

Non-financial news related to India

India, UK combined military exercise 'Ajeya Warrior-2017' begins in Rajasthan

- The 14-day long Combined Military exercise 'Ajeya Warrior- 2017' between India and the United Kingdom began at the Mahajan Field Firing Range near Bikaner, Rajasthan on 1 December 2017.
- The participants include 20 Rajputana Rifles unit of the Indian Army and the first battalion of the Royal Anglian Regiment of the UK Army. In total, about 120 Army personnel from both the armies are participating in the exercise.
- The exercise is the third joint military exercise between the two countries.

SC directs all States, UTs to set up trauma centre in every district

- The Supreme Court of India on 30 November 2017 issued a string of directions on road safety and asked all the states and Union Territories to set up a trauma centre in each district of the country and make safety norms a part of the school curriculum.
- The decision was taken by a bench headed by Justice M B Lokur. The bench also asked the states, which have not yet formed the Road Safety Policy, to form it latest by 31 January 2018 and implement it with all due earnestness and seriousness.

FSSAI issues detailed guidelines on recall of food products

- The FSSAI (The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India), Food safety regulator, asked the companies to frame a proper plan to recall food products from markets if found unsafe. It also asked the companies to inform the authority about the same.
- The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) released the guidelines on recalling of food products. The purpose of these guidelines is to help food business operators (FBOs) outline a proper recall plan and apply them when the situation demands.

USAID announces USD 1 million support for Ending Tuberculosis Epidemic in India

- The US Agency for International Development (USAID) on 29 November 2017 announced USD 1 million support for Ending Tuberculosis (TB) Epidemic in India and to raise TB awareness to help India in its fight against TB.
- Through this support, the agency aims to hold up to PM Modi's goal of securing a TB-free India by 2025.

India re-elected to International Maritime Organisation Council for 2 years

- India has won huge by bagging the second largest number of votes enabling it to re-enter the council of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) for the next two years.
- India secured 144 votes from the member countries while Germany bagged 146.

Kathakar: International Storytellers Festival inaugurated in New Delhi

- The 7th edition of the three-day 'Kathakar: International Storytellers Festival' was inaugurated by Minister of State (MoS) for Home Affairs Kiren Rijiju at the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA), New Delhi on 1 December 2017.
- Kathakar is the only oral storytelling festival in India and is a part of Ghummakkad Narain- the Travelling Literature Festival which was started under the aegis of UNESCO in 2010. The festival is an attempt to not just preserve the art form but also create new audiences for the same.

India awarded for its effort to combat illegal wildlife trade

- India on 30 November 2017 was awarded with the Certificate of Commendation for its exemplary enforcement action in its regional and global effort to combat illegal wildlife trade.

- The award was conferred to the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) by the Secretary General of Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) at the 69th Standing Committee meeting of CITES at Geneva, Switzerland.

Union Cabinet approves setting up of National Nutrition Mission

- The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 30 November 2017 approved the setting up of National Nutrition Mission (NNM) with a three year budget of Rs.9046.17 crore starting from 2017-18.
- The mission will be rolled out in three phases from 2017-18 to 2019-20. It mainly aims to reduce stunting, under-nutrition, anaemia among young children, women and adolescent girls and reduce low birth weight.

First global summit on AYUSH & Wellness inaugurated in Delhi

- The first International Exhibition and Conference on AYUSH and Wellness sector- AROGYA 2017 was inaugurated by Ayush Minister Shripad Yesso Naik in New Delhi on 4 December 2017. It will conclude on 7 December.
- The main theme of the event is 'Enhancing the global potential of AYUSH'. It is being organised by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) in collaboration with Union government's Ministry of AYUSH and Ministry of Commerce & Industry and Pharmaceuticals Export Promotion Council (Pharmexcil).

The 6th International Tourism Mart 2017 inaugurated in Assam

- The 6th 'International Tourism Mart' (ITM) was inaugurated by Assam's governor Jagdish Mukhi in Guwahati, Assam on 5 December 2017.
- The mart has been organised by the Ministry of Tourism in association with the North Eastern States. It will be held from 5 to 7 December 2017. Assam's Chief Minister Sarbanand Sonowal and Union Tourism minister (I/C) K L Alphonso also attended the inaugural programme along with other dignitaries from the Central Ministries and the North Eastern States.
- The mart aims to put special emphasis on India's 'Act East Policy', blossoming ties with ASEAN and the larger East Asia region, which is home to the world's rapidly growing economies and India's emerging tourism markets.

UP became first Indian state to endorse triple talaq bill

- Uttar Pradesh has become the first state to endorse the Centre's draft bill that makes instant triple talaq a cognisable and non-bailable offence.
- The draft law, which provides for three years' imprisonment and a fine to a Muslim man trying to divorce his wife by uttering "talaq" three times, got the UP government's approval at a meeting of the state cabinet chaired by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath here last night.

India successfully tests surface to air missile 'AKASH'

- India conducted successful test launch of surface to air missile 'AKASH' with indigenous radio frequency seeker on 5 December 2017. The missile was launched from Launch Complex-III at ITR Chandipur.
- The radars, telemetry and electro-optical systems along coast have tracked and monitored all the health parameters of the missile. The missile would soon be inducted into the Indian army as Short Range Surface to Air Missile (SRSAM).

Indian, Italy sign new MoU for cooperation in Agriculture and Phytosanitary issues

- India and Italy signed a new Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for cooperation in Agriculture and Phytosanitary issues on 6 December 2018. The agreement will replace the one signed in 2008.

- It was signed by Union Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Minister, Radha Mohan Singh and the visiting Italian Minister for Agriculture Food and Forestry Policies, H E Maurizio Martina.
- India and Italy enjoy traditionally friendly and cordial relations.
- India attaches great importance to the development of bilateral ties between the two countries and aims to further expand and strengthen ties between the two countries in various areas including in the Agriculture sector.

India, Cuba sign MoU for enhanced cooperation in health sector

- India and Cuba on 6 December 2017 signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for enhanced cooperation in the health sector.
- The MoU was signed by Union Health Minister JP Nadda and Public Health Minister of Cuba Dr Roberto Tomas Morales Ojeda in the presence of senior officers from the Health Ministry and the visiting high level delegation from Cuba.
- Speaking on the occasion, the Union Minister stated that the relations between the two nations are historical and have been based on the shared values of equality and justice, common aspirations and convergence of interests on global issues.

Unesco honours India's Kumbh Mela with 'intangible cultural heritage' tag

- India's Kumbh Mela has been recognised by Unesco as an "intangible cultural heritage of humanity", a tweet posted today by the international organisation said.
- The Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage under the UN body inscribed Kumbh Mela on the "Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity" at its 12th session in Jeju, South Korea. The meeting, which opened on December 4, will end on December 9.
- Kumbh Mela, considered the world's largest congregation of religious pilgrims, joins new elements from Botswana, Colombia, Venezuela, Mongolia, Morocco, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates on the list.

National Minorities Commission to study possibility of giving minority status to Hindus

- The National Commission for Minorities has set up a three member committee to study the matter to give minority status to Hindus in eight states including Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab.
- The information was shared by the commission's chairman Syed Ghayurul Hasan Rizvi, who said that the committee will give its report within three months, following the examination of which, the Commission will take a view over the issue.
- The decision in this regard came following the Supreme Court views over the issue asking a petitioner to approach the Commission with the matter.

Govt launches door-to-door campaign against TB

- The Government of India has launched a door-to-door campaign for 15-days in the country for early diagnosis, detection and treatment of tuberculosis to eliminate the disease. The health ministry has initiated this campaign along the lines of its anti-polio drive, which fetched very good result for India and successfully eliminated this disease from the country.
- Through this door-to-door campaign, health department workers, ASHAs (Accredited Social Health Activists) and TB supervisors will make door-to-door visits to find TB patients and give them free medical treatment till they are cured.

Uttarakhand government makes LED bulbs compulsory in all government offices

- The state government of Uttarakhand has taken a new initiative for energy conservation by making it compulsory for all government offices to install LED bulbs.
- The move is expected to reduce the consumption of electricity in offices and civic areas.

Key Highlights

- The state government has made compulsory to install LED bulbs in all government offices, educational institutions, civic bodies and institutes taking grants from the government.
- The initiative is aimed at reducing consumption of electricity.

ASEAN India Connectivity Summit begins in Delhi

- The ASEAN India Connectivity Summit (AICS) began in New Delhi on 11 December 2017. The theme of the two-day Summit is Powering Digital and Physical Linkages for Asia in the 21st Century.
- The summit would be attended by Union Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari along with ministers of state for External Affairs, Gen VK Singh and MJ Akbar and Minister of State for Communications (Independent Charge), Manoj Sinha.
- The representatives from ASEAN include Deputy Communications Minister of Viet Nam, Phan Tam and Secretary of State, Ministry of Public Works and Transport of Cambodia Tauch Chankosal.

National Trachoma Survey Report 2014-17 released: India declared free from Trachoma

- Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare J P Nadda on 8 December 2017 released the National Trachoma Survey Report 2014-17.
- While releasing the report, the Ministry declared that India is now free from 'Infective Trachoma', a contagious bacterial infection of the eye.
- With this, India met the goal of trachoma elimination as specified by the WHO under its GET2020 program.

Now, SC/STs in Delhi can apply for Employment Loan through mobile app

- The Delhi Government on 9 December 2017 launched a mobile application through which Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe, Other Backward Classes, minorities, and handicapped persons can apply for employment loans.
- The app will help applicants to apply for the loan with Delhi SC/ST/OBC/Minorities and Handicapped Finance and Development Corporation (DSFDC) without any hassle.
- The Government also said that the inefficient officers, who do not process the loans on time, will be forced to take compulsory retirement.

Government sets up first NIC-CERT centre to prevent, predict cyber attacks

- The first NIC-CERT, a setup of National Informatics Centre, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology was inaugurated by Law and Information Technology Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad on 11 December 2017.
- Explaining the move, the Minister stated that the union government as a part of its Digital India initiative had introduced a lot of services online and while this made the services easily accessible to citizens, it also exposed them to threats and vulnerabilities that are an inherent part of cyberspace.
- The Minister mentioned that in the recent past there has been an exponential growth in cyber attacks leading to concerns of data theft, which led to the government drafting the Data protection Act.

Union Government launches new initiatives on Universal Health Coverage Day 2017

- Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare J P Nadda on 11 December 2017 launched various initiatives to observe Universal Health Coverage Day 2017.
- Universal Health Coverage Day is observed every year on 12 December to commemorate the first unanimous United Nations resolution calling for countries to provide affordable, quality health care to every person, everywhere.

LaQshya Initiative

- Considering that there is a need to improve the quality of care in Labour rooms especially on the day of birth for maternal and neonatal survival, the Ministry launched 'LaQshya' Initiative also known as 'Labour Room Quality Improvement Initiative'
- LaQshya was launched as a safe delivery mobile application for health workers who manage normal and complicated deliveries in the peripheral area.

mHealth: Safe Delivery Application

- The ministry also launched the safe delivery application mHealth for health workers who manage normal and complicated deliveries in the peripheral areas.
- The application has Clinical Instruction films on key obstetric procedures which can help the health workers translate their learnt skills into practice.

Union WCD Ministry launches logo and tagline contest for National Nutrition Mission

- The Ministry of Women & Child Development on 11 December 2017 launched a contest inviting people to design a logo and suggest a tagline for prestigious 'National Nutrition Mission'.
- The ministry also proposed to award a prize money of Rs 1 lakh to the winner of the contest. In case the logo and tagline selected by the jury are from separate participants, then the prize money would be split.
- The last date to submit entries for the contest on Ministry's mail nnm.mwcd@gmail.com is 17 December 2017.
- The Union Cabinet on 30 November 2017 approved the setting up of National Nutrition Mission (NNM) with a three year budget of Rs 9046.17 crore.

Rajasthan government to recognise political prisoners as 'Loktantra Sainani'

- The state government of Rajasthan has decided to recognise political prisoners held in jails during the emergency period as 'Loktantra Sainani'.
- The state's cabinet decided to change the name of Rajasthan MISA and DIR Bandi Pension Rules 2008 to the Rajasthan Loktantra Sainani samman Nidhi 2008 on 12 December 2017.

Delhi government to launch accident victim policy

- The Delhi government has decided to launch accident victim policy which will cover all hospital expenses of victims of road accidents, acid attacks or burns.
- As per government, there is no upper limit on the cost of treatment and all victims irrespective of residence, and even foreigners will be entitled to get free treatment in any Delhi hospital, government or private if the accident takes place in the capital.

India hosts 4th India-Australia-Japan trilateral meeting

- Issues related to counter-terrorism, economic cooperation and maritime security were highlighted in the 4th India-Australia-Japan trilateral meeting hosted by Foreign Secretary Subrahmanyam Jaishankar here in December.

- Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) Spokesperson Raveesh Kumar took to twitter to inform about the meeting that the Foreign Secretary held with his Australian and Japanese counterparts.

Haryana to set up organ, tissue transplant organisation

- The state government of Haryana announced on 14 December 2017 that it would establish an organ and tissue transplant organisation (SOTTO) at the Bhagwat Dayal Sharma Post Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences (PGIMS) in Rohtak.
- The proposal was approved by the state's Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar, who directed the officers concerned to establish the organisation by 31 January 2018. Through this effort, the government aims to promote organ donation in the state.

INS Kalvari, first Scorpene-class submarine commissioned into Indian Navy

- INS Kalvari, the first of the Scorpene-class submarines, was commissioned by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 14 December 2017.
- The commissioning ceremony was held at the Naval Dockyard in Mumbai, which was attended by Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Navy chief Admiral Sunil Lanba and top defence officials.

Uttar Pradesh Cabinet approves UPCOCA Bill to fight organised crime

- The Uttar Pradesh Government on 13 December 2017 approved the draft of Uttar Pradesh Control of Organised Crime Act (UPCOCA) to fight land mafia, mining mafia and organised crime in the state.
- The UPCOCA Bill was approved in a meeting of the state cabinet chaired by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. The bill is expected to be introduced in the winter session of the state legislature.
- The Bill has been framed on the lines of the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA) by the committee which was set up to examine the draft bill.

NGT declares Amarnath Cave shrine a 'Silent Zone'

- In order to protect the eco-sensitive Amarnath cave shrine, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) declared it a "silence zone" and prohibited religious offerings like chanting of hymns, and ringing bells beyond the entry point.
- The Amarnath cave temple is situated in the Himalayas in the state of Jammu & Kashmir.

India, Morocco sign MoU for enhanced cooperation in healthcare

- India on 14 December 2017 signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Morocco to enable enhanced cooperation in the health sector.
- The agreement was signed by Union Health and Family Welfare Minister J P Nadda and Morocco's Health Minister, Abdelkader Amara in the presence of senior officials from the Union Health Ministry and the visiting high-level delegation from the North African nation.

Aadhaar mandatory linking: Supreme Court extends deadline to 31 March

- The Supreme Court in December extended deadlines for linking of Aadhaar with mobile services and opening of new bank accounts till 31 March 2018.

- Deadlines for linking with existing bank accounts, PAN (permanent account number) cards and welfare schemes was already extended to 31 March by the government.

Google X to bring high-speed internet to 12 million households in Andhra Pradesh

- Google X is preparing to set up its Development Centre in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh, to bring in high-speed internet and broadband connections to about 12 million households and 1,30,000 enterprises (government and private) in the state by March 2019.
- The centre will become Google X's first development center outside the United State of America.
- A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has already been signed between Government of Andhra Pradesh and Google X in San Francisco, USA. It was signed in the presence of IT minister Nara Lokesh and CEO of Google X Astro Teller.

India-Maldives Joint Exercise 'Ekuverin 17' in Belagavi from today

- India and the Maldives will begin Exercise Ekuverin, their eighth annual joint military training event, in Belagavi in December.
- A flypast by the Army Aviation team and a march-past by the two contingents are slated to launch the exercise, said an official release.

Cabinet approves bill to set up National Medical Commission

- A bill to replace the Medical Council of India (MCI) with a national medical commission was cleared by the Union Cabinet in December, Law and Justice Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said.
- The MCI is a statutory body for establishing uniform and high standards of medical education in India. The bill seeks to replace the MCI with a new Commission.

India, Morocco sign MoU for cooperation in Water Resources, Road and Marine Sectors

- India on 14 December 2017 signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Morocco for cooperation in Water Resources, Road and Marine sectors.
- The agreement was signed between Union Transport and Water Resources Minister Nitin Gadkari and his Moroccan counterpart, Abdelkader Amara, who is currently on a visit to India along with a high-level delegation of the Moroccan government.
- During the high-profile meet, the two sides discussed matters relating to India-Morocco bilateral cooperation in road transport, water resources and the marine sector.

Following is the list of MoUs signed and exchanged between the two nations:

1. MoU on cooperation in the field of Water Resources.
2. MoU to establish cooperation between Indian Maritime University (IMU) and Higher Institute of Maritime Studies (ISEM) of Morocco.
3. Framework Agreement for Cooperation in Training between the National Ports Agency (NPA) of Morocco and the Indian Maritime University (IMU).
4. Cooperation Framework Agreement between the Institute of Training in Engines and Road Maintenance of Morocco (IFEER) and Indian Academy of Highway Engineers (IAHE).

National Workshop on role of Sakhi Centres in strengthening response to violence inaugurated in Delhi

- The Minister of Women and Child Development, Maneka Gandhi inaugurated a 2-day National Workshop on Role of Sakhi One Stop Centres in strengthening the multi-sectoral response to violence, in New Delhi on 15 December 2017.
- The workshop has been organised by the Ministry of Women and Child Development. It would witness participation from around 400 Sakhi- One Stop Centre Functionaries and nodal officials from state departments of WCD Ministry from 33 States/UTs across the country.

UIDAI suspends Airtel, Airtel Payments Bank's eKYC licence

- In its strongest action yet, the UIDAI has temporarily barred Bharti Airtel and Airtel Payments Bank from conducting Aadhaar-based SIM verification of mobile customers using eKYC process as well as e-KYC of payments bank clients.
- The action follows allegations of Bharti Airtel using the Aadhaar-eKYC based SIM verification process to open payments bank accounts of its subscribers without their 'informed consent'. UIDAI also took strong objection to allegations that such payments bank accounts are being linked to receive LPG subsidy.

Meghalaya launches India's first social audit law

- Meghalaya in December became the first state in India to operationalise a law that makes social audit of government programmes and schemes a part of government practice. Chief Minister Mukul Sangma launched 'The Meghalaya Community Participation and Public Services Social Audit Act, 2017', at a national convention in Shillong.
- The event was attended by more than 200 people from state departments, citizens from audited villages and eminent citizens associated with social audits. The legislation — applicable to 11 departments and 21 schemes — was passed on April 4, and was followed by pilot social audits for 26 schemes in 18 villages of the northeastern state.

Dharmendra Pradhan inaugurates Eastern India's first CNG stations

- Terming it as Prime Minister Narendra Modi's New Year gift to the people of Odisha, Union Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Dharmendra Pradhan today inaugurated Eastern India's first compressed natural gas (CNG) stations at Bhubaneswar.
- The Petroleum Minister, while pointing out that for the first time CNG fuel will be used by two wheelers and auto rickshaws in the city of Bhubaneswar, said that this move will lead to the reduction in fuel rates by 30-40 percent.

NGT bans plastic items in Haridwar, Rishikes

- The National Green Tribunal (NGT) on 15 December 2017 imposed a complete ban on plastic items like carry bags, plates and cutlery in towns located on the banks of the River Ganga like Haridwar and Rishikesh.
- A bench headed by NGT Chairperson Justice Swatanter Kumar also banned the sale, manufacture and storage of such plastic items in the towns spreading till Uttarkashi. The bench was hearing a plea of environmentalist M C Mehta.

Union Cabinet approves bill criminalising instant Triple Talaq

- The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 15 December 2017 approved the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill, 2017 that seeks to criminalise instant triple talaq among Muslims.

- According to the Union government, it is aimed at protecting the dignity and security of women in the Muslim community. The draft bill proposes that triple talaq should be made a cognisable and non-bailable offence that would attract a jail term of three years.
- The bill is now, expected to be tabled during the on-going Winter Session of Parliament, which commenced on 15 December 2017.

Govt of Bihar launched Safe City Surveillance scheme for Women Safety

- The Bihar government has launched Safe City Surveillance Scheme for keeping the crimes against women in check.
- The scheme aims to bring all major public places under a strict watch of close-circuit television (CCTV) cameras and improve the overall crime control in the state.

Highlights:

- The scheme has been launched in a phase-wise manner and will commence from the capital city Patna
- The scheme has specially been launched for checking crimes against women such as harassment, eve-teasing and molestation, snatching incidents and roadside scuffles etc.
- It will also help in keeping a track of miscreants

Kacheguda declared India's first energy efficient railway station

- Kacheguda has become India's first energy efficient 'A1 Category' railway station on Indian Railways. Kacheguda railway station comes under the South Central Railway (SCR).
- The measures taken by the Railways to achieve 100 per cent energy efficiency will save about 1.76 lakh units and Rs 14.08 lakh per annum with reduction of the connected load by 46.18 KW.

Listed below are measures that helped Kacheguda become country's first energy efficient railway station

- It replaced 1,312 conventional lights with light-emitting diode (LED) lighting
- Around 370 ceiling fans too were replaced with Brushless DC Electrical (BLDC) motors energy efficient fans
- 12 air conditioners were replaced with energy efficient inverter type air conditioners

Union Cabinet approves agreement with UNESCO for establishing ITCOcean Centre

- The Union Cabinet on 16 December 2017 approved the agreement with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for establishing International Training Centre for Operational Oceanography (ITCOcean) in Hyderabad.
- The International Training Centre for Operational Oceanography will be established as a Category-2 Centre (C2C) at the ESSO-INCOIS (ESSO-Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services) campus.

Rajasthan becomes first Indian state to offer e-mail IDs in Hindi

- Rajasthan has become the first state in the country to offer its residents email ids in Hindi. The move will help encourage the population who is not comfortable reading or writing in English to go digital.
- The facility, name@rajasthan.bharat (in Devanagari script) can be used by the residents of the state to create their email ids in Hindi, according to media reports.
- The first email under the initiative was made for chief minister Vasundhara Raje, whose new id is vasundhara@rajasthan.bharat (in Devanagari).

Telangana's Kaleshwaram Irrigation Project gets environmental clearance

- The Expert Appraisal Committee of the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change on 18 December 2017 accorded environmental clearance for the Kaleshwaram Irrigation Project in Telangana.
- However, it directed the Telangana Government to take care of changes in the micro-climatic conditions in the project area during the construction and post construction period of the project as it involves submergence of a large area.
- The project is estimated to cost around Rs 80499.7 crore and is proposed to be completed in three years.

AP Govt, UNESCO to set up gaming hub, special school

- The Andhra Pradesh Government in association with the UNESCO Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIEP) is planning to establish a centre of excellence for children with learning differences as well as a "gaming for e-learning hub".
- It will be the first of its kind in India and in Asia-Pacific region, according to Anantha Kumar Duraipah, Director of UNESCO MGIEP.

India, Myanmar sign MoU for Rakhine State's development

- India and Myanmar in December signed a MoU to develop Rakhine State, from where thousands of Rohingya Muslims have fled to Bangladesh following a military crackdown.
- Foreign secretary S Jaishankar and Myanmar's deputy minister for social welfare, relief and resettlement U Soe Aung signed the Memorandum of Understanding.

Cabinet approves setting up of India's first rail university in Gujarat

- The Cabinet today approved a project to set up India's National Rail and Transport University (NRTU) in Vadodara in Gujarat.
- A not-for-profit company under Section 8 of the Companies Act, 2013, will be created by the ministry of railways which shall be the managing company of the proposed university, the ministry said in a statement.
- The project has been pending for the past three years.

India's first design university 'World University of Design' opens in Haryana

- India's first and only design university, World University of Design opens its campus at Sonapat, Haryana.
- Promoted by Om Parkash Bansal Educational and Social Welfare Trust of Mandi Gobindgarh, Punjab, having more than two decades of presence in higher education, the university is currently located in a sprawling lush green picturesque campus with the state-of-the-art infrastructure and world class facilities.
- The campus is situated on NH1 in Rajiv Gandhi Education City (NCR), Sonapat, the largest planned integrated city for education in India.

Haryana government to provide free sanitary napkins to poor women

- The Haryana government would distribute sanitary napkins free of cost to all women belonging to BPL (Below Poverty Line) category in the State. Earlier, on 1st December, the Haryana government had announced that it would make plans for free supply of sanitary napkins to girls in the schools across the State.
- The government also said that the State would become malnutrition-free in the coming 3-years.
- To achieve the goal of malnutrition-free Haryana, nutrition mission will be set up as per the guidelines of the National Nutrition Mission (NNM).

Union Government lays foundation stone for 32 projects in Uttarakhand under Namami Gange programme

- The foundation stone for 32 projects costing about Rs 905 crore was laid down in Uttarakhand on 19 December 2017 under Namami Gange programme in the presence of Minister of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation Satyapal Singh and Uttarakhand Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat.
- Two Sewerage Treatment Projects (STP) worth about Rs 12.83 crore were inaugurated in Gangotri and Badrinath during the event.

32 projects in Uttarakhand under Namami Gange programme

- 20 projects worth Rs 871.74 crore pertain to sewage treatment and infrastructure in different parts of Uttarakhand.
- Six projects are in Haridwar that includes construction of Sewerage Treatment Projects in Jagjeetpur and Sarai under PPP based Hybrid Annuity model. The total cost of projects in Haridwar is Rs 414.20 crore.
- There are projects related to sewage treatment in Uttarkashi, Muni-ki-Reti, Kirti Nagar, Srinagar, Rudra Prayag, Badrinath, Joshimath, Chamoli, Nand Prayag and Karn Prayag.
- Ghat development works in Tehri Garhwal, Rudra Prayag and Chamoli.
- Interception and diversion (I&D) work of Rs 85.14 crore and Sewage treatment work of Rs 244.91 crore in Jagjeetpur.
- I & D work of Rs 31.46 crore sewage treatment work of Rs 52.64 crore in Sarai.
- Sewerage Treatment Projects at Tapovan (Rs 2.1 crore), Swarga Ashram (Rs 4.5 crore) and Uttarkashi (Rs 10.03 crore)
- I & D and Sewerage Treatment Projects in Rishikesh (Rs 158 crore), Muni Ki Reti (Rs 80.45 crore), Kirti Nagar (Rs 4.2 crore), Srinagar (Rs 22.5 crore), Rudra Prayag (Rs 13.1 crore), Badrinath (Rs 18.23 crore), Joshimath (Rs 48.42 crore), Chamoli (Rs 61.8 crore) and Nand Prayag (Rs 6.4 crore).
- Sewerage Treatment Project rehabilitation work in Srinagar for Rs 15.4 crore.
- Ghat work in Tehri Garhwal (Rs 6 crore), Chamoli (Rs 24 crore) and Rudra Prayag (Rs 4.77 crore).
- Once all these 32 projects get accomplished, the sewage water of all priority towns in Uttarakhand including Haridwar and Rishikesh will not go untreated into Ganga.

India, Sri Lanka complete 2nd phase of joint oceanographic survey

- The Indian Navy in collaboration with the Sri Lankan navy successfully completed the second phase of the joint oceanographic survey conducted off the South Western Coast of Sri Lanka.
- The survey was initiated on 26 October 2017 with the arrival of the Indian Naval Ship Sutlej in Sri Lanka.
- The survey charts were handed over by the Indian side to the Commander of the Sri Lankan Navy on 19 December 2017. The survey extended to a depth contour of 200 m from the coastline, ranging from Colombo to Galle.

MEA launches SAMEEP to take foreign policy to classroom

- The Ministry of External Affairs has launched a new program SAMEEP (Students and MEA Engagement Program), to make the student understand India's place in the world and its global ambitions, and also to look at diplomacy as a career option.
- It's an "outreach" mission by MEA to take India's foreign policy and its worldwide engagements to students across the country.

Indian Navy conducts Exercise Naseem-Al-Bahr with Oman Navy

- Indian Navy on 20 December 2017 conducted the joint naval exercise Naseem-Al-Bahr with the Oman Navy. The exercise is also known as Sea Breeze. This is the 11th edition of the exercise which has been a biennial feature since 1993.
- Indian Naval Ships Trikand and Teg entered Muscat, Oman on 16 December 2017 for the harbour phase. A Pre-sail conference for the exercise was held at Said Bin Sultan Naval Base, Wudam on 17 Dec 17.

Union Government launches Project Darpan to improve postal services for rural customers

- Union Minister of Communications Manoj Sinha on 21 December 2017 launched Project DARPAN – “Digital Advancement of Rural Post Office for A New India” to improve the quality of service and add value to services for rural customers.

- The project has an outlay of 1400 crore rupees and intends to provide a low power technology solution to each Branch Postmaster (BPM). This will enable all 1.29 Lakhs Branch Post Offices (BOs) to improve the level of services being offered to rural customers across all the states.
- At Present, 43171 Branch Post Offices have migrated under the “DARPAN” project with the aim of financial inclusion to rural population.

All railway stations to be 100% LED lit by April 2018: Railways

- In an eco-friendly measure to cut power consumption, the Indian Railways today said it planned to make all stations cent per cent LED lit by March 31, 2018.
- The railways said it was actively working to provide 100 percent LED lighting for energy needs in railway staff colonies, stations and platforms.

Government to launch 'Ganga Gram' project for development of villages situated on the banks of Ganga

- The Union Government is going to formally launch the 'Ganga Gram' project at the Ganga Gram Swachata Sammelan in New Delhi on 23 December 2017.
- The project, which is a part of the government's clean Ganga mission - Namami Gange, is an integrated approach for the holistic development of villages situated on the banks of Ganga with the active participation of villagers.
- The event will be presided over by Union Minister for Drinking Water and Sanitation Uma Bharti. It will be attended by Water Resources and Ganga Rejuvenation Minister Nitin Gadkari and Rural Development Minister Narendra Singh Tomar.

Indian Coast Guard Commissions Sixth 105m Offshore Patrol Vessel 'Sujay'

- The Indian Coast Guard Ship 'Sujay', the sixth in the series of six 105m Offshore Patrol Vessel (OPV) was commissioned into service in Goa on 21 December 2017.
- The commissioning was done by the Director General of Indian Coast Guard, Rajendra Singh in the presence of senior officers from Coast Guard, CMD Goa Shipyard Limited and other senior dignitaries of the Central and State Government.

CBSE ties up with Ramakrishna mission to teach harmony, humility to students

- The CBSE has tied up with the Ramakrishna mission to impart value education to its students and make them “awakened” citizens with values of peace, harmony, humility and cooperation.
- This programme is a three-year graded Values Education programme for students of classes 6-8 (or classes 7-9).
- However, the implementation of the programme by schools is voluntary.

Indian Railways flag off country's first AC suburban local train in Mumbai

- The Indian Railways in December flagged off the country's first air-conditioned suburban local train for Mumbai commuters, 150 years after the first suburban local was hauled by a steam engine in 1867, officials said.
- The Christmas and the pre-New Year bonanza saw the first AC local's maiden run for the media, officials, some political party activists and commuters between Borivali and Churchgate on the Western Railway.

Bengaluru Becomes India's First City To Have Its Own Logo "BE U"

- To give the city its own identity and highlight its global image, Bengaluru in December became the first Indian city to get its own logo.
- With a tagline 'Bengaluru Be U', the unique red-black logo is in part English and Kannda. It was unveiled at the Namma Bengaluru Habba festival by Karnataka Tourism Minister Priyank Kharge in Vidhana Soudha.

Narendra Modi launches Delhi Metro's Magenta Line from Noida

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi in December launched a 12-km stretch of Delhi Metro's Magenta Line with a ride between the Botanical Garden and the Okhla Bird Sanctuary stations here.
- Mr. Modi was accompanied by Uttar Pradesh Governor Ram Naik, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Union Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs Hardeep Singh Puri and Delhi Metro Rail Corporation chief Mangu Singh during the ride.

Narendra Modi, first Prime Minister in 20 years to visit Davos, World Economic Forum 2018

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be the first Indian PM in 20 years to visit the World Economic Forum in Davos next year. It was in 1997 when the then Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda had attended the event.
- The annual meeting in Davos is a five-day long event which will begin on January 22, 2018. When Narendra Modi was the chief minister of Gujarat, he had attended the regional summit of the World Economic Forum in China in 2007.

Mission Antyodaya: Ranking of 50000 gram panchayats completed

- As part of the Centre's ambitious plan to make 50,000 villages poverty free by 2019, an exercise to rank as many gram panchayats on the parameters of physical infrastructure, human development and economic activities have been completed, the rural development ministry said today.
- The ranking will help in identification of gaps in the quest for making these gram panchayats poverty free, the ministry said in a statement.
- Under the Mission Antyodaya, the Centre has set a target of bringing one crore households out of poverty and making 50,000 gram panchayats poverty free by 2019.

Gujarat constructed most houses for urban poor under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban)

- Gujarat has constructed most number of houses for the urban poor under the Centre's flagship housing scheme 'Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban)' in the country, official data shows.
- As many as 54,474 houses have been constructed in Gujarat, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's home state, since 2014-15 under the scheme.
- This accounts for 18.70 per cent of the 2.91 lakh total houses constructed in 36 states and UTs in the country, according to the data of Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.
- Gujarat has received central assistance of Rs 1,355 crore for construction of these houses.
- Under the PMAY(U) scheme, the government targets to construct 1.2 crore affordable houses for urban poor across the country by 2022.

Electronic Human Resource Management System launched to enable easy governance

- The DoNER, Space and Public Grievances & Pensions Minister, Jitendra Singh launched the electronic-Human Resource Management System (e-HRMS) in Delhi on 25 December 2017.
- The launch process was conducted during the observance of Good Governance Day by the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions. The Minister launched the 25 applications of 5 modules of the system. The e-service book launched for the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) during March 2017 will also be integrated into the e-HRMS.

UP launches free power connection scheme to mark Vajpayee's birthday

- Uttar Pradesh has launched a free household power connection scheme for the poor in the state to mark former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's birth anniversary.
- The government has a target of covering 16 million by 2018-end, driven by Yogi Adityanath government's motto 'Prakash hai to vikas hai' (the barometer of development is light), he stated.
- As against the target of 4 crore under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Saubhagy scheme, the state so far has provided 25 lakh household connections.

Maharashtra becomes first Indian state to allow businesses to run 24x7

- Corporate enterprises and shops across Maharashtra can now decide to stay open for 365 days a year and choose their opening and closing times with the state government passing an amendment to the Shops and Establishments Act.
- The changes in the Act, however, will not apply to liquor shops and bars.
- The state government today passed the Shops and Establishment (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Bill, which would enable multiplexes, restaurants, shops business houses that don't serve liquor to remain open 24/7 throughout the year with permission that can be obtained online.
- Maharashtra is the first Indian state to allow businesses to run 24x7.

NITI Aayog's 'AIM' selects additional 1500 schools

- Government of India's flagship program, NITI Aayog's Atal Innovation Mission (AIM), to promote innovation and entrepreneurship nationwide in schools, universities and industry, has selected additional 1500 schools for establishment of Atal Tinkering Labs (ATLs).
- The addition of these schools will give a major boost to realize the vision of the mission to 'Cultivate one million children in India as the innovators of tomorrow'.
- With this announcement, AIM has selected 2441 schools across India to establish ATLs to date since it began its operations over a year ago.

SDMC launches Atal Jan Aahar Yojana for poor to provide lunch at Rs 10

- The South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC) in December launched a new scheme for the poor that will allow them to buy meal for Rs 10 from the civic body's kiosks during the day, officials said.
- According to them, the Atal Jan Aahar Yojana has been started to make a nutritious full meal accessible to the needy, in a phased manner.
- The scheme was started at kiosks in five different locations of south Delhi.

Rajya Sabha passes forest bill to remove bamboo from 'tree' category

- The Rajya Sabha in December passed the Indian Forest (Amendment) Bill, 2017, which excludes bamboo from the definition of "tree", even as the opposition members, opposing the Bill and questioning the government's intentions behind bringing this legislation, walked out.
- The Bill will replace the Indian Forest (Amendment) Ordinance that was promulgated by the President on November 23 this year.

Delhi Govt and Maruti sign MoU to set up 12 automated driving test tracks

- The Delhi government in December signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Maruti Suzuki for setting up 12 automated driving test tracks across the city.
- The Indian automobile major will invest approximately Rs 15 crore to develop the centres, which will be set up in phases and handed over to the Transport department of Delhi governments, Maruti Suzuki India Ltd (MSIL) said in a statement.

Assam CM launches skill development training centres

- The Chief Minister of Assam, Sarbananda Sonowal, launched skill development training centres across the state in a programme organised by the Department of Skill, Employment and Entrepreneurship at Srimanta Sankardev Kalakshetra in Guwahati on 28 December 2017.
- Speaking on the occasion, Sonowal stated that the knowledge and skill is must for socio-economic progress. He said that the state's youth must give a new dimension to the pace of the state's development by acquiring knowledge and enhancing their skills.

Orange Festival of Music and Adventure begins in Dambuk, Arunachal Pradesh

- Excitement, thrill and musical extravaganza gripped Dambuk village, located in the Lower Dibang Valley in Arunachal Pradesh, when a four-day long Orange Festival of Music and Adventure (OFAM) offered tourists the experience of various rendition of Indo-Western music and adventure sports activities.
- Dambuk in Arunachal is known to produce some of the best oranges in the country and hence the name Orange festival evolved.

78th session of Indian History Congress begins in Kolkata

- The three-day long 78th session of the Indian History Congress today began here at the Jadavpur University campus.
- The Indian History Congress will have six sections this time - Ancient India, Medieval India, Modern India, Countries Other than India, Archaeology and Contemporary India.

Modi Kaka Ka Gaon: Movie based on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's development agenda

- Hindi feature film 'Modi Ka Gaon' – now renamed as 'Modi Kaka Ka Gaon' finally released Today, after nearly 11 months it was denied a censor certificate on various grounds.
- The movie is loosely inspired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's development agenda. Vikas Mahante Worked as a lead role as a Indian Prime minister. Apart from him, Film-makers casts Rohit Raj, Chandramani, Swarnim, Zeba Anujam, and Sarvagya for prominent roles. Tushar Amrish Goel Directed movie is produced by Suresh Jha.

MP CM flags off mobile museum 'Adi Shankara Sandesh Vahini' in

- As part of the 'Ekam Yatra', Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan today flagged off a mobile museum, showcasing various aspects of the life of Adi Shankaracharya, from the home of the saint's mother near here.
- The journey of the mobile museum 'Adi Shankara Sandesh Vahini', is being organised to propagate the philosophy and teachings of Adi Shankaracharya among the youth.

India successfully test-fires AAD Supersonic Interceptor Missile

- India on 28 December 2017 successfully test-fired indigenously developed Advanced Air Defence (AAD) supersonic interceptor missile from a test range in Dr Abdul Kalam Island off the coast of Odisha.
- This Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) System of Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) directly hit the target at an altitude of about 15 kilometre and destroyed it into fragments.

Lok Sabha passes bill criminalising Instant Triple Talaq

- Lok Sabha on 28 December 2017 passed the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill, 2017. The Bill criminalises the practice of instant triple talaq among Muslims.
- The bill was introduced by Union Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad in the lower house on 28 December 2017 in the wake of the August 2017 ruling of Supreme Court declaring instant triple talaq practice as "null and void", unconstitutional and arbitrary.

Union Government launches Mobile Application on Livestock Disease Forewarning

- The Union Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Minister Radha Mohan Singh on 27 December 2017 launched Livestock Disease Forewarning - Mobile Application (LDF - Mobile App).
- During the launch, Union Agriculture Ministry also informed that dreaded Rinderpest disease has been eradicated from India and stressed the need to control and eradicate diseases like FMD, PPR, Brucellosis, CSF, BT, HS etc., which cause huge economic loss annually to the livestock industry.

President inaugurates Andhra Pradesh Fiber Grid Project

- The Andhra Pradesh Fiber Grid Project was inaugurated by the President of India, Ram Nath Kovind at Velagapudi, Amaravathy on 27 December 2017.
- The project, initiated by Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, aims to expand high-speed internet facility in the state. It aims to cover over 1.45 crore households, more than 12,000 panchayats and 60,000 schools. It will also provide internet facilities to 10,000 government offices, 96 municipalities, 14 Corporations and 6,000 Public Health Centres in the state.

India's first 'Robocop' launched in Hyderabad

- India's first 'Robocop', capable of performing police duties, has been launched in Hyderabad.
- Developed by the city-based Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning start-up H-Bots Robotics, this 5-foot-7-inch tall smart police robot, weighing 43 kg, can receive complaints, record audio and video clips, identify suspects, detect metals and monitor temperature.
- The Robocop will be able to recognise objects stationed at a location for long hours and inform the Police Control Room. The life-sized robot has been named after 26/11 martyr Hemant Karkare and all Smart Police Robots to be produced by H-Bot Robotics in future will be named after police martyrs.

PM Modi inaugurates Sivagiri pilgrimage celebrations in Kerala

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi in December inaugurated the 85th annual Sivagiri pilgrimage celebrations at Sivagiri Mutt in Kerala via video conferencing.
- The Sivagiri Mutt is a major spiritual-cum-pilgrim centre of the Ezhava community in Kerala and was established by Sri Narayana Guru, who propagated the message of 'One Caste, One Religion and One God for Mankind'.

Delhi government launches mobile app that would connect 16000 SMC members

- The Delhi government on 28 December 2017 launched a mobile app that would connect around 16,000 members of School Management Committees (SMCs).
- The launch was conducted by Delhi's Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia in the capital itself. Speaking on the occasion, the CM stated that the application will help in making the process more transparent and is going to be an effective help for all the stakeholders by all means.