

**Finance and Banking*****Metro Plus card for IndusInd Bank customers launched***

- The Delhi Metro, in association with IndusInd Bank, today launched a dual purpose Metro Plus' debit card that will enable customers of the bank to use it for metro train rides, besides other transactions.
- The card was jointly launched by managing director of Delhi Metro Mangu Singh and IndusInd Bank executive vice president Ritesh Raj Saxena.
- The dual purpose Metro Plus' card' will enable the IndusInd Bank debit card holders to use it as a Delhi Metro Smart Card, in addition to using it for all other regular debit card transactions, a statement from the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation(DMRC) said.
- The card users can also get their smart cards auto topped up at AFC Gates across the network which will help them to have seamless travel without worrying about top-up from time to time, he said.
- The card, developed by IndusInd bank, has a Delhi Metro Transit chip embedded within, along with the secured Debit Card Chip.
- The customers can choose from the multiple modes to top-up their cards via IndusInd Bank ATMs, IndusMobile app, net banking, SMS, auto top-up and other methods.

***SBI to soon set up blockchain-based exchange for bad debts***

- State Bank of India will soon have a blockchain-based exchange for bad debts along with other banks, asset reconstruction companies and investors on the same infrastructure, according to Sudin Baraokar, Head Innovation, SBI.
- India's largest public sector bank, which is also among the top 40 globally, will implement four or five blockchain-ready business solutions.
- With Indian banks saddled with an estimated \$210 billion of non-performing assets (NPAs), of which over \$30 billion are with SBI alone, a blockchain-based exchange will provide a common platform that will enable data-driven price discovery. Similarly, trade finance and loan exchanges are also planned, he said.
- Blockchain, a unified IT infrastructure for which SBI is working with over 30 banks, including public sector, cooperative and foreign banks, and global companies in IT, will be the next big step for the bank. SBI was among the early adopters of IT and has a core banking solution that is benchmarked for over two billion transactions a day, about 23,000 a second, with over 550 million accounts, he said.

***JioMusic merges with Saavn to create \$1 b streaming entity***

- Reliance Industries (RIL) has entered into an agreement to combine its music service JioMusic with New York-based music over-the-top (OTT) platform Saavn to create India's largest music platform. The combined entity will be valued at more than \$1 billion.
- In addition, the company led by billionaire Mukesh Ambani RIL will acquire a partial stake in Saavn for \$104 million. RIL will also invest up to rupee equivalent of \$100 million, out of which \$20 million will be invested upfront, for growth and expansion of the joint platform.
- The three co-founders of Saavn — Rishi Malhotra, Paramdeep Singh and Vinodh Bhat — will continue in their leadership roles and will drive growth of the combined entity.
- The deal comes even as other music streaming services including Amazon Music, Gaana and Hungama are looking to up the ante. A report titled 'Digital Media: Rise of On-demand Content', by consulting firm Deloitte, said India's digital music industry is expected to reach Rs. 3,100 crore in revenue while the number of online music listeners is expected to reach 273 million by 2020.

***Irdai extends Aadhaar linking deadline for insurance policies***

- Insurance regulator Irdai has extended the deadline for linking 12-digit unique identity number Aadhaar with various insurance policies until the Supreme Court decides on the matter.
- The Supreme Court of India in Writ Petition (vide order dated March 13) extended the deadline of linking Aadhaar till the matter is finally heard and the judgement is pronounced.
- The Irdai decision to indefinitely extend the March 31 deadline comes in wake of the Supreme Court order.
- In case of new insurance policies, the regulator said the policy buyer is allowed six months from the date of commencement of account based relationship to submit the Aadhaar number and PAN/Form 60 to the insurer.

**India*****Saras, India's First Indigenous Passenger Plane, to be Inducted Into Service Post 2022***

- Saras Mk2, India's first indigenous passenger aircraft, will be inducted into service after 2022. The National Aeronautics Laboratories (NAL) has undertaken the development programme with a renewed vigour under the Narendra Modi government.
- The development of Saras, though initiated in 2005, struck a roadblock in 2009 after two pilots were killed in an accident during its trial run.
- NAL Director Jitendra Jadhav claims the issues which came to the fore after the accident have been resolved. The design deficiencies have been addressed, he said, further adding that the aircraft is now safe on both quality and controllability parameters.
- Union Science Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan said the project, "which was dumped by the erstwhile government", was resumed in 2016. The 7,000-kg plane has conducted two safe test-runs in the past 18 months, he added.

***India's first cyber security cluster to come up in Hyderabad***

- Two years after signing a Memorandum of Understanding, the 'Hyderabad Security Cluster' (HSC) is all set to take off next month, making it the first cyber security cluster in the country. While a search for a physical space for housing this intended cyber security 'magnet' is on, three institutions have readily offered 'space' for the same.
- Once launched, the HSC will bring together security agencies of national and international importance, governments, research and knowledge institutions and cyber security businesses — much on the lines of The Hague Security Delta (HSD) that is currently the largest cyber security cluster in the world.
- The first initiative of the HSC — Hague India Summer school — will be kickstarted in July.

***Delhi government presents 'green budget', aims at controlling pollution***

- The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) led Delhi government on Thursday presented a 'green budget' which is aimed at controlling pollution and monitoring its impact on the environment.
- With the party staring at the possibility of a by-election for 20 legislative seats and the Arvind Kejriwal government receiving flak for being unable to implement measures to curb pollution over the last two years, the subject that has gained thrust in the governance model of the Arvind Kejriwal-led government that has so far stuck to directing resources towards public health and improving standards of government schools in the capital.
- Unveiling the green budget on Thursday, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, "We are going to thread 26 programmes and schemes of transport, power, environment and PWD for devising a unified system of pollution control, bringing down levels of different pollutants."
- The initiatives include studying the possibility of using technology to ascertain the source of air pollution at designated spots in collaboration with the University of Washington, developing a model for forecasting of air pollution scenario and setting up 1,000 indoor display panels inside all government buildings dealing with the public to display information on air pollution levels.

***Odisha signs MoU with British Council***

- The Odisha government today signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the British Council to strengthen educational and cultural cooperation.
- Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik was present when Alan Gemmell OBE, Director British Council India signed the MoU with GB Reddy, OSD and Special Secretary of State Handicrafts Museum here.
- British High Commissioner to India Sir Dominic Asquith KCMG was also present.
- The British Council will support the state governments "Mo School" (My School) initiative by contributing to the development of English language skills for learners and teachers including government-aided schools.

## Appointments

### *JS Rajput to represent India on UNESCO's Executive Board*

- The Centre on Sunday announced the nomination of Professor J S Rajput, former Director of the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), as India's representative to the Executive Board (EXB) of UNESCO.
- Professor Rajput, who is known for his contributions in school education and teacher education, has held several assignments which include Professor in NCERT, 1974, Principal of the Regional Institute of Education Bhopal 1977-88, Joint Educational Adviser, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, 1989-94; Chairman, National Council for Teacher Education, NCTE, 1994-99 and the Director of the NCERT, 1999-2004.
- A Padma Shri recipient, Professor Rajput's association with UNESCO and other international agencies extends over three decades. UNESCO acknowledged his contributions by selecting him for the Prestigious Jan Amos Comenius Medal for outstanding contributions in research and innovations in the year 2004. He received this Award in July 2009.
- He was also invited by the UNESCO in April-May 2005 to participate in the Evaluation of the UNESCO International Center for Technical and Vocational Education; UNEVOC; Bonn, Germany. He has completed a UNESCO project for Bremen University, Germany in 2007-08.

## Sports

### *PV Sindhu to be India's flag-bearer at 2018 CWG*

- Rio-Olympic silver-medalist PV Sindhu will be the flag-bearer of the Indian contingent for the opening ceremony of the Commonwealth Games in Gold Coast, Australia.
- The CWG opening ceremony will be held on April 4.
- World No. 3 Sindhu is one of the favorites to win the badminton women's singles title in Gold Coast after reaching the semi-finals of the All England championships last week.
- Sindhu had earlier won a bronze medal in the 2014 edition of the multi-sport event.
- The Pullela Gopichand protégée had also bagged a silver medal at last year's Badminton World Championships.

## World

### *In world first, Air India crosses Saudi airspace to Israel*

- Air India launched on Thursday the first scheduled service to Israel to be allowed to cross Saudi airspace.

- Saudi Arabia has opened its airspace for the first time to an Israel-bound passenger plane, breaking a 70-year-ban on commercial jets flying over the Arab kingdom to reach the Jewish state.
- While Riyadh does not formally recognise Israel, Thursday night's touchdown by the Air India flight in Tel Aviv signalled a thawing of relations between the two countries which share a common enemy in Iran.
- Air India 139 took off from Delhi, and the Boeing Dreamliner flew over the kingdom for three hours, passing just west of the Saudi capital, according to the Flightradar24 monitoring app.
- Tracking showed the airliner had earlier flown over Oman, which also does not have official diplomatic relations with Israel.
- In his first foreign presidential trip, Donald Trump flew from Riyadh to Tel Aviv on Air Force One.

## Days

- The International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade was observed globally on 25 March 2018 with the theme 'Remember Slavery: Triumphs and Struggles for Freedom and Equality'.
- The World Tuberculosis Day was observed across the globe on March 24, 2018 with an aim to raise public awareness about the upsetting health and economic consequences of tuberculosis (TB) and to step up efforts to end the global TB epidemic. The theme of the World Tuberculosis Day 2018 is 'Wanted: Leaders for a TB-free world'.

### ***Earth Hour 2018: India Gate, Eiffel Tower, Empire State Building go dark for climate change awareness***

- Nations around the globe have been turning off the lights for Earth Hour 2018 -- a worldwide call for universal solidarity on the significance of climate change.
- Earth Hour, which began in Australia in 2007, is being seen by a huge number of supporters in 187 nations, who are turning off their lights at 8.30 pm local time in what coordinators describe as the world's "biggest grassroots movement for environmental change".
- With global temperatures the highest on record, O'Gorman said this year's theme was the impact of climate change on biodiversity and plant and animal species.
- Species which are at risk of facing extinction include Australia's green turtles, black-flanked rock wallabies and koalas, as well as the Adelie penguin colonies in Antarctica, according to a report published in the science journal Climatic Change.

### ***Ambedkar Jayanti to be celebrated as 'Social Justice Day'***

- The birth anniversary of India's Dalit social reformer Dr BR Ambedkar will be celebrated as 'Social Justice Day', BJP national spokesperson Anil Baluni announced on Friday.

- Addressing a press after the BJP Parliamentary meeting, Baluni said, "14th April, Dr BR Ambedkar's birth anniversary, will be celebrated as 'Social Justice Day' across the nation."
- Born into a poor Dalit family, on 14 April 1891, Ambedkar became independent India's first law minister, the principal architect of the Constitution of India and a founding father of the Republic of India.
- He also campaigned against the social discrimination of Dalits and inspired the Dalit Buddhist Movement in 1956.