

Current Affairs Magazine

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Put your heart, mind, and soul into even your smallest acts. This is the secret of success.

Swami Sivananda

Cochin Shipyard signs MoU with Mumbai Port Trust

- Cochin Shipyard (CSL) signed a MoU in January, 2018 with Mumbai Port Trust (MbPT) for management and operation of the Shiprepair Facilities at Mumbai Port trust.
- As per the terms of the MoU, MbPT and CSL are to associate with each other for utilizing the Indira Dock facility at Mumbai Port to set up a Professional Ship Repair Ecosystem, that would be beneficial for the commercial as well as Defence Ship Repair Industry in India.

CM launches Assam Agribusiness and Rural Transformation Project (APART)

- Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal in January, 2018 launched the Assam Agribusiness and Rural Transformation Project (APART), a World Bank financed project.
- Speaking on the occasion, the chief minister expressed optimism that this project would be able to uplift the agricultural sector of the state and inspire the farmers to adopt latest technology to increase production.
- Saying that the young generation must be motivated to take up farming as a viable profession by showing the great potentials of agriculture, Sonowal urged the colleges of the state to sensitise the students about agriculture and its allied professions.

India, Israel sign 9 MoUs for cooperation in cyber security, space, oil & gas sector

- India signed 9 Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with Israel on 15 January 2018, during the visit of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to India.
- Netanyahu is the first Israeli Prime Minister to visit India in the span of the last 15 years and the second one overall. The only other Israeli Prime Minister to visit India was Ariel Sharon in 2003. Prime Minister Narendra Modi broke protocol to greet the Prime Minister at the airport, reciprocating the warmth he received when he visited Israel in July 2017, as Netanyahu had also received the Indian Prime Minister at the airport.
- During Modi's visit to Israel, both the leaders had promised to build a strategic partnership of hope, trust and progress of diverse and cutting-edge cooperation and of joint endeavours and shared successes.

Details of the MoUs

1. MoU on Cyber Security Cooperation between India and Israel
2. MoU between the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas and the Ministry of Energy on Cooperation in Oil and Gas Sector
3. Protocol between India and Israel on Amendments to the Air Transport Agreement
4. Agreement on Film-co-production between India and Israel
5. MoU between the Central Council for Research in Homeopathy, Ministry of AYUSH and the Centre for Integrative Complementary Medicine, Shaare Zedek Medical Center on Cooperation in the field of Research in Homeopathic Medicine
6. MoU between Indian Institute of Space Science and Technology (IIST) and the Technion- Israel Institute of Technology for cooperation in the field of space
7. Memorandum of Intent between Invest India and Invest in Israel
8. Letter of Intent between IOCL and Phinergy Ltd. For cooperation in the area of metal-air batteries
9. Letter of Intent between IOCL and Yeda Research and Development Co Ltd for cooperation in the area of concentrated solar thermal technologies

Punjab, IOC sign MoU for biogas plants to reduce stubble-burning

- The Punjab government in January, 2018 signed an MoU with Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) to set up biogas and CNG plants in the state in a bid to find sustainable solutions to straw-burning, a major environmental concern.
- The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the IOC was signed by Punjab Bureau of Industrial Promotion and Punjab Energy Development Agency (PEDA) in the presence of Chief Minister Amarinder Singh.
- Under the project, 42 plants will become operational in 2018, probably before the paddy season.

Sri Lanka, India sign MoU for cooperation in information technology, electronics

- Sri Lanka and India signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in Colombo in January, 2018 for cooperation in the field of information technology and electronics, a statement from the Indian High Commission in Colombo said in January, 2018.
- Sri Lankan Minister of Telecommunication and Digital Infrastructure Harin Fernando and visiting Indian Minister of Law and Justice and Electronics and Information Technology Ravi Shankar Prasad signed the MoU.

CBDT notifies India, US signing of IGA under Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act

- Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) in January, 2018 announced that India and USA had signed the Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA) under Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act (FATCA) in 2015.
- To enhance the effectiveness of information exchange and transparency, both the sides committed to establish by January 1 2017, rules requiring their Reporting Financial Institutions (RFIs) to obtain the Tax Identity Number (TIN) of each reportable person having a reportable account as of June 30, 2014 (pre-existing account).

Haryana to set up NBFC for efficient management of funds

- The Haryana government has decided to form a non-banking financial company (NBFC) — Haryana State Financial Services Limited — to act as an in-house treasury manager for efficient management of surplus funds of State public enterprises and autonomous bodies.
- The decision was taken in January, 2018 at a meeting of the State cabinet.
- The NBFC would enable quick and hassle-free lending and create financial discipline among the State government entities. It would also result in centralised mechanism for management of funds under the overall control and supervision of the General Administration Department.
- It will be established as a limited company under the Companies Act and registered with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) as an NBFC.
- The authorised capital of the company will be ₹10 crore and the paid up capital will be ₹2 crore in the first instance.

Bank of Baroda partners with Invoicemart as a TReDS partner

- Digital invoice discounting marketplace - Invoicemart has tied up with state-run lender Bank of Baroda to discount invoices for MSMEs. Buyers and sellers registered on the marketplace will now be able to access funding from Bank of Baroda. Invoicemart is a joint venture between Axis Bank Ltd and mjunction services ltd.
- Bank of Baroda had recently announced that it was stepping up its focus on supply chain financing, to provide loans to MSMEs associated with large corporates. TReDS is an online mechanism that helps MSMEs unlock working capital without the hassle of applying for loans.

Rs 10,700 crore telecom projects in North East to improve connectivity

- Telecom Minister Manoj Sinha in January, 2018 said the Centre is initiating projects worth Rs 10,700 crore for improving telephone connectivity in North East by December this year.

- This amount, which is about 1/8th of the total investment planned by the DoT, is likely to be enhanced to Rs 15,000 crore for North East, the minister said.
- Attending a two-day conference on implementation of BharatNet and other major projects in North East, the telecom minister dedicated the Asthamangal Project by BSNL to the nation, especially to the citizens of the region.

Ujjivan Small Finance Bank launches Tax Saver FD product

- Ujjivan Small Finance Bank Limited, a wholly owned subsidiary of Ujjivan Financial Services, in January, 2018 announced the launch of its Tax Saver Fixed Deposit (FD) across all bank branches nationally.
- The Tax Saver FD scheme is best suited for salaried individuals, business professionals who come under the ambit of tax payment, a company release said. The deposit can be opened in single name or jointly with another individual, including a minor. Being a tax saver scheme, the depositor needs to furnish the permanent account number (PAN) while opening the account.

Italy signs its 1st MoU in Bengal Global Business Summit (BGBS) 2018

- The Bengal Global Business Summit (BGBS) 2018 got off to a flying start in January, 2018 with the participation of nine countries.
- The visiting Italian delegation of almost thirty is led by ArtValley, an organisation that has got in business houses to the BGBS since last year.
- In a significant step forward an MoU was signed on the eve of BGBS 2018 between Italian Leather Research Institute and CLC TA Tanner's Association, Kolkata .
- The two principal persons from Italian side in this MoU were Paolo Gurisatti, President of SSIP district and Golin Mauro, CEO Spraytech.

Centre, CII ink MoU for development of logistics sector

- To enhance import and export performance, the Centre has entrusted the task of integrated development of the logistics sector to the Department of Commerce.
- It is believed that improved logistics will up ways of doing business and be a game changer in the creation of billions of job.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has issued directions for a division for logistics in the government.

PM Modi inaugurates project commencement of Rajasthan's first Oil Refinery

- Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 16 January 2018 inaugurated the project commencement of the Rajasthan oil refinery at Pachpadra in Barmer district of the state.
- The oil refinery is the first one to be set up in Rajasthan. The project was undertaken as a joint venture between Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL) and the Rajasthan government at a cost of Rs 43000 crores.

TCS launches new digital subscription platform HOBBS on Microsoft Azure

- Tata Consultancy Services in January, 2018 announced the launch of "HOBBS" (Hosted OSS/BSS) -- a new platform for digital enterprises on Microsoft Azure.
- The Cloud ready TCS HOBBS platform will enable customers get to market quicker and benefit from a pay-as-you-use commercial model, the company said in a statement.
- The new platform leverages micro services, natural language processing, Machine Learning and Big Data to drive automation, customer and employee experiences.
- Globally, several service providers are already leveraging TCS "HOBBS" platform for their digital transformation.

Reliance Communications to build USD 600 million submarine cable

- Embattled Reliance Communications is laying a 68,000-km undersea cable to carry data across Europe and Asia, to be built at a cost of USD 600 million.

- The system, which will connect its base in India with Italy to the West and Hong Kong on the East, is expected to treble revenues in five years for its wholly-owned subsidiary Global Cloud Exchange, which is laying the cable, the company said in January, 2018.
- It is expected to be operational by the third quarter of 2020 and will have a revenue potential of USD 1 billion per year, RCom's chief executive Bill Barney told reporters.

SBI to raise Rs 20,000 crore for affordable housing, infrastructure projects

- State Bank of India in January, 2018 said its board has given nod to raise Rs 20,000 crore for financing affordable housing and infrastructure projects through long- term bonds.
- The bank did not specify whether the borrowing would be in rupee denomination or foreign currency.
- Earlier this month, SBI had announced plans to raise up to USD 2 billion by issuing bonds in the US dollar or other convertible currency to fund overseas expansion.

Govt cuts additional borrowing target from Rs 50,000 crore to Rs 20,000 crore for this fiscal

- The government in January, 2018 said it has curtailed its additional market borrowing programme by Rs 30,000 crore after review of revenue receipts and expenditure, a move likely to help in containing fiscal deficit.
- The government on December 27 last year had announced that it would make an additional borrowing of Rs 50,000 crore during 2017-18 through dated securities. However, there would have been no change in the net borrowing as envisaged in the budget.
- Earlier in the day, Economic Affairs Secretary Subhash Chandra Garg in a tweet said that the government has reassessed additional borrowing requirements taking note of revenue receipts and expenditure pattern.
- Requirement of additional borrowing being reduced from Rs 50,000 crore as notified earlier to Rs 20,000 crore.

Maharashtra becomes the first state to unveil public cloud policy

- Maharashtra has come out with a public cloud policy virtually mandating its departments to shift their data storage onto the cloud, creating a USD 2- billion opportunity for the industry.
- He said the policy, which is a first by any state, will result in additional private sector investments as government is one of the biggest creators and consumers of data.
- Government departments currently have their own data storage facilities, which can be done better and cheaper by private sector vendors, the official said.
- The policy is likely to be formally set in motion through a detailed government resolution. In the next 20 days, five to six top cloud service providers like Amazon or Microsoft will be empanelled, the official added.

Karnataka to organise blockchain hackathon

- Karnataka's Information Technology department would be organising a blockchain hackathon from 19 to 21 January 19 to see if participants can create demonstrable prototypes of the use of blockchain in government applications.
- The move comes as blockchain, the technology behind cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin, is fast gaining acceptance worldwide. By hosting the hackathon, the state government of Karnataka hopes to see if the technology can be used in some critical areas of governance in the State.

PhonePe launches app-in-app platform with redBus

- Payments platform PhonePe in January, 2018 announced a strategic partnership with online bus ticket booking service, redBus. As a part of the partnership, Redbus has now gone live with an exclusive store on the PhonePe app.
- This partnership is part of PhonePe's vision of being an open payments ecosystem, enabling businesses of all sizes to build and deploy apps on its platform with a unified login and payments experience for customers.

Ashok Leyland signs pact with Israel-based Phinergy for electric CVs

- Commercial vehicles (CV) major Ashok Leyland, signed a Letter of Intent (LoI) with Israel-based firm Phinergy to secure long-term arrangements for its electric CVs.
- Ashok Leyland and Phinergy will work towards the adaptation of unique, competitive, and sustainable solutions for high-energy applications in the commercial vehicles space in order to provide varying energy management solutions to the customers.

HDFC Bank becomes first Indian bank to cross Rs5 trillion market cap

- India's most-valued lender HDFC Bank Ltd in January, 2018 crossed Rs5 trillion market capitalisation for the first time, making it only the third Indian company to achieve this milestone.
- Tata Consultancy Services Ltd (TCS) and Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) are the other two companies which crossed market capitalisation of Rs5 trillion. RIL remained the most-valued company with a market cap of Rs5.82 trillion, followed by TCS with a market cap of Rs5.57 trillion.

SBI ties up with Transfast Remittance LLC for remittance

- State Bank of India (SBI), the largest commercial bank in India, in January, 2018 announced tie-up with Transfast Remittance LLC, the USA based payment network since 25 years with a network that covers over 6 billion people across 120 plus countries for inward remittance from the USA to India.
- According to a SBI press release, Transfast enjoys a leadership position in the cross border payments industry and offers competitive pricing, fast transfer of funds and personalized customer engagement to notify transfers and other value added services.

Yes Bank ties up with Amplus Energy Solutions

- Amplus Energy Solutions in January, 2018 announced entering into a pact with private sector lender Yes Bank for strategic tie-up to co-finance projects in the solar energy space in India.
- The memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed at International Solar Alliance pavilion at the World Future Energy Summit, Abu Dhabi, the company said in a statement.
- Under the partnership, the total projects capacity is likely to be up to 1,000 mw under the partnership, it said adding that these projects would be developed by Amplus by 2023.

AP govt signs Mou with Niti Aayog for developing monitoring mechanism

- The Andhra Pradesh government and Niti Aayog have entered into an MoU for development of monitoring mechanism, including creation of dashboard and collection of data for improving the performance of 115 most aspirational districts in the country.
- Formalising the collaboration, an MoU was signed by Mr Ashok Jain, Advisor NITI Aayog and Mr Sanjay Gupta, Secretary, Planning Department of the government of Andhra Pradesh at the District Collectors' Conference being held at Undavalli near here in January, 2018.

India announces \$350 million Solar Development Fund

- India announced setting up of a \$350 million solar development fund for solar-projects-financing in the first International Solar Alliance (ISA) outreach programmes 'International Solar Alliance Forum' during 17-18th January, 2018 at the Future World Energy Summit (WFES) 2018.
- WFES is a signature event of a global initiative, Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week, hosted by Masdar scheduled during 15-18th January, 2018 at Abu Dhabi (UAE).
- Seven Energy Ministers of ISA Member countries participated in ISA Forum and presented their views on benefits of collaboration, synergies, and knowledge sharing at the international level to scale up solar energy for universal energy access and investing in Innovations, Technology and R&D for solar projects followed by breakout sessions.

Paytm Payments Banks launches physical RuPay Debit Cards

- Paytm Payments Bank in January, 2018 announced the launch of physical Debit Cards">RuPay Debit Cards for its banking customers to seamlessly make payments across online platforms and offline stores.
- Additionally, now Debit Card holders can also withdraw money from any ATM in the country. The bank's physical debit cards can be ordered online via the Paytm app.
- The company has also launched UPI on its iOS app (launched on Android a month ago), enabling users to create their own Paytm UPI IDs, which will be issued by Paytm Payments Bank.

AU Small Finance Bank inks MoU with LIC to offer PMJJBY scheme

- Banking finance company AU Small Finance Bank has signed an MoU with LIC to offer Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY), a company official said.
- Under the MoU, LIC will give a life cover of ₹2 lakh in case of death to the customer at a nominal premium of ₹330 per annum.
- The aim is to provide best services to the customers under one roof, MD and CEO of the company, Sanjay Agarwal said in a statement.

Mauritius largest source of foreign direct investment in India, says RBI

- Mauritius was the largest source of foreign investment in India, followed by the US and the UK, according to a census by the Reserve Bank.
- Singapore and Japan were the next two sources of foreign direct investment (FDI), said the Census on Foreign Liabilities and Assets of Indian Direct Investment Companies 2016-17, released by RBI in January, 2018.
- Of the 18,667 companies that participated in the census, 17,020 had FDI/overseas direct investment in their balance sheets in March 2017, it said.

WEF 2018 first to be chaired entirely by women, Chetna Sinha from India to create history

- Indian entrepreneur Chetna Sinha will be creating history by becoming a part of 'all-women' co-chairs for the first time in 48 years. Chetna Sinha will join world women leaders and entrepreneurs, including IMF Director Christine Lagarde and former Norwegian PM Erna Solberg.
- Chetna Sinha is a banker, activist and the president of micro-finance company Mann Deshi Mahila Sahkari Bank.
- Called a 'silent crusader' by Forbes magazine, Chetna Sinha has worked to make Maharashtra's Mhaswad a destination for women entrepreneurship. Mann Deshi Mahila Sahkari Bank became the first bank in the country for and by rural women to get a cooperative license from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

Axis Bank partners NGO Srijan to mentor IIM graduates

- Axis Bank is partnering with NGO Srijan through an initiative called Buddha Fellowship Programme to help nurture talent for the development sector. The bank is mentoring 15 graduates from the Indian Institutes of Management at Kolkata, Ahmedabad and Shillong, who have been taken on board by Srijan as campus hires.
- Axis Bank, along with Srijan, recently hosted a day-long event where the graduates had sessions with some of the bank's business heads as well as other senior honchos.

Maharashtra gives nod to Rs 4,000-cr climate resilient agri project

- The Maharashtra government has approved a Rs 4,000-crore project aimed at promoting climate-resilient agriculture, to be partially funded by the World Bank.
- A government resolution (GR) issued yesterday said the project, named Nanaji Deshmukh Krishi Sanjivani Yojna, will be implemented in 5,142 villages across 15 districts.

Kerala to set up Blockchain academy

- The state-run Indian Institute of Information Technology and Management-Kerala (IIITM-K) is all set to launch its proposed Kerala Blockchain Academy, which will be the first of its kind in the country.

- The academy is a joint initiative of IIITM-K and the Blockchain Education Network (BEN), a global network of blockchain communities. It will come up at the Technopark campus.

India becomes member of Australia Group

- India on 19 January 2018 joined the Australia Group export control regime, an informal forum that seeks to ensure that exports do not contribute to the development of chemical or biological weapons.
- India has become the 43rd member of the group. The inclusion is expected to raise India's stature in the field of non-proliferation and help in acquiring critical technologies.

CBEC to set up training centre for National Academy of Customs in Hyderabad

- Vanaja N. Sarna, Chairman, Central Board of Excise and Customs (CBEC), New Delhi, laid the foundation stone for the National Academy of Customs, Indirect Taxes and Narcotics (NACIN) for its Zonal Training Centre at Attapur in Hyderabad.
- The new project which entails construction of the modern training facility is expected to be developed with an outlay of Rs. 47 crore and is scheduled for completion within two years.

India's richest 1% corner 73% of wealth generation: Survey

- The richest 1 per cent in India cornered 73 per cent of the wealth generated in the country last year, a new survey showed in January, 2018, presenting a worrying picture of rising income inequality.
- Besides, 67 crore Indians comprising the population's poorest half saw their wealth rise by just 1 per cent, as per the survey released by the international rights group Oxfam hours before the start of the annual congregation of the rich and powerful from across the world in this resort town.
- The situation appears even more grim globally, where 82 per cent of the wealth generated last year worldwide went to the 1 per cent, while 3.7 billion people that account for the poorest half of population saw no increase in their wealth.

Paytm launches 'Paytm for Business' for SME's to accept digital payments

- India's largest mobile-first financial services platform Paytm has announced launch of 'Paytm for Business' app on Android Play Store.
- The app, which enables new merchants to sign up quickly and get a Paytm QR code to start accepting digital payments, will now enable merchants to manage their day to day payments and day-end reconciliations.
- The app offers a complete suite of services allowing Paytm's existing six million offline merchants along with new, to track payments, navigate through the past collections and trace settlements made to their preferred bank accounts. They can also generate a Paytm QR instantly through the app, print it, and start using it at their shops to accept unlimited payments directly into their bank accounts at 0% charge.

India to grow at 7.4% in 2018 as against China's 6.8%: International Monetary Fund

- India is projected to grow at 7.4 per cent in 2018 as against China's 6.8 per cent, the IMF said in January, 2018, making it the fastest growing country among emerging economies following last year's slowdown due to demonetisation and the implementation of the GST.
- In its latest World Economic Outlook (WEO) update released in January, 2018 in Davos, Switzerland on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum, the International Monetary Fund has projected a 7.8 per cent growth rate for India in 2019.
- Growth rate projections for both 2018 and 2019 remains unchanged since its October 2017 WEO projections.

NIIF, DP World create platform to invest up to \$3 bn in ports

- Global operator of marine and inland terminals DP World in January, 2018 said it has joined hands with National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF) to create a platform for investing up to USD 3 billion in ports and logistics sectors.

- "NIIIF and DP World announce the creation of an investment platform to invest in ports, terminals, transportation and logistics businesses in India. The platform will invest up to USD 3 billion of equity to acquire assets and develop projects in the sector," DP World said in a statement.
- It said the partnership follows the memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed in May 2017 and the visit to India of Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, and DP World Group Chairman and CEO Sultan Ahmed bin Sulayem in February 2016.

Paisabazaar.com becomes India's first major platform to offer direct mutual funds to consumers

- Paisabazaar.com, India's No. 1 Marketplace for Loans and Cards, announced in January, 2018 it has launched direct mutual funds, becoming India's first major platform to offer direct plans to retail customers.
- Unlike in a regular plan where a part of investment is paid to the broker as commission by the mutual fund company, a direct mutual fund doesn't involve any type of commission and provides higher returns to the consumers and hence, is a much superior investment option.

RailYatri acqui-hires YatraChef to strengthen last mile commerce

- Noida-based RailYatri, a long-distance travel app acqui-hired Kochi based food-delivery technology start-up YatraChef. who will now manage the pan-India supply side of the former's in-transit delivery business.
- Last-mile capability is becoming a critical piece in commerce marketplaces as companies are able to provide a complete online and offline experience to its users, in addition to creating a premium and differentiated offering.

Bajaj Allianz General chatbot "BOING" debuts on Amazon Alexa

- Private general insurance company Bajaj Allianz General Insurance's chatbot 'BOING' has made its debut on Amazon's Alexa. The company is the first in the Indian insurance industry to use Amazon's cloud based voice service Alexa, which is available on Amazon's Echo.
- Through this move, the company aims to redefine the customer experience and provide them with instant customer query resolution and FAQ's in voice format. The company also announced an additional feature of linking of Aadhaar and PAN card to the insurance policy on BOING chatbot.

India, World Bank sign USD 120 million loan agreement to improve Water Supply Services in Uttarakhand

- India and World Bank on January 22, 2018 signed USD 120 million loan agreement to improve water supply services in peri-urban areas of Uttarakhand.
- The Agreement for the project was signed by Sameer Kumar Khare, Joint Secretary in the Department of Economic Affairs, under Union Ministry of Finance; Arvind Singh Hyanki, Secretary in Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation of Uttarakhand and Hisham Abdo, Acting Country Director of World Bank, India.
- The USD 120 million loan will have a 5 year grace period and a maturity of 17 years.
- The Uttarakhand Water Supply Program for Peri-Urban Areas will help the state in increasing water supply coverage as well as ensure sustainable water supply service delivery in peri-urban areas.

Japan commits loan of 45 bn yen for Bengaluru water project

- Japan has committed JICA Official Development Assistance loan for an amount of 45 billion yen (about Rs 2,587 crore) for Bengaluru Water Supply and Sewerage Project (Phase 3), an official statement said in January, 2018.
- Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) provides various forms of aid for promoting economic and social development in developing countries.
- The notes in this regard were exchanged between Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Finance S Selvakumar and Ambassador of Japan to India Kenji Hiramatsu.

RIL becomes India's first firm to cross Rs. 6-lakh crore in market cap

- Reliance Industries (RIL) become the first Indian company to cross the Rs. 6-lakh crore mark in market capitalisation as its shares touched a 52-week high of Rs. 974.5 following the announcement of robust Q3 profits in January, 2018.
- India's largest software exporter, Tata Consultancy Services follows RIL with market capitalisation of Rs. 5,95,946 crore. The market cap of BSE listed firms stood at Rs. 1,55,48,572 crore at close of trade in January, 2018 as the Sensex gained 286 points to close at a record high of 35,798.
- HDFC Bank become the first bank to cross market capitalisation of Rs. 5 lakh crore in January, 2018. Its shares rose marginally to Rs. 1,963.8 in January, 2018 before touching its 52-week high of Rs. 1,986, valuing the bank at Rs. 5,08,648 crore.

Federal Bank launches chatbot for easy m-commerce on its mobile app

- Kerala based lender Federal Bank has launched a chatbot based virtual assistant in the bank's mobile application FedMobile in partnership with Niki.ai. Using the Chatbot feature, the users of the app can avail a host of m-commerce services by simply chatting on the application, said the company in a release.
- Explaining the abilities of the chatbot, the company said that customers can simply type in text to recharge a mobile phone and the application is intelligent enough to pick it up, identify the service provider and recharge the number by debiting the customer's account. The services it can offer range from ticket booking to recharge, bill payments, movie tickets as well.

Adarsh Credit partners with BankChain to Deploy blockchain solutions

- Adarsh Credit is working towards a safer and secure financial system in India through its implementation of blockchain solutions in partnership with BankChain.
- BankChain is a community of banks and financial institutions in India formed to explore, build and implement blockchain solutions. BankChain has 30 members globally. Primechain Technologies operates the BankChain community and delivers an enterprise blockchain solution that runs on Hyperledger Sawtooth and Intel Software Guard Extensions (Intel SGX).

Prodigee Finance granted NBFC-ND license from RBI

- Prodigee Finance Limited recently crossed that milestone and received their NBFC license from RBI, making it possible for the firm to provide Small and Medium sized Enterprises (SME) loans as part of their services.
- Prodigee Finance Limited thanked Enterslice for their valuable help during the entire process. Both financial companies are enthusiastic about the news.
- According to the Bhopal-based company, the goal at Prodigee Finance Limited is to provide SMEs loans that they likely otherwise would not have had available, energising the local economy.

IOB inks pact with National Housing Bank for RHIS scheme

- Indian Overseas Bank (IOB) had in January, 2018 signed an MoU with National Housing Bank for implementing the Rural Housing Interest Subsidy Scheme (RHIS) of the Union Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD).
- The MOU was signed in the presence of IOB MD and CEO R. Subramaniakumar and MD and CEO of National Housing Bank Sriram Kalyanaraman and other senior executives of the bank and the National Housing Bank.
- The aim of the RHIS was to provide subsidy for the Housing loans to the households living in rural areas that are availed for construction and modifications of their dwelling units, a IOB release in January, 2018 said.

WEF-Reliance partner to establish Center for Fourth Industrial Revolution

- Mukesh Ambani owned Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) in January, 2018, in partnership with the World Economic Forum, announced establishing a center for Fourth Industrial Revolution in Mumbai.
- The World Economic Forum has been championing the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

- They have been leading the discussions and shaping the agenda of its potential impact on addressing inclusive growth and solving some of the most pressing challenges facing humanity, by using a combination of multiple technologies and tools.
- It is in this context that the WEF had established Center for Fourth Industrial Revolution in the Silicon Valley at San Francisco.

Bhubaneswar to host 2018 Asia Steel International Conference

- Bhubaneswar will host the seventh edition of the Asia Steel International Conference from February 6, 2018.
- About 50 per cent of the 70 key speakers are joining from countries such as China, Japan, Netherlands, the UK, the US, Germany, among others, Tata Steel and Indian Institute of Metals, organisers of the event, said in a joint statement in January, 2018.
- The Asia Steel Conference is a platform for experts from across the globe to discuss innovative and green technologies for iron making, and promoting automation and digitisation in steel industry as well.

Philippines, India ink MOU on investments, information technology

- After their bilateral meeting in New Delhi, Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi witnessed the signing of two memoranda of understanding (MOU) – one on investments, the other on information technology.
- The meeting took place in January, 2018, January 24, right after Duterte arrived in India's capital.
- Philippine Trade Secretary Ramon Lopez and Indian Ministry of External Affairs Secretary Preeti Saran represented their countries during the exchange of the MOU on investments.
- The MOU was made between the Philippines' Board of Investments and Invest India.
- An MOU is a non-binding agreement. Malacañang did not elaborate on what type of investment or what sector the investments from India would focus on.
- The second MOU is on developing the information technology (IT) and business process management (BPM) industry.

NHIDCL inks MoU with IL&FS for Rs 6,808 crore Zojila tunnel project

- NHIDCL and IL&FS transportation signed an MoU for construction of Zojila tunnel at an estimated cost of Rs 6,808.69 crore, the government said in January, 2018.
- The tunnel will provide all weather connectivity between Srinagar, Kargil and Leh.
- Zojila pass is situated at an altitude of 11,578 feet on Srinagar-Kargil-Leh National Highway which remains closed during winters (December to April) due to heavy snowfall and avalanches cutting off Leh-Ladakh region from Kashmir.
- The total capital cost of the project is Rs 6,808.69 crore.

ICICI Lombard partners with Practo for out-patient insurance

- ICICI Lombard General Insurance in January, 2018 announced a partnership with healthcare platform Practo to offer out-patient insurance products.
- The two have collaborated to launch a healthcare app, IL Take Care, that lets users book medical appointments, order medicines, view reports and manage personal health data.
- The app leverages Practo's network of doctors, profiles of its hundreds of thousands of users and an infrastructure created by Practo to manage exchange of information like prescriptions and bills.
- Using that to power its app, ICICI Lombard plans to offer a slew of out-patient health insurances products to users.

NSIC inks pact with Malaysia's SME Corp

- National Small Industries Corporation (NSIC) in January, 2018 signed an MoU with SME Corporation Malaysia for exchange of information and cooperation in areas such as policies to aid development of small and medium businesses (SMBs) in the two countries.
- Besides, three other agreements were also signed between Indian and Malaysian entities to strengthen cooperation among smaller businesses in these countries.
- Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) Minister Giriraj Singh, who was present at the event, expressed confidence that the two countries will work together in various areas like manufacturing and technology to drive growth in the SME sector.

FinMin notifies Rs. 80,000-cr recap bonds for PSBs

- The Finance Ministry has notified the recapitalisation bonds that will allocate Rs. 80,000 crore to 20 public sector lenders.
- The bonds, which are split into six instalments, will bear interest rates between 7.35 per cent and 7.68 per cent and will mature between 2028 and 2033.
- State Bank of India will receive the largest chunk of capital from the bonds, estimated at Rs. 8,800 crore, followed by IDBI Bank at Rs. 7,881 crore and Bank of Baroda, Rs. 6,975 crore. Last year, the Finance Ministry had unveiled plans to infuse Rs. 2.11 lakh crore capital in public sector banks that have been staring at mounting bad loans pegged at Rs. 6.9 lakh crore at the end of September 2017.
- Following this, it had, on January 24, announced a more detailed plan for recapitalisation of public sector lenders for the fiscal that includes over Rs. 1 lakh crore in capital through recapitalisation bonds, Budgetary support and fund raising from the market.

POORTI launches FarmCart, DealerBandhu apps with SBI

- POORTI Agri Services, a Mumbai-headquartered start-up, dedicated to farmer's welfare, launched its mobile shopping app "FarmCart" and delivery management app "Dealer Bandhu" nationally here in January, 2018 in presence of Guest of Honour Chairman, of their partner bank SBI, Rajneesh Kumar.
- POORTI is led by N Balasubramanian, ex-chairman of SIDBI, R G Rajan, ex-Chairman of RCF & NFL, and some senior professionals from banking and other industries.
- POORTI stands for Platform for Online Ordering & Rural Transformation of India.
- POORTI provides a mobile-enabled e-commerce platform in vernacular to farmers. Using FarmCart app, farmers can buy quality-assured product from authorized sellers at the right price at the right time using their android mobile.
- With SBI partnership, registered farmers and sellers of POORTI platform will get the benefit of doing cashless transactions through its payment gateway. Farmers with accounts in SBI and its associate banks, and 40+ public sector banks and private banks, can use net-banking, rupay card etc on POORTI platform.

SBI to offer credit cards to farmers

- State Bank of India is exploring the possibility of issuing credit cards to farmers.
- The bank, through its credit card arm SBI Card, a joint venture company between SBI and GE Capital, currently issues credit cards to farmers on pilot basis in the states of Rajasthan, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh.
- According to Rajnish Kumar, Chairman, SBI, farmers currently have access only to Kisan Credit Card (KCC) which is more like a debit or RuPay card linked to a loan account.
- The pilot, if successful, will be rolled out across other states and will give farmers access to interest-free credit for a period of 40-45 days.

India, World Bank sign USD 100 million loan agreement to boost rural economy of Tamil Nadu

- India and the World Bank on 30 January 2018 signed a USD 100 million loan agreement for Tamil Nadu Rural Transformation Project, aimed at boosting up the rural economy of Tamil Nadu.

- The Agreement was signed by Sameer Kumar Khare, Joint Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs, Union Ministry of Finance; Praveen P Nair, Project Director, Tamil Nadu; and Junaid Ahmad, Country Director of World Bank India.
- The Tamil Nadu Rural Transformation Project will create an enabling environment for producer organizations and enterprises to promote businesses across select value chains.
- The project aims to promote rural enterprises, facilitate their access to finance and create employment opportunities for youth particularly women in selected blocks of Tamil Nadu across 26 districts, benefitting over 400000 people.
- The Project will be operational in 120 blocks across 3994 villages in 26 Districts of Tamil Nadu with 411620 direct beneficiaries.

Centre launches GeM 3.0 with enhanced features

- The third version of the Government e-Marketplace, GEM 3.0, envisaged by the Union Government as the National Procurement Portal of India has been launched.
- The GeM 2.0 was launched as a pilot project in August 2016 and its success led to the conceptualisation of GeM 3.0. The portal strives to keep pace with the ever-evolving technological challenges and stake holder aspirations.

India and ADB sign USD 250 million loan to improve rural connectivity in five states

- India and Asian Development Bank (ADB) on 30 January 2018 signed USD 250 million loan to finance the construction of 6254 kilometres all-weather rural roads in five states- Assam, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and West Bengal.
- The loan agreement was signed by Sameer Kumar, Joint Secretary (Multilateral Institutions), Department of Economic Affairs in the Union Ministry of Finance and by Kenichi Yokoyama, Country Director of ADB's India Resident Mission.
- Under the project, about 2000 technical personnel would be imparted training on road safety and maintenance.

IREDA, RUMSL sign agreement to finance two large-scale solar parks in Madhya Pradesh

- The Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency Limited (IREDA) and Rewa Ultra Mega Solar Limited (RUMSL) signed an agreement on January 31, 2018 for financing the shared infrastructure of two large Solar Parks in Madhya Pradesh.
- The agreement was signed by S K Bhargava, Director (Finance), IREDA and Avaneesh Shukla, Executive Engineer, RUMSL in the presence of Upendra Tripathy, Interim Director General, International Solar Alliance (ISA).

India a top borrower from China-sponsored AIIB in 2017

- India has emerged as a top borrower from the China-sponsored Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) with USD 1.5 billion worth of loans last year and USD three billion more in the pipeline.
- They also exchanged views on the preparations for the next annual meet of AIIB which will be held in Mumbai in June this year, the Indian Embassy said in a statement.
- The vice president and chief investment officer of the bank, DJ Pandian also took part in the meeting.
- Next to India, Indonesia has emerged as the second largest borrower with about \$600 million loans.
- Significantly in the pipeline for lending for India by the 84-member bank this year included USD 3.5 billion worth of projects including Mumbai Metro, Andhra Pradesh new capital Amaravati's development and irrigation network in West Bengal.
- India is the second largest shared holder in the bank which has an authorised capital of USD 100 billion.

- China is the largest shareholder with 26.06 per cent voting shares in the bank. India is the second largest shareholder with 7.5 per cent followed by Russia 5.93 per cent and Germany with 4.5 per cent.

India gives \$45 mn aid to develop Kankesanthurai harbour in Sri Lanka

- India has extended a fresh financial assistance of \$45.27 million for upgrading Kankesanthurai (KKS) Harbour in northern Sri Lanka into a commercial port and strengthening the country's efforts to become a regional maritime hub.
- Sri Lanka's Ministry of Finance and Export-Import Bank of India (Exim Bank) signed an agreement in this regard on January 10, the Indian High Commission said.

Airtel ties up with Amazon to offer free Prime subscription

- Bharti Airtel in January, 2018 said it has tied up with e-commerce platform Amazon India to offer one-year subscription of Amazon Prime free of cost to its postpaid subscribers.
- The telecom major said the offer will be available for its new and existing postpaid subscribers with an "Infinity plan" of Rs 499 or above.

NCLT approves Vodafone India-Idea Cellular merger

- The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) has approved the proposed merger between Idea Cellular and Vodafone -- a move that brings both the companies closer to culminating the deal.
- On 20 March last year, Vodafone India, the Indian subsidiary of the UK-based Vodafone Group plc, the world's second-largest mobile phone company, announced its merger with the Aditya Birla Group-owned Idea Cellular, India's third-largest telecom operator.

IDFC Bank to merge with Capital First, Vaidyanathan to succeed Lall

- IDFC Bank will merge with Warburg Pincus-backed Capital First in an all-share deal, and V Vaidyanathan, the current chairman of Capital First, will become the MD and CEO of the merged entity, succeeding Rajiv Lall.'
- IDFC Bank will be issuing 139 shares for every 10 shares of Capital First, the bank said in a statement.
- The merger is subject to regulatory and shareholder approvals.

West Bengal tops DIPP's Business Reforms Action Plan 2017 with 86.18%

- West Bengal currently tops the list of the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion's Business Reforms Action Plan (BRAP) 2017, comprising 36 states and Union Territories.
- The eastern state's 'implementation scorecard' stood at 86.18 per cent, the same as neighbouring Jharkhand, followed by Gujarat at 82.38 per cent, according to DIPP data.
- The development comes as a shot in the arm for West Bengal, days before it hosts the Bengal Global Business Summit (BGBS).

India's first app for real estate brokers - 'Wajood' - launched

- This is the era of applications or apps as they are popularly known as. Almost all day-to-day activities are associated with some or the other app.
- Keeping this growing trend in mind the real estate broker community has now launched the first-ever application for real estate brokers called 'Wajood'.

Yes Bank launches 'YES! i am the CHANGE' programme

- YES Foundation, the social development arm of YES Bank, in January, 2018 launched a programme to inculcate the spirit of responsible youth citizenship and drive social impact through the medium of films.
- The fifth edition of 'YES! i am the CHANGE' (YIAC) aims at providing youth, NGOs/ social enterprises with a platform to use films as a storytelling medium to drive social impact, Yes Bank said in a statement.

India INX lists Indian Railway Finance Corporation green bonds - first debt security at IFSC

- The BSE's India International Exchange (India INX) in January, 2018 listed the IRFC's green bonds on its debt listing platform -- the global securities market.
- With this, the Indian Railway Finance Corporation's (IRFC) green bonds have become the first debt security to be listed on an exchange at International Financial Services Centre in Gujarat's GIFT city.
- IRFC had last year raised USD 500 million from the 10- year green bond from investors in Asia, Europe and offshore US through listing on the London Stock Exchange (LSE).

Uttar Pradesh plans MoU with BSE for listing of state SMEs

- Uttar Pradesh government proposes to sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) to enable listing of small and medium industries in the stock market and get more funds for them.
- A letter is being sent to CEO of BSE Ashish Chauhan to consider signing of the MoU and also help in setting up a facilitation centre at the two-day Uttar Pradesh Investors' Summit that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is likely to inaugurate on February 21.

Reliance Jio plans to launch its own cryptocurrency 'JioCoin'

- Reliance Jio Infocomm Ltd on 11 January 2018 announced its plans to create its own cyptocurrency, 'JioCoin'. Mukesh Ambani's elder son Akash Ambani will be leading the JioCoin project.
- Reliance Jio plans to build a 50-member team of young professionals with average age of 25 years to work on this blockchain technology, which can also be used to develop applications such as smart contracts and supply chain management logistics. The team would also work on various blockchain products.

India contributes USD 50,000 to UN Youth Envoy's office

- India has contributed USD 50,000 to UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres's Office of Envoy on Youth to help with its mission of involving young people in the world body's goals.
- Paulomi Tripathi, a First Secretary in India's UN Mission, handed over the contribution in January, 2018 to the Youth Envoy, Jayathma Wickramanayake.

Federal Bank ties up with Hedge Equities

- Federal Bank has entered into a strategic partnership with Hedge Equities Ltd for providing Portfolio Investment Scheme (PIS) services to NRIs.
- A formal agreement was executed here in which Jose K Mathew (EVP & Head Retail Business, Federal Bank) and Alex Babu (MD, Hedge Equities Ltd) exchanged the MoU announcing the tie-up.
- Federal Bank is authorised by the RBI to issue permission letter to NRIs on behalf of the RBI to transact in secondary market.

Arun Jaitley launches India's first agro options contract in guar seeds

- Finance Minister Arun Jaitley in January, 2018 launched options trading in guar seed on the commodity bourse NCDEX and asserted that the new initiative will benefit farmers and ensure better prices in the coming days.
- Higher production has led to fall in prices of some agri-commodities in some places, he said, adding that options trading is one of the major steps towards taking farmers out of this situation.
- NCDEX is the second exchange after MCX to launch options trading in commodities. In October 2017, MCX had launched gold options. Guar seed is the first agri-commodity options.

Yara International acquires Tata Chemicals' urea business for Rs 2,682 crore

- Yara International in January, 2018 announced the completion of its acquisition of the Tata Chemicals' urea business for Rs 2,682 crore.
- The deal includes transfer of all assets and liabilities relating to the Babrala plant in Uttar Pradesh.
- It is the first FDI in the urea sector. With this buyout, Yara gains a significant position in the North India, with access to a strong network of 650-700 dealers.

President of India Inaugurates Economic Democracy Conclave

- The President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind, inaugurated the Economic Democracy Conclave organised by Rambhau Mhalgi Prabodhini at Thane, Maharashtra, in January, 2018 (January 14, 2018).
- Speaking on the occasion, the President said that it is very important for our country and society to strengthen economic democracy through entrepreneurship. He praised the Prabodhini team for its contribution to strengthening the political, economic and social dimensions of our democracy for the past 35 years.

Cairn India to invest Rs 370 bn to ramp up crude production in Rajasthan

- Vedanta's oil and gas vertical Cairn India is planning to invest Rs 370 billion to ramp up crude production at its Barmer oil fields in Rajasthan.
- The investment will be made over the next few years, which will enhance the production of crude oil.
- Union Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Dharmendra Pradhan in January, 2018 inaugurated an Enhanced Oil Recovery (EOR) programme for Mangala-Bhagyam-Aishwarya (MBA) fields in Barmer.

IBBI registration must for asset valuations under bankruptcy code

- Professionals carrying out asset valuations under Companies Act and Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code will have to get themselves registered with Insolvency Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) from April to conduct such activities, an official statement said in January, 2018.
- A government notification in October had delegated powers and functions to the IBBI under Companies Act and designated it as the authority under the Companies (Registered Valuers and Valuation) Rules, 2017.

Maharashtra govt sanctions ₹14,240 cr for farm loan waiver

- The Maharashtra government in January, 2018 made a ₹14,240-crore allocation for the farm loan waiver scheme and for repayment to farmers whose produce was purchased by the State.
- The State's cooperation and marketing department in January, 2018 issued a Government Resolution (GR) for the allocation of ₹14,240 crore for the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Shetkari Sanman Yojana, the loan waiver scheme announced on June 24 last year.

Govt announces details of electoral bonds for political funding

- The union government in January, 2018 announced details of political funding that can be routed by donors to parties through electoral bonds, a scheme announced by it in Union Budget 2017.
- Electoral bonds will allow a political donor to purchase bonds from authorized banks. These can be redeemed only through the registered accounts of a political party in a prescribed time frame.
- Finance minister Arun Jaitley said the electoral bonds, which are interest-free banking instruments, can be bought from specified branches of State Bank of India in multiples of Rs1,000, Rs1 lakh, Rs10 lakh or Rs1 crore.
- The life of the electoral bonds will be 15 days and they can be encashed only by registered political parties through a designated bank account.

Indian Railways to launch co-branded debit card with State Bank of India

- To incentivise passengers to use the online ticket booking system and adopt cashless methods, Indian Railways is set to launch its own co-branded debit card and also hold monthly lottery draw to give 100% cash-back to 10 lucky passengers.
- The debit card will be launched in association with the country's biggest lender State Bank of India and the transporter's arm Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC).
- The move comes at a time when IRCTC is losing Rs 600 crore per year as post the demonetisation of specified currencies in November 2016, the railways waived charges for online booking of tickets.

SBI inks pact with NABARD to promote JLG method of lending in West Bengal

- State Bank of India has joined hands with National Bank for Agriculture & Rural Development (Nabard) to grow its priority lending book as the country's largest lender plans to raise its stake with small and medium farmers, a majority of whom do not enjoy the access of bank loans.
- The loans under this agreement will be given to small homogeneous groups of farmers carrying joint liability to repay. Lending to joint liability groups (JLGs), pioneered by Nobel winner Muhammad Yunus of Bangladesh and implemented in India by microfinance companies such as Bharat Financial Inclusion or the likes of Bandhan Bank, is now an effective way of doing rural business for large private sector banks such as Axis Bank and HDFC Bank, helping them to gain priority sector exposure directly.
- JLGs consist 4-10 members who are engaged in similar economic activities including farming.
- SBI is the first one to join hands with Nabard and its partner NGOs in West Bengal to promote JLG method of lending to farmers at 7% interest in the state, which is characterised by fragmented landholdings and low credit penetration.

SBI collects Rs 1,771 crore as charges from below minimum balance accounts

- State Bank of India (SBI) collected Rs 1,771 crore during April-November 2017 as charges from customers who did not maintain their minimum monthly average balance (MAB) in their accounts, according to Finance Ministry data.
- According to India Express, this is more than the bank's July-September quarter net profit of Rs 1,581.55 crore and nearly half of the Rs 3,586 crore it earned as net profit April-September.

Crisil launches index to track FPI investments in fixed markets

- Rating agency Crisil in January, 2018 launched an index to measure the performance of investments of foreign portfolio investors (FPI) in the fixed-income market.
- The Crisil FPI index would serve as benchmark for performance of FPI investments in government securities, and 'AAA' as well as 'AA' rated corporate bonds with residual maturity greater than three years.

Principal Financial to buy Punjab National Bank's minority stakes in JVs

- Investment manager Principal Financial Group Inc said in January, 2018 it would purchase Indian lender Punjab National Bank's (PNB) minority stakes in their joint ventures.
- The agreement, subject to regulatory approval, would give Iowa-based Principal Financial full ownership of Principal-PNB Asset Management Co and Principal Trustee Co, the company said in a statement.

Govt approves Rs 5,369 cr waterway project on NW 1

- The government in January, 2018 approved the Rs 5,369-crore Jal Vikas Marg Project (JVMP) for enhanced navigation on the Haldia-Varanasi stretch of National Waterway-1 (NW-1).
- The project falls in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal and major districts under its ambit are Varanasi, Ghazipur, Ballia, Buxar, Chhapra, Vaishali, Patna, Begusarai, Khagaria, Munger, Bhagalpur, Sahibganj, Murshidabad, Pakur, Hoogly and Kolkata.
- The project is expected to be completed by March, 2023 and will provide an alternative mode of transport that will be environment friendly and cost effective.

- About the funding part, the government said IBRD loan component will be Rs 2,512 crore (USD 375 million) while the Government of India counterpart funds will be to the tune of Rs 2,556 crore (USD 380 million), to be sourced from budgetary allocation and proceeds from bond issue.
- Private sector participation under PPP mode would be Rs 301 crore (USD 45 million).

IICA, IPPB sign MoU to provide training on payment banking

- The Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs (IICA) and India Post Payments Bank in January, 2018 signed an agreement for the training of employees of the latter in the area of payment banking.
- With massive network of post offices, India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) can very effectively remedy the lack of financial inclusion in India, he added.

APGVB introduces Desktop ATMs in rural India

- Move over independent ATMs, security and queues, here come desktop ATMs, that too in rural India. In a trendy initiative, the Andhra Pradesh Grameena Vikas Bank (APGVB) has operationalised its first desktop ATM at Kasibugga in Mandi Bazar of Warangal in Telangana in January, 2018.
- The mini-ATM within the branch premises will facilitate customers to withdraw small amounts. At the same time regular bank account holders can withdraw money and do other banking activities. The model will be scaled up to 100 in the near future, said Narasi Reddy, Chairman. With these ATMs, there will be no need for separate ATM rooms, so there is no security issue.

PHD Chamber signs MoU with IDFC bank, credit facilitation for MSMEs on chart

- Eyeing at facilitating credit to the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in the country, the PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHD-CCI) recently signed collaboration with the IDFC bank.
- The main focus of the MoU between the PHDCCI and IDFC would be to facilitate credit support to the MSMEs in the country. Also the chamber will assist the micro, small and medium enterprises with the documentation procedures.

NABARD sanctions Rs 372.51 crore to Odisha

- The NABARD has sanctioned Rs 372.51 crore loan assistance under the Rural Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF) to Odisha towards irrigation and rural bridge projects for the last quarter of this fiscal.
- A total number of 17,322 lift irrigation projects including bore wells, shallow tube wells, digging wells, micro river lifts shall be taken up with Rs 130.17 crore from the assistance, the bank said in a release in January, 2018.

Cabinet approves Zojila tunnel project in Jammu and Kashmir

- The government in January, 2018 approved the strategic Zojila pass tunnel project in Jammu and Kashmir to provide all-weather connectivity between Kashmir valley and Ladakh, which remains cut-off from the rest of the world during winters due to heavy snowfall.
- Zojila pass is situated at an altitude of 11,578 feet on Srinagar-Kargil-Leh National Highway which remains closed during winters (December to April) due to heavy snowfall and avalanches cutting off Leh-Ladakh region from Kashmir.

Indian Oil Corp takes up 2018 as 'Year of Trust'

- Indian Oil Corp (IOC), the nation's biggest oil firm, has adopted 2018 as the 'Year of Trust' as it earned belief in the delivery potential in programmes like PMUY, and decision of early implementation of BS-VI fuel norms.
- Every second Indian is served by the company as it commands half of the auto fuel and cooking fuel market share.

Cabinet nod to India, UK pact to improve public transport

- The government in January, 2018 approved a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and London's transportation authority to improve public transport in the country.
- The MoU is aimed at improving the overall public transport system, improve passenger services and promote the use of high capacity buses in India.

SRL becomes first diagnostics firm to record Rs 10 billion in revenue

- Leading diagnostics chain, SRL Diagnostics (SRL) in January, 2018 announced that the company had become the first Indian diagnostics company to surpass Rs. 10 billion in revenue in 2017.
- The platform is also the chosen lab partner for UNICEF's Comprehensive National Nutrition Survey.

Haryana to implement Integrated Solar Based Micro Irrigation scheme

- Haryana government has announced to implement the integrated solar based micro irrigation scheme (ISBMI) in all districts of the State and formed a Committee under the Chairman of Haryana Renewable Energy Development Agency (HAREDA) to chalk out a plan in this regard.
- Presently, this scheme is being implemented on pilot basis in commands of 14 different canal outlets spread over 13 districts of the State.

India's 2nd largest rooftop solar power plant commissioned by GAIL in UP

- As part of India's target to achieve 40 Giga Watts (GW) of rooftop photovoltaics (PV) by 2022, the state-owned gas utility, Gas India Limited has said in a statement in January, 2018 that it has installed India's second largest roof top solar PV power plant at its Petrochemical Complex at Pata, Uttar Pradesh.
- The 5.76 MWp solar energy plant is spread over the roof of warehouses covering a total roof area of 65,000 sq meters

About GAIL

- Gas (India) Limited is the largest state-owned natural gas processing and distribution company in India.
- Headquartered in New Delhi.

RIL commissions world's largest ROGC complex at Jamnagar

- In one of the largest capital expenditure programmes globally in the oil & gas sector, Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) has commissioned the world's largest refinery off-gas cracker (ROGC) complex at Jamnagar.
- ROGC uses off-gases from RIL's two refineries at Jamnagar as feedstock. It is part of the \$11-billion capital expenditure RIL had announced in one of the largest brown-field expansion of energy and petrochemical projects globally.

Govt notifies 7.75% bond scheme for retail investors

- The government has notified a new 7.75% taxable bond scheme to replace the earlier 8% scheme for retail investors.
- The interest would be payable half-yearly and the cumulative value of Rs1,000 at the end of seven years will be Rs1,703. These taxable bonds to be issued at par are meant for individual other than Non-Resident Indians, it said, adding these are not tradeable in the secondary market and are not eligible as collateral for loans from banking institutions, non-banking financial companies or financial institutions.

RBI puts Allahabad Bank under prompt corrective action

- India's Allahabad Bank said the central bank has initiated 'prompt corrective action' (PCA) against the state-run lender over its high bad loans.
- High net non-performing assets (NPA) and a negative Return On Assets (ROA) for two years in a row has prompted the action, the bank said in a statement late in January, 2018, although it added the action would help improve its risk management, asset quality and profits.

New ₹10 notes to be chocolate coloured

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is going to issue new Rs 10 notes under the Mahatma Gandhi series with chocolate brown colour as the base. The new note will bear the picture of the Konark Sun Temple.
- The apex bank has already printed around 1 billion pieces of the new note, according to people familiar with the matter.

Air India ties up with foreign banks to acquire three B777 planes

- State-owned Air India has tied up with UAE-based First Abu Dhabi Bank as well as Standard Chartered Bank and Mashreq Bank to avail short-term loans for acquiring three Boeing 777 aircraft, Union minister Jayant Singh said in January, 2018.
- Two of the aircraft are to be used for ferrying VVIPs, the minister of state for civil aviation said in a written reply in the Lok Sabha.
- The delivery of the three B777-300 ER planes is scheduled to be completed next month -- two in January and one in February.

Paytm Mall partners with Samsung India to strengthen O2O channel

- Paytm Mall in January, 2018 announced a landmark partnership with consumer electronics brand, Samsung India, aiming to strengthen its offline-to-online (O2O) model.
- As part of the arrangement, Paytm Mall will now be hosting Samsung brand store on its platform to drive immediate discovery and instant purchases of the brand's flagship range of smartphones.

NIIT acquires Eagle Productivity Solutions for \$8.1 million

- Skills and talent development firm NIIT Ltd said in January, 2018 it has acquired Eagle International Institute (EII) for \$8.1 million.
- The acquisition will help NIIT expand its training capability for global rollout of cloud-based enterprise applications in the pharmaceutical and life sciences industry, NIIT said in a statement.

CCEA approves mandatory packaging of foodgrains in Jute Materials

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) on 3 January 2018 approved mandatory packaging of foodgrains and sugar in the jute material for the Jute Year 2017-18. The Jute Year 2017-18 period is from 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018.
- The above decision of the Cabinet is aimed at sustaining the core demand for the jute sector and supporting the livelihood of the workers and farmers dependent on the sector.
- CCEA approved the mandatory packaging norms under the Jute Packaging Material (JPM) Act, 1987.

Union Cabinet approves revised Model Concession Agreement for building ports

- The Union Cabinet on 3 January 2018 approved amendments in the Model Concession Agreement (MCA) to make the Port Projects more investor-friendly and make investments more attractive in the Port Sector.
- The amendments in the MCA call for setting up of the Society for Affordable Redressal of Disputes - Ports (SAROD-PORTS) as dispute resolution mechanism, similar to provision available in Highway Sector.

Yes Bank, Nearby Tech bring cardless-pinless ATM service

- Fintech startup Nearby Technologies has tied up with Yes Bank to provide Aadhaar-enabled cardless and pinless ATM service by which customers can deposit or withdraw money at retailers' place.
- Using the PayNEARBY mobile application on a smart phone, a retailer can become an Aadhaar ATM/Aadhaar Bank branch for cash withdrawals and deposits by a customer, Yes Bank said in a release.
- Yes Bank and Nearby worked closely with the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) to launch this service.

GDP growth in 2017-18 estimated at 6.5%

- The growth in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) during 2017-18 is estimated at 6.5 per cent, as compared to the growth rate of 7.1 per cent in 2016-17, the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation noted in January, 2018.
- As per data released by the Central Statistics Office (CSO), Real GDP at constant (2011-12) prices in the year 2017-18 is likely to attain a level of Rs 129.85 lakh crore, as against the Provisional Estimate of GDP for the year 2016-17 of Rs 121.90 lakh crore, released on May 31, 2017.

Madhya Pradesh to Levy 50 Paisa per Litre Cess on Petrol-Diesel to Raise Funds for Roads

- Petrol-diesel is going to be costlier in Madhya Pradesh. The state's cabinet paved the way for the fuel getting costlier by levying cess of 50 paisa a litre for boosting 'infrastructure' in the state.
- The cabinet has approved an ordinance, MP Motor Speed Bill 2018, which enabled government to levy 50 paisa per litre cess on petrol and diesel and the funds would be invested into infrastructure development and improvement of traffic, MP government's spokesperson Narottam Mishra told newsmen after the meeting was over in state capital.

NMCG approves Namami Gange projects worth Rs 295 crore

- The National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) on 4 January 2018 approved five Namami Gange projects worth Rs 295.01 crore.
- Out of 5, three projects pertain to sewage management in West Bengal at an estimated cost of Rs 278.6 crore, one relates to sewage management in Uttarakhand at an estimated cost of Rs 4.68 crore and one project worth Rs 11.73 crore is related to ghat improvement works in Varanasi.
- With this approval of 5 projects, all the Namami Gange projects related to sewage management in high pollution load towns along river Ganga have been sanctioned.

Sewage Management in West Bengal

- In West Bengal, sewage management works in Kamarhati and Baranagar Municipalities will be undertaken at an estimated cost of Rs 172.10 crore under PPP-based Hybrid Annuity mode.
- Pollution abatement works for river Ganga in Berhampore Municipality will be done at an estimated cost of Rs 52.2 crore.
- Sewage management works in Nabadwip Municipality will be done at an estimated cost of Rs 54.3 crore.

Sewage Management in Uttarakhand

- In Uttarakhand, NMCG approved one project for laying of sewer lines in some of the uncovered areas in Haridwar at an estimated cost of Rs 4.68 crore.

Sewage Management in Varanasi

- In Varanasi, NMCG approved a project worth Rs 11.73 crore for repair and retrofitting of various ghats.
- This project is aimed at strengthening the poor condition of ghats through bolder pitching and stone steps to ensure improved life of ghats apart from avoiding inconvenience to the visitors and pilgrims.

Infosys partners Belgium telecom company Proximus

- Software major Infosys in January, 2018 announced it has been selected by Belgium-based telecommunications major Proximus to implement a business transformation programme aimed at delivering superior digital customer experiences for its enterprise clients.
- As part of this programme, Infosys has been entrusted with the joint overall responsibility and ownership of the Greenfield Excite programme, which includes simplifying and remodelling the company's portfolio of products for the professional services market, the company said.

Three Ministries sign MoU for a Technology Mission for Indian Railways

- Three Ministries of the Union Government, the Ministry of Railways, Ministry of Human Resource Development and the Department of Science & Technology on 4 January 2018 signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) at Rail Bhawan, New Delhi for joint funding of Technology Mission for Indian Railways.
- The unique effort is in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas'. The MOU will facilitate the co-financing of 'Technology Mission for Indian Railways' by investment sharing for identified railway projects for applied research.

The percentage division of the funding between the three ministries is as follows:

- Ministry of Railways: 30 percent
- Ministry of Human Resource Development: 25 per cent
- Department of Science & Technology: 25 per cent

Paytm Payments Bank, IndusInd tie-up for fixed deposit facility

- Paytm Payments Bank in January, 2018 said it has partnered IndusInd Bank to introduce a facility to create a fixed deposit when the customer balance exceeds Rs 1 lakh at the end of day.
- Paytm Payments Bank customers can redeem their deposits instantly, anytime without paying any pre-closure or miscellaneous charges and can earn up to 6.85 per cent annual interest, the company said in a statement.

TIHCL gets RBI nod to operate as NBFC

- Telangana Industrial Health Clinic Ltd (TIHCL), a State government initiative, has got RBI clearance to register and function as a non-banking finance company (NBFC).
- It will be the first State promoted and co-financing NBFC, according to B Yerram Raju, TIHCL's advisor and director. TIHCL was floated in 2017 with a corpus of ₹100 crore, which included contributions from the State and Central governments, financial institutions, industrial units and high networth individuals.

Google Tez signed up as Reliance Energy's payment window

- Reliance Energy announced in January, 2018 it has become the first utility to link up with Google for its Google Tez, a Unified Payments Interface (UPI)-based payment platform. Customers can now download the Tez app and identify their bank account through their registered phone banking mobile number which would be mapped to the bank account and a Virtual Payment Address shall be created to effect all payments.
- Compared with other online payment options, Google Tez takes less time to make payments as there is no need to enter card details, CVV numbers, OTP and other processes, a spokesperson said.

Janata Sahakari Bank launches "Jet Pay"

- In line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's dream of creating digital India, the leading Urban Cooperative Bank Janata Sahakari Bank Pune has recently launched the application called "Jet Pay" which is based on latest technology of Unified Payments Interface (UPI).
- Jet Pay app can be easily available on the Google Play Store. This application provides Money Transfer, Balance Enquiry, Scan & Pay from UPI Mobile Application.
- It is headquartered in Pune, Maharashtra

IndusInd Bank and Dynamics introduce India's first battery-powered interactive Payment Cards

- IndusInd Bank and Dynamics Inc. at the 2018 Consumer Electronics Show (CES) announced plans to introduce the first battery-powered, interactive payment cards to the Indian market in 2018.
- The new IndusInd Bank card from Dynamics has multiple buttons that let the consumers use a single card to pay in multiple ways. With a touch of a button consumers can select credit, points or monthly instalments as payment option. A different colour light will activate based on the selected payment option.
- The solution requires no changes to the payment infrastructure or merchant systems. A consumer can pay using points or instalment anywhere MasterCard is accepted.

PNB ties up with NSFDC for assisting SC families

- Punjab National Bank (PNB) and National Scheduled Castes Finance and Development Corporation (NSFDC) have tied up to provide financial assistance for economic empowerment of persons belonging to Scheduled Caste (SC) families living below Double Poverty Line (DPL).
- A Memorandum of Agreement to this effect was signed by B.M.Padha, Corporate General Manager, Priority Sector & Financial Inclusion Division, PNB and Devanand, General Manager, NSFDC.

Peru records highest export sales to India among Asian markets

- South American country Peru generated its highest export sales to India during January- October 2017 with shipments totalling USD 1.57 billion, as compared to other Asian economies like China, South Korea, Japan and the UAE.
- According to the country's Exports and Tourism Promotion Board, Peruvian sales to Asian markets went from USD 10.53 billion (January-October 2016) to USD 15.59 billion in the same period last year.
- The target markets included China, South Korea, India, Japan, the UAE, the Philippines, Taiwan, Vietnam, Hong Kong, and Malaysia.

Ola ties up with ICICI Bank to offer innovative solutions to customers, driver partners

- Taxi aggregator Ola in January, 2018 announced signing of an MoU along with ICICI Bank to bring forth a range of integrated offers to their customers and driver-partners.

Through this alliance, **two of India's most popular and trusted brands will bring together their respective technology platforms to offer the following facilities:**

- Ola booking facility on ICICI Bank's mobile banking platforms: It will enable ICICI Bank customers to seamlessly book an Ola and pay the fare by using the bank's mobile banking applications; 'iMobile' and 'Pockets'.
- Access to instant small ticket digital credit: The facility will help Ola customers to get small ticket digital credit instantaneously from ICICI Bank, on the Ola Platform.
- Enable digital payments to driver partners: ICICI Bank will offer a 'Pay Direct' card for Ola's driver partners. With this, Ola's auto and cab driver partners will be able to get their daily earnings directly into their 'Pay Direct' card accounts.
- Co-branded credit card: ICICI Bank will launch a new co-branded credit card in association with Ola.

Telangana becomes first state to monetise roads through TOT route

- India's youngest state Telangana has become the first state government to take up asset monetisation through toll-operate-transfer (TOT) initiative and has appointed transaction advisors for Hyderabad Outer Ring Road.
- The TOT model, an asset recycling model which enables completed road projects to be monetised, is now being initiated at the state level in India.
- While the Ministry of Road Transport & Highways (MoRTH) and the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) are expecting bids for the first TOT bundle of National Highways in February 2018, Telangana state has become the first state to kick-off the asset monetisation exercise.

Union Bank of India launches Project Utkarsh

- The Union Bank of India (UBI) in January, 2018 launched project Utkarsh, aimed at providing better services to its customers.
- Under Utkarsh, UBI would provide home loans in five days to savings bank account holders.
- The UBI had been the front-runner in providing loans to its customers and also provided continuous services across the State during the demonetisation, he said.

Apollo Tyres to invest Rs 1800 crore in first phase in Andhra Pradesh

- Gurgaon-based Apollo Tyres Tuesday said it will be investing close to Rs 1800 crores to set up a new manufacturing facility in Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh.
- The resources earmarked are for developing the first phase of the unit, for which the company has procured 200 acres of land from the state government.
- The construction work on the project will begin within the next six months and it will start rolling out tyres in the following 24 months.

South Korea, GCCI sign MoU for business cooperation

- An official delegation from South Korea and the Gujarat Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GCCI) in January, 2018 signed a memorandum of understanding for co-operation between industries in Gujarat and the East Asian country, with a focus on automobile, defence and textiles sectors.
- The South Korean delegation was led by the country's Consul General in Mumbai, Kim Soungun.

PhonePe inks strategic pact with rival FreeCharge

- Flipkart's payments arm PhonePe in January, 2018 said it has partnered mobile wallet company FreeCharge to allow the latter's customers pay for transactions at PhonePe's partner merchants.
- According to the deal terms, PhonePe has now enabled its over 45 million users to link their existing FreeCharge wallets to the PhonePe app, PhonePe said in a statement.
- Once linked, PhonePe customers will be able to spend their FreeCharge wallet balance at all online and offline merchant outlets that accept payments via PhonePe, it added.

GVK inks pact with Cidco for ₹16,000-cr Navi Mumbai airport project

- GVK Power & Infrastructure Ltd has signed a concession agreement for the mega ₹16,000-crore Navi Mumbai International Airport project.
- The agreement has been signed through a special purpose vehicle, Navi Mumbai International Airport Pvt Ltd with Cidco, the nodal authority of the Maharashtra government for the implementation of the project.

Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry, Allahabad Bank ink MoU for web portal to process

- The Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry in January, 2018 inked an MoU with Allahabad Bank for setting up an online portal for processing interest subsidy to be paid to people who availed loans under the Centre's DAY-NULM scheme.
- The move is aimed at faster payment of subsidy to the people and enhanced monitoring system with availability of a mechanism to ascertain whether the subsidy has reached the beneficiary or not, an official release said.
- Under the Self-Employment Programme (SEP) component of Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NULM), loans up to Rs 2 lakh is available to individuals in urban areas for setting up micro-enterprise. The loan limit is 10 lakh for a group.

Cabinet approves 49% foreign investment in Air India under approval route

- The Union Cabinet in January, 2018 approved changes in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) norms to allow foreign carriers to own 49 per cent in Air India under approval route, a change that will allow foreign carriers to bid for the national carrier but with an Indian partner.
- The earlier FDI policy allowed foreign carriers to own 49 per cent in Indian carriers, but had kept Air India out of it, which has been amended by the Cabinet now.

Cabinet Approves 100% FDI In Single Brand Retail Via Automatic Route

- The Union Cabinet in January, 2018 approved a proposal to allow 100 per cent FDI or foreign direct investment through automatic route in single brand retail. Currently, FDI up to 49 per cent is permitted under automatic

route in single brand retail but beyond that limit, government nod is required. The Union Cabinet in January, 2018 reviewed foreign direct investment policy in certain sectors with a view to attract more overseas funds.

- It also cleared 100 per cent FDI in construction development via automatic route.

Bank of India inks MOU with RXIL for discounting invoices of MSMEs

- Public sector lender Bank of India (BoI) in January, 2018 said it has entered into an Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Receivables Exchange of India Ltd (RXIL) as a Trade Receivables Discounting System (TReDS) partner for discounting invoices of MSMEs on digital platform.

Paytm sets up investment arm 'Paytm Money'

- Paytm in January, 2018 announced that it has set up 'Paytm Money Limited', a wholly owned subsidiary of One97 Communications to build Investment and Wealth Management products for its users.
- Paytm Money will be the fourth consumer brand from the company after Paytm, Paytm Mall and Paytm Payments Bank.

Government divests paid-up capital in NMDC

- The Government of India in January, 2018 divested 2.52 percent of paid-up capital in National Mineral Development Corporation (NMDC) for an amount of Rs. 1200 crore approximately.
- Rs. 980.05 crore came from non-retail investors and Rs. 232 crore approximately came from retail investors through Offer for sale (OFS) mechanism.

Digital transactions cross 1-billion mark in December

- Overall digital transactions for the first time has breached the 1-billion mark in a month, having clocked 1.06 billion in December, according to data released by RBI. It jumped by around 6.5% against November transaction numbers, which was 998 million.
- The growth has been driven by strong show from all forms of payments across Unified Payments (UPI), IMPS, cards as well as wallets. The spectacular show of UPI has played a vital role having clocked almost a 40% jump in transaction volume month-on-month. UPI clocked 145.5 million transactions against 104.8 million done in November.

CAIT launches Digital Rath to boost digital payments

- In its efforts to incentivise digital payments in the country, the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) has launched a Digital Rath under its national campaign "Cashless Bano India" in association with MasterCard to boost digital payments among traders and consumers across the country and to motivate trading fraternity transform from cash-based business formats to technology-led digitalised transactions.
- The Digital Rath was flagged off in January, 2018 at Kashmiri Gate Market in walled city area of Delhi. The Digital Rath is targeted to touch about 10 lakh persons across the country in ten cities including Gwalior, Jhansi, Kanpur, Kolkata, Puducherry, Nagpur, Bhopal, Pune, Navi Mumbai and Mumbai.

French car maker Groupe PSA ties up with TCS for smart cars

- In what is a validation of rise of Indian engineering and design process, French car maker Groupe PSA has partnered with homegrown IT and engineering major Tata Consultancy Service for the development and engineering of its ambitious emerging market Smart Cars plan.
- Designed with a motto of 'Be Indians in India', the hiring of TCS by PSA is an attempt by a global conglomerate to design and develop products for Indian buyers at Indian cost and compete strongly against Maruti and Hyundai.

GDP growth to touch 7.3 percent in 2018-19: World Bank

- India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is expected to grow by 6.7 percent in FY 2017-18 and will pick up to 7.3 percent in 2018-19, and to 7.5 percent a year in the medium term, a report released by the World Bank in January, 2018 stated.
- The report titled 'Global Economic Prospects' for 2018 noted that the GDP figures of 6.7 percent for FY 2017-18 can be attributed to short-term disruptions arising from the introduction of the Goods and Services Tax (GST).

India and States

UIDAI allows face recognition for Aadhaar authentication

- The UIDAI in January, 2018 allowed face recognition as additional means of Aadhaar authentication to be used in combination with existing ways such as fingerprint or iris scan.
- The move will enable easy authentication for those individuals who face a difficulty in other biometric authentication like fingerprint and iris.
- The facility is being allowed only in a "fusion mode" that is along with other existing means of authentication, and will be available by July 1, 2018, an official release said.
- "This facility is going to help in inclusive authentication of those who are not able to biometrically authenticate due to their worn out fingerprints, old age or hard work conditions," the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) said.
- As of now, two modes of biometric authentication, fingerprint authentication and iris authentication, are allowed under Aadhaar.

Hyderabad To Host World Sweet Festival 2018

- The World Sweet Festival (WSF-2018) will be held in Telangana(Hyderabad) from January 13 to showcase the cosmopolitan nature of Hyderabad in a sweet way. The sweets from around 25 states in India and 15 foreign countries, to be prepared locally by members of various associations, will be displayed at the event, being organized by the Telangana government.
- The 3-day festival would be organised in association with various cultural, language and region-based associations of people, including those from foreign countries living in Hyderabad.

Historic War memorial Teen Murti Chowk renamed after Israeli city Haifa

- The Teen Murti Chowk in central Delhi was formally renamed as Teen Murti-Haifa, after Israeli city Haifa in a solemn ceremony attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Israeli counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu on 14 January 2018.
- The two leaders jointly paid tribute at the memorial. The renaming of the iconic war memorial is aimed at being a symbolic gesture of India's friendship with Israel. The announcement follows the scheduled visit of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to India.

Odisha government introduces new artists' assistance scheme

- The state government of Odisha on 15 January 2018 announced an artists' assistance scheme called the 'Mukshyamantri Kalakar Sahayata Jojana' (MMKSJ) under which 50,000 artists from across the state will get a monthly assistance of Rs 1,200.
- The announcement was made by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik after a meeting, attended by culture minister A C Panda, Chief Secretary A P Padhi and other officials. The state was earlier imparting a sum of Rs 1000 as artist's assistance to 4000 artists.

Home Minister Rajnath Singh inaugurates two-day International Workshop on Disaster Resilient Infrastructure

- Home Minister Rajnath Singh on 15 January 2018 inaugurated a two-day International Workshop on Disaster Resilient Infrastructure, which has been organised by the National Disaster Management Authority in New Delhi.
- Speaking on the occasion, the Minister said that the workshop is a paradigm shift in the field of disaster management globally. He said tremendous foresight and rigour are required to ensure that all new infrastructures are built in such a way that they could withstand the hazards of the present as well as the future.

West Bengal, Kerala, Odisha opt out of Centre's aspirational districts scheme

- Three opposition ruled states –West Bengal, Kerala and Odisha — have opted out of the Centre's Transformation of Aspirational Districts scheme, thus reducing the total number of districts under the programme to 102 from 115, a senior Niti Aayog official said.
- According to another government official, the three states have objected to the criteria set up by the centre for identifying backward districts without taking states into confidence. The Centre has embarked upon a major policy initiative for rapid transformation of districts that are lagging on specific development parameters.
- Earlier in the month, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had addressed the conference of 115 aspirational districts. It was attended by collectors and officers-in-charge of 115 backward districts. During the conference, Modi has also promised to personally visit one well-performing district by April 14, the birth anniversary of B R Ambedkar.

Union Government ends Haj subsidy to empower minorities without appeasement

- The Union Government has decided to end Haj subsidy from this year, as a part of its policy to 'empower minorities without appeasement'. The announcement was made by Minority Affairs Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi on 16 January 2018.
- The Minister stated that the decision is a part of the government's policy to empower minorities with dignity and without appeasement. He further said that despite the withdrawal of the subsidy, a record number of 1.75 lakh Muslims would be undertaking the pilgrimage this year from India after Saudi Arabia increased India's quota by 5,000.

Sri Lanka has become the first one to be connected to India's National Knowledge Network

- India's National Knowledge Network and Sri Lanka's LEARN which connect to educational institutions between the two countries have now been linked with each other through high capacity internet, the government said in January, 2018.
- Law and IT Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad, who is on an official visit to Sri Lanka, inaugurated the connectivity between the two networks.

Kerala's Ernakulam Station Becomes The 1st Disabled-Friendly Railway Station

- Kerala has made permanent ramps at Ernakulam Junction, along with portable ramps to board trains and small wheelchairs to get inside the trains. Luggage porters were trained on how to assist disabled passengers.
- The proponents of the projects have also promised to have an electronic cart for porters to transport disabled and elderly passengers to their trains.
- They have also announced to create disabled-friendly lounges including an AC lounge, and wheelchair friendly washrooms within six months and handed over the project to the railways with an intention to implement the same facilities to other stations all over the state.

Centre, J-K sign MoU for education reforms

- Jammu and Kashmir government in January, 2018 signed a Memorandum of understanding (MoU) to bring normalcy in the state through education reforms.

- Under the MoU titled, 'School Education Transformation Roadmap', signed between the state's Department of School Education and Union Minister of Human Resource Development (MHRD), over 9,000 J-K students could participate in an exchange programme.
- Among other measures, Information Communication Technology (ICT) and digital platforms would also be set up in the state's schools.

Centre approves proposal to procure assault rifles, carbines worth Rs 35 bn

- The government in January, 2018 gave its nod for the procurement of assault rifles and carbines worth Rs 35.47 billion to meet the immediate requirement of troops deployed on the borders on a "fast track basis", the defence ministry said.
- The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC), headed by Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, cleared the procurement of 72,000 assault rifles and 93,895 carbines.
- The procurement is expected to address the shortage of small arms for the armed forces.
- Sources said that tenders will soon be floated to set the ball rolling for the procurement process.
- The procurement could also be done at the government to government (G to G) level.

PM Modi, Israeli PM Netanyahu dedicate iCreate to the nation

- Prime Minister Modi and Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu in January, 2018 dedicated to the nation, the iCREATE facility located on the outskirts of Ahmedabad.
- iCreate is an independent Centre created with the objective of facilitating entrepreneurship through a blend of creativity, innovation, engineering, product design and leveraging emerging technologies to deal with major issues such as food security, water, connectivity, cybersecurity, IT and electronics, energy, bio-medical equipment and devices etc.
- iCreate aims to develop an ecosystem in India to generate quality entrepreneurs.

MoS, Textiles inaugurates 60th edition of India International Garment Fair

- The 60th edition of India International Garment Fair (IIGF) was inaugurated in January, 2018 by Minister of State for Textiles, Shri Ajay Tamta, at Pragati Maidan, New Delhi. Addressing the audience, the Minister said that garment sector is one of the largest providers of employment.
- Recalling that business worth US \$200 million was conducted in the previous edition, the Minister extended his best wishes to all participating buyers and exporters.
- A total of 294 exporters from 11 states, namely Gujarat, Haryana, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Delhi, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal, are participating at the 60th IIGF.

ISRO releases first image taken by Cartosat-2 series satellite

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) on 16 January 2018 released the first image captured by India's recently launched remote sensing satellite, Cartosat-2.
- The image shows a part of Indore city in Madhya Pradesh with the Holkar Cricket Stadium in the centre. The image was acquired on 15 January, three days after the launch of the satellite.

NITI Aayog initiates first course on Sustainable Urban Planning

- The First Global Initiative on Academic Network (GIAN) course on Sustainable Urban planning using remote sensing and Geographic Information System (GIS) was launched on 15 January 2018.
- The course was inaugurated by Niti Aayog's Principal Adviser Ratan P Watal at the Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur's outreach center in NOIDA. The course is being conducted under the Global Initiative on Academic Network (GIAN) Program of the Ministry of Human Resource Development with active support by NITI Aayog and Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.

India, US to conduct joint military exercise 'Vajra Prahar'

- The Indo-US joint military exercise 'Vajra Prahar' will be undertaken at the Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM) in Seattle, US in the third week of January.
- The exercise would see a 45-member Special Forces team from Indian Army's Southern Command train alongside US soldiers.
- 'Vajra Prahar' is an Indo-US Special Forces joint training exercise, which is conducted alternately in India and the US.

NIFT to host International Conference 'Rediscovering Culture'

- National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT) is organizing an International Conference: 'Rediscovering Culture: Transforming Fashion', with the aim of initiating a conversation on fashion, culture, textiles, crafts and sustainability.
- Some of the leading designers who will be showcasing their work at the inaugural event through a fashion show include Manish Arora, Rajesh Pratap Singh, Suket Dhir, Sanjay Garg, Sunita Shanker, Swati Kalsi, Payal Pratap, Pratima Pandey, to name a few.

Andhra CM launches e-Pragati platform

- Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu in January, 2018 launched the e-Pragati CORE platform, which will be a common portal for all citizen services online.
- As envisioned by the Chief Minister, a single source of truth and one portal to monitor everything, from insights to action, will be enabled by this platform.

Madhya Pradesh becomes first state to achieve door-to-door garbage collection target

- The state government of Madhya Pradesh has claimed that the state has become the first one in the country to fully achieve the target of door-to-door garbage collection in areas under urban bodies.
- The announcement was made by the state's Urban Development and Housing Minister Maya Singh during a "Swachha Bharat Abhiyan 2018" review meeting held on 15 January.

NHRC holds Open Hearing and Camp Sitting in Jaipur

- The two-day Open Hearing and Camp Sitting, organised by the National Human Rights Commission to address the grievances of the people began in Jaipur on 18 January 2018.
- Chairman Justice HL Dattu would be inaugurating the hearing of the cases. Following the inauguration, the Commission would be taking up 169 complaints in the Open Hearing, which will be heard by the Chairperson and other members.
- The complaints relate to the grievances and atrocities against the persons belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes due to action, inaction or omission by the public authorities.

India successfully test-fires indigenously developed ICBM Agni-5

- India on 18 January 2018 successfully test-fired the indigenously developed long-range surface-to-surface ballistic missile, Agni-5, off the coast of Odisha.
- The state-of-the-art missile, developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation DRDO, was test fired successfully from the Abdul Kalam Wheeler Island.

Kolkata Police introduces LED-fitted uniforms to ensure safety of traffic cops

- The Kolkata Police has introduced uniforms with LED lights attached to them for traffic police officers, who work after sunset, especially during the winters.
- The "body lights" will help the commuters and the drivers spot the officers from a reasonable distance and cut the risk of fog-related road crashes.

Snapdeal celebrates Republic Day 2018 with "Pride of India" e-store

- Snapdeal's "Pride of India" e-store celebrates 69 years of the Indian Republic with special curated products to bring unique handloom and handicraft items from all parts of the country.
- The store also has products from famous Indian brands, patriotic themed items and quirky stuff uniquely related to India.

Hardeep Singh Puri announces commencement of India's first-ever 'Livability Index'

- Union minister Hardeep Singh Puri in January, 2018 announced the commencement of the country's first-ever 'Livability Index' to rank 116 cities.
- An official said that the result of the exercise will be announced in June.
- Among the cities to be assessed for the 'Livability Index', include Delhi's three municipal corporations, Bangalore (Karnataka), Kochi (Kerala), Ghaziabad, Meerut, Varanasi, Allahabad and Lucknow (Uttar Pradesh) and Faridabad in Haryana.
- The cities will be assessed on 15 core parameters like governance, social infrastructure, education, employment, health and safety and security.
- The 'Livability Index' will also take into account physical infrastructure like housing, open spaces, land use, energy and water availability, solid waste management and pollution, among others.

'PadMan' has become the first Indian film to be showcased at the Oxford Union

- Actor-producer Twinkle Khanna has been invited to speak at the Oxford Union - one of the reputed debating societies in the world. She is expected to showcase her maiden production venture Pad Man, starring her husband Akshay Kumar, at the Union on January 18. Twinkle Khanna will talk about why is it important to discuss menstrual hygiene and how the story of PadMan (Arunachalam Muruganantham in real life) has played a big part in creating awareness among rural South Indian population.
- She will also discuss the need to break the taboo around menstruation and the stigma attached to it globally.
- This will also be the first Indian film to be showcased and discussed at the Oxford Union. The society founded in 1823 has since invited world leaders and influencers to discuss topics of importance. Some of the speakers include Sashi Tharoor, the Dalai Lama, Michael Jackson, Malala Yousafzai, Salman Rushdie and Morgan Freeman.

Uber enters into partnership with Eastern Railway

- App-cab company Uber in January, 2018 entered into a partnership with Eastern Railway to help travellers avail a ride at Howrah station, which is one of the busiest railway terminals in the country.
- Uber will set up booking zones at the station where even those who do not have the app will be able to book a ride, a spokesperson for the company said.

Telangana inks MoU with Clean Authority of Tokyo

- The Telangana government has entered an MoU with Clean Authority of Tokyo in the field of Municipal Solid Waste Incineration Facilities in January, 2018.
- On the Third-day of his tour to Japan to woo foreign investors, Telangana business delegation led by IT and Industries Minister KT Rama met with industrial heads and front leaders of Multi-National Companies in Tokyo.

9 more cities selected for 'Smart City' mission, 3 from Uttar Pradesh

- Housing Minister Hardeep Singh Puri in January, 2018 released the list of nine new cities to be funded under the Centre's flagship 'Smart City' mission.
- The government has allocated Rs 12,824 crore to be invested in 409 projects to make these cities 'Smart Cities'. Of the nine cities, 3 are from Uttar Pradesh, 1 from Bihar, 1 from Tamil Nadu, 1 from Daman & Diu, 1 from Arunachal Pradesh and 1 from Lakshadweep.

Here's are the nine cities announced in January, 2018:

1. Silvassa, Dadra and Nagar Haveli
2. Erode, Tamil Nadu
3. Diu, Daman & Diu
4. Biharsharif, Bihar
5. Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh
6. Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh
7. Moradabad, Uttar Pradesh
8. Saharanpur, Uttar Pradesh
9. Kavaratti, Lakshadweep

Union Government launches 100 accessible websites for Divyangs

- The Union Social Justice and Empowerment Minister Thaawarchand Gehlot on 19th January 2017 launched 100 accessible websites for Divyangs.
- The divyang-friendly websites, especially for the visually impaired, use features such as screen readers and screen magnifiers, which can relay website content to the user in audio format. According to Social Justice Minister, 900 such websites will be launched in a phased manner.

PMSMA crosses 1 Cr mark in antenatal check-ups

- The Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan (PMSMA) has crossed one crore mark in antenatal check-ups.
- The programme was launched in 2016 to fulfil Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision and ensure comprehensive and quality antenatal checkups to pregnant women across the country. The PMSMA has provided quality antenatal checkups to pregnant women on the 9th of every month.

Tamil Nadu government to introduce Aerospace & Defence policy

- The Tamil Nadu government is planning to come up with an exclusive Aerospace and Defence policy.
- The policy's main objective would be to achieve a 30 per cent share of the defence sector in India and creating high-end employment opportunities for around 100,000 people in the state.

Union Government launches Cyber Surakshit Bharat initiative

- The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) launched Cyber Surakshit Bharat initiative in association with National e-Governance Division (NeGD) and industry partners at an inaugural event in Delhi on 19th January 2018.
- The move is aimed at strengthening the cybersecurity ecosystem in India, in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision for a 'Digital India'.

Rajasthan to have candidates' picture on EVMs in upcoming bypolls

- Rajasthan's Chief Election Officer Ashwani Bhagat announced on 19th January 2018 that the Electronic Voting Machines in the state's by-polls would carry photographs of candidates contesting elections.
- The by-polls are due on 29th January in Ajmer and Alwar Parliamentary seats along with Mandalgarh Assembly seat.

President to felicitate women achievers at Rashtrapati Bhawan

- President Ram Nath Kovind would be felicitating exceptional women achievers who are the first to set a milestone in their respective fields at Rashtrapati Bhawan on 20th January 2018.
- The information was shared the Women and Child Development Ministry through an official release. The statement read that 112 women have been selected after an extensive research process by the Ministry.
- The women being felicitated are those who have been the first in any field like the first woman judge, first woman porter, first woman to head a missile project, first para-trooper and first Olympian. For the same, a list of 227 women was compiled through various sources including Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Sports, Limca Book of Records, press clippings and internet.

Manipur CM launches health assurance scheme for poor & disabled people

- Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh in January, 2018 launched the Chief Minister-gi Hakshelgi Tengbang (CMHT), a pioneering health assurance scheme for the poor and disabled people.
- The chief minister launched the CMHT along with 10 advanced life support ambulances as a gift of Statehood Day to the people of Manipur at a function at Khuman Lampak Indoor Stadium, said a government press release.
- Speaking at the occasion, Singh said CMHT was a dream-scheme of his government.
- The CMHT will provide cashless treatment to the poor at government hospitals, health centres and other empanelled selected private hospitals.
- The scheme will provide cover up to Rs 2 lakh per eligible family identified from the Socio Economic Caste Census (SECC) in the treatment of seven critical identified critical ailments - cardiovascular diseases, kidney ailments, neurological conditions, liver ailments, cancer, neo-natal diseases and burns per year.

First ever jallikattu in Coimbatore on January 28

- The first ever bull taming sport of Jallikattu in the district would be held on January 28.
- The groundbreaking ceremony for laying 'vadivasal', the gate through which bulls are sent to the arena, was performed in January, 2018 at Chettipalayam on the outskirts.
- Jallikattu is being jointly organised by the District Administration and Omkar Foundation.

Marashtra leads the way in toilet construction in Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban)

- Maharashtra has constructed the maximum number of individual household toilets under the Centre's flagship Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban) scheme, followed by Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh, according to official data.
- Till November last year, as many as 42.72 lakh household toilets have been constructed against the target of 66.42 lakh, recording an achievement of nearly 64 percent.
- The government launched Swachh Bharat Mission in 2 October, 2014 with an aim of eliminating open defecation, manual scavenging and scientific management of municipal waste by 2 October, 2019.
- The Centre is focusing on construction of toilets to make the cities open defecation free by 2019.

Maharashtra to launch weather advisory system for farmers

- The Maharashtra government is all set to introduce a system to issue daily district-wise weather advisory to farmers across the state.
- "The system has a capacity to generate weather alerts for every ten minutes, if required. The state is taking a step forward to explore the possibility of issuing weather advisory for farmers to minimise their crop losses due to adverse weather conditions," Agriculture Commissioner Sachindra Pratap Singh told PTI.
- The first automatic weather station (AWS) in Maharashtra became operational on May 1 last year. The weather station helps in measuring the wind direction, wind speed, air temperature, relative humidity and records amount of rainfall, the officer said.

Odisha government launches OeHMIS project

- The state government in January, 2018 launched Odisha e-Hospital Management Information System (OeHMIS) to provide a computerized platform for online recording of clinical parameters of patients and reporting of performance criteria of hospitals.
- According to the system, patients can be registered online and can view and download their individual electronic health records at their doorstep through web portal or mobile application.

India to host 16th International Energy Forum meet

- The 16th International Energy Forum (IEF) Ministerial meeting will be held in New Delhi on April 10 to 12.

- While addressing a press conference, Union Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas Dharmendra Pradhan said, "The 16th International Energy Forum Ministerial meeting will be held on April 10 to 12, 2018, which will be hosted by Government of India in New Delhi and co-hosted by the Government of China and South Korea."
- Representatives from 92 countries will be participating in the conference, including 72 member countries of IEF and 20 guest countries, the minister added.

NGT orders 'intensive survey' of rivers in western UP

- The NGT has ordered "intensive survey" of the Kali, Krishna and the Hindon rivers in western Uttar Pradesh and directed the inspection of 316 industries, which are allegedly polluting the water bodies.
- The NGT bench headed by acting Chairperson Justice U D Salvi has constituted a committee comprising officials from the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), state pollution control board and UP Jal Nigam to jointly inspect and carry out survey of the rivers and groundwater in six districts in the western part of the state.

India to launch ocean pollution observation system

- India is all set to have its own automated ocean pollution observation system this year that is expected to help monitor ocean pollution levels besides offering insights on the changes in the marine system.
- According to SSC Shenoi, Director of Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS), the new ocean data acquisition system called automated moorings will be the first of its kind in India. He said that the system would be very effective in getting the data about ocean pollution, which will then be used to understand the quality of water.

Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban launches Smart Star-Rating for garbage-free cities

- Hardeep Singh Puri, Minister of State (I/C) for Housing and Urban Affairs along with the Chief Minister of Goa, Manohar Parrikar launched the 'Protocol for Star Rating of Garbage-Free Cities' in Goa on January 20, 2018.
- The SMART star-rating initiative, developed by the Swachh Bharat Mission – Urban would rate the cities on a 7-star rating system, which would be based on multiple cleanliness indicators for solid waste management.

ixigo introduces India's first augmented reality feature for Train Passengers

- ixigo Introduces India's First Augmented Reality Feature for Train Passengers
- ixigo, India's leading travel marketplace, has introduced India's first augmented reality (AR) feature on its trains app">trains app. The AR Coach Position feature will enable train travellers to accurately locate their coach positions for over 13,000 passenger trains at more than 7,000 railway stations across India.

India set to become food exhibition, distribution hub with 'Indus Foods'

- India is laying concrete plans to become a hub for retail, distribution and exhibition in the food space over the next few years though 'Indus Foods', the global food and beverage show which kicked off in January, 2018 at Greater Noida.
- Also, Indian players in the processed food segment are likely to improve their exports to Gulf states, West Asia and Russia, if business interest by foreign buyers on day 1 show is anything to go by.

Ministry of Tourism launches Incredible India digital calendar

- In line with the government's Digital India initiative, Minister of State for Tourism (Independent Charge) and Minister of State for Electronics and Information Technology, K.J Alphons launched the Incredible India digital calendar in New Delhi in January, 2018.
- He also released the Incredible India wall and desk calendar for 2018.
- The Incredible India digital calendar application enables users to know about the events and festivals happening in India on the go.

Andhra Pradesh inks MoU with Hitachi India Limited for e-governance

- The State government signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Hitachi India Limited (HIL) in January, 2018 to facilitate the development of the Hitachi MGRM Citizen Lifecycle E-Governance platform in AP.
- The MoU was signed in the presence of Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, Finance Minister Yanamala Ramakrishnudu and IT Minister Nara Lokesh in Davos.

Govt awards 325 air routes in tier 2, 3 cities under UDAN-2

- The government on Wednesday awarded 325 routes to airlines as well as helicopter operators, enhancing air connectivity to 73 new airports and helipads in tier 2 and tier 3 cities, including Kargil in the frontier Ladakh region.
- The announcement was made after the conclusion of the second round of bidding for the Centre's regional connectivity scheme, also known as UDAN (Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik), which aims to take flying to the masses and enhance flight services to smaller cities.
- Eleven fixed-wing operators have been granted rights for 67 proposals and four helicopter operators have been awarded 23 proposals, an official of the civil aviation ministry said at a press briefing in New Delhi.
- Among the major domestic carriers, IndiGo has bagged 20 proposals, SpiceJet got 17 while Jet Airways won 4 proposals.
- The government will spend Rs 620 crores in providing viability gap funding or subsidy to airlines and helicopter operators for RCS flights.

International Dam Safety Conference to begin in Thiruvananthapuram

- India is set to host the International Dam Safety Conference - 2018 on January 23-24 at Thiruvananthapuram, the capital city of Kerala.
- The conference would be inaugurated by Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and the inaugural function would be presided over by Union Minister of State for Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation Arjun Ram Meghwal.

New schemes launched for young scientists

- Minister for Science and Technology, in January, 2018 launched four new schemes which seek to help young researchers to realise their potential more fully for their own benefit as well as for the betterment of the society at large.
- The first initiative called Teacher Associateship for Research Excellence (TARE) Scheme aims to tap the latent potential of faculty working in state universities, colleges and private academic institutions who are well trained but have difficulty in pursuing their research due to varied reasons including lack of facilities, funding and guidance.
- The scheme facilitates mobility of such faculty members to carryout research in well established public funded institutions such as IITs, IISc, IISERS and other National Institutions including NITs, CSIR, ICAR, ICMR laboratories and Central Universities located preferably nearer to them. Upto 500 teachers will be supported under this scheme.
- The second initiative called Overseas Visiting Doctoral Fellowship will seek to enhance international mobility of Indian research students with a view to create a pool of globally trained manpower. The scheme will provide opportunities for research students to access top class research facilities in academia and laboratories across the world. This scheme will offer fellowships for up to 100 PhD students admitted in the Indian institutions to take up training in overseas universities and institutions of repute working in areas of importance for the country for periods up to 12 months during their doctoral research.

UP Cabinet approves 'one district, one product' scheme

- The Uttar Pradesh Cabinet has approved 'one district, one product' scheme to promote products indigenous to every district.

- The implementation of the scheme will boost economic development of the state and also help in the generation of five lakh new jobs annually. Under the scheme, one product indigenous to every district would be showcased at the three-day UP Diwas event.

NHRC issues notice to Odisha Govt over closure of schools

- The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has issued a notice to the Odisha government and the Centre, after a media report revealed that a large number of government-run primary and upper primary schools have been closed in the state due to less number of students.
- The NHRC stated that the media report has raised the issue of Right to Education of young students, mostly belonging to poor families of Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe and other backward communities.

Supreme Court asks Centre to set up Mahanadi water tribunal

- The Supreme Court has directed the Centre to set up a tribunal within a month to resolve the dispute between Odisha and Chhattisgarh over the sharing of water from river Mahanadi.
- The orders were issued by a bench of Justices comprising SA Bobde and L Nageswara Rao. The bench stated that all the pending issues can be raised before the tribunal. It, however, refused to grant any stay sought by the Odisha government on the seven small dams across Mahanadi river, which flows through Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Odisha before pouring into the Bay of Bengal.

Second Offshore Patrol Vessel 'Vijaya' launched

- The multi-national construction and engineering firm, Larsen & Toubro (L&T) announced on January 22, 2018 that it has launched the second offshore patrol vessel (OPV) for the Indian Coast Guard at its greenfield defence shipyard in Kattupalli near Chennai.
- According to JD Patil, Senior Executive Vice-President and whole-time Director (Defence), L&T, the OPV-2 is the ninth defence vessel launched by L&T in the current financial year.
- The indigenously built vessel 'Vijaya' is equipped with state-of-art radar, navigational and communication system.

Microsoft introduces AI for real-time translation in Hindi, Bengali, Tamil

- As India celebrates its 69th Republic Day, Microsoft in January, 2018 announced to bring Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Deep Neural Networks to improve real-time language translation for Hindi, Bengali and Tamil.
- With Deep Neural Networks-powered language translation, the results are more accurate and the sound more natural.

Akshay Kumar launches Pad Banks in Maharashtra villages

- Akshay Kumar is one of few Bollywood stars who understand the importance of addressing relevant social issues through entertainment. After the success of 'Toilet: Ek Prem Katha', a film that talked about open defecation, Kumar will be back on screen with another socially relevant film 'PadMan'.
- 'PadMan' is based on 'The Sanitary Man of Sacred Land', a short story from Twinkle Khanna's book, The Legend of Lakshmi Prasad. The film is inspired from the life of Arunachalam Muruganatham, a social activist from Tamil Nadu who invented low-cost sanitary pads.

Pradhan Mantri LPG Panchayat launched in Jharkhand

- Jharkhand Chief Minister Raghubar Das in January, 2018 launched 'Pradhan Mantri LPG Panchayat' in the state from Balijore village in Dumka district.
- Addressing on the occasion, Das said that so long women were developed, the country would not be developed and whatever projects were being made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi was being made keeping women s development in mind.

- The government's thought is that even the poor families live with dignity, an official release said quoting the chief minister.

Haryana govt sets up 26 portable cabins for homeless

- In view of the prevailing cold conditions in the state, the Haryana government has installed 26 portable cabins for the urban homeless in nine districts, an official spokesperson said in January, 2018.
- The cabins have been set up in Panchkula, Faridabad, Gurugram, Sonapat, Panipat, Yamunanagar, Kurukshetra, Bahadurgarh and Rohtak districts.

Himachal Government launches Nutrition Scheme for HIV-positive children

- On the occasion of National Youth Day, Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur launched a state-level nutrition scheme for HIV-positive children that aims to boost the immunity of over 400 youths up to 18-year-olds.
- The Chief Minister also made it mandatory for every expecting mothers to go for HIV test in order to start the treatment early.

International spice conference in Jaipur from Feb 4-7

- The third edition of international spice conference will be held at Jaipur from February 4 to 7. Over 750 delegates from various countries, including representatives of international spice associations, policy makers, and farmers, are expected to participate in the four-day meet that would deliberate on effective strategies and innovative technologies that foster sustainable farming, improve the livelihood of spice farmers, address spice industry challenges, food safety concerns and demand supply disparity.
- The central theme of the 2018 conference would be 'Managing Disruptions through Transformation and Collaboration'.

WCD Ministry launches MIS portal for Anganwadi Services Training Programme

- The Management Information System (MIS) portal for Anganwadi Services Training Programme was launched by Rakesh Srivastava, Women and Child Development Secretary in New Delhi on January 24, 2018.
- The portal has been developed by the Ministry of Women and Child Development in collaboration with National Informatics Centre (NIC) for the submission of applications and estimates by NGOs for carrying out Anganwadi Services (ICDS) Training through Anganwadi Workers Training Centres (AWTC) and Middle-Level Training Centres (MLTC).

Maharashtra bans sale of tobacco at shops selling FMCG items

- The Maharashtra government on January 24, 2018 banned the sale of tobacco in shops selling Fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) items in the state.
- The state government announced a ban on the sale of tobacco at shops selling chips, chocolates and other edible items. The move aims to ensure that youngsters do not get addicted to tobacco products.

India, Vietnam sign MoU for cooperation in I&B sector and space

- India and Vietnam on January 24, 2018 exchanged Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) for cooperation in the field of Information and Broadcasting and space.
- The agreements were exchanged in the presence of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Vietnam counterpart, Nguyen Xuan Phuc.
- The two nations agreed to enhance cooperation in the field of Information and Broadcasting based on principles of equality and reciprocity pursuant to their national laws and regulations.

Prime Minister holds bilateral talks with ASEAN Leaders

- Ahead of the India-ASEAN commemorative summit, Prime Minister held a bilateral meeting with Sultan of Brunei, His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassan-al Bolkiah in New Delhi on January 25, 2018.
- Modi also held talks with his Thailand counterpart Prayut Chan-o-cha and Prime Minister of Singapore Lee Hsien Loong. Later, in the evening, the Prime Minister would be meeting the President of Indonesia Joko Widodo.

Indian Navy launches third Scorpene Class Submarine INS Karanj

- INS Karanj, the third Scorpene class submarine constructed by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited, was launched by the Indian Navy on January 31, 2018.
- The submarine was launched by Reena Lanba, President of Navy Wives Welfare Association following the recitation of Sanskrit shlokas from the Atharva Veda and traditional ceremonies associated with the launch of naval platforms.

Rural women in Maharashtra to get sanitary pads for just Rs 5

- The state government of Maharashtra on January 30, 2017 approved a proposal to provide sanitary napkins at a subsidised rate of Rs 5 to women living in rural areas.
- The decision was taken during the state Cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis. It is aimed at promoting menstrual hygiene among young girls and women.
- According to the state's Women and Child Development Minister Pankaja Munde, the decision would be effectively implemented from the International Women's Day on March 8, 2018.

President Ram Nath Kovind approves Bill to hike salary of judges

- President Ram Nath Kovind on January 31, 2018 approved The High Court and Supreme Court Judges (Salaries and Conditions of Service) Amendment Act, 2018, a Bill that seeks to hike the salaries of Supreme Court and High Court judges.
- The Bill was passed in the Winter Session of Parliament. Following the approval of the President, the Chief Justice of India will draw a monthly salary of Rs 2.80 lakh, up from the current Rs 1 lakh.

UP government announces jobs to dependants of martyred jawans

- Uttar Pradesh state government on January 30, 2018 announced that it will provide employment on compassionate grounds to the dependants of the martyred Jawans of armed forces and Central Para Military forces who had a domicile of origin in Uttar Pradesh.
- The decision was taken at a cabinet meeting headed by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

Snapdeal, National Book Trust launch Har Hath Ek Kitab at the World Book Fair

- This World Book Fair at New Delhi, National Book Trust and Snapdeal have come together to spread awareness around importance of education, especially aiming to inculcate a reading habit amongst the underprivileged kids through their initiative 'Har Hath Ek Kitab'.
- On this occasion, National Book Trust and Snapdeal have launched an online portal www.harhathekitab.com to expand its outreach, so that people from across the country can support the movement by gifting books for underprivileged kids.

IAF becomes 1st organisation in the world to scale Seven Summits

- After scaling Mt Vinson in Antarctica, Indian Air Force (IAF) has become the first organisation to accomplish the "Seven Summit", climbing the highest mountains of each of the seven continents.
- Mt Vinson, standing tall at 16050 feet, is the most pristine and remotest mountain on earth.
- Gp Capt Tripathi had also flied the tri-colour and IAF flag on the highest peaks of other six continents.

UK, India collaborate to improve public transport

- Transport for London (TfL) and the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways India (MoRTH) signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on bilateral cooperation in urban transport policy, planning, technology transfer and institutional organisation for transport on January 10.
- Union Minister Nitin Gadkari along with Chief Technology Officer and Director of Customer Experience TfL, Shashi Verma signed the MoU.

Railway Ministry launches SFOORTI App to help track both passenger and freight trains

- In a major digital initiative to help plan the traffic flows and optimize freight operations, the Ministry of Railways in January, 2018 launched Smart the Freight Operation Optimisation and Real Time Information (SFOORTI) App for Freight Managers.
- This application provides features for monitoring and managing freight business using Geographic Information System (GIS) views and dashboard.

Northeast Frontier Railway introduces new Fogpass technology

- The Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has introduced a new GPS-based system in all locomotives for auto warning to train drivers during the foggy season.
- The new system called FogPASS (Fog Pilot Assistance System for Safety), consisting of an in-built battery and GPS antenna with a magnetic base, has been installed in all locomotives in the NFR.
- The system is also expected to ensure timely running of trains.

West Bengal govt launching water ATMs in city, districts

- West Bengal Panchayat and Rural Development and Public Health Engineering Minister Subrata Mukherjee in January, 2018 said the state government has launched a water ATM project to provide bacteria-free drinking water in schools.
- The government is setting up water ATMs in the city and suburbs and the machines are made in Germany, he told reporters on the sidelines of an award programme. "If someone can prove the presence of harmful bacteria in any such water ATM, he will be given Rs 2 lakh.

US travel advisory puts India at level 2

- The US in January, 2018 issued a new travel advisory for countries including India, which its officials said is "user friendly" as it is based on ready-to-understand level of advice ranging from one to four.
- India has been ranked Level 2 (exercise increased caution), while Pakistan has been placed in Level 3 (reconsider travel). Level 1 advises travellers to exercise normal precaution, while Level 4, which has countries like Afghanistan, recommends "Do Not Travel".
- Now every country has a travel advisory based on this system, which has replaced all the previous such advisories.

ISRO successfully launches its 100th satellite

- India successfully launched its 100th satellite 'Cartosat-2 Series' from Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Andhra Pradesh's Sriharikota Island in January, 2018.
- For the mission, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) used PSLV-C40 launch vehicle, which is carrying 31 satellites, including three from India and 28 from six other countries.
- The weather observation 'Cartosat-2 Series' satellite and 29 others will be inserted into a 505-kilometre sun-synchronous orbit after about seventeen and a half minutes since its liftoff.

PM Modi ranked among top 3 world leaders in survey

- Ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Switzerland for Davos summit, an international survey has ranked him among the top three leaders of the world.
- An annual survey by Gallup International has put Prime Minister Modi at number three among the global leaders.

- The respondents in the survey, which was conducted among the people across 50 countries, had rated Prime Minister Modi ahead of China's Xi Jinping, Russian President Vladimir Putin, British Prime Minister Theresa May, Israel's Benjamin Netanyahu among others.
- The top ranking in the survey went to German Chancellor Angela Merkel, followed by French president Emmanuel Macron.

PM Modi inaugurates National Youth Festival 2018 in Uttar Pradesh

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi in January, 2018 addressed the public at five-day National Youth Festival (NYF) via video conferencing.
- The festival, being held at the Gautam Buddha University in Greater Noida, commenced on the occasion of the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda in January, 2018.
- The inaugural function was co-chaired by Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, and Union Minister for State (Independent Charge) of Youth Affairs and Sports Col. Rajyavardhan Rathore. The guest of honour on the occasion was Union Minister for Culture (Independent Charge) Mahesh Sharma.
- The festival is organised by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports in collaboration with the Uttar Pradesh government.
- The theme of the festival is 'Sankalp Se Siddhi', to capitalise on the demographic dividend of young India, to capture the vibrancy and fresh perspective of youth and to pledge to accomplish the Goal of New India.

Himachal Pradesh health worker Geeta Verma featured in WHO Calendar

- Geeta Verma, a health worker from Sapnot village in Mandi district, has figured in the World Health Organization (WHO) calendar for 2018 for ensuring 100 per cent coverage in her area of operation under the measles and rubella programme.
- Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur in January, 2018 congratulated Geeta on making the state proud. He exhorted all employees to work with dedication.

Kerala to use robots to clean sewers, end manual scavenging

- Robots will soon replace men in cleaning up sewer holes in Kerala, ending the age-old practice of manual scavenging in the southern state. 'Bandicoot', the robot developed by the startup firm Genrobotics, will be used for cleaning sewer holes.
- The Kerala Water Authority (KWA) and Kerala Startup Mission (KSUM) in January, 2018 signed an MoU for transfer of technology and products, including use of the robots for the purpose. The MoU was signed between Kerala Water Innovation Zone under KWA and KSUM at the Chief Minister's office in Thiruvananthapuram, a statement said.
- 'Bandicoot' will start its work, so far mostly done manually, by cleaning sewer holes in the city during the coming famed Attukal Pongala festival in Thiruvananthapuram in March, it said.

MEA discontinues last page of passport

- The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) in January, 2018 decided to discontinue the last page of the passport, containing information about parents, address, Emigration Check Required (ECR) and old passport details.
- The Ministry decided that the last page of the passport and other travel documents issued under the Passports Act, 1967 and Passport Rules, 1980 would no longer be printed.

Election Commission constitutes Umesh Sinha Committee to suggest changes to RP Act, 1951

- The Election Commission of India on 11 January 2018 constituted a 14 member committee to suggest changes to Section 126 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 (RP Act) in view of social media expansion.
- The Committee will be chaired by Senior Deputy Election Commissioner Umesh Sinha.

Indu Malhotra, first woman lawyer to be directly promoted as Supreme Court judge

- The senior advocate Indu Malhotra has been recommended as a judge of the Supreme Court by the collegium of Supreme Court.

- Indu Malhotra would become the first woman lawyer to be directly appointed as a judge of the highest court.

Film contest launched for Saubhagya scheme

- The government has taken the 'short movie' route to promote its flagship Saubhagya scheme, which aims to provide free electricity connections to about 4 crore needy people this year.
- Rural Electrification Corporation (REC), a public sector unit functioning under the purview of the Ministry of Power, is organising a short film-making contest to create awareness about the electrification scheme launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in September last year.
- As per the officials, the scheme is meant only for the common masses and the objective of the contest is to involve general public as ambassadors of the programme.

India, UK ink pacts on illegal migrants' return, sharing intelligence

- India and the UK have signed two agreements on return of Indians, who are living in Britain as illegal migrants, and sharing criminal records and intelligence.
- The development comes close on heels of India seeking UK's help in early extradition of liquor tycoon Vijay Mallya from Britain to face the law at home in connection with cases of fraud and money laundering amounting to around Rs 9,000 crores.
- The memorandums of understanding (MOUs) were signed by UK's Minister of Immigration Caroline Nokes and India's Minister of Home Affairs Kiren Rijiju in January, 2018.

Johnson & Johnson partners with Maharashtra government on health interventions

- Maharashtra's mine workers who face an increased risk of tuberculosis will be part of awareness programmes on the illness, as part of a partnership that the Maharashtra Government recently formalized with Johnson & Johnson.
- Other interventions under the ambit of the agreement include hospital acquired infections and maternal and infant mortality, a J&J note said.
- The collaboration would also look at infection prevention, diabetes, obesity and menstrual hygiene and support healthcare professionals and nurses in the State to develop skills in these areas.

Rashtriya Sanskriti Mahotsav-2018 begins in Karnataka

- The Centre is set to organise the seventh edition of the "Rashtriya Sanskriti Mahotsav-2018" in Karnataka from January 14 to January 20.
- "The Union Culture Ministry has decided to organise Rashtriya Sanskriti Mahotsav under the Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat matrix in Karnataka to celebrate the idea of unity in diversity," the government said in a statement.
- Parliamentary Affairs Minister Ananth Kumar and Culture Minister Mahesh Sharma will inaugurate the 'Mahotsav' on January 14 at 7.30 pm at the Jnana Jyothi Auditorium on Palace Road in Bengaluru.

Assam government recognises 1.9 crore as legal Indian citizens in first NRC draft

- The Assam government late in January, 2018 night published the much-awaited draft of the National Register of Citizens (NRC), recognising the names of 1.9 crore people out of a total of 3.29 crore applicants as legal citizens of India. The rest of the names of applicants continued to remain "under various stages of verification" and are likely to be recognised in the final draft.
- The NRC authorities had received applications from 68.27 lakh families comprising 3.29 crore individuals.
- About 1.39 crore cases continued to remain under examination, scrutiny or field verification, Sailesh said.

Nagaland declared as 'disturbed area' till June-end under AFSPA

- The entire Nagaland has been declared as "disturbed area" for six more months, till June-end, under the controversial AFSPA, which empowers security forces to conduct operations anywhere and arrest anyone without any prior notice.
- In a gazette notification, the Union Home Ministry said it is of the opinion that the area comprising the whole of Nagaland is in such a "disturbed and dangerous condition" that use of armed forces in aid of the civil power is necessary.

Health Ministry launches Allied and Health care Professional Database

- Aiming to make data repository robust, the Union Health Ministry in January, 2018 launched the Allied and Health care Professional Database which will help the government to track the number of professionals and streams of allied and health care professions in the country.
- According to the ministry, more than 3, 000 professionals have already registered on the portal during the testing phase.

Rajya Sabha completes entire Zero Hour agenda for first time

- The Rajya Sabha in January, 2018 made a record of sorts as it took up all the Zero Hour issues and special mentions listed in the agenda for that period, Chairman M. Venkaiah Naidu said. The first hour of every sitting of Parliament is generally reserved for the asking and answering of questions. Zero Hour is the immediately following the Question Hour has come to be known as "Zero Hour".
- It starts at around 12 noon (hence the name) and members can, with prior notice to the Speaker, raise issues of importance during this time. Typically, discussions on important Bills, the Budget, and other issues of national importance take place from 2pm onwards.
- Why is it called Zero Hour? While dictionary defines 'Zero Hour' as the "the critical moment" or "the moment of decision", in parliamentary parlance, it is referred as the time gap between the end of Question Hour and the beginning of the regular business. Zero Hour doesn't find a mention in the Rules of Procedure and hence it's considered an informal procedure for the members of Parliament to raise matters of serious importance.

India and Pakistan exchange 27th list of Nuclear Installations

- India and Pakistan on 1 January 2018 exchanged the lists of their nuclear installations under an agreement that aims to prevent both sides from attacking such facilities. This is the twenty-seventh consecutive exchange of such a list between the two countries.
- The exchange was done through diplomatic channels simultaneously at New Delhi and Islamabad.

Maneka Gandhi launches online portal 'NARI' for women empowerment

- Union Minister of Women & Child Development Maneka Sanjay Gandhi on 2 January 2018 inaugurated the online portal 'NARI' for women empowerment. NARI stands for 'National Repository of Information for Women'.
- The portal contains information about schemes being run by both Central as well as the States Governments.
- 'NARI' portal has been developed by the Union Ministry of Women & Child Development.

Arunachal Pradesh becomes second ODF state in Northeast

- The state of Arunachal Pradesh has become the second state in the Northeast, after Sikkim, to be declared Open Defecation Free.
- The feat was deemed completed after three remaining districts in the state - Upper Subansiri, Siang and Changlang - were declared Open Defecation Free (ODF) on 31 December 2017.
- In total, the state has 21 districts and it managed to achieve the feat much before the national deadline of 2 October 2019.
- The project undertaken under Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin) was bolstered by the state government's incentive of Rs 8000 per toilet.

India International Coffee Festival to be held in Bengaluru

- After a gap of four years, Bengaluru will host the seventh edition of India International Coffee Festival (IICF) in January 2018.
- This gains significance as India has bagged the chance to host World Coffee Conference of International Coffee Organisation (ICO) in 2020.

Famous Dhanu Jatra Concludes in Odisha

- Curtains were drawn on the famous Dhanu Jatra of Bargarh in Odisha, believed to be the largest open air theatre in the world, with the death of tyrannical king Kansa and coronation of Ugrasen in January, 2018.
- During the 11-day festival that kicked off on December 23, Bargarh town was made to resemble Mathura — the birthplace and homeland of Lord Krishna. The festival is based on Krishna Leela and Mathura Vijay.

Surajkund crafts fair 2018: Uttar Pradesh would be theme state

- Uttar Pradesh would be the theme state for the 32nd Surajkund International Crafts fair, beginning from the first week of February at Faridabad in Haryana.
- Besides participation of all states, about two dozen countries would also take part in the fair, Haryana Tourism Minister Ram Bilas Sharma said in January, 2018. He said the fair is aimed to preserve Indian folk traditions and cultural heritage.

Republic Day Parade to Have Record 10 Chief Guests as PM Invites ASEAN Leaders

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the nation in his final radio programme for 2017; ‘Mann Ki Baat’ and he ended the 30-minute speech with an announcement that this year’s Republic Day parade will have the ASEAN leaders as chief guests.
- He said the year 2017 was special for both ASEAN and India because the Southeast Asian bloc completed its 50 years of formation and the year also marked 25 years of India's partnership with the grouping.

Guests

Person	Nation
Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah	Brunei
Hun Sen	Cambodia
Joko Widodo	Indonesia
Thongloun Sisoulith	Laos
Najib Razak	Malaysia
Htin Kyaw	Myanmar
Rodrigo Roa Duterte	Philippines
Halimah Yacob	Singapore
Prayuth Chan-ocha	Thailand
Nguyễn Xuân Phúc	Vietnam

India, Sri Lanka to sign MoU on Traditional Systems of Medicine and Homoeopathy

- The Union Government is planning to sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Sri Lanka for cooperation in areas of traditional systems of medicine and homoeopathy.

The MoU aims to establish cooperation in the following areas:

- Promotion including the regulation of teaching, practice, drugs and drugless therapies, traditional medicine and homeopathy.
- Exchange of experts for the training of practitioners, paramedics, scientists, teaching professionals and students in traditional systems of medicine and homeopathy.

MoU signed between ofo, Pune Municipal Corporation

- ofo, a station-free app based bike-sharing platform signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) to support the Pune Cycle Plan - a comprehensive bicycle master plan for integrated city-wide cycle tracks across Pune.
- Prepared with support from the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Government of India, the Pune Cycle Plan sets out to create the necessary infrastructure for proper cycle tracks, a city-wide cycle network, seamless public sharing bicycle schemes and development of cycle promotion activities for encouraging the use of this eco-friendly mode of transport.

BSF launches 'Operation Alert' along 200 km border to curb militant movement

- The Border Security Force (BSF) has launched "Operation Alert" along the over 200 kilometer long International Border (IB) in Jammu and Kashmir to curb the increasing movement of infiltrating militants from across the border.
- The BSF gave a military send off by organising Wreath-laying ceremony at Frontier headquarters in the honour of the late Head Constable Radha Pada Hazara, who was killed in sniper firing by Pakistan rangers along the IB in Samba sector yesterday.

Centre launches online tutorial to train doctors in detecting cancers early

- A first-of-its kind online tutorial, meant to train doctors in small towns and far-flung areas in early detection, prevention, palliation, rehabilitation and treatment of various cancers was launched by the Centre in January, 2018 in collaboration with the Tata Memorial Hospital, Mumbai.
- The course is intended for physicians, gynecologists, dentists and other healthcare professionals who are not oncologists, but can help in early detection and diagnosis of cancers. The online video lectures, as part of seven-week course, are also designed to update oncologists with the evidence based guidelines and skill for the management of cancer.

Ahmedabad surgeon uses robots in coronary surgery first time outside US

- Ahmedabad-based, internationally-reputed cardiologist Tejas Patel in January, 2018 said he has introduced vascular robotic technology for the first time anywhere outside the US to perform coronary angioplasty and stenting.
- Patel told reporters that the new technology, which he had implemented on 57 patients in a month, would make India a frontrunner in the modern healthcare system with almost zero failure rate in angioplasty and stenting.

Nation-wide cleanliness survey 'Swachh Survekshan' launched

- The nation-wide cleanliness survey 'Swachh Survekshan' was launched across India on 4 January 2018.
- The announcement for the same was made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 31 December 2017 while addressing the nation in the 39th edition of his monthly radio-address 'Mann Ki Baat'.
- The main objective of the survey is to evaluate the achievements in the cleanliness level in urban areas.
- Deemed as the world's biggest survey, it will be conducted in over 4,000 cities with a population of more than 40 crores.
- It will commence on 4 January and will run till 10 March 2018.

Union Cabinet approves setting up of AIIMS in Bilaspur

- The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 3 January 2018 approved the establishment of AIIMS in Bilaspur, Himachal Pradesh.
- The new AIIMS will be set up under Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY). The cost of the project is Rs 1351 crore.

Goa to host second edition of Bird Festival between Jan 12-14

- Goa will be hosting the second edition of the Bird Festival between January 12-14 at Cotigao Wildlife Sanctuary and Galjibag beach in Canacona in South Goa.
- The event is being hosted by the Forest department in association with Goa Tourism Development Corporation and Goa Bird Conservation Network.

Goa to be the new host for 3rd Science Film Festival

- A film festival based on Sci-Fi genre is about to start in a few days. The 3rd edition of Science Film Festival 2018 will be held in Goa this year.
- Participants can fill their online form on the official website to participate in the competition
- The 3rd edition of SCI-FI short film competition is open in two categories: films duration more than 5 minutes and films duration up to 5 minutes

Meghalaya CM inaugurates 40 mw Umtru hydro-electric project

- Meghalaya Chief Minister Mukul Sangma inaugurated the 40 mw Umtru hydro-electric project at Dehal in Ri Bhoi district.
- Inaugurating the Rs 629 crore project yesterday, he said the state has various potential areas for power generation and called on the local indigenous people to participate in the process of state building.

India's first National Park for differently abled people inaugurated in Hyderabad

- In a first of its kind, the authorities in Hyderabad are set to open a park meant for people with special needs. Dubbed as National Park for Special Needs, the park will have special equipment for children with a various physical disabilities.
- Spread over an acre of land at Nalgonda crossroads and developed with a cost of Rs 52.10 lakh, unique aspect of the park is that it has been divided into five blocks, with each block or section providing services to children and even adults who have various kinds of disabilities.

Delhi government launches mobile health van for homeless addicts

- Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia in January, 2018 flagged off a mobile health van to treat homeless drug addicts.
- Sisodia launched the van at a government night shelter in Yamuna Bazar area of north Delhi.
- The Deputy Chief Minister said the biggest challenge of homeless in the area and the prime inhibitor for them using night shelters is drug addiction.

Himachal CM announces 'Gudiya' helpline to fight crime against women

- In one of his key decisions after taking over as Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister, Jai Ram Thakur in January, 2018 announced setting up of 24x7 'Gudiya' helpline for safety of women. The helpline will work directly under the supervision of the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) and action will have to follow mandatorily within 48 hours.
- Gudiya is the nickname given to 16-year-old schoolgirl from Kotkhai who went missing on her way home from school at Mahasu and whose body was later found dumped in the forests two days later. After widespread protests, including violence in which the police station at Kotkhai was set ablaze, the case was referred to the CBI by Himachal Pradesh High Court.

Indian Navy & Cochin Port Trust enter into MoU

- The Indian Navy and Cochin Port Trust (CPT) have entered into an Memorandum of Understanding for utilising the Port's berthing facility at Mattancherry wharf for Naval ships.
- As per the MoU, Cochin Port's Q2 and Q3 berths at Mattancherry wharf, totaling 228 metre quay length, would be handed over to the Indian Navy for five years for berthing their ships.

- The Indian Navy had requested for an exclusive berthing facility in Cochin Port for berthing their ships during reconstruction period of their berths.

Haryana becomes first state to launch High Risk Pregnancy portal

- Haryana has achieved the distinction of becoming the first state in the country to launch High Risk Pregnancy (HRP) Portal. This portal not only helps in early identification of high-risk pregnant cases up to the grass-roots level but also ensures their timely referral to the civil hospitals for further management and delivery by specialists.
- The Union ministry of health and family welfare and Niti Ayog have acknowledged the portal as a good practice to be implemented at the conference held in Delhi Friday

International kite festival begins in Gujarat

- The international kite festival which attracts kite flyers from across the country and the world, began in January, 2018 in Ahmedabad.
- The international kite festival was inaugurated by Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani at Sabarmati Riverfront. The Governor O.P. Kohli was also present on the occasion.
- Kite enthusiasts from across India and also foreign countries are participating in the week-long festival that is being celebrated across cities in Gujarat.

Centre sanctions construction of 14,000 bunkers along LoC, International Border

- 4,000 community and individual bunkers would be constructed along the Line of Control (LoC) and the International Border (IB) for border residents facing Pakistani shelling in Jammu division, officials said in January, 2018.
- While 7298 bunkers would be constructed along the LoC in the twin districts of Poonch and Rajouri, 7162 underground bunkers would be constructed along the IB in Jammu, Kathua and Samba districts, the officials said.
- The Centre recently sanctioned the construction of 14,460 individual and community bunkers at a cost of Rs 415.73 crore for people living along the LoC and IB.

Indian Railways to equip all 8,500 stations with Wi-Fi

- All railway stations -- nearly 8,500 across the country, including those in rural and remote areas -- will be equipped with Wi-Fi facilities at an estimated cost of Rs 700 crore (\$110 million).
- As part of the government's ambitious Digital India initiative, the national transporter has currently commissioned Wi-Fi services at 216 major stations enabling about seven million rail passengers to log on to the free Internet facility.

MHA ranks Coimbatore's R.S. Puram police station as No. 1 in the country

- The RS Puram police station (B-2) in the city won the ministry of home affairs' trophy for the best police station in the country, in the category of Smart police stations, in January, 2018.
- Director general of police TK Rajendran and station inspector T Jothi received the trophy from union home minister Rajnath Singh at the 'All India Conference of Director Generals/Inspector Generals of Police -2017' held at Takenpur in Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh.
- While Panjagutta police station in Telangana ranked in the second place, Gudumba police station in Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh nabbed the third place.

Govt releases AISHE 2016-17; no. of students enrolling for higher education up by 0.7%

- The number of students enrolling for higher education in India saw a marginal 0.7 per cent increase in 2016-17, according to a government survey released in January, 2018.

- Human Resource Development (HRD) Minister Prakash Javadekar released the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) for the year 2016-17 in New Delhi in January, 2018. It said the gross enrolment ratio (GER) in higher education had gone up 25.2 per cent in 2016-17 from 24.5 per cent in 2015-16.
- The country has set an aggressive target of achieving 30 per cent GER in higher education by 2020. GER is the total enrolment in higher education among the population in the age group of 18-23.
- According to the survey, the number of universities in the country rose to 864 last year as compared to 799 in 2015-16.
- Tamil Nadu had the highest GER in the country at 46.9 per cent. Bihar is at the bottom with 14.9 per cent of its youth in the age group of 18 to 23 enrolling for higher education.

In a first, ITBP to sponsor India tour for elderly citizens living in border areas

- In a major policy move, China frontier guarding force ITBP will sponsor India-wide excursion tours for senior citizens living in border areas of Arunachal Pradesh and Ladakh to build strong ties with the people, described as “strategic assets” by home minister Rajnath Singh.
- The paramilitary force has also decided to almost double, to a dozen in a year, the number of such regular educational tours for the children living in border areas.

India’s second FTII to be set up in Arunachal Pradesh

- Arunachal Pradesh would get its first Film and Television Institute, being set up by the Union Government as part of tapping the potential of the Northeastern region, Union Minister Jitendra Singh said in January, 2018.
- This would be the second such one in the country. The first Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) was set up in Pune, an autonomous institute operating under the Information and Broadcasting Ministry.

Pratyush, India’s first multi-petaflops supercomputer launched

- On 8 January India took a major step ahead in upgrading computing capacity in the area of weather forecasting and climate monitoring. Union Minister for Earth Sciences Dr. Harsh Vardhan inaugurated a supercomputer system at the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM) in Pune, taking its total high-performance computing (HPC) power to as high as 6.8 Petaflop.
- With this, India will now occupy the fourth position, next only to the United Kingdom, Japan and USA in terms of a dedicated capacity for HPC resources for weather and climate purposes.
- The new supercomputer has been named ‘Pratyush’.
- The supercomputer set up at a cost of Rs. 450 crore.

Bhopal Becomes The First Railway Station In India To Install Sanitary Napkin Vending Machine

- In a first, Bhopal’s main railway station—Bhopal Junction—has installed an automated sanitary pad dispenser. The machine, appropriately named Happy Nari, was set up on 1 January, 2018.
- Identifying the need to provide hygiene products for women at the station, the Railway Women Welfare Association of Bhopal joined hands with a local NGO Arushi.

18th All India Whips’ Conference: Union Government proposes rolling out e-Sansad and e-Vidhan

- The 18th All India Whips’ Conference was inaugurated by Union Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Chemicals & Fertilizers Ananth Kumar on 8 January 2018 in Udaipur, Rajasthan. The conference will conclude on 9 January 2018.
- Rajasthan Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje Scindia was the Chief Guest for the Inaugural Session of the Conference.
- During this two-day conference, Kumar will consider rolling out e-Sansad in Parliament and e-Vidhan in State Legislatures with an aim to digitize and make their functioning paperless.

Indian Railways to deploy “Drone” cameras to enhance safety and efficiency in train operations

- The Indian Railways has decided to deploy “Drone” cameras (UAV/NETRA) for various railway activities especially maintenance of tracks, project monitoring and other railway infrastructure.
- All the zonal Railways have been directed to procure such cameras. This is in-line with Railways’ desire to use technology to enhance safety and efficiency in train operations.
- Under this initiative, West Central Railways with headquarter at Jabalpur (M.P) has become the first Zonal Railway to procure “Drone” cameras in Indian Railways.

Delhi govt launches common card for bus, metro rides

- Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in January, 2018 launched a common card for rides on public buses and the metro, terming it a big step in the city's transport sector.
- Delhi is the first city in the country to have a common mobility card, which can at present be used on 200 DTC and 50 cluster buses plying on different routes, apart from metro trains.
- The buses of DTC's Raj Ghat Depot-I and Rohini Depot-I plying on different routes and those of Cluster scheme's BBM depot-II will have the facility as of now.

BSES launches rooftop solar single-point for apartment complexes

- In an initiative to promote clean energy, BSES, one of Delhi's two electricity distribution companies (discoms), in January, 2018 launched the country's first solar rooftop consumer aggregation programme for residential buildings to provide the installations at a single point for the entire apartment complex.
- The sister discom BSES Rajdhani Power Ltd's (BRPL) "Solar City Initiative", designed to maximise rooftop solar power use in south and west Delhi, was launched at an event by Delhi Power Minister Satyendar Jain.

Centre releases Rs. 20 cr for Defence Innovation Centre in Coimbatore

- The Ministry of Defence has announced release of Rs. 20 crore to the Coimbatore District Small Industries' Association (Codissia) for setting up a Defence Innovation Centre.
- Making this announcement, Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said MSME units and start-ups engaged in manufacture of components for the defence sector could use the centre for conduct of tests and trials.

India's first customized online course for women entrepreneurs launched in IIM Bangalore

- The Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Bangalore in January, 2018 announced the launch of Women Start-up Programme (WSP) which will be India's first customized online and classroom initiative for aspiring female entrepreneurs.
- The programme launched by the institute's NS Raghavan Centre for Entrepreneurial Learning (NSRCEL).
- The programme is being jointly funded by finance company Goldman Sachs and Centre's Department of Science & Technology (DST).

Playing national anthem in cinema halls not mandatory: SC

- Recalling a 2016 order, the Supreme Court in January, 2018, January 9, 2018, said that playing National Anthem before screening movies is not mandatory.
- It also added that if a cinema hall decides to play the National Anthem before the screening, the patrons have to mandatorily stand up and show respect. The differently-abled are exempted from this rule, though.

Matunga, India's first station with all-woman staff, enters Limca Book of Records 2018

- The first all-women station in India, Matunga on Central Railway (CR), manned by a staff of 41 women, has entered the Limca Book of Records, an official spokesperson said in January, 2018.
- The unique initiative was taken by CR General Manager D.K. Sharma in July 2017 with the aim of empowering women, said CR spokesperson Sunil Udasi.
- Incidentally, Kulkarni holds the distinction of becoming the first woman assistant station manager to be recruited on the CR's Mumbai Division in 1992.

- Now, she and her all women staff handle the overall operations of the busy Matunga station with positive and encouraging results, said Udasi.

India and Saudi Arabia sign bilateral annual Haj 2018 Agreement

- India and Saudi Arabia on 7 January 2018 signed the bilateral annual Haj 2018 agreement, giving the green signal for India's decision to revive the option of sending Haj pilgrims through sea route also.
- The agreement was signed by Union Minister for Minority Affairs Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi and Haj and Umrah Minister of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, His Excellency Mohammad Saleh bin TaherBenten at Makkah.

UIDAI introduces 'Virtual ID' for Aadhaar to privacy

- UIDAI in January, 2018 introduced a new concept of 'Virtual ID' which Aadhaar-card holder can generate from its website and give for various purposes, including SIM verification, instead of sharing the actual 12-digit biometric ID.
- This will give the users the option of not sharing their Aadhaar number at the time of authentication.
- The Virtual ID, which would be a random 16-digit number, together with biometrics of the user would give any authorised agency like a mobile company, limited details like name, address and photograph, which are enough for any verification.
- The Virtual ID will be a temporary and revocable 16 digit random number mapped to a person's Aadhaar number and the Aadhaar-issuing body will start accepting it from March 1, 2018.
- From June 1, 2018, it will be compulsory for all agencies that undertake authentication to accept the Virtual ID from their users.

IIT establishes its first food testing lab in Kharagpur

- The Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT) has established its first food testing lab at its Kharagpur campus.
- The agricultural and food engineering department's Analytical Food Testing Laboratory received the National Accreditation Board for Calibration and Testing Laboratories (NABL) accreditation, which empowered the IIT Kharagpur to certify food items for their nutritional value and also check for adulteration.

India to sign pact with UK on illegal migrants

- India will sign an MoU with the United Kingdom to enable the return of illegal Indian migrants within a month of their detection by authorities, an official said in January, 2018.
- The Memorandum of Understanding comes ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's proposed visit to the UK in March.
- The British authorities will first identify the illegal migrants, inform the Indian authorities, followed by police verification back home.

Cabinet approves India-Canada MoU for cooperation in Science & Technology

- The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in January, 2018, approved a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Canada for cooperation in the field of Science & Technology.
- The MoU will provide a mechanism and help foster scientific cooperation between R&D and academic institutions of the two countries.

Reports, Indexes & Lists

WEF ranks India 62nd on Inclusive Development Index

- The World Economic Forum on January 22, 2018 released the Inclusive Development Index, which places India at the 62nd spot among emerging economies, much behind its neighbours China and Pakistan, which are placed at 26th and 47th position respectively.
- According to the report, Norway remains world's most inclusive advanced economy, while Lithuania again tops the list of emerging economies. The report states that there is a huge decline in corruption rate in the index due to Indian Government's efforts of bringing transparency in the system.
- The Inclusive Development Index is an annual assessment economic performance of 103 countries that measures how countries perform on eleven dimensions of economic progress in addition to GDP.

India ranks 177 out of 180 in Environmental Performance Index

- India is among the bottom five countries on the Environmental Performance Index 2018, plummeting 36 points from 141 in 2016, according to a biennial report by Yale and Columbia Universities along with the World Economic Forum.
- While India is at the bottom of the list in the environmental health category, it ranks 178 out of 180 as far as air quality is concerned.
- Its overall low ranking — 177 among 180 countries — was linked to poor performance in the environment health policy and deaths due to air pollution categories.
- The report was released on the sidelines of the ongoing World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.
- It said deaths attributed to ultra-fine PM2.5 pollutants have risen over the past decade and are estimated at 1,640,113 annually in India.
- Switzerland leads the world in sustainability, followed by France, Denmark, Malta and Sweden in the EPI, which found that air quality is the leading environmental threat to public health.

India ranked 81st on Global Talent Competitiveness Index

- India has been ranked 81st on the annual global index of talent competitiveness, which was released on the first day of the 48th World Economic Forum (WEF) annual meeting in Davos, Switzerland.
- While Switzerland continues to top the list, India has improved its position from 92nd last year. In 2016, India was placed at the 89th rank. The index measures how countries grow, attract and retain talent.
- Though India has improved its position on the list, it still lags behind the other BRICS nations.
- While India was ranked the lowest in the group, China fared the best with 43rd rank, followed by Russia at 53rd, South Africa at 63rd and Brazil at 73rd position.
- India's ranking was the worst among the five BRICS countries in 2017 as well, China, on the other hand, was still ahead with 54th rank, followed by Russia at the 56th position, South Africa at 67 and Brazil at 81.

Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru make it to Emerging World Cities group: Report

- For the first time after years of no show on the global annual survey, three cities from India -- Mumbai, Delhi and Bengaluru -- have featured among the top world order as a part of the Emerging World Cities group.
- A report by JLL, titled World Cities: Mapping the Pathways to Success, shows that among the Emerging World Cities category, Delhi and Mumbai have been deemed Megahubs, while Bengaluru is high Enterprisers city.
- Large cities in emerging economies, or Megahubs, are junctions for globalisation of national economies, and are capable centres of business and retail, but fail to punch above their weight as investment destinations.
- Enterprisers are home to some of the world's most dynamic real estate markets. These emerging economies possess rapidly evolving innovation systems and are increasingly becoming home to their own successful, home-grown multi-national corporations.
- Mumbai has been a gateway city for most international corporations looking to set up shop in the country. The city enjoys a strong presence of global BFSI, retail as well as institutional investment companies. The capital of Maharashtra has an estimated GDP of USD 310 billion and has 28 billionaires living in it.

India ranked as 6th wealthiest country in the world: Report

- A report by New World Wealth has ranked India in the sixth position in the list of wealthiest countries. It noted that India was the best-performing wealth market globally in 2017, as its total wealth increased from USD 6,584 billion in 2016 to USD 8,230 billion in 2017, registering a 25 per cent growth.
- The United States is the wealthiest country in the world with a total wealth of USD 64,584 billion.
- The report ranked China in the second place, as its total wealth in 2017 amounted to USD 24,803 billion.
- Japan follows at the third position with a total wealth of USD 19,522 billion.
- The top 5 also includes the United Kingdom at the 4th position with wealth amounting to USD 9,919 billion and Germany at the 5th position with USD 9,660 billion.
- India is ranked at the 6th position with USD 8,230 billion, followed by France at 7th with USD 6,649 billion, Canada at 8th with USD 6,393 billion, Australia at 9th with USD 6,142 billion and Italy at 10th with USD 4,276 billion.

India slips to 42nd place on EIU Democracy Index 2018; US at 21st

- India on January 31, 2018 slipped to 42nd rank on an annual Global Democracy Index, compiled by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU). India moved down from 32nd rank in 2017 and remains classified among "flawed democracies". While Norway has again topped the list, followed by Iceland and Sweden.
- The United States (ranked 21), Japan, Italy, France, Israel, Singapore, and Hong Kong have also been named among 'flawed democracies'.
- The index ranks 165 independent states and two territories on the basis of five categories: electoral process and pluralism, civil liberties, the functioning of government, political participation and political culture.
- The list ranks the countries into four broad categories -- full democracy, flawed democracy, hybrid regime and authoritarian regime.

ixigo bags 1st place in Workplace Experience Ranking for 2017

- India's leading travel search marketplace, ixigo, has been recognized as the best place to work by Workplace Experience Ranking among large startups in India.
- Culturro collaborated with BW Business World in partnership with Indian Angel Network and F6s to develop a platform to recognize the startups that contribute to the holistic growth of their employees.
- The survey was organized to evaluate the overall experience of employees at their organization.
- The productivity of the employees and their tenure in the company largely depends on their experience within the organization.

Samsung overtakes Intel as world's biggest chip maker: Study

- South Korea's Samsung has overtaken US rival Intel as the world's biggest maker of semi-conductors as sales in the sector boom, a study published by consultancy Gartner showed in January, 2018.
- Samsung Electronics "gained the most market share and took the number one position from Intel --- the first time Intel has been toppled since 1992," said Gartner analyst, Andrew Norwood.
- The total global market for semi-conductors grew by 22 percent to \$419.7 billion (348 billion euros) in 2017, fuelled by growth in smartphones and other connected devices, Gartner calculated.

Gujarat tops new logistics index that flags inefficiency of states

- The logistics performance of Indian states and Union territories is "sub-par" owing to a host of inefficiencies, according to a study which also suggests measures for improvement.
- The Logistics Ease Across Different States (LEADS) index, a composite indicator to assess international trade logistics across states and Union territories, is based on a stakeholders' survey conducted by Deloitte for the ministry of commerce and industry. While Gujarat topped the first-of-its-kind index, Punjab and Andhra Pradesh took the second and third positions, respectively.
- Logistics, or the management of the flow of resources such as cargo, documents, information and funds through a range of activities and services between points of origin and destination, is a key parameter in deciding the trade competitiveness of a state or country.

WEF ranks India 30th on global manufacturing index; Japan tops list

- The World Economic Forum (WEF) has ranked India at 30th position on a global manufacturing index -- below China's 5th place but above other BRICS peers, Brazil, Russia and South Africa.
- Japan has been found to have the best structure of production in the Geneva-based WEF's first 'Readiness for the future of production report' and is followed by South Korea, Germany, Switzerland, China, Czech Republic, the US, Sweden, Austria and Ireland in the top 10.
- Among BRICS nations, Russia is ranked 35th, Brazil 41st and South Africa at 45th place.
- The report, which analyses development of modern industrial strategies and urges collaborative action, has categorised 100 countries into four groups -- Leading (strong current base, high level of readiness for future); High Potential (limited current base, high potential for future); Legacy (strong current base, at risk for future); or Nascent (limited current base, low level of readiness for future).
- India has been placed in the 'Legacy' group along with Hungary, Mexico, Philippines, Russia, Thailand and Turkey, among others. China figures among 'leading countries', while Brazil and South Africa are in 'nascent' ones.

Kozhikode ranked the best station in the country by ixigo

- Railways is the most popular means of transport in India that carries a daily ridership of 25+ million from across the country. Data from leading travel marketplace ixigo suggests, around 40 percent of the highest user rated railway stations on the basis of cleanliness are in the south.
- This is followed by 20 percent in central India and 20 percent in the west.
- The stations rated, not so clean are from Uttar Pradesh, Delhi and Rajasthan.
- Kozhikode was ranked the best station in the country by travellers with a 4.4 rating out of 5 while Hazrat Nizamuddin railway station, which is one of the five main stations in Delhi, has been rated the lowest by ixigo users.
- Other stations that made it to the 'best' list include - Hubli Junction, Davangere, Dhanbad Junction, Jabalpur, Bilaspur Junction, Vadodara Junction, Rajkot Junction, Falna and Vijayawada Junction.

Total mobile subscribers base grows to 981.65 million

- The Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI), the apex industry association representing the country's major telecom, internet, technology and digital services companies, in January, 2018 released the latest telecom subscriber numbers, for the month ending December 2017.
- As per the data, India's private telecom service providers have a total of 981.65 million subscribers.
- The figures include Reliance Jio Infocomm and Mahanagar Telephone Nigam (MTNL) by the end of November 2017, reported the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI).
- Amongst the individual companies, Idea Cellular Ltd had the highest subscriptions over previous month, the report stated.
- Further, Bharti Airtel Ltd continues to hold the top position, with 29.55 percent market share, adding another half a million subscribers during December, to take its total subscriber base to 290.11 million subscribers.

Five Indian tech companies feature in 'Top 100 Global Tech Leaders List'

- Thomson Reuters Corp on 17 January 2018 published its debut 'Top 100 Global Technology Leaders' list, which was topped by Microsoft, followed by Intel Corp and Cisco Systems at the 2nd and 3rd position respectively.
- The list, which aims to identify the industry's top financially successful and organisationally sound organisations, also features American tech giants such as Apple Inc, Alphabet Inc, International Business Machines Corp and Texas Instruments Inc among its top 10.
- The other companies to feature in the Top 10 include Microchip maker Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing, German business software giant SAP and Dublin-based consultant firm Accenture.

Appointments

India

Person	Appointed as	Organisation/Country
Vijay Gokhale	Foreign Secretary	India
Pankaj Jain	Managing Director	India Infrastructure Finance Company
Rajinder Khanna	Deputy National Security Advisor	India
Salman Khan	Brand Ambassador	Emami Edible Oils
Hanne Birgitte Sorensen	Independent Director	Tata Motors
T S Tirumurti	Secretary (Economic Relations)	External Affairs Ministry
A R Rahman	Brand Ambassador	Sikkim
Dilip Asbe	Managing Director and CEO	National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)
K. Sivan	Chairman	Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)
Pravin Jadhav	Senior Vice President	Paytm Money
Vijay Kumar	Managing Director and CEO	National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange
Nitin Chauhan	Chief Information Security Officer	Paytm Payments Bank
Vice Admiral Ajendra Bahadur Singh	Chief of Staff	Western Naval Command
Parvez Rasool	technical advisor (cricket)	the J&K State Sports Council
Puneet Agarwal	Chief Risk Officer	Mobikwik
Anandiben Patel	Governor	Madhya Pradesh
Om Prakash Rawat	Chief Election Commissioner	Election Commission
Dilip Chenoy	Director General	Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry
Kaustubh Sonalkar	CEO	Essar Foundation
Chandra Bhushan Paliwal	Chairman	Uttar Pradesh Subordinate Services Selection Commission (UPSSSC)
Usha Ananthasubramanian	First Woman Chairman	Indian Banks' Association (IBA)
KVB Reddy	MD & CEO	L&T Metro Rail Hyderabad Limited
Praveen Sinha, Ajay Bhatnagar and Pankaj Kumar Srivastava, Sharad Aggarwal, Gajendra Kumar Goswami and V Murugesan	Joint Director	Central Bureau of Investigation
Wolfgang Prock-Schauer	Chief Operating Officer	IndiGo Airlines
Dinesh Srivastava	CEO	Nuclear Fuel Complex (NFC)

World

Person	Appointed as	Organisation/Country
Kookhyun Shim	MD & CEO	Kia Motors India
Raj Kumar Rishi	Regional GM & MD	Xerox India

Sunny Verghese	Chairman	World Business Council for Sustainable Development
Ajit Jain	Vice-chairman	Berkshire Hathaway's insurance business
Harjinder Singh	Chef De Mission of Indian Contingent	23rd Winter Olympic Games
Preet Kaur Gill	Minister	Shadow Cabinet
Mohan Somasi	Vice President	Schneider Electric India
Arun Balasubramanian	Country Manager (India)	Qlik
Gurbir S Grewal	First Sikh attorney general	New Jersey, USA
Jerome H Powell	Chairman	Federal Reserve System, USA
Clare Lombardelli	First Chief Economist	Bank of England
Momtaz Moussa	General Manager	OLX India
Vijay S. Subramaniam	Managing Director for Asia Pacific, Middle East and Africa	Bacardi Spirits

Awards & Honors

Shesh Anand Madhukar awarded with Sahitya Akademi's Bhasha Samman 2018

- Magahi writer Shesh Anand Madhukar was on January 31, 2018 honoured with the Sahitya Akademi Bhasha Samman Award 2018. With this, he became the second writer of Magahi language to be given the award.
- Madhurkar was conferred the award by Sahitya Akademi President Vishwanath Prasad Tiwari.
- Some of his important works in Hindi are "Magahi Kavita Ke Bimb", "Eklavya", and "Bhagwan Birsa".

PM Modi presents National Bravery Awards to 18 children

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi in January, 2018 presented the National Bravery Awards to 18 children, seven of them being girls.
- Three of these awards were presented posthumously.
- Interacting with the awardees, Modi said their deeds of bravery inspire other children, and often engender a sense of self-confidence among other children.
- He remarked that most of the awardees are from rural and humble backgrounds. He said that perhaps their daily struggles had helped instill resilience in them to deal courageously in adverse situations, an official statement said.
- The awards are divided into five categories- Bharat Award, Geeta Chopra Award, Sanjay Chopra Award, Babu Gaidhani Award, and General National Bravery Awards.

Tamil Nadu CM Palanichamy receives UNESCO Award

- The Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Edappadi K Palanichamy on January 24, 2018 received the UNESCO Award of Merit awarded to the iconic Srirangam Ranganathaswamy temple in the city of Tiruchirapalli in Tamil Nadu.
- The award of merit is being awarded by UNESCO Asia Pacific region for the reconstruction activities undertaken in the temple without in the least affecting its traditional splendour and Vedic rituals.

'Sachin: A Billion Dreams' bags two awards at Tehran International FICTS Festival

- 'Sachin: A Billion Dreams,' a biopic on cricket icon Sachin Tendulkar has won two awards at the recently concluded 11th Tehran International FICTS Festival 2018.

- Helmer James Erskine won the trophy for the Best Director of a Long Documentary and an honorary diploma, while the Special Award for the Best Film in the Long documentary section went to producer Ravi Bhagchandka.

Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik Receives 'Ideal Chief Minister' Award

- Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik received the 'Ideal Chief Minister' award at Bharatiya Chhatra Sansad in January, 2018.
- Patnaik was conferred with the award by former President of India Pratibha Patil in a special event which was organised by Maharashtra Institute of Technology (MIT) School of Government. The award carries Rs 1 lakh, citation, shawl and memento.
- MP and Former Union Minister Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi was among the many distinguished guests who attended the event.
- The Odisha CM who was given the award for his commitment and conviction to provide clean governance and delivering on his promises, dedicated the award to the people of the state.

63rd Filmfare Awards

Members of the Hindi film industry came together to celebrate the best of Bollywood in the year 2017 at 63 rd Jio Filmfare Awards 2018, held on January 20 at the NSCI Dome in Worli, Mumbai. The starry night was hosted by Bollywood's Baadshah Shah Rukh Khan, and filmmaker Karan Johar.

List of awardees

- Best Film: 'Hindi Medium'
- Critics' Award for Best Film: 'Newton'
- Best Actor In A Leading Role (Female): Vidya Balan for 'Tumhari Sulu'
- Best Actor In A Leading Role (Male) : Irrfan Khan for 'Hindi Medium'
- Critics' Award for Best Actor (Male): Rajkummar Rao for 'Trapped'
- Critics' Award for Best Actor (Female): Zaira Wasim for 'Secret Superstar'
- Best Director: Ashwiny Iyer Tiwari for 'Bareilly Ki Barfi'
- Best Debut Director: Konkona Sensharma for 'A Death in the Gunj'
- Best Actor In A Supporting Role (Male): Rajkummar Rao for 'Bareilly Ki Barfi'
- Best Actor in a Supporting Role (Female): Meher Vij for 'Secret Superstar'
- Best Short Film (Fiction) : 'Juice'
- Best Short Film (Non Fiction): 'Invisible Wings'
- Lifetime Achievement Award: Mala Sinha and Bappi Lahiri

Girish Karnad selected for the Ammannur Madhava Chakyar Award

- Film director, actor, and playwright Girish Karnad has been selected for the Ammannur Madhava Chakyar award instituted by the Kerala Sangeeta Nataka Akademi.
- The award, which carries a purse of ₹3 lakh, was instituted by the akademi in 2010. However, it was stopped after a few years. The akademi resumed it last year.
- Cultural Affairs Minister A.K. Balan will present the award to Mr. Karnad at the International Theatre Festival of Kerala (ITFoK) on January 26.
- Palestine, Year – Zero will be the opening drama of the 10th edition of ITFoK, with the theme 'reclaiming the margins'.

American novelist Stephen King to receive PEN Literary Service Award

- Horror master Stephen King is set to receive the 2018 PEN America Literary Service Award.
- The annual honour is presented to a “critically acclaimed author whose work embodies PEN America’s mission to oppose repression in any form and to champion the best of humanity.” Past winners include J K Rowling, Salman Rushdie and Margaret Atwood
- King will be honoured on May 22 at the 2018 PEN America Literary Gala, the same day his latest novel, *The Outsiders*, will release.

Actor Soumitra Chatterjee will receive Legion of Honour award from French culture minister in Kolkata

- Having honoured acclaimed actor Soumitra Chatterjee with the "Legion of Honour" which is the highest order of merit in France, the French government will confer the award to the legendary actor at the 42nd Kolkata Book Fair on January 30.
- The award will be presented by French culture minister Françoise Nyssen, who would be accompanied by a delegation of 10 top writers and publishers from her country, as the theme country for the international book fair this year is France.

Chittagong University to honor Pranab Mukherjee with D.Litt

- Chittagong University or CU will confer a DLitt or Doctor of Letters on former Indian president Pranab Mukherjee, the university’s acting registrar Kamrul Huda has said.
- During a syndicate meeting in January, 2018, the CU took the decision to recognise Mukherjee for his contributions to society and for being a genuine friend of Bangladesh, he told bdnews24.com.

West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee honoured with Doctor of Literature (D.Litt) by the Calcutta University

- West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has been conferred with the honour of Doctor of Literature (D.Litt) by the Calcutta University.
- The degree was presented to the Chief Minister by West Bengal Governor Keshari Nath Tripathi. Mamata Banerjee, an alumnus of the university, was recognised for her work in social service.

Shah Rukh Khan wins 2018 Crystal Award by World Economic Forum

- The King of Bollywood Shah Rukh Khan has won the 2018 Crystal Award from India.
- The superstar was honored with this award for his leadership in championing children’s and women’s rights in India.
- Shah Rukh has been running his NGO– Meer Foundation– which works for providing justice to female victims of acid attack.
- The two others who received the award are Actor Cate Blanchett and musician Elton John. Blanchett, Australian actress and theatre director, has received the award for her leadership in raising awareness of the refugee crisis which John got it for his leadership in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

Actor Sudhir Dalvi gets Janakavi P Sawlaram award

- Actor Sudhir Dalvi was honoured with the Janakavi P Sawlaram award at a glittering function.
- Thane Mayor Meenakshi Shinde gave the 79-year-old artist a citation, shawl and 'shreefal' in the presence of thousands of admirers in January, 2018 night.
- The award is jointly given by the Thane Municipal Corporation and the Janakavi P Savlaram Kala Samiti.
- Well-known dancer Jaishree T was given the Ganga Jamuna award.

JNPT wins ‘Samudra Manthan - Caring Organisation of the Year’ award

- The Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust, India’s Premier Container Port, has won the ‘Samudra Manthan - Caring Organisation of the Year’ award.
- The award was instituted by Bhandarkar Shipping, which is a leading publication in the maritime industry. It aims to fuel healthy competition in the maritime sector and impart an impetus to the industry to emerge stronger to work for the benefit of trade and the economy.

Indian-origin banker Ravi Menon named central bank governor of the year for Asia-Pacific

- An Indian-origin banker in Singapore has been named as the best central bank governor in Asia-Pacific for 2018, a media report said in January, 2018.
- Ravi Menon, managing director of Singapore’s central bank Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS), was recognised by the leading UK-based magazine ‘The Banker’ for his contribution in the makeover of Singapore’s financial system.

Nitish Kumar to receive 1st Mufti M Sayeed Award for Probity in Public Life

- Bihar CM Nitish Kumar has been selected for the 1st Mufti Mohammad Sayeed Award for Probity in Public Life. He will be conferred the award at an official function of Jammu & Kashmir government to be held at Jammu in January, 2018.
- The award was constituted recently by the Jammu and Kashmir government to commemorate the death anniversary of PDP founder and two-time J&K chief minister Sayeed who died on January 7, 2016 after nearly a week-long hospitalization in New Delhi. Sayeed was father of J&K CM Mehbooba Mufti.

75th Annual Golden Globe Awards announced

- The 75th Annual Golden Globe Awards were announced on 7 January 2018, honouring the best Motion Pictures and American Television of 2017. The award ceremony was organized at Beverly Hills, California, United States (US).
- This year, 'The Shape of Water' received the most nominations of show with seven, while 'Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri' and 'Big Little Lies' both won the most awards with four each.

List of winners of the 75th annual Golden Globe Awards: Motion Pictures

Category	Awardees
Best Motion Picture Drama	Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri
Best Motion Picture Musical/Comedy	Lady Bird
Best Director in Motion Picture-Drama	Guillermo del Toro (The Shape of Water)
Best Foreign Language Film	In the Fade (Germany/France)
Cecil B. DeMille Lifetime Achievement Award	Oprah Winfrey

List of winners of the 75th annual Golden Globe Awards: Television

Category	Awardees
Best television series, drama	'The Handmaid's Tale', Hulu
Actress in a television series, drama	Elisabeth Moss in 'The Handmaid's Tale'
Actor in a television series, drama	Sterling K. Brown in 'This Is Us'

Sports News

Shahzar Rizvi Wins Men's 10m Air Pistol Gold

- Shooter Shahzar Rizvi ended a brilliant 2017 by winning the Men's 10m Air Pistol Gold at the 61st National Shooting Championship (NSCC), at the Karni Singh Shooting Range in January, 2018.
- Representing the Air Force, Shahzar won with a new finals national record score of 241.7, leaving Army's Yashwant Singh in silver medal position with a score of 237.7. Yashwant's teammate Omprakash Mitherwal won bronze, securing 218.0 in the finals.

Vidarbha Thump Delhi by 9 Wickets to Clinch Maiden Ranji Title

- Vidarbha claimed their maiden Ranji Trophy after beating Delhi by nine wickets in the final of the country's premier domestic tournament in January, 2018.
- Chasing a target of 29, Vidarbha completed the task with loss of skipper Faiz Fazal's wicket.
- Opting to field, Vidarbha bowled out Delhi for 295 in the first innings with Rajneesh Gurbani picking up six wickets.

Star Sports is official broadcast partner for Khelo India School Games

- The Ministry of Sports & Youth Affairs has chosen Star Sports as its broadcast and production partner for the upcoming Khelo India School Games for five years.
- The broadcaster has bagged the broadcast rights for the event till 2022.
- The Ministry did not give out specifics about the financials of the broadcast deal.

Viswanathan Anand wins bronze in World Blitz Chess championship 2017

- Chess grandmaster Viswanathan Anand bagged a bronze in the World Blitz Chess Championship held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
- On the first day of the championship, Anand suffered a loss at the hands of Ian Nepomniachtchi of Russia, however he put on a class act on the final day as he won against Maxime Vachier-Lagrave of France.

Meghalaya to Host 39th National Games in 2022

- Meghalaya is going to host the 39th National Games in 2022. In January, 2018, the State signed the host city contract for hosting the 39th National Games and would celebrate 50 years of statehood in 2022, reports said.
- It may be mentioned that after Manipur and Assam which had hosted the National Games in 1999 and 2007 respectively, Meghalaya will be the third state to host the games in 2022.

New Zealand player Colin Munro: First to score 3 centuries in T20

- Colin Munro became the first batsman in the history of T20 internationals to slam three centuries.

- Right behind him are fellow Kiwi Brendon McCullum, India's Rohit Sharma and West Indies' Chris Gayle and Evin Lewis – all who have two centuries each. Munro brought up his century in 47 balls before being dismissed by Carlos Brathwaite.

Virat Kohli Becomes IPL's Highest Paid Player Ever

- Virat Kohli will continue to play for the Royal Challengers Bangalore, as he has been retained by the team once again. AB de Villiers and Sarfaraz Khan are the other players that the RCB has decided to hold on to.
- After he was retained for Rs 17 crore, Kohli became the highest paid player in IPL history. He went past Yuvraj Singh's record of Rs 16 crore (bought by Delhi Daredevils). MS Dhoni was retained by the Chennai Super Kings for Rs 15 crore.

Khelo India logo launch kick starts mission of mass participation and excellence

- The vibrant Khelo India logo, reflecting the freshness, agility and vitality of New India was launched at a simple ceremony by the Union Minister of State (I/C) Youth Affairs and Sports Col Rajyavardhan Rathore at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium. The logo also conveys an impression of fitness and competitiveness.
- The three-stroke Khelo India logo, designed by Ogilvy India, has in-built modularity, allowing plenty of adaptability and flexibility into endless pictorial forms. The colour of the Indian flag evoke a sense of National pride and team-work.

Roger Federer Leads Switzerland to Third Hopman Cup Title

- Switzerland won their third Hopman Cup in January, 2018 as Roger Federer and Belinda Bencic beat Germany's Alexander Zverev and Angelique Kerber 4-3(3) 4-2 in the deciding mixed doubles to secure a 2-1 victory in the final at the Perth Arena.
- It was Federer's second Hopman Cup triumph after victory in 2001 alongside then world number one Martina Hingis.

Julia Goerges defeats Caroline Wozniacki to claim ASB Classic title

- Powerful-serving Julia Goerges stunned top seed Caroline Wozniacki with a straight-sets win in the WTA Auckland Classic final in January, 2018.
- The 29-year-old German, with a first serve topping 180 kilometres per hour (112 miles per hour), sent down 11 aces on her way to winning the Auckland title for the first time in her ninth attempt 6-4, 7-6 (7/4).

Wriddhiman Saha Breaks MS Dhoni's Record, Becomes First Indian Wicket-Keeper to Affect 10 Dismissals in a Test Match

- On day four of the first Test between South Africa and India, Wriddhiman Saha took four catches to complete ten dismissals in the match. With it, Saha has gone past former India captain MS Dhoni's record of nine dismissals in a Test match. Dhoni achieved the feat against Australia in 2014.
- Saha, who took five catches during South Africa's first innings, added five more in the second innings. Four of these catches came in the first session of day four. Indian bowlers produced an impressive pace bowling to dismiss South Africa cheaply in their second innings.

Yusuf Pathan handed five months suspension after failing dope test

- Indian all-rounder Yusuf Pathan was in January, 2018 handed a five-month retrospective suspension for failing a dope test, a sanction which will end on January 14 after the BCCI accepted his plea that the violation was inadvertent.

- The 35-year-old Pathan had provided a urine sample as part of the BCCI's anti-doping testing program during a domestic T20 match between his team Baroda and Tamil Nadu on March 16 last year.

Aanchal Thakur creates history by winning India's first medal in an international skiing competition

- Aanchal Thakur, a 21-year-old from Himachal Pradesh, created history in January, 2018 when she became the first Indian to win an international medal in skiing. Aanchal clinched bronze at the Alpine Ejder 3200 Cup in Turkey.
- The event is organised by the International Ski Federation (FIS) — skiing's international governing body — at the Palandoken Ski Centre in Erzurum. Aanchal won the medal in the slalom race category.

Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore unveils the Khelo India Anthem

- Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports in January, 2018 unveiled the Khelo India Anthem Commencing on January 31, 2018, the Khelo India School Games will be the first programme to mark the beginning of Khelo India, a category defining, holistic sports development programme. Star Sports, India's leading sports broadcaster has come in as broadcast partner.
- The anthem is conceptualized by Ogilvy, composed by Louis Bank and the film has been produced by Nirvana Films.

Ukraine's Marta Kostyuk creates history at Australian Open

- Ukraine's Marta Kostyuk became the youngest tennis star to book her place in the third round of a grand slam in over two decades.
- Kostyuk in January, 2018 thrashed local wildcard Olivia Rogowska in straight sets in the women's singles event of the Australian Open.
- Kostyuk, 15, who entered the tournament ranked No. 521, made 11 victories in a row when she defeated Australia's Rogowska 6-3, 7-5 in the second round that lasted an hour and 30 minutes on Margaret Court Arena.
- With the win, Kostyuk became the youngest to reach that stage at a Slam since Mirjana Lucic-Baroni in the 1997 US Open, the WTA reported.

Virat Kohli named ICC cricketer of the year

- Indian Captain Virat Kohli was named the ICC Men's Cricketer of the Year at the ICC annual awards, which were announced in Dubai on 18 January 2018.
- The award is courtesy the 29-year-old's splendid form during the qualification period, which was from September 2016 till the end of 2017, when he knocked up a total of 2203 runs including 8 centuries in tests, 1818 runs with 7 centuries in ODIs and 299 runs in T20 Internationals.
- Besides this, Kohli also won the ICC Men's ODI Cricketer of the Year award. This is the first instance since 2013 that the award has been won by a non-South African. While Quinton de Kock received the award in 2016, AB de Villiers won it in 2014 and 2015.
- Kohli was also named the captain of the ICC Test and ODI teams of the year.

FIFA rankings: India surges 3 places to occupy 102nd spot

- The Indian men's football team have climbed three spots to be placed 102nd in the latest Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) rankings.
- India, which are ranked 14th among Asian countries, have earned 13 points over the past month for a total of 333 points.
- Coached by Englishman Stephen Constantine, the Sunil Chhetri-led side are currently standing just above 103rd-placed Qatar.

Brazil legend Ronaldinho bids adieu to football

- Brazilian football superstar Ronaldinho, who was part of the triumphant Brazil 2002 World Cup squad, has bid adieu to his illustrious career at the age of 37.
- Confirming the news, Ronaldinho's brother and agent Roberto Assis said that the Brazilian World Cup winner's career as a professional footballer is over.
- However, he hopes to schedule some farewell matches for Ronaldinho after the World Cup in Russia, which ends July 15

ICC rankings: Kohli becomes 2nd Indian batsman to reach 900-point mark

- Indian skipper Virat Kohli has become the second player of the country, after Sunil Gavaskar, to reach the 900-point mark in the latest International Cricket Council (ICC) Player Rankings for Test Batsmen, which were released following the conclusion of the Centurion Test.
- Gavaskar, one of the ICC Cricket Hall of Famers, had achieved the milestone in his 50th Test when he scored 13 and 221 at The Oval in 1979 to jump from 887 points to 916 points, which remained his career-best.
- Kohli, who recorded his 21st century at Centurion, got to the rare feat in his 65th Test after vaulting from 880 points to 900 points.

India beat Pakistan by two wickets to retain Blind Cricket World Cup title

- Sunil Ramesh slammed a superb 93 as India defeated arch rivals Pakistan by two wickets in a thrilling summit clash to retain the Blind Cricket World Cup title in January, 2018.
- Batting first, Pakistan amassed 308 runs, courtesy some useful contribution by Badar Munir (57), Riasat Khan (48) and captain Nisar Ali (47).
- Ramesh then led the run chase as India overhauled the target with eight balls to spare to retain the trophy that they had won in 2014 after beating the same opponents at Cape Town, South Africa.

India's Manav Thakkar becomes World No 2 in latest International TT rankings

- India's Manav Thakkar climbed to World Number 2 spot in the boys' under-18 category while Diya Chitale rose to Number 5 in the girls' under-15 category in the International Table Tennis Federation rankings.
- Thakkar's jump has been particularly phenomenal as he moved from 18th to his current position. According to an official release by the ITTF, the top place is within striking distance of Thakkar, which will become India's moment of crowning glory.

Akash Gill becomes first Canada batsman to hit ton

- Canada and Zimbabwe progressed to the ICC U-19 Cricket World Cup Plate semi-finals, with convincing victories over Papua New Guinea (PNG) and Namibia, respectively in Christchurch in January, 2018.
- All-rounder Akash Gill slammed the first century by a Canada batsman in an ICC U19 Cricket World Cup match as the North American side defeated PNG by 80 runs, while Wessely Madevere took two for 11 and then scored 47 as Zimbabwe beat Namibia by seven wickets.

Sharath Kamal lifts National Men's singles title for the eighth time

- Sharath Kamal on January 30, 2018 lifted the National men's singles title for the eighth time, equalling the feat of Kamlesh Mehta.
- In the finals at the Senior Table Tennis Nationals in Ranchi, Kamal defeated top-seed Anthony Amalraj 4-1. The winner received two lakh rupees as prize money.

World News

WEF launches Global Centre for Cybersecurity

- The World Economic Forum (WEF) on 24 January 2018 launched the Global Centre for Cybersecurity to safeguard the world from hackers and growing data breaches.
- The centre will help bring all the stakeholders together in warding off cyber criminals.
- Headquartered in Geneva, the centre will become operational from March 2018.
- Initially, the centre will reach out key industry players and G-20 countries to make this platform a success for dialogue and real-time action on cyber threats.

In a first, scientists clone monkeys by process that made Dolly the sheep

- Scientists in China have created the first monkeys cloned by the same process that produced Dolly the sheep more than 20 years ago, a breakthrough that could boost medical research into human diseases.
- The two long-tailed macaques (*Macaca fascicularis*) named Hua Hua and Zhong Zhong were born at the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) Institute of Neuroscience in Shanghai, and are the fruits of years of research into a cloning technique called somatic cell nuclear transfer.

Brisbane to become world's 'first' digital currency airport

- BNE has partnered with local startup TravelbyBit to allow travellers to use cryptocurrencies, such as Bitcoin, Dash and Ethereum to pay for goods and services at the airport's stores and F&B outlets.
- The airport says it is working with a number of terminal retailers to bring 'decentralised block chain enabled payments into its terminal shopping' to enable travelling customers to use TravelbyBit's cryptocurrency payment system.

Facebook bans cryptocurrency ads on its platforms

- Facebook has banned ads that promote initial coin offerings (ICOs), cryptocurrency like Bitcoin and binary options trading from its platforms, including Instagram, Audience Network and Messenger.
- The new policy prohibits ads that promote financial products and services that are frequently associated with misleading or deceptive promotional practices, Facebook said in a statement late in January, 2018.

Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos becomes richest man in history

- Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos is now the world's richest man, not just at present, but of all time.
- Both Bloomberg and Forbes have put Bezos on top of their billionaire lists. Bloomberg said Bezos' net worth reached \$106 billion while Forbes put it at \$105 billion as of Wednesday, Xinhua news agency reported.
- The previous record was held by Microsoft founder Bill Gates with \$100 billion in 1999.
- The majority of Bezos' net worth comes from the 78.9 million shares of Amazon stock he owns. Shares of Amazon (AMZN) climbed nearly 57 per cent in 2017.
- The Seattle-based corporation managed to make up 89 per cent of online spending among major retailers in the five-week period beginning on Thanksgiving, according to an analysis of transaction data by Earnest Research in New York.

Iceland enforces historic law to ensure equal pay for men and women

- Iceland, on January 1, enforced a law ensuring that companies operating within the nordic country pay their male and female employees equally. The new rules make Iceland the first country in the world to introduce such a legislation, Al Jazeera reported.
- The bill was tabled in the Icelandic Parliament in April 2017. The new law will make it mandatory for private and public companies with 25 or more employees to prove that their salary structure is not biased by gender. Erring companies will be fined.

Saudi Arabia lifts 35-year cinema ban by screening The Emoji Movie

- Saudi Arabia has started screening feature-length movies from Saturday in a makeshift theatre. The first movie it chose to screen is animated The Emoji Movie—a film featuring various talking emoticons reported Reuters.

- This is the first time an officially sanctioned public screening of a movie took place after 35 years. Earlier, in December, on the initiative of crown prince Mohammed bin Salman, the ban on film screening was lifted.

China launches new guided-missile frigate 'Wuhai'

- China has launched a new guided- missile frigate called 'Wuhai', which has stronger anti- submarine capabilities.
- Wuhai is the latest member of the Type 056 corvettes family. Following the retirement of China's older generation corvettes, Type 037 and Type 053, the Type 056 family has become the Chinese navy's main fleet for offshore defense.

China to fight pollution with world's largest air purifier

- China has constructed an experimental air purifying tower called the Xian smog tower, which is touted to be the 'world's biggest air purifier' with a height of over 100 meters, to combat smog and air pollution.
- The tower is undergoing tests by researchers of the Institute of Earth Environment at the Chinese Academy of Sciences. It is reported to be having a positive effect on the air quality in the area.

UK appoints 'Minister for loneliness'

- The Prime Minister of United Kingdom, Theresa May on 17 January 2018 announced the appointment of Sports minister Tracey Crouch as the country's first 'Minister for loneliness'.
- The move has been made to tackle the isolation felt by more than one in ten people in the UK. In her additional role, Tracey Crouch would be required to develop a strategy to address loneliness in the nation.
- According to research, Britain has in fact, a serious problem with loneliness.

Britain announces world's first public register against money laundering

- Britain has announced the world's first public register that requires overseas companies that own or buy property in the country to provide details of their ultimate owners.
- The government is set to publish relevant draft laws and the register will go live by early 2021. Speaking on the development, British Business Secretary Greg Clark said that this register will build on their reputation for corporate transparency as well as help create a hostile environment for economic crimes like money laundering.

Japan launches New Earth Observation Satellite into Space

- Japan successfully launches an earth observation satellite with third generation Epsilon rocket from the Uchinoura Space Center, located in Kagoshima, Japan.
- It was also confirmed that after approximately 52 minutes into the flight, ASNARO-2 successfully separated from the rocket.

Google develops human-like text-to-speech Artificial Intelligence

- In a major step towards its "AI first" dream, Google has developed a text-to-speech artificial intelligence (AI) system that will confuse you with its human-like articulation.
- The tech giant's text-to-speech system called "Tacotron 2" delivers an AI-generated computer speech that almost matches with the voice of humans, technology news website Inc.com reported.

Saudi Arabia, UAE become first Gulf nations to introduce VAT

- Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) introduced the Value Added Tax (VAT) for the very first time on 1 January 2018. The move is a first for the Gulf region, which has long boasted of a tax-free system.
- VAT is a five per cent tax that will be levied on most goods and services to boost revenue. It will be applied on food, clothes, electronics and gasoline, phone, water and electricity bills, as well as hotel reservations. Some services that will be exempted from the tax include medical treatment, financial services and public transport.

No more aid to Pakistan: Trump

- Showing zero tolerance towards terrorism, the US President issued a tough warning to Pakistan and said that United States will no longer give any fund to Pakistan. The statement comes soon after the recent talks that the Trump administration was considering cutting off aid to Pakistan.
- In this changing scenario the US President Donald Trump slammed the Pakistan, saying that this South Asian country has given nothing but the lies and deceit to US. It has provided safe heaven to terrorists.

NASA to launch GOLD, ICON Missions to explore nearest space

- National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) on 4 January 2018 announced to launch two missions to explore 60 miles (96 KM) of area above Earth's surface.
- The Global-scale Observations of the Limb and Disk (GOLD) mission will be launched aboard a commercial communications satellite in January 2018 itself, while the other mission Ionospheric Connection Explorer (ICON) will be launched later in 2018.

Volcano erupts for first time in Papua New Guinea

- A dormant volcano erupted for the very first time in a dramatic fashion, spewing lava and sending an ash cloud at around two kilometres above the sea level.
- The local media reported that the volcano, located on the Kadovar Island, situated in north-eastern Papua New Guinea, lay dormant until yesterday when it began to erupt at around noon. The volcano is still spewing lava, stripping large parts of land in the island.

SpaceX launches Secret Zuma Mission for US Government

- Private spaceflight company SpaceX on 7 January 2018 launched the secret Zuma Mission for the United States government. SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket launched the secret Zuma spacecraft from the Cape Canaveral Air Force Station in Florida.
- SpaceX' live webcast did not show video coverage of the Zuma spacecraft after it separated from the first stage of the rocket, but confirmed that the payload was well on its way to low-Earth orbit.
- Zuma mission remains a secret as its nature or purpose and the agency behind it remains a mystery.

World's largest Ice Festival at China's Harbin International Ice and Snow Festival

- The 34th Harbin International Ice and Snow Festival and the third China International Ice and Snow Tourism Summit officially opened in January, 2018 in Harbin, capital of northeast China's Heilongjiang Province.
- The festival mainly features ice and snow-themed scenic spots such as the world's largest ice and snow park and a snow sculpture art expo as well as diverse ice and snow sports and entertainments.

AirAsia, Uber partner for seamless, affordable travel

- Uber and AirAsia announced their partnership to help provide a seamless, affordable and convenient door-to-door experience for travelers, through joint marketing efforts and technological integration.
- The two companies will work together to help passengers get home or to work, or to the airport and back more seamlessly in the 52 cities in 16 markets across India, Asia Pacific and the US, where AirAsia operates and the Uber app is available.

Infosys signs agreement with US IRS for lower tax rate

- Global software major Infosys in January, 2018 said it has signed an agreement with the US Internal Revenue Service (IRS) which will lead to an effective tax rate lower by about 100 basis points (bps) for future periods.
- According to the Bengaluru-based firm, the advanced pricing agreement (APA) -- the preliminary discussions on which were initiated with the IRS in 2015 -- is expected to result in the reversal of tax provisions of around \$225 million in the quarter ended December 31, 2017.

Danish wind energy sets new record in 2017

- Wind power accounted for a record high of 43.4 per cent of the total electricity consumption in Denmark in 2017, according to official data released in January, 2018.
- The new record surpasses the previous 2015 record of 42 per cent, keeping Denmark on track to reach its target of having 50 per cent of all electricity produced by wind power by 2020, figures from Danish Ministry of Energy, Utilities and Climate showed.
- In the coming years, higher records are expected as new offshore wind farms are developed in the Baltic sea and the North Sea to further increase the Danish wind production.

Ecuador grants WikiLeaks Founder Julian Assange citizenship

- Ecuador in January, 2018 announced that it has granted citizenship to Julian Assange, the founder of the whistleblowing website WikiLeaks who has been holed up in the country’s embassy in London for the past five and a half years, The Guardian reported. The country’s Foreign Ministry said Assange was granted citizenship on December 12.
- Ecuador’s Foreign Minister Maria Fernanda Espinosa said at a press conference in Capital city Quito that the government was concerned about potential threats to Assange’s life from unspecified nations, The Washington Post reported. She added that Ecuador was looking to resolve the impasse in a “dignified” way.

General Motors introduce a fully autonomous car with no steering or brake pedals

- There is no brake pedal, no accelerator pedal and even no steering wheel in this fully autonomous car recently unveiled by General Motors. The car is the fourth generation of GM’s driverless cars that are being powered by its self-driving arm, Cruise.
- Now the automaker is seeking U.S. government’s approval for this car to enter GM’s first commercial ride-sharing fleet in 2019.

China launches two navigation satellites into space

- China successfully launched two BeiDou-3 satellites to provide navigation and positioning services to countries along the Belt and Road initiative (BRI) by the end of 2018.
- This is the first launch of the BeiDou satellites in 2018, which will see intensive launches in 2018.
- The March-3B carrier rocket took off from Xichang Satellite Launch Center in the south western province of Sichuan.

US Launches New Spy Satellite on Secret Mission

- The fleet of U.S. spy satellites has just welcomed a new member.
- The NROL-47 spacecraft soared into Earth orbit in January, 2018 (Jan. 12), riding atop a United Launch Alliance (ULA) Delta IV Medium rocket that lifted off from California's Vandenberg Air Force Base at 5:11 p.m. EST (2211 GMT, 2:11 p.m. local California time).

Days

Days	Observed on	Theme/Info
Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas	9 January	2018 will be held in Singapore.
World Hindi Day	10 January	
National Youth Day	12 January	Birth Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda
Army Day	15 January	
National Girl Child Day	24 January	
National Voters' Day	25 January	

Republic Day	26 January	First time 10 guests are invited. List below.
Sarvodaya day/Matyr Day	30 January	Gandhiji was assassinated.
National Disaster Response Force Rising Day	19 January	
World Braille Day	4 January	
International Customs Day	26 January	
International Holocaust Remembrance Day	27 January	

Books & Authors

Former Delhi CM Sheila Dikshit pens autobiography "Citizen Delhi: My Times, My Life"

- Former Delhi Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit is coming out with her autobiography, "Citizen Delhi: My Times, My Life", publishers Bloomsbury India announced.
- The memoir which will be unveiled on January 27 at the 11th edition of the Jaipur Literature Festival, will take readers through the "lifelong journey of the only female politician in India to be part of a select, overwhelmingly male, band".
- The memoir documents how a girl who loved cycling along the tree-lined avenues of a brand new Lutyens' Delhi, five decades later, went on to govern, and transform, Delhi as its chief minister not once, but thrice consecutively -- from 1998 to 2013.

Obituaries

Former Union minister Raghunath Jha passes away in Delhi

- Former Union minister Raghunath Jha passed away at Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital in Delhi last night.
- Jha was Union minister of State for Heavy Industries and Public Enterprise during former prime minister Manmohan Singh's government.
- He was a member of the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) and represented Bihar's Bettiah constituency.

Award-winning sci-fi fantasy author Ursula Le Guin passes away at 88

- Ursula K Le Guin, one of the greatest science-fiction and fantasy authors, died in January, 2018 at the age of 88.
- Her family announced in a tweet that the author died peacefully at her Portland, Oregon home.
- Le Guin's work spanned multiple genres and categories but is best known for her work in the science fiction and fantasy realm.

Ex-Windies umpire Clyde Cumberbatch passes away

- Former West Indies umpire Clyde Cumberbatch has recently passed away in Port of Spain. He was 81.
- Fellow Trinidadian and international umpire, Peter Nero condoled the demise of Cumberbatch, saying that he has lost his umpiring father.

Toyota's former president Tatsuuro Toyoda dies at 88

- Toyota's former president Tatsuuro Toyoda, who helped the Japanese auto giant establish a foothold in North America, has died at the age of 88, the company said in January, 2018.
- Toyoda, an uncle of current Toyota CEO Akio Toyoda, died of pneumonia on December 30, the firm said in a statement.

- Toyoda joined the company -- founded by his father Kiichiro Toyoda -- in 1953 and in 1984 became the first president of a new firm formed by Toyota and General Motors.

Saksham Yadav, world champion weightlifter, dies

- World champion Saksham Yadav succumbed to his injuries in January, 2018 evening at the AIIMS Trauma Centre in New Delhi.
- Saksham, who won a gold medal in the 2017 world weightlifting championship for India, was seriously injured along with another weightlifter, Rohit, 19, a police official said.

French pop star France Gall passes away at 70

- Singer France Gall, whose hits — including a Eurovision triumph with Serge Gainsbourg — made her an icon of French pop music, has died aged 70. Gall passed away in January, 2018 after a two-year struggle against cancer, French media reported.
- Gall revived her career in the 1970s with Michel Berger, another influential French songwriter whom she later married and with whom she had two children. In addition to a string of chart successes into the 1980s, she also took a turn on stage in the hit French-Canadian musical Starmania.

Lagaan actor Shrivallabh Vyas passes away

- Lagaan actor Shrivallabh Vyas passed away in January, 2018 morning in Jaipur.
- Shrivallabh Vyas had appeared in over 60 Hindi films, with occasional stints in regional cinema, television and theatre. He had to take a break from acting in 2008 after he collapsed in his hotel room in Gujarat.

John Young, who set records in space with NASA, passes away at 87

- Legendary astronaut John Young, who walked on the Moon and later commanded the first space shuttle flight, has died, NASA said in January, 2018. Young was 87.
- The space agency said Young died in January, 2018 night at home in Houston following complications from pneumonia.
- NASA called Young one of its pioneers — the only agency astronaut to go into space as part of the Gemini, Apollo and space shuttle programs, and the first to fly into space six times. He was the ninth man to walk on the Moon.

Atomic scientist professor Baldev Raj passes away

- Atomic scientist Prof Baldev Raj, 70, passed away in Pune early in January, 2018 while attending a conference in Pune. Having held several key posts, Raj was serving as the direction, National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS), Bengaluru, since 2014.
- His death was sudden and no immediate confirmation about the cause was available, even as it was clear that he was healthy and fit to travel to attend the conference.

Comedian and Actor Jerry Van Dyke of 'Coach' Dies at 86

- Comedian and Coach actor Jerry Van Dyke has died at the age of 86.
- The actor died in his Arkansas ranch Friday, the New York Times reported. Jerry Van Dyke's wife Shirley Ann Jones told the Times that his health had been deteriorating since he was in a traffic accident back in 2015.

Old Monk creator Kapil Mohan passes away

- Brigadier Kapil Mohan, the man who created Old Monk, an iconic brand of dark rum that managed to reach the hearts (and livers) of many, passed away on January 6, 2018.
- The 88-year-old was an entrepreneur who served as chairman and managing director of Mohan Meakin. Launched in 1954, Old Monk for many is not just a drink but an emotion.