrorists as 14-yr-old awarded Shaurya Chakra.

- Jammu and Kashmir's Irfan Ramzan Sheikh, who fought off three armed terrorists in 2017, when he was 14 years old, was awarded Shaurya Chakra by President Ram Nath Kovind. Sheikh fought off the terrorists who wanted to kill his father and didn't let them enter his house. The terrified terrorists left one of the terrorists' body and ran away.

Mathematician Karen Uhlenbeck becomes 1st woman to win prestigious Abel Prize.

- Mathematician Karen Uhlenbeck (76-year-old) has become the first woman to win the Abel prize, sometimes called the Nobel prize of mathematics, for the impact of her work on “analysis, geometry and mathematical physics”. She is also an advocate for gender equality in science and mathematics.

Brazilian astronomer Marcelo Gleiser wins 2019 Templeton Prize.

- Brazilian physicist and astronomer Marcelo Gleiser (60) was awarded 2019 Templeton Prize worth $1.4 million for his work on blending science and spirituality. It makes him first Latin American to win this award.

Templeton Prize is awarded annually on person for outstanding his/her contributions in affirming life's spiritual dimension, whether through insight, discovery, or practical works. Mother Teresa was the first winner in 1973. Some of its other recipients include Dr Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1975), Dalai Lama (2012) etc. In 2018, it was awarded to King Abdullah II of Jordan.

Leeladhar Jagudi will be honoured with the Vyas Samman 2018.

- Hindi writer Leeladhar Jagudi honoured with Vyas Samman 2018 for his collection of poems ‘Jitne Log Utne Prem'. He was awarded Padma Shri in 2004 apart from other awards, including Sahitya Akademi Award, Akashvani National Award and Uttarakhand Gaurav Samman. Vyas Samman: The award is given annually to outstanding literary work in Hindi authored by Indian citizen which has been published in the last decade. It was started in 1991 by the KK Birla Foundation. It carries monetary amount of Rs. 4 lakh.

Indian American Neomi Rao sworn in as judge of District of Columbia Court.

- Neomi Jehangir Rao, a prominent Indian-American lawyer, has been sworn in as U.S. Circuit Judge for the District of Columbia Circuit Court of Appeals. She has become the second from the community to be a part of the powerful court considered next only to the U.S. Supreme Court.

India clinched SAFF Womens Championship For 5th Time.

- India lifted South Asian Football Federation SAFF Women’s
Championship fifth time in a row. Keeping its winning streak India defeated host Nepal in the final by 3-1 in Biratnagar, Nepal. India’s Dalmia Chhibber scored first goal of the match in 26th minute. India’s Indumathi Kathiresan and Sabitra Tamang of Nepal remained top scorer of the tournament, both scored four-goal each.

Peter Tabichi won Global Teacher Prize 2019.
• Peter Tabichi, a science teacher from rural Kenya, who gives away most of his salary to support poorer pupils, has won a $1m prize (£760,000) for the world's best teacher. The award, in a competition run by the Varkey Foundation, has seen him beating 10,000 other nominations from 179 countries. Last year's winner was an art teacher from north London, Andria Zafirakou.

ADNOC Awards Onshore Block To Indian Consortium.
• A consortium of two Indian oil companies, Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited and Indian Oil Corporation Limited awarded as the exploration rights for Abu Dhabi Onshore Block 1. The Abu Dhabi National Oil Company, ADNOC, Monday signed agreements awarding the exploration rights. The award has been endorsed by Abu Dhabi’s Supreme Petroleum Council.

President Kovind honoured with highest civilian order in Croatia.
• President Ram Nath Kovind was honoured with Croatia's highest civilian award -- the Grand Order of the King of Tomislav, by President Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović. He was awarded for his "exceptional contribution to the advancement of relations and development of mutual cooperation between Croatia and India.
• “President Kovind is the first Indian President to visit Croatia. Kovind is in the European country as part of his eight-day three-nation visit to Croatia, Bolivia and Chile to further strengthen bilateral ties between India and the three countries.

Nobel Prize recipient Amartya Sen awarded with Oxford University's Bodley award.
• The 85-year-old winner of the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences, was awarded with the prestigious Bodley Medal, the highest honour granted by the University of Oxford’s world-famous Bodleian Libraries, for his contribution in literature, culture, science and communication.

Turing Award, the Nobel Prize of computing, won by 3 Pioneers in Artificial Intelligence.
• The 2018 Turing Award, known as the “Nobel Prize of computing,” has been given to Yoshua Bengio, Geoffrey Hinton, and Yann LeCun — sometimes called the ‘godfathers of AI’, for their work developing the AI subfield of deep learning.
• The trio believed in the potential of AI and brought to the world the innovations such as neural networks, self-driving cars, facial recognition, CNN and much more. About Turing Award: Initiated in 1966, this annual award is named after British mathematician Alan M.
• Turing, whose work laid the foundation for computer science and artificial intelligence. It honors the individual for contributing major technical importance in the computer field. First recipient – Alan Perlis.

**Delhi government school teacher Manu Gulati honoured with Martha Farrell Award 2019**

• Delhi government school teacher, Manu Gulati honored with the Martha Farrell award for Excellence in Women’s Empowerment 2019 in the Most Promising Individual category with prize money of INR 1,50,000 for promoting gender quality and women’s empowerment.
• She collaborates with America India Foundation’s “Market Aligned Skills Training Program”, through which she assists the training programs for beauticians, weavers, salesgirls, etc in Jalandhar in Punjab, Betul in Madhya Pradesh and Baramullah in Kashmir.
• The Awards were first awarded in 2017 in the memory of Dr. Martha Farrell, a prominent activist for gender equality and women’s empowerment.

**Singapore airport named worlds best aviation hub for the seventh time.**

• According to the Skytrax World Airport Awards, Singapore’s Changi Airport has been crowned the world’s best aviation hub for the seventh time in a row, while New Delhi's Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport featured at number 59.
• Singapore Changi Airport is known for its rooftop swimming pool, two 24-hour movie theaters and shopping spots
• At number two on the list is Tokyo International Airport (Haneda), up one place from 2018. This hub also won World's Best Domestic Airport and World's Cleanest Airport. Incheon International Airport secured 3rd position in the list. The other Indian airports in the list were Mumbai’s Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport at 64, the Rajiv Gandhi Hyderabad International Airport at 66, and Bengaluru’s Kempegowda International Airport at 69.

**SUMMITS & RECOGNITION**

**India and Brunei signed an agreement to exchange information on tax and banking matters**

• India and Brunei signed a pact for exchange of Information and Assistance in Collection with respect to taxes in order to curb tax evasion and tax avoidance in New Delhi.
• This agreement will facilitate both the countries to exchange information, including banking and ownership information for tax purposes and will also avail mutual assistance in collection of tax revenue claims.

**The 4th Global Digital Health Partnership Summit held at New Delhi.**

• The 4th Global Digital Health Partnership Summit being held at New Delhi was inaugurated by the Union Health Minister J P Nadda in the presence of Shri Ravi Shankar Prasad
Union Minister of Information Technology. The summit provides an opportunity to support governments and health system reformers in improving the health and well-being of their citizens through digital technologies.

- The Global Digital Health Partnership Summit is being hosted by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Global Digital Health Partnership (GDHP).

RBI have signed a bilateral swap agreement with the Bank of Japan

- Reserve Bank of India (RBI) have signed a bilateral swap agreement with the Bank of Japan. The Swap agreement will provide India access to 75 billion US dollars against the 50 billion dollars under earlier BSA.
- The bilateral swap agreement will provide India to access the reserves if at any point of time when the need arises. The currency swap makes it easier to improve liquidity conditions. Currency swap agreements help when the economic crisis arises.
- The swap agreements also contribute towards stabilizing the country’s balance of payments (BOP) position. The agreement aids in improving confidence in the Indian market.

India & Afghanistan Signed an MOU On Digital Education Initiatives.

- The Ministry of Human Resource Development has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Afghanistan government to work on digital education initiatives, which include many prominent programs developed by Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs). The MoU was signed at IIT-Madras.

About Afghanistan

- President: Ashraf Ghani
- 1st Vice President: Abdul Rashid Dostum
- 2nd Vice President: Sarwar Danish
- Chief Executive Officer: Abdullah Abdullah

New hydro policy will help to meet renewables target.

- The Union Cabinet approval to the new hydroelectricity policy that, among other things, included large hydro projects within the ambit of renewable energy. Prior to the policy, only small hydro projects of a capacity of less than 25 MW were treated as renewable energy.
- Large hydro projects were treated as a separate source of energy. India’s renewable energy sector had an installed capacity of 75,055.92 MW as of February 2019, according to data with the Central Electricity Authority. This made up about 21.4% of the overall energy mix, with the rest coming from thermal, nuclear and large hydro sources.
- With the inclusion of large hydro in renewable energy, the energy mix changes drastically. Renewable energy capacity would now be 1,20,455.14 MW or 34.4% of the overall energy mix.

MoU signed by Ola and Telangana Govt. to strengthen traffic infrastructure in Hyderabad

- A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between Ola and the Government of Telangana to support the government’s initiative to implement smart solutions to enhance
mobility experience further strengthening traffic infrastructure in Hyderabad. Under the MoU, the first pilot project proposed is the dynamic mapping of riding quality of various major roads in Hyderabad through the network of vehicles operating on the Ola platform.

**IBBI and SEBI signed an MoU for effective implementation of IBC.**
- The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI). The IBBI and the SEBI seek effective implementation of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 (Code) and its allied rules and regulations, which have redefined the debt-equity relationship and aims to promote entrepreneurship and debt market.

**OBITUARY**

**Sitting Judge of Delhi HC Justice Valmiki J Mehta passed away**
- Mehta, who was 59 years old, had assumed office as an Additional Judge of Delhi high court on April 15, 2009.
- Mehta got enrolled with the Bar Council of Delhi in 1982 and began his career in law by practising in the Delhi High Court, district courts and various tribunals in civil matters.
- He was appointed a Senior Advocate at the age of 42, on September 22, 2001.

**Goa CM Manohar Parrikar Passes Away Aged 63 After Battle with Pancreatic Cancer.**
- Manohar Parrikar, Goa Chief Minister and former defence minister, has passed away at the age of 63 after a long battle with pancreatic cancer. Parrikar was diagnosed with advanced pancreatic cancer in February 2018 and had been in and out of hospitals in Goa, Mumbai, Delhi and New York since.

**India-Pakistan war hero, Captain M.N. Samant died aged 89 years.**
- Captain Mohan Narayan Rao Samant of the Indian Navy, a 1971 India-Pakistan war hero, who was honoured by Bangladesh as a ‘Friend of Liberation War’, has passed away at the age of 89. The Maha Vir Chakra awardee was instrumental in India waging a covert maritime war against shipping in the then East Pakistan. He had trained over 400 Bengali college students as maritime commandos for carrying out mass raids and inflicting damages to Pakistani shipping vessels in the run up to the 1971 war.
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