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# Monthly Current Affairs Magazine

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May, 2018



# Finance, Banking & Industry related news

## ***GST revenue collection exceeds Rs 1 lakh crore in April***

- The Centre in May stated that the revenue collected towards Goods and Services Tax (GST) for the month of April 2018, surpassed the Rs trillion mark.
- According to the Ministry of Finance, the total gross GST revenue collected in the month of April stood at Rs 1.03 trillion, consisting of Central GST (CGST) worth Rs 186 billion, State GST (SGST) of Rs 257 billion, Integrated GST (IGST) of Rs 505 billion (including 212 billion collected on imports) and cess of Rs 85.54 billion (including Rs 7.02 billion collected on imports).

## ***Mahindra and Mahindra to acquire up to 10 per cent stake in Canada's Resson Aerospace Corp***

- Mahindra and Mahindra (M&M) has signed a share subscription agreement to acquire up to 10 per cent share capital of Canada's IT firm Resson Aerospace Corporation for up to CAD 6.63 million to be paid in cash.
- M&M said the cost of acquisition is up to CAD 6.63 million (equivalent to approximately Rs 34.5 crore) to be paid in cash.

## ***L&T signs agreements with Schneider Electric to divest Electrical & Automation Business***

- Larsen & Toubro, India's leading engineering, technology and construction conglomerate in May signed, subject to regulatory approvals, definitive agreements with Schneider Electric, a global player in energy management and automation, for strategic divestment of its Electrical and Automation (E&A) business for an all-cash consideration of Rs 14,000 crore.
- L&T's E&A business offers a wide range of low and medium voltage switchgear, electrical systems, marine switchgear, industrial and building automation solutions, energy management systems and metering solutions.

## ***RBI allows foreign investors to invest in T-bills***

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has allowed foreign portfolio investors to invest in treasury bills issued by the federal government, in its latest move to ease foreign investment rules.
- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) set the implementation date of online monitoring of the limits in treasury bills as June 1, it said in May.

## ***GAIL signs Rs 2,000 crore loan agreement with SBI***

- State-owned gas utility GAIL India in May said it has borrowed Rs 2,000 crore loan from State Bank of India (SBI) to meet its general capital expenditure requirement.
- The loan is for a 15-year tenure, the company said in a statement without saying what interest rate it would pay on the borrowing.

## ***Cabinet approves the continuation of Umbrella Scheme 'Green Revolution — Krishonnati Yojana' in Agriculture Sector***

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the continuation of Umbrella Scheme, 'Green Revolution — Krishonnati Yojana' in agriculture sector beyond 12th five-year plan for the period from 2017-18 to 2019-20.
- The Umbrella scheme comprises 11 schemes, which aim to develop the agriculture and allied sector in a holistic and scientific manner to increase the income of farmers by enhancing production, productivity and better returns on produce.
- The schemes will be continued with an expenditure of Rs 33, 269.976 crore for three financial years, which is from 2017-18 to 2019-20.

### ***Cabinet approves doubling of investment limit for senior citizens under Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandan Yojana (PMVVY)***

- The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on May 2, 2018 gave its approval for extending the investment limit from Rs 7.5 lakhs to Rs 15 lakhs as well as an extension of time limits for subscription from May 4, 2018 to May 31, 2020.
- The move was undertaken under the Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandan Yojana (PMVVY), as a part of the government's commitment for financial inclusion and social security.
- The investment limit of Rs 7.5 lakh per family in the existing scheme has also been enhanced to Rs 15 lakh per senior citizen in the modified PMVVY, thereby providing a larger social security cover to the senior citizens.
- The provision will enable up to Rs 10000 pension per month for senior citizens.

### ***Union Government releases draft of new Telecom policy***

- The Union Government on May 1, 2018 released the draft of a new Telecom policy - National Digital Communications Policy, 2018.
- The policy aims to provide broadband coverage with 50 Mbps speed to every citizen, attract USD 100 billion investment in the sector and create 40 lakh new jobs by 2022.
- The new telecom policy draft aims to ensure universal broadband coverage at 50 Mbps to every citizen.

### ***SAS to host India's largest Analytics Forum on May 15 in Mumbai***

- For the eighth consecutive year, SAS - the leader in business analytics software and services will be once again hosting India's largest analytics forum. This year's edition of the SAS Forum India will be held in May, May 15, 2018 at Renaissance Mumbai Convention Centre Hotel, in Mumbai.
- With this year's theme on Inspire the Extraordinary, attendees can only expect speakers with extraordinary influential aura who have leveraged cutting-edge analytics and disruptive technologies such as AI & IoT to achieve breakthrough outcomes.

### ***Reliance Jio launches JioInteract – World's 1st AI-based brand engagement video platform***

- Reliance Jio in May announced the launch of the world's first Artificial Intelligence (AI)-based brand engagement platform-JioInteract. It is a 'Live Video Call' service that features India's big celebrities. To kick-start, Jio has on-boarded none other than Bollywood's biggest star, Amitabh Bachchan, who will promote his upcoming comedy-drama film '102 Not Out' in the most innovative way.
- Such use of artificial intelligence is a first across the world and will reposition the way brands and customers think of engagement.

### ***Centre announces Rs 1 lakh crore investment to upgrade airports***

- Air travellers will get a smoother and more comfortable flying experience in the coming days. The Centre in May announced that it was ready with a plan for upgradation and development of airports in the country involving investment of about Rs 1 lakh crore in the next five years.
- The government stated that it had approved investments in expansion and upgradation of integrated terminals at Chennai, Guwahati and Lucknow airports by Airports Authority of India at a cost of Rs 2,467 crore, Rs 1,232 crore and Rs 1,383 crore, respectively.

### ***NBCC secures 20 bn order to build convention centres in African nations***

- State-owned NBCC (India) Ltd. has bagged an order worth Rs. 20 billion to build high-capacity convention centres in nine different African countries namely Niger, Uganda, Malawi, Zambia, Liberia, Gambia, Burkina Faso, Togo, Gabon and is an initiative of the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India.
- As per the order, NBCC will build nine Mahatma Gandhi Convention Centres (MGCC) in African nations in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's commitment to raise the level of support for the vision of a prosperous, integrated and United Africa.

### ***EPFO Introduces 'View Pension Passbook' Service for pensioners***

- The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO), which is providing a host of e-services for its stakeholders, has now introduced a new service - 'View Pension Passbook' service through 'UMANG app'.
- On clicking 'View Passbook' option, the pensioners would be required to enter the PPO Number and date of birth information.

### ***Government set-up panels on cess on sugar, incentivising digital payment***

- The government in May constituted two panels of state finance ministers for considering issues relating to the levy of cess on sugar and incentivising digital payments under the GST regime.
- Both the Group of Ministers (GoM) will submit their reports within 15 days, Finance Ministry said in a statement hours after the meeting of the GST Council.
- The GoM will consider issues relating to 'Imposition of Cess on Sugar under GST'.
- "Himanta Biswa Sarma, Finance Minister of Assam is convenor and other members of this GoM are Rajesh Agrawal, Finance Minister, Uttar Pradesh; Sudhir Mungatiwar, Finance Minister, Maharashtra; D Jayakumar, Minister for Fisheries and Personnel & Administrative Reforms, Tamil Nadu and T.M.Thomas Isaac, Finance Minister, Kerala," it said.
- The other GoM will examine the issues relating to 'Incentivising digital payments in the GST regime'.
- The five-member panel to be headed by Sushil Kumar Modi, Deputy Chief Minister, Bihar will also have members Nitinbhai Patel, Dy. Chief Minister, Gujarat; Capt.Abhimanyu, Excise & Taxation Minister, Haryana; Amit Mitra, Finance Minister, West Bengal and Manpreet Singh Badal, Finance Minister, Punjab.

### ***ICICI Bank Launches Next Generation Features on Its Digital PoS Application 'Eazypay'***

- ICICI Bank, India's largest private sector bank by consolidated assets, has added an array of industry-first features to 'Eazypay', the country's first digital point-of-sale (PoS) application.
- It was launched by the bank during demonetisation to enable merchants/retailers & professionals to collect payments through multiple digital modes including Unified Payment Interface (UPI), credit / debit card & internet banking of any bank, Aadhaar Pay, Bharat QR Code and 'PocketsbyICICIBank' digital wallet.
- Since then, Eazypay has quickly garnered over 1.70 lakh customers, enhancing the Bank's nation-wide network of physical and digital PoS to over 7 lakh.

### ***Fourth regional conference on futuristic, resilient and digital infrastructure begins***

- The fourth regional conference on futuristic, resilient and digital infrastructure began in Bengaluru on May 3, 2018.
- The conference is being organised by the Union Ministry of Finance in collaboration with the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS).
- The 2-day event is a lead-up to the 3rd Annual Meeting of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), which will be hosted by the Union Government from June 25-26 in Mumbai.

### ***GST Council approves simplified return filing process***

- The GST Council, in its 27th meeting on May 4, 2018, approved simplified principles for filing return based on the recommendations of the Group of Ministers on IT simplification.
- One monthly Return: All taxpayers shall file one monthly return. Return filing dates will be spread over a period of time, based on the turnover of the registered person. The composition dealers and dealers having nil transaction will have to file quarterly return.
- Unidirectional Flow of invoices: The seller needs to upload unidirectional flow of invoices anytime during the month. This would be regarded as the valid document to avail input tax credit by the buyer. Buyer would be able to see the uploaded invoices continuously during the month.

### ***GST council meeting discussed change in GST rate for digital transactions and imposition of Sugar Cess***

- The 27th GST council discussed in detail the proposal of a concession of 2 percent in GST rate on B2C supplies, for which payment is made through cheque or digital mode, subject to a ceiling of Rs 100 per transaction.
- The council recommended for setting up of a Group of Ministers from State Governments to look into the proposal and make recommendations, before the next Council meeting.
- The Council also discussed the issue of imposition of sugar cess and reduction in GST rate on ethanol.

### ***CBDT inks 200th Unilateral Advance Pricing Agreement***

- The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) entered into 200th Unilateral Advance Pricing Agreement (UAPA) in April 2018.
- With the signing of this UAPA, the total number of APAs entered into by CBDT so far has gone up to 220, which include 20 Bilateral APAs.
- The UAPA entered in April 2018 pertains to provision of sourcing support services.

### ***EPFO launches View Pension Passbook Service on Umang App***

- The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) launched View Pension Passbook Service for pensioners on Umang App.
- It will allow pensioners to view their pension passbook on mobile phones with the help of Umang app.
- This facility was launched as a part of EPFO's plan to go paperless by August 2018 and provide all services online.

### ***ADB projects India's growth at 7.3% in 2018***

- Asian Development Bank (ADB) President Takehiko Nakao noted that India's growth in 2018 would pick up to 7.3 percent.
- Addressing the opening session of the Board of Governors at the 51st ADB Annual Meeting here in May, Nakao stated that despite operational challenges, Asia and the Pacific is well positioned to sustain its growth momentum, supported by robust private consumption and investment, and anchored by sound macroeconomic policies and structural reforms.
- Talking about the growth perspective for the region in total, Nakao opined that active trade and foreign direct investment are the foundation of Asia's economic success, and essential for continuing solid growth.
- The ADB, in its Asian Development Outlook (ADO) 2018 report released in April, had claimed that the Indian economy is set to expand by 7.3 percent in fiscal year (FY) 2018 and 7.6 percent in the next fiscal, aided by various growth-oriented policy measures.

### ***Centre permits partial withdrawal to NPS subscribers***

- Partial withdrawals will now be allowed to subscribers under the National Pension System (NPS), who wish to improve their employability or acquire new skills by pursuing higher education/ acquiring professional and technical qualifications, the Centre stated in May.
- Following the Board meeting of the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA), it was decided that individual NPS subscribers who wish to set up a new business or acquire a new one will be allowed to make partial withdrawals from his/her contributions.

### ***NITI Aayog, IBM sign Sol to develop crop yield prediction model using Artificial Intelligence***

- NITI Aayog and IBM signed a Statement of Intent (Sol) on May 4, 2018 to develop a crop yield prediction model using Artificial Intelligence (AI) to provide real-time advisory to farmers in aspirational districts.
- The Sol was signed in the presence of Amitabh Kant, CEO of NITI Aayog and Karan Bajwa, Managing Director of IBM India.
- The first phase of the project will focus on developing the model for 10 aspirational districts across the states of Assam, Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.



### ***GST Council approves conversion of GST Network into government holding***

- The Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council on May 4, 2018 approved the ownership change of GST Network (GSTN) structure into a government holding.
- The council approved converting of the firm providing IT backbone to the Goods and Services Tax (GST) into a government-owned entity from being a private company. The decision was taken at the end of the 27th meeting of the GST council when Finance Minister Arun Jaitley announced that the government would be taking over the stakes held in GSTN by private entities.
- Till now, 24.5 per cent of GSTN was owned by the central government and a similar percentage was held by the state governments collectively.

### ***India signs up for USD 200-million loan from World Bank for nutrition mission***

- India signed an agreement with the World Bank in May for a USD 200-million loan for the National Nutrition Mission (POSHAN Abhiyaan) to achieve its goal of reducing stunting in children aged 0-6 years from 38.4 per cent to 25 per cent by 2022.
- The loan will support the first phase of scaling up of interventions in 315 districts across all states and union territories, according to an official statement.
- POSHAN Abhiyaan was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on March 8 in Jhunjhunu in Rajasthan.

### ***NITI Aayog and Google sign Sol to help grow AI ecosystem in India***

- NITI Aayog and Google on May 7, 2018 signed a Statement of Intent (Sol) to work on a range of initiatives to help build the Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) ecosystem across the country.
- The Sol was signed by Anna Roy, Advisor, NITI Aayog and Rajan Anandan, Vice President of Google India and South East Asia.
- Google will train and incubate Indian AI startups in an accelerator program. These startups will be mentored and coached by Google and its affiliates.
- Google will be funding Indian researchers, scholars and university faculty for conducting AI-based research.

### ***GST, bank balance sheet problems pushed India's economic growth downward: UN report***

- The UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) on May 8, 2018 released the 2018 Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific.
- As per the UN report, India's economic growth was pushed downward in 2017 due to the implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) as well as due to issues such as bank balance sheet problems. Moreover, these factors led to the decline in India's GDP in 2017 to 6.6 percent, from 7.1 percent in 2016.
- The report indicates that the country is expected to recover gradually and grow at 7.2 percent in 2018 and 7.4 percent in 2019.
- Developing Asia-Pacific economies are expected to record an overall growth rate of 5.8 percent in 2017, compared to 5.4 percent in 2017. These economies will grow by 5.5 percent in both 2018 and 2019.
- Private investment is expected to perk up as the corporate sector has adapted itself to GST and bank balance sheets improve with the government support.

### ***Walmart acquires Flipkart for \$16 bn, world's largest ecommerce deal***

- Walmart Inc. in May announced its high profile acquisition of Flipkart for \$16 billion for a valuation of over \$20 billion, making it the largest ecommerce acquisition in the world. The Bentonville company has acquired 77% of the Bengaluru-based company, as per sources.
- This is also the largest buyout for the US company with its biggest bet ever in online space and on India, underscoring the growing digital consumption potential in a country of 1.3 billion.
- The Wednesday announcement culminates discussions between Walmart and the Bengaluru company that began in September 2016 with Walmart's plans to pick a minority stake in Flipkart. The talks pivoted earlier this year towards the world's largest retailer acquiring Flipkart.

### **India launches biggest auction of City Gas Distribution networks**

- India on May 8, 2018 launched its biggest auction of City Gas Distribution (CGD) networks, offering permits to companies for selling Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) and Piped Natural Gas (PNG) in 86 geographical areas.
- As per the Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB), that acts as a facilitator for the CGD network, this 9th CGD licensing auction is expected to attract investment of Rs 70000 crore. The last day for bidding is July 10, 2018.
- This time, changes have been made to the bidding conditions to attract greater investment from the exercise, such as the granting of utilities status to CGD networks by the Union Labour Ministry.
- Under the changed parameters, maximum weightage of 50 percent has been given to the number of piped gas connections proposed in previous eight years, as against 30 percent earlier.

### **15th Finance Commission constitutes an Advisory Council**

- The 15th Finance Commission has constituted an Advisory Council to advise and assist the commission on the matters related to its terms of reference.

#### **Functions of the Advisory Council**

- To advise the finance commission on any issue or subject related to the Terms of Reference (ToR) of the Commission, which may be of relevance.
- To assist in the preparation of any paper or research study that would enhance the commission's understanding on the issues containing in its ToR.
- To help in broadening the commission's ambit and understanding to seek best national and international practices on matters pertaining to fiscal devolution and improving the quality and reach and enforcement of its recommendations.

#### **The advisory council will comprise following members:**

1. Arvind Virmani: President, Forum for Strategic Initiatives
2. Surjit S Bhalla: Part-time Member of PMEAC and Senior Indian Analyst for the Observatory Group and Chairman of Oxus Research and Investments
3. Sanjeev Gupta: Ex-Deputy Director (Fiscal Affairs Department), IMF
4. Pinaki Chakraborty: Professor (NIPFP)
5. Sajjid Chinoy: Chief India Economist, JP Morgan
6. Neelkanth Mishra: Managing Director and the Credit Suisse India Economist and Strategist

### **Indian tea records highest ever production**

- Indian tea industry has recorded the highest ever production as well as exports in financial year 2017-18.
- India's total tea production was 1325.05 million kgs, an increase of 74.56 million kgs as compared to 2016-17. In percentage terms the increase was around 6%.
- Similarly, the total quantity of tea exported during the financial year 2017-18 stood at 256.57 million kgs, while the foreign exchange realised from exports of Indian tea was \$ 785.92 million.

### **PSBs will report frauds to CBI with new monetary limits set by RBI**

- The monetary threshold for public sector banks to report frauds to different departments of the CBI for a probe has been revised, according to the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC).
- Frauds of minimum Rs 30 million and to Rs 250 million, up from Rs 150 million, have to be reported to either the CBI's Anti-Corruption Branch (in case staff involvement is prima facie evident) or to the Economic Offences Wing (if employees involvement is prima facie not evident) respectively, the CVC said in its latest directive to all the state-owned banks.
- The CVC has cited a circular from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and asked the banks to comply with it.

- According to the RBI's circular, cases of frauds involving more than Rs 250 million and up to Rs 500 million should be given to the CBI's Banking Security and Fraud Cell (BSFC), irrespective of the involvement of a public servant.
- The BSFC is a specialised unit of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to probe big-ticket bank fraud cases.
- The cases of more than Rs 500 million should be lodged with the Joint Director (Policy), CBI, the central bank order said.

#### ***Government orders extension of assistance to clear dues of sugarcane farmers***

- The Union Government on May 9, 2018 issued orders for extending assistance to clear the dues of sugarcane farmers.
- An official statement by the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution Ministry read that the government has decided to provide financial assistance of Rs 5.50 per quintal of cane crushed in sugar season 2017-18 to sugar mills to offset the cost of the cane.
- Due to higher sugar production against the estimated consumption during the current sugar season 2017-18, the domestic sugar prices had remained depressed since the commencement of the season.
- As a result, accumulated dues of farmers had reached to over Rs 20,000 crores.

#### ***Telangana launches crop investment support scheme***

- The Telangana government in May launched a new scheme in which the farmers in the state will get Rs 8,000 per acre each every year as crop investment support.
- Launching the programme titled 'Rythu Bandhu', Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao claimed that Telangana is the first state in India to implement a farmer investment support scheme.
- The government plans to spend Rs 12,000 crore every year under this scheme, benefiting 58 lakh farmers. The financial assistance will be for two crops each year.

#### ***Nepal grants license to India's Satluj Jal Vidyut Nigam Ltd to generate power from Arun-3 Hydropower Project***

- Nepal Government granted licence to Indian government-owned subsidiary Satluj Jal Vidyut Nigam Ltd (SJVN) to generate power from a 900-megawatt (MW) Arun-3 Hydropower Project located in eastern Nepal.
- The project will also provide 21.9 percent or 197 MW of the generated energy free of cost to Nepal.

#### ***YES Bank launches Agenda 25x25 to for budding women entrepreneurs***

- YES Bank and YES Global Institute have announced the launch of Agenda 25x25 which pledges to create a synergetic startup environment for budding women entrepreneurs in India, ensuring that by 2025 at least 25 per cent of all Entrepreneurs in India are Women.
- The announcement was made in May at the YES BANK – YES Global Institute 'Annual Startup Conclave' hosted in partnership with NITI Aayog, Invest India, Startup India and Atal Innovation Mission.
- The inaugural edition centering on the theme 'Empowering Women for Entrepreneurship', featured two highly engaging panels which deliberated on the need for creating an enabling ecosystem for accelerating Women Entrepreneurship in India.

#### ***Punjab signs MoU with UK for setting up bio-gas, bio CNG plants***

- The Punjab government in May signed a pact with the UK for setting up of bio-gas and bio-CNG plants in the state.
- A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed in the presence of Punjab Finance Minister Manpreet Singh Badal and Andrew Ayre, deputy high commissioner, British High Commission, as part of the state's efforts to find sustainable solutions to paddy straw burning, which has become a major environmental concern.
- Giving details, an official spokesperson said the MoU has been signed with Rika Biofuels Development Ltd UK by Punjab Bureau of Industrial Promotion (PBIP) and Punjab Energy Development Agency (PEDA).



- Punjab Infrastructure Development Board (PIDB) will facilitate regulatory clearances and incentives by the state government.

#### ***Odisha's GO-SWIFT draws investments to the tune of Rs.10.6 bn in 6 months***

- Government of Odisha's Single Window for Investor Facilitation & Tracking abbreviated as GO-SWIFT has bagged 200 investment proposals in a span of six months.
- Cumulatively, GO-SWIFT has bagged investment commitments valued at Rs 10.6 billion, promising employment for over 10,500. The investment proposals span sectors like food processing, seafood, aluminium downstream, apparel, cement and tourism. Referenced on a six-month period before GO-SWIFT's launch, the quantum of investment proposals post the launch of the portal has risen by 37 per cent.

#### ***AAI to modernise India's air traffic management communications infrastructure***

- The Airports Authority of India (AAI) has signed a 15-year contract worth Rs 945 crore with Harris Corporation for its Futuristic Telecommunications Infrastructure (FTI) initiatives, the aviation company said in May.
- Harris Corporation will serve as the prime contractor and systems integrator for the same.
- This initiative will upgrade network operations, enhance security, and improve the performance, reliability and quality of India's air traffic management communications network while reducing telecommunications costs.

#### ***India receives first cargo for Mangalore petroleum reserve from ADNOC***

- India in May received its first crude oil cargo shipment from Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) for its strategic petroleum reserve at Mangalore. The shipment is part of the agreement under which ADNOC will store 5.86 million barrels of crude oil in the country under India's Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) programme, the oil ministry said in a statement.
- The agreement with ADNOC allows India to use the entire available crude oil stored by ADNOC at Mangalore SPR during emergency and also allows ADNOC to sell part of the crude oil to Indian refiners as and when required.

#### ***Kerala and NTPC sign MoU for increasing solar power generation***

- The Kerala State Electricity Board has signed a memorandum of understanding with the National Thermal Power Corporation for increasing solar power generation in the state.
- The MoU, signed yesterday, also includes an agreement to set up a 15 MW solar power unit at the NTPC complex in Kayamkulam, an official release said here.
- Besides this, the possibility of setting up solar plants at reservoirs, open space and top of buildings also would be explored.

#### ***RBI puts Dena Bank under prompt corrective action***

- Reserve Bank has initiated prompt corrective action against public sector lender Dena Bank in view of high non-performing loans, restricting the bank from giving fresh credit and new hiring.
- The public sector lender yesterday reported widening of its net loss to Rs 1,225.42 crore in the March quarter on mounting bad loans and higher provisioning to cover them.
- The net loss stood at Rs 575.26 crore in the January-March quarter of 2016-17.

#### ***Centre sets up 12-member panel to advise on valuation standards***

- The Centre has set up a 12-member Committee to make recommendations on the formulations and laying down of valuation standards and policies for compliance by companies and registered valuers. This committee will be headed by R Narayanaswamy, Professor-Finance & Accounting, Indian Institute of Management, Bengaluru.
- The members of this panel include K Biswal, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Law & Justice; Navrang Saini, Wholtime Member, IBBI; K V R Murty, Joint Secretary(policy), Ministry of Corporate Affairs; Saurav Sinha,

Chief General Manager-in-charge, Reserve Bank of India; Jayanta Jash, Chief General Manager, SEBI, and A Ramana Rao, General Manager, IRDAI.

### ***Chinese state-run bank ICBC launches India-dedicated investment fund***

- Chinese state-run bank Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC) on May 14, 2018 launched the country's first India-dedicated publicly offered investment fund, named as the 'ICBC Credit Suisse India Market Fund'.
- This significant move came just after the first ever informal summit between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping which was held in April 2018 at Wuhan.
- It is the China's first publicly offered fund for investing in India and it will invest in exchange-traded funds listed on more than 20 exchanges in Europe and in the United States that are based on the Indian market.
- It will invest in the future of the Indian economy and track the distribution of the industrial structure across the Indian market.

### ***Government departments earmark Rs 16,500 cr for Swachh Bharat Mission***

- A sum of Rs 16,500 cr has been earmarked by 71 ministries and departments of the govt for implementation of Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) in 2018-19.
- The amount is over and above the budget of Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation for SBM (Gramin) and Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs for SBM (Urban).
- SBM aims to clean up the streets, roads and infrastructure of India's cities and rural areas.

### ***DoT approves merger of Bharti Airtel and Telenor India***

- The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) on May 14, 2018 approved Bharti Airtel's acquisition of Telenor India. The department has transferred all licences belonging to the Indian unit of Norway-based Telenor to Bharti Airtel.
- With this approval, Bharti Airtel will buy Telenor India in a no-cash deal and will take over its outstanding spectrum payments of Rs 1650 crore.
- The Airtel-Telenor merger had been in talks since February 2017, however, was stalled by a legal dispute over the requirement of furnishing a bank guarantee.

### ***NALCO signs MoU with Union Ministry of Mines for setting revenue target of FY 2018-19***

- Aluminium major & 'Navratna' company National Aluminium Company Limited (NALCO) on May 14, 2018 signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Union Ministry of Mines, setting highest ever target of generation of Rs 9350 crore revenue from the operations of FY 2018-19.
- The MoU was signed between Anil Gopishankar Mukim, Secretary, Ministry of Mines and Dr Tapan Kumar Chand, CMD of NALCO in New Delhi.

### ***Renewable Energy Ministry issues national wind-solar hybrid policy***

- The Union Ministry of New and Renewable Energy on May 14, 2018 issued the National Wind-Solar Hybrid Policy in New Delhi.
- The policy provides for the integration of both wind and solar energy sources at alternating current (AC) and direct current (DC) level.
- The policy also provides for flexibility in the share of wind and solar components in the hybrid project, subject to the condition that, rated power capacity of one resource be at least 25 per cent of the rated power capacity of other resource for it to be recognised hybrid project.

### ***BSE becomes India's first exchange to be recognized as a DOSM by the US SEC***

- Asia's first stock exchange BSE received recognition as a 'Designated Offshore Securities Market' (DOSM) from the United States Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) in May, making it the first stock exchange in India to receive DOSM recognition.

- Following this development, the exchange joined an elite list of foreign securities exchanges that have been recognised as DOSM by the SEC under Rule 902 (b) of Regulation S under the U.S. Securities Act of 1933. BSE has largely adopted an international regulatory framework over the years to govern its structure, organization and disclosure standards.

#### ***Infosys sets up blockchain-based trade finance network with seven banks***

- Infosys in May said it has set up India Trade Connect, a blockchain-based trade network in India, in partnership with seven lenders, including Axis Bank, ICICI Bank, IndusInd Bank and RBL Bank.
- The other partner banks include Kotak Mahindra Bank, South Indian Bank and Yes Bank.
- India's second-biggest software services exporter, whose Finacle software powers the core functions of the majority of Indian lenders, is in talks to sign up more domestic and foreign banks to the network, senior company executives told Reuters in May.

#### ***Union Government take action for removal of Allahabad Bank CEO Usha Ananthasubramanian***

- Union Government initiated action for removal of Allahabad Bank CEO Usha Ananthasubramanian following the release of CBI's first charge sheet in the USD 2 billion fraud case of PNB.
- The Allahabad Bank board has also been asked to divest Ananthasubramanian of all powers and initiate further action.
- Ananthasubramanian was the MD and CEO of the Punjab National Bank from 2015 to 2017.

#### ***RBI imposes lending, deposit curbs on Allahabad Bank***

- RBI has imposed lending and deposit restrictions on Allahabad Bank, including the expansion of risky assets and creation of non-banking assets.
- RBI also asked the bank to reduce exposure to unrated and high-risk advances.
- The RBI directive comes in the wake of the bank's common equity tier-1 breaching the minimum regulatory requirement of 7.37 percent in March 2018.

#### ***CAIT launches nationwide campaign to popularise Bharat QR, support digital payment***

- In support of the Union Government's target of 30 billion digital transactions in FY 18-19, the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) in May, launched a nationwide campaign to popularise Bharat QR, prompting the trading community to empower itself by embracing this payment solution.
- The Traders body also strongly advocated for educating merchants and consumers to use "Bharat QR" for making payments for business transactions and personal usage.

#### ***Union Government approves coal-linkage methodology for Independent Power Producers***

- The Union Ministry of Coal on May 16, 2018 approved the recommendations of the Inter-Ministerial Task Force (IMTF) unfolding the coal-linkage methodology for Independent Power Producers (IPPs).
- The task force was constituted to undertake a comprehensive review of existing coal sources of IPPs having coal linkages and consider the feasibility for rationalisation of these sources to optimise transportation cost.

#### ***ePayLater & IDFC Bank Partner to Bring India's First UPI-Based Digital Credit Card***

- ePayLater, provider of innovative digital credit solutions, has partnered with IDFC Bank to bring instant digital credit to individuals transacting online and offline, using BHIM UPI. ePayLater's 'Buy Now, Pay Later' credit facility works like a credit card without the hassles associated with a long application process or friction at payment checkout.
- For the first time, digital credit is made possible using the BHIM UPI railroad, the instant real-time payment system developed by National Payments Corporation of India facilitating inter-bank transactions. Individuals, merchants and small businesses can now opt for real-time credit, in addition to other prepaid modes of payment, for their purchases using BHIM UPI.

- ePayLater's 'Buy Now, Pay Later' facility allows users to avail credit and transact, with a 14-day interest-free period from the date of purchase, to settle outstanding bills. This is the smoothest possible checkout experience, as users no longer have to pull out their card to complete a transaction.

#### ***Cabinet approves Corpus for Micro Irrigation Fund with NABARD***

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on May 16, 2018 approved an initial corpus of Rs 5000 crore for setting up of a dedicated 'Micro Irrigation Fund' (MIF) with NABARD (National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development) under Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY).
- The allocation of MIF under PMKSY will be made in installments of Rs 2000 crore and Rs 3000 crore in 2018-19 and 2019-20.
- NABARD will extend loans to state governments during this period.

#### ***CCEA approves enhancement of budget for implementation of Network for Spectrum for Defence Services***

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved enhancement of budget by Rs 11,330 crore for Network For Spectrum (NFS) project for laying of alternate communication network for Defence Services for release of spectrum.
- The amount is over and above Rs13,334 crore already approved by Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure in July, 2012.
- The project, being implemented by Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL), will be completed in a period of 24 months.

#### ***Cabinet approves development of Trunk Infrastructure Components for Integrated Multi Modal Logistics Hub known as 'Freight Village'***

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi on May 16, 2018 approved the following proposal of the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion:-
- To develop 'Freight Village', an Integrated Multi Modal Logistics Hub (IMLH) in Nangal Chaudhary, Haryana on 886.78 acres of land to be implemented by the project Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) in two phases.

#### ***Indian exports rose to \$25.9 billion in April 2018***

- India's exports rose by 5.17 per cent year-on-year to USD 25.9 billion in April 2018 with good performance by sectors including engineering, pharmaceutical & chemicals.
- The non-petroleum, non-gems and jewellery exports in April 2018 were valued at USD 19.8 billion as against USD 17.7 billion in April 2017, showing an increase of 11.73 per cent.
- India recorded a trade surplus in services sector at USD 6.5 billion.

#### ***Department of Commerce notifies creation of Directorate General of Trade Remedies***

- The Department of Commerce on May 17, 2018 issued notification for creation of the Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR) in the Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- The approval for the creation of DGTR was given by Union Commerce and Industry Minister Suresh Prabhu following the amendment carried out by the Union Government to the Government of India (Allocation of Business) Rules, 1961 on May 7, 2018 in this regard.

#### ***SC refuses to stay RBI virtual currency order***

- The Supreme Court in May refused to stay the Reserve Bank of India's decision that mandated banks, e-wallets, and payment gateway providers to withdraw support for cryptocurrency exchanges and other businesses dealing with virtual currencies. However, it allowed cryptocurrency exchanges, their shareholders, traders and other individuals to present their cases within two weeks to the RBI, which will look into the issue in accordance with the law.

- Various PILs, including the one filed by a group of 11 different representatives from various crypto-related businesses, have challenged the RBI's April 6 circular that declared cryptocurrency-related businesses like virtual currencies, crypto assets, etc illegal in India. The regulator has given banks a deadline of July 6 to adhere to the new rule.
- A bench led by Chief Justice Dipak Misra while transferring to itself various other similar petitions pending before the high courts of Delhi and Calcutta also stayed proceedings before the HCs. It also restrained all the HCs from entertaining any other petition against the RBI circular. It also sought the attorney general's assistance in the matter. Last week, it had sought response from the RBI and the Centre.

#### ***Tata Steel subsidiary acquires 72% stake in Bhushan Steel***

- Tata Steel, through its wholly-owned subsidiary Bamnipal Steel Ltd (BNPL), has acquired 72.65 per cent controlling stake in Bhushan Steel Ltd (BSL) for around Rs 36,400 crore.
- The announcement was made by Tata Steel in a statement on May 18, 2018. The deal is set to help the banks recover NPAs amounting to over Rs. 36,000 crore in the time to come.
- Speaking on the development Union Finance Minister Piyush Goyal said, "Liquidation value of Bhushan Steel was Rs. 14,541 crore but creditors received almost 4 times the amount (Rs. 36,400). This was possible due to the robust and transparent Insolvency & Bankruptcy Code."
- Under the deal, Tata Steel acquired 79 crore share at Rs 2 each. The deal was finalised in accordance with the approved Resolution Plan under the Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP) of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code 2016 (IBC).

#### ***RBI modifies norms for setting up of IFSC Banking Units***

- The Reserve Bank of India modified norms for setting up of the International Financial Services Centres (IFSC) Banking Units (IBUs) by banks in IFSCs.
- The modification makes mandatory for parent bank to provide and maintain at all times minimum capital of USD 20 million or equivalent in any foreign currency to its IBU.
- However, minimum prescribed regulatory capital, including for exposures of IBU, should be maintained on on-going basis at parent level.

#### ***Faircent.com receives NBFC-P2P certification from RBI***

- Peer to Peer (P2P) lending platform Faircent.com in May received its NBFC-P2P certification from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
- "This development further bolsters our resolve to take financial inclusion to every last Indian through technology and to address the country's credit deficit with our innovative tech-led offerings," said Rajat Gandhi, Founder and CEO - Faircent.com.
- The company, through its tech-led approach, has not only helped in enabling more seamless access to credit for Indian borrowers, but also presented a high-potential avenue of wealth creation to investors across the country.
- The platform currently has more than 40,000 registered lenders and 3.5 lakh registered borrowers, and has facilitated over 6,000 loans cumulatively till date.

#### ***Bank Note Paper Mill India gets green nod to increase bank note production***

- The government's Bank Note Paper Mill India (BNPM) has received green signal to increase the production of bank note paper at its Mysuru unit in Karnataka from 12,000 tonnes per annum (TPA) to 16,000 TPA.
- BNPM is a joint venture of Bharatiya Reserve Bank Note Mudran (BRBNMPL) and Security Printing and Minting Corporation of India (SPMCIL).
- The company had sought environment clearance (EC) for increasing the bank note paper production from 12,000 TPA to 19,000 TPA without adding any machinery and pollution load.
- The approval is subject to compliance of certain conditions including developing greenbelt in 33 per cent of the project area.



### **World Bank extends \$300 million credit**

- The World Bank's Board of Executive Directors has approved a \$220 million loan and an \$80 million (Rs 544 crore) guarantee for the India Energy Efficiency Scale-Up Program.
- The programme will be implemented by the Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL).
- The programme will help scale up the deployment of energy saving measures in residential and public sectors and strengthen EESL's institutional capacity.

### **Paytm partners UNDP, launches scheme AshaKiran to empower rural women**

- In a bid to encourage people in rural India to avail of digital financial services, Paytm Payments Bank has launched Paytm AshaKiran, a programme to educate rural women about these financial services and create new employment opportunities in small towns and cities in India's formal banking systems.
- For the first phase of this programme, Paytm has partnered with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) as part of its Disha project, which is supported by the IKEA Foundation and women-related organizations like SHEROES. The plan is to mobilise self-help groups and organize workshops in smaller cities and towns across Maharashtra, Karnataka, Haryana, Andhra Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh.

### **Union Finance ministry ties up with 40 companies for extending loans under Mudra scheme**

- The Union Finance Ministry on May 21, 2018 announced that it has tied up with 40 entities including Flipkart, Swiggy, Patanjali and Amul for extending loans to small entrepreneurs under the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY).
- In order to identify people who can be given funds under the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY), the ministry will organise an event in Mumbai on May 23, 2018 to extend loan under the scheme.
- The CEOs of various Banks like SBI, ICICI, BOB, PNB; senior officials in the rank of MD or CEO from Oil Companies, Railway Board would be part of the event.

### **PayPal acquires payments startup iZettle for \$2.2 bn**

- PayPal is planning to buy Swedish online commerce startup iZettle in a deal worth \$2.2 billion.
- US-based brand PayPal, a unit of eBay, revealed that this deal is so far its biggest acquisition, planned to strengthen its payment transactions catering to small businesses, particularly in Europe and Latin America.

### **Sony to buy EMI Music Publishing in USD 1.9 billion deal**

- Sony Corporation on May 22, 2018 announced to acquire EMI Music Publishing, one of the world's largest music publishing companies, in a USD 1.9-billion deal.
- EMI is the second-largest music publishing company by revenue and holds the rights to 2.1 million pieces of music including classics by the likes of Queen, Sam Smith, Pharrell Williams and Drake.
- The deal adds a catalogue of more than 2 million songs to Sony's huge list, which already owns 2.3 million copyrights, including the Beatles catalogue.

### **Indian AI startup signs MoU to assist Dubai Police**

- India-based Artificial Intelligence (AI) startup Staqu in May signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to assist the Dubai Police with its AI-powered predictive policing technology.
- In an attempt at monitoring and reducing the crime rates, Dubai Police intends to integrate AI with its current programmes and database to enable quicker response time in emergency situations with adequate technology that can extract the information and connect with the problem in real-time.

### **HDFC Bank to offer Digital Loans against mutual funds**

- India's most valuable lender HDFC Bank has launched Digital Loans against Mutual Funds in partnership with transfer agent CAMS. Customers can now pledge mutual fund assets online and get overdraft limit set in their account in under 3 minutes, the bank claimed.

- Customers will be able to leverage their mutual fund portfolio to avail funds for any contingencies or emergencies without liquidating their investments or stopping their regular investment plans.
- The bank has a tie-up with 10 mutual companies against whose policies loans will be given. The ticket size of the loans will range from Rs 1 lakh to Rs 1 crore at an interest rate of 10.5 -11%. The bank which has a mutual fund loan portfolio of Rs 10,000 crore aims to grow the book manifold by this latest initiative.

#### ***Railways inks three MoUs for network improvement***

- The railways in May signed three agreements with two public sector enterprises and a joint venture company to ensure the continuation of projects across the rail network, a statement from the Ministry of Railways said.
- The railways and the Braithwaite & Company Limited (BCL), a Central Public Sector Enterprise (CPSE) under the administrative control of the Ministry of Railways, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the manufacture of new wagons, repairing of wagons, steel structural fabrication and manufacturing of cranes.
- Under the MoU, the BCL has projected revenues of Rs 285 crore from operations and Rs 1,300 crore from wagon production.
- The national transporter has signed another MoU with the RailTel Corporation of India Limited (RCIL), a CPSE under the ministry, for the implementation of several rail projects for doubling of lines, new lines, electrification etc.
- The RCIL has projected revenues of Rs 1,200 crore from operations and set several other targets regarding CCTV cameras and wi-fi at stations and development of content on demand (CoD) services on trains.

#### ***Cabinet approves plan to install mobile towers in Meghalaya for Rs 3,911 crore***

- The Cabinet in May approved installation of 2G and 4G mobile towers in uncovered parts of Meghalaya for Rs 3,911 crore, while raising total fund limit for telecom project in the northeast region.
- "The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved Implementation of a Comprehensive Telecom Development Plan (CTDP) for the North Eastern Region(NER) in Meghalaya at a total estimated project cost of Rs 3,911 crore," an official statement said.
- The project will be funded by the Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF). The project has provision of 2G and 4G mobile coverage in identified uncovered areas of Meghalaya and seamless mobile coverage along the National Highways in the northeastern state.

#### ***Paytm Entertainment acquires Chennai-based e-ticketing platform TicketNew***

- Digital payment giant Paytm, owned by One97 Communications Limited, acquired Orbgen Technologies Private Limited, the entity that operates TicketNew, a Chennai-based online ticketing platform.

#### ***NABARD sanctions Solar street lighting system***

- National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development has sanctioned LED Solar Street Lighting system for Arunachal Pradesh under its Rural Infrastructure Development Fund with a grant of Rs 87.83 lakh.
- It would be implemented in 4 districts of the state Tirap, Longding, Namsai & Tawang.
- The scheme was launched by Chief Minister Pema Khandu.

#### ***Cabinet approves ordinance to change bankruptcy rules***

- The Union Cabinet approved an ordinance that incorporates changes to the bankruptcy law.
- However, the government declined to share details on the changes as the President's approval is still awaited.
- A 14-member Insolvency Law Committee had earlier made few suggestions to change bankruptcy rules to the Ministry of Corporate Affairs.

#### ***India and Netherlands sign multiple MoUs, Netherlands joins Solar Alliance***

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Netherlands Prime Minister Mark Rutte, who is in India at PM Modi's invitation held wide-ranging discussions on bilateral and international issues at the Hyderabad House in May.

- Both leaders acknowledged the private sector's role in boosting trade and investment. PM Modi assured investors from the Netherlands that government of India is committed to economic reforms.
- India and the Netherlands announced a wide range of MoUs/Agreements and Initiatives across different sectors.

#### G2G

- The Netherlands signed the Framework Agreement of the International Solar Alliance (ISA) and became the 64th signatory member country. The ISA is conceived as a coalition of solar resource rich countries to address their special energy needs and will provide a platform to collaborate on addressing the identified gaps through a common, agreed approach. The Netherlands expressed its commitment to the continued advocacy of ISAs aims and objectives.
- The Government of the Netherlands has signed a MoU with the Government of Haryana, India, to support the state with the diversification of the agricultural sector, with a focus on horticultural crops.
- India welcomed the Netherlands as the Partner Country for the Tech-Summit in 2019

#### Knowledge institutions:

- The Clingendael Institute, the independent think tank and diplomatic academy of the Netherlands and the Foreign Institute Service of India under the Ministry of External Affairs agreed on collaboration for diplomatic training.
- A formal announcement was made that the Science and Engineering Research Board and Maastricht University, Erasmus University Rotterdam, University of Groningen, Technical University of Delft and the VU University Amsterdam, will intensify collaborations between the Netherlands and India in education.

#### Water:

- Arcadis, a Dutch global design, engineering and management consulting company, and Tata Consulting Engineers signed a MoU to strengthen their collaboration on a variety of water management and ports & waterways related projects.
- Imotec Projects, a Dutch company which operates in the maritime and offshore market, and Reliance Naval & Engineering Ltd., signed a MoU to make dredgers in India.
- A MoU was signed between KPMG India, the Dutch non-profit WASTE and the Lucknow-based non-profit FINISH (Financial Inclusion improves Sanitation and Health) Society to establish the Sanitation Impact Bond. Other involved parties are Cashpor Micro Credit, which provides microfinance to below poverty line women in UP and Bihar, and ESAF, one of the new age social banks in India started in 2017.
- Dutch non-profits – WASTE, and Aqua for All along with air ambulance service provider in Africa - Amref Flying Doctors, signed a MoU to scale up the FINISH model, whose ultimate objective is to make safe sanitation and improved health a reality for all by 2030, thereby contributing to Sustainable Development Goals #3, #6 and #17.

#### Agrifood and horticulture:

- Building upon ongoing successful strategic collaboration, a contract was signed between the Dutch biotech company - KeyGene, and DCM Shriram Bioseed, to launch a new initiative called 'Ricebooster', to develop superior high quality hybrid rice for the Indian and South Asian market.
- A Letter of Intent was signed between KeyGene and India's Crystal Crop Protection Group to embark on a multi-year strategic collaboration to strengthen the Crystal Groups seed business with research based input and product development.
- KeyGene and ICRISAT signed a Letter of Intent to strengthen the improvement of research in legume crops and enabling complex trait improvement trajectory.

- A contract was signed between the Dutch food processing equipment manufacturer Kiremko and Gujarat-based Hyfun Frozen Foods, for the supply of potato processing equipment with new modern technology.
- To improve the average yield and quality of milk produced by smallholder farmers and increase their income level, a tripartite MoU was signed between Dutch companies Larive International and Trouw Nutrition with the Baramati Agricultural Development Trust.
- To establish a "fair factory" for the production of Plant Based Protein products for local market and export to the Middle East, a tripartite MoU was signed between the Dutch companies Schouten Europe (a company that produces meat substitutes based on vegetable proteins), Inluvest (an impact investment company that contributes to the sustainable improvement of living conditions in developing countries) and India's LT Foods.
- Wageningen Environmental Research signed a contract with Hyderabad-based Agrirain and the Swiss Syngenta Foundation for the commitment to execute the "Adaptive Irrigation Model for Small Farmers" project in India.
- Two's MoU between Wageningen Food & Biobased Research were signed: one for product development and innovation in rice, and one for (hand) device sensing diagnostic technologies in rice.
- A contract was signed between De Heus Animal Nutrition and Shandilya Plast Pvt Ltd, which will enable farmers to have access to high quality feed and will receive training and support from Dutch nutritional experts.
- Rabobank India signed a loan agreement with De Heus India, which will enable the latter to set up its India operations.
- A partnership was signed between the members of the Dutch Dairy Cluster (De Heus, Trouw, Lekkerkerker Dairy & Food Equipment, Alta Genetics and MS Schippers), to meet the increasing demand of thriving Indian middle-class for high-quality and reliable dairy products.

#### Hi-tech/IT:

- India's first cyber security cluster is collaborating with Europe's biggest security delta, with the Program of Cooperation under the MoU that was signed between The Hague Security Delta and Hyderabad Security Cluster.

#### Life Sciences & Health:

- Dutch Watchyourmeds (specializes in providing information about essential medicines and related diseases through animated videos) signed an agreement with the Bengaluru-based Rx Digi Health Platform to distribute medical toolboxes to ASHA's (community health workers). Watchyourmeds will be added to these toolboxes, to provide easy to understand medical literature to people in rural India.
- A contract was signed between the Delft University of Technology and the School of International Biodesign and India's Brun Health (enables the adoption of best practices in labor management for all tiers of healthcare).
- For the development of large-scale manufacturing process of a novel, promising and affordable vaccine adjuvant, an MoU has been signed between LiteVax and Pune-based Gennova Biopharmaceuticals.
- Litevax also signed an MoU with Indian Immunologicals and with Bharat Biotech International to collaborate on the evaluation of the potentials of LiteVax adjuvant in combination with existing vaccines and vaccines under development.
- Serum Institute of India, the Translational Institute Health Science and Technology (an autonomous institute of the Department of Biotechnology, Ministry of Science & Technology) and Intravacc from the Netherlands Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports, will jointly develop a novel delivery system for vaccines (Measles/Rubella): Bioneedles.
- A MoU was signed between the Dutch Nutrilab and Ahmedabad's Biocare Research to set up a joint venture private laboratory in the food industry.
- A partner agreement was signed for the role out of integrated mobile telemedicine services across India between swyMed and Wipro Technologies.

- The ALL India Football Federation signed a MoU with the Dutch KNVB, the Royal Dutch Football Association, on collaboration with focus on youth teams, women/girls and community coaches.
- Elsevier, a Dutch information analytics company, signed a MoU with Columbia Asia Hospitals and Manipal Health Enterprises, to explore opportunities for using technology solutions to improve access to quality clinical care.

#### **Smart Cities:**

- The Dutch Antea Group and Delhi Integrated Multi-Modal Transit System Ltd., have signed a MoU to bid for the Pune Municipal Corporation projects related to Smart Cities in India.
- A MoU was signed between Dr. Ten (a company that specializes in product and process innovation within the sport, food, energy and chemical sectors) and Idiom, to cooperate in the area of sea salt battery activities.
- To facilitate its global expansion and access the European Market in the field of sustainability, India's GE3S or Global Energy and Environmental Engineering Services Ltd., has found a local partner in the Netherlands INCO Business Group.

#### **Business:**

- A MoU has been signed between INCO Business Group and SK Patodia & Associates, to enable market entry of Indian companies into the European/Dutch market, as well as facilitate market entry by EU companies into India.
- A contract has been signed between INCO Business Group and The Indian Lawyers Network in India.
- A confirmation letter for starting up a EU headquarter office in Rotterdam was signed between Netherlands Foreign Investment Agency (NFIA) and Cogoport (an Indian Freight handling company).
- With the signing of a MoU, a business partnership between NXCP Semiconductors Netherlands and Tata Consultancy Services in automotive, internet and security was established.
- With the signing of a MoU, a business partnership between NCP Semiconductors Netherlands and Tata Consultancy Services in automotive, internet and security was established.
- Loan Agreement was signed between Dutch Rabobank and Manlift Private India Ltd. With this agreement Rabobank supports Dutch company - Riwal in expanding their business in India, where their Indian subsidiary Manlift Private India already has a leading position in rental of aerial work platforms, telehandlers and power equipment.
- Dutch companies GKN Sinter Metals and Fokker Elmo have announced plans that they are starting a new wiring factory in Pune.
- Sonalika, an Indian tractor company, and Innostrat, a company that designs learning solutions, have signed an expression of interest with the Netherlands Foreign Investment Agency (NFIA) for setting up a subsidiary company and a M&S Sand Service Centre in the Netherlands.
- A startup collaboration has been established between India and the Netherlands, in the form of a Letter of Intent between The Hague and Intellectap (Bangalore-based firm that provides innovative business solutions that help build and scale profitable and sustainable enterprises dedicated to social and environmental change).

#### ***Union Cabinet approves ordinance to amend Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code***

- The Union Cabinet on May 23, 2018 approved the ordinance to amend the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 (IBC), heaving a sigh of relief to homebuyers who have invested in housing projects of real estate companies that have gone bankrupt.
- Now, the ordinance awaits the President's nod.
- Once the ordinance gets the President's approval and the proposed changes are incorporated in the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016, homebuyers will be treated on par with financial creditors in terms of their legal rights.
- Homebuyers will have the right to initiate a resolution process against the bankrupt real estate companies and get their money back.



- The biggest beneficiaries of this ordinance will be homebuyers as the present version of the IBC does not consider homebuyers as secured creditors; they have no right to initiate a resolution process if a real estate company goes bankrupt.
- The committee of creditors's voting rights of resolution plans will be limited to 66 percent from earlier threshold of 75 percent, a move that will help speed up the resolution process.
- The ordinance also exempts MSMEs from disqualification under Section 29 of the IBC. The Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) will now be exempted from all conditions. As per Section 29 of the IBC Act, a person or a company suffering disqualification, can't participate in the resolution process.
- Promoters of companies with turnover of up to Rs 250 crore will be allowed to bid. Earlier, they were barred from bidding as the government feared that they will walk away with the stressed assets at a discount.

#### ***NITI Aayog, ABB India sign Statement of Intent***

- NITI Aayog and ABB India signed a Statement of Intent (Sol) on May 23, 2018 to support the Indian government realise its vision of 'Make in India' through advanced manufacturing technologies that incorporate the latest developments in robotics and artificial intelligence.
- The agreement was signed by Anna Roy, Adviser (Industry), NITI Aayog and Sanjeev Sharma, MD, ABB India in the presence of NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant and ABB CEO Dr. Ulrich Spiesshofer.
- Through the agreement, NITI Aayog will work with ABB across various sectors of the economy such as power and water utilities, food and heavy industry, transport including rail and metro and infrastructure to suggest solutions for digitalisation, incorporating the Internet of Things (IoT) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies. The initiative also covers the fast-growing segment of electric mobility.

#### ***HDFC ERGO brings AI chatbot to Google Assistant***

- General insurance company HDFC ERGO launched its Artificial Intelligence (AI)-enabled chatbot "DIA" on Google Assistant in May to enable users to access the service through Google's home device.
- With DIA, the company aims to provide instant solutions to user queries related to general insurance through a simple voice command -- "Ok Google, Talk to HDFC ERGO", the company said in a statement.
- Even though the primary mode of interaction will be through voice, text input through the keyboard is also supported on the Assistant.

#### ***15th Finance Commission constitutes High Level Group for balanced expansion of Health Sector***

- The Fifteenth Finance Commission on May 24, 2018 constituted a High Level Group consisting of eminent experts from across the country in Health Sector to examine the strengths and weaknesses for enabling balanced expansion of Health Sector.
- The Committee will be convened by Dr. Randeep Guleria, Director of All India Institutes of Medical Sciences (AIIMS).
- It will evaluate the existing regulatory framework in the Health sector.
- It will examine strength and weaknesses of the health sector for enabling a balanced yet faster expansion of the health sector, keeping in view the India's demographic profile.
- It will suggest ways and means to optimise the use of existing financial resources and incentivise the state governments' effort on fulfillment of well-defined health parameters in India.

#### ***TCS Is India's First Company To Cross Rs 7 Lakh Crore In Market Value***

- Tata Consultancy Services Ltd. in May became the country's first company to hit the Rs 7 lakh crore market capitalisation milestone. This comes just a month after TCS became the first Indian information technology firm to cross the \$100 billion (about Rs 6.7 lakh crore) mark.
- TCS shares rose nearly 2 percent to an all-time high of Rs 3,674.8 apiece in early trading. The stock has rallied nearly 14.5 percent since the company touched \$100 billion market value, mainly on the back of a weakening rupee. The Indian currency depreciated about 3.2 percent against the dollar in the last one month.

### ***Government reconstitutes Financial Stability and Development Council***

- The Union Government reconstituted Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC) to include secretaries from revenue department as well as Ministry of Information Technology (MeitY).
- It will also include the Chairman of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI).

### ***5th India-CLMV Business Conclave held in Cambodia***

- The 5th India-CLMV (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Vietnam) Business Conclave was held at Phnom Penh, Cambodia.
- It was jointly organised by Ministry of Commerce & Industry along with Ministry of Commerce of Cambodia.

### ***E-Way Bill system for intra-state goods movement comes into force in seven more states, UTs***

- The e-Way Bill system for intra-state movement of goods came into effect in seven more states and Union Territories from May 28, 2018.
- The states and UTs include Maharashtra, Manipur, Chandigarh, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Daman and Diu and Lakshadweep.
- With this, the number of States, where the system is being implemented, will go up to 27.
- As per the decision of the GST Council, e-Way Bill system was rolled out from April 1, 2018.

### ***India launches its second IT corridor in China***

- India on May 27, 2018 launched its second IT corridor in China to benefit from the nation's growing software market.
- The IT corridor, Digital Collaborative Opportunities Plaza (SIDCOP) platform, was established in China's Guiyang city by the National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM).
- During the launch of the corridor, agreements worth about six million US Dollars were signed between Indian service providers and Chinese customers by China's Guiyang Municipal government and the NASSCOM.
- The pilot projects launched on the SIDCOP platform would be executed during 2019.

### ***NSDC to Set Up Trainer and Assessor Academies across India***

- To meet the rising demand for trainers and assessors in India's skill development ecosystem, National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) aims to establish state-of-the-art Trainer and Assessor Academies in the country.
- To complement this development, Singapore Polytechnic (SP) and Temasek Foundation International are partnering NSDC on a Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programme to build capabilities of 300 education leaders and specialists who will establish and manage these academies across India. This programme is supported by Temasek Foundation International with a grant of S\$502,955.

### ***India, World Bank sign USD 21.7 million loan agreement for Rajasthan Project***

- India on May 29, 2018 signed a loan agreement with the World Bank for IBRD Credit of USD 21.7 million for the strengthening public financial management in Rajasthan Project.
- The agreement was signed by Sameer Kumar Khare, Joint Secretary (FB and ADB), Department of Economic Affairs, Union Ministry of Finance and Hisham Abdo, Acting Country Director of World Bank (India) in New Delhi.
- While, the Implementing Entity Agreement was signed by the Secretary, Finance (Budget) on behalf of the Rajasthan Government and Hisham Abdo on behalf of the World Bank.

### ***Yes Bank inks MoU with SIDBI to provide loans to SMEs, MSMEs***

- Yes Bank has entered into an agreement with SIDBI under which it will act as a preferred financial institution for giving loans to the small and medium enterprising customers of the latter.
- Under the pact, Yes Bank would provide various banking services, including working capital, to SIDBI customers at its pan-India branches, which currently number around 1100. A memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between SIDBI chief general manager K I Mani and Yes Bank group president (international and institutional banking) Arun Agarwal here this evening.
- Currently, merely about 550 SIDBI customers avail of its working capital facility, which forms a miniscule part of its customer base. The Bank had earlier entered into an agreement with a public sector bank, yet the scheme could not take off as expected.

### ***Moody's cuts India's projected growth rate for 2018***

- Moody's Investors Service, a credit rating firm in May estimated a 7.3 per cent growth in Indian Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for the year 2018, thereby cutting it down from a previously projected 7.5 per cent.
- In its May update of the Global Macro Outlook: 2018-19, Moody's cited higher oil prices and tighter financial conditions as the primary barrier to the growth rate.

### ***India, Indonesia elevate ties to establish Comprehensive Strategic Partnership***

- India and Indonesia on May 30, 2018 issued a joint statement on "Establishing Comprehensive Strategic Partnership", elevating their existing bilateral ties.
- The move followed a bilateral summit between Indonesian President Joko Widodo and visiting Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Jakarta, the capital city of Indonesia. The two leaders held extensive talks on bilateral, regional and global issues of mutual interest and provided strategic directions that would further enhance the solid and expanding relations between the two countries.

### **Trade**

- India and Indonesia have agreed to double their efforts to take bilateral trade to USD 50 billion by 2025.
- According to Indonesia's Central Statistics Agency (BPS), trade between the two countries in 2016 was USD 12.9 billion.
- It rose by 28.7 per cent to USD 18.13 billion in 2017 with Indonesia's exports to India reaching USD 14.08 billion and its imports from India standing at USD 4.05 billion.

### **Defence**

- The leaders reaffirmed that their countries, as strategic partners and maritime neighbours, will work to further strengthen and broaden the already robust defence cooperation.
- The leaders reaffirmed their commitment in the field of defence with the signing of the Defence Cooperation Agreement between the two countries.
- They also agreed to further enhance mutual trust through regular meetings and staff talks between armies, navies and air forces of the two countries.
- They further took note on the progress made through the joint production of military equipment and identified cooperation in defence industry and technology as areas of great potential.

### **Economic Cooperation**

- The two sides agreed to work intensively for the early conclusion of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) and reiterated that it needs to be comprehensive, fair and balanced with benefit to all member states.

### **Power Minister RK Singh launches Web Portal and App called PRAAPTI**

- RK Singh, Minister of State for Power, on May 29, 2018 launched the web portal and an app namely PRAAPTI that stands for 'Payment ratification and analysis in power procurement for bringing transparency in invoicing of generators'.
- The portal 'www.praapti.in' has been launched for bringing transparency in payments to electricity generators.
- PRAAPTI App and web portal have been developed to bring transparency in power purchase transactions between Generators and Discoms.
- The App and Web Portal will capture the Invoicing and payment data for various long term PPAs from the Generators.

### **India, Singapore announce 14 B2B, B2G agreements**

- India and Singapore in May announced 14 business-to-business and business-to-government agreements during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit here.
- The agreements include on supporting India's innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem and promoting Indian innovation abroad, to set up Indian institutes of skills on waste water management and recycling, on promotion of 'Make-in-India' in Singapore and ASEAN, and commercial collaboration in the space sector and development of Singapore's space industry, among others.

### **List of MoUs**

1. Statement of Intent between qNITI Aayog and Pan IIM Alumni Association (PIIMA), IIT Alumni Association of Singapore (IITAAS), The Ind US Entrepreneurs (TiE), Data Security Council of India (DSCI), The Indian School of Business Alumni Association – Singapore Chapter (ISBAA) ON SUPPORTING INDIA'S INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP ECOSYSTEM AND PROMOTING INDIAN INNOVATION ABROAD.
2. Memorandum of Understanding between Tata Education and Development Trust (TEDT) and ITE Education Services (ITEES) Singapore TO SET UP INDIAN INSTITUTES OF SKILLS.
3. Memorandum Of Understanding between National Skill Development Centre (NSDC) and National University of Singapore (NUS) ON FUTURE SKILLS.
4. Memorandum of Understanding between National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) and Singapore Polytechnic (SP) and Temasek Foundation International ON ESTABLISHING TRAINER AND ASSESSOR ACADEMIES IN INDIA.
5. Memorandum of Understanding between National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) and Enterprise Singapore Board (ES) TO SUPPORT INVESTMENTS BY SINGAPORE SKILLS TRAINING PROVIDERS IN INDIA.
6. Memorandum of Understanding between SynchroServe Global Solutions Pte. Ltd. and SkillsSG Ventures Pte. Ltd. facilitated by NSDC & ES FOR PROVIDING SKILL TRAINING SERVICES ACROSS INDIA.
7. Memorandum of Understanding between Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and Singapore Cooperation Enterprise (SCE) FOR WASTE WATER MANAGEMENT AND RECYCLING.
8. Memorandum of Understanding between Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and Singapore Business Federation (SBF) ON CREATING FAMILY BUSINESS NETWORKS AND TRAINING FAMILY BUSINESSES.
9. Memorandum of Understanding between Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and Singapore Business Federation (SBF) ON BUSINESS EXPOSURE IN INDIA AND SINGAPORE.
10. Memorandum of Understanding between Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), Singapore Manufacturing Federation (SMF) and Singapore Business Federation (SBF) ON PROMOTION OF MAKE IN INDIA IN SINGAPORE & ASEAN.
11. Memorandum of Understanding between Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and WaterROAM ON RURAL WATER SOLUTIONS IN INDIA (PROVIDING YOUNG SINGAPORE START-UPS OPPORTUNITIES IN INDIA.)
12. Memorandum of Understanding between Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) and Singapore Space Technology Association, (SSTA) FOR COMMERCIAL COLLABORATION IN THE SPACE SECTOR AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SINGAPORE SPACE INDUSTRY.
13. Memorandum of Understanding between Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) and Food Industry Asia (FIA) FOR COOPERATION IN FOOD PROCESSING, SAFETY AND CAPACITY BUILDING.

14. Memorandum of Understanding between Institute of Economic Growth (IEG) and Asian Competitiveness Institute (ACI), LKY of Public Policy FOR JOINT RESEARCH ON COMPETITIVENESS ASSESSMENTS AND PUBLIC POLICY.

**PM Narendra Modi launches RuPay card, BHIM and SBI apps in Singapore**

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi on May 31, 2018 launched three Indian digital payment systems - RuPay, BHIM app and UPI by SBI at the 'Business, Innovation and Community Event' in Singapore.
- With the launch, India's RuPay digital payments system was linked up with Singapore's 33-year old Network for Electronic Transfers (NETS). The move will enable RuPay users to make payments at all of NETS acceptance points across Singapore.
- Whereas, holders of Singapore NETS will be able to make online purchase on any National Payment Corporation of India (NPCI) e-commerce merchant website in India, using 2.8 million RuPay point of sale terminals in India.
- The development is significant, as it would create multi-billion dollar transactions as some five million Indians travel to and transit through Singapore, internationalising the RuPay beginning with the first cross border usage.
- During the business event, SBI's Singapore branch launched a new app-based rupee remittance mode - United Payment Interface (UPI).
- The Singapore branch of the SBI is the first to launch this new mode of remittance in collaboration with National Payment Corporation of India (NPCI).
- The step is a major one towards the internationalisation of India's digital payment platform.
- The move would make transfer of funds of up to Rs 100,000 very fast, easy and convenient with the help of Virtual Payment Address (VPA).
- The service would be available to all savings account holders of SBI Singapore.
- SBI has six branches in Singapore as well as Auto Teller Machines (ATMs).

**Government, World Bank sign agreement worth \$500m for PMGSY rural roads project**

- The Union Government on May 31, 2018 signed a \$500 million loan agreement with the World Bank to provide additional financing for the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) Rural Roads Project.
- The project, implemented by the Union Rural Development ministry, aims to build 7,000 km of climate resilient roads, out of which 3,500 km will be constructed using green technologies.
- The Loan agreement for the project was signed by Sameer Kumar Khare, Joint Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance, on behalf of the Government of India and Junaid Ahmad, Country Director, World Bank India, on behalf of the World Bank in the presence of Alka Upadhyaya, Joint Secretary (RC), Ministry of Rural Development.

**State Bank of India raises term deposit rates by 25 bps**

- State Bank of India, the country's largest lender, has hiked the interest rate by up to 25 basis points (bps) in some of its term deposits
- Those with a tenor of two to less than three years have been raised by five bps to 6.65 per cent. The hike for those between a year to less than two years is 25 bps, also to 6.65 per cent. A senior executive said: "Money in these two buckets (tenors) has substantial share in banks' deposit base. We would like to retain the amounts when competition for resources is intensifying."

**Tata Motors in pact with Maharashtra govt to deploy 1,000 EVs, set up infra**

- Tata Motors in May said it has inked a pact with Maharashtra government to deploy 1,000 electric vehicles (EVs) from its range of passenger and commercial vehicles across the state.
- As part of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) inked with the state government in May, Tata Motors along with Tata Power will also facilitate setting up of EV charging stations in the Maharashtra.



### **IBM launches AI-powered Enterprise Marketing Cloud Services**

- Global technology major, IBM has launched its artificial intelligence (AI)-powered Enterprise Marketing Cloud Services in India which will be hosted at its data centre in Chennai.
- According to the company, this would enable Indian customers to host their consumer data in India, which would help them in complying with local regulations.
- These solutions, which are part of IBM's Watson programme, is likely to see much interest from domestic clients, especially those in banking and finance space.

### **Haryana Cabinet approves comprehensive affordable housing policy**

- The state cabinet of Haryana on May 30, 2018 approved a comprehensive affordable housing policy - 'Housing for all-2018' for core areas of municipalities in the state.
- For the implementation of the policy, the Town and Country Planning Department would be delegating the power under the Haryana Development and Regulations of Urban area Act, 1975 to the Urban Local Bodies Department.
- According to the policy for core areas, projects would be allowed in core areas of municipal towns with an area of minimum one acre and maximum five acres, while the floor area ratio (FAR) should be 250 and for 2.5 to 5 acres, it should be 275.

## **India and states related news**

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### **15th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas to be held in Varanasi**

- The 15th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas will be held in the holy city of Varanasi in January 2019, giving a chance to the Indian diaspora to participate in Kumbha Snan and attend the Republic Day parade in New Delhi.
- The announcement was made the Indian Embassy's Minister of Community Affairs Anurag Kumar while addressing a gathering of eminent Indian-American community leaders from in and around Washington DC, Maryland and Virginia.

### **GOBAR-DHAN Scheme launched under Swachh Bharat Mission to promote wealth and energy from waste**

- Union Minister for Drinking Water and Sanitation, Uma Bharti, on April 30, 2018 launched the GOBAR - DHAN (Galvanising Organic Bio-Agro Resources Fund) Scheme at the National Dairy Research Institute (NDRI) Auditorium, Karnal.
- On the same occasion, the guidelines of GOBAR-DHAN scheme were also launched, detailing about the implementation arrangements, financing provisions and roles and responsibilities of the Centre, State governments, districts and other stakeholders involved in implementation of the scheme.
- The launch was attended by sarpanches from the project villages, implementing agencies, officers from 14 states and district officers.
- Under GOBAR-DHAN scheme, solid waste of dung and fields will be changed into compost and fuels such as biogas and bio-CNG.

### **National workshop for creating disaster risk reduction database begins in Delhi**

- The National Workshop on Data Requirements for Disaster Risk Reduction Database began in New Delhi on May 2, 2018.
- The workshop is being organised by the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) in collaboration with the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR).
- The main aim of the two-day workshop is to develop a uniform and credible national-level disaster database.

### ***President Ram Nath Kovind to preside over PM-headed panel on Gandhi's 150th birth Anniversary***

- President Ram Nath Kovind on May 2, 2018 presided over the first meeting of the national committee set up for commemoration of 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi in 2019.
- The 114-member committee, comprising Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, former Prime Ministers and Chief Justice of India, will discuss the policies, plans and preparatory activities for commemoration of the birth anniversary.
- The birth anniversary of the Mahatma Gandhi will be commemorated from October 2, 2019 to October 2, 2020.

### ***Telecom Commission approves in-flight mobile connectivity in Indian airspace***

- The high-powered inter-ministerial Telecom Commission, headed by Telecom Secretary Aruna Sundararajan, approved in-flight mobile connectivity in Indian airspace on May 1, 2018, thus, allowing people to make phone calls and use internet services in flights over Indian airspace, with certain riders.
- Telecom Commission's approval comes months after the telecom regulator TRAI recommended for in-flight mobile telephony and internet services.
- The Internet and Mobile Communication on Aircraft (MCA) service will be permitted as In-Flight Connectivity (IFC) in the Indian airspace.

### ***Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana approved beyond 12th Five Year Plan***

- The Union Cabinet on May 2, 2018 approved the continuation of Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY) beyond the 12th Five Year Plan for a period of three year from 2017-18 to 2019-20 with the financial outlay of Rs 14832 crores.
- The Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana was initially approved in March 2006 with an aim to correct the imbalances in the availability of affordable healthcare facilities across the country and augmenting facilities for quality medical education in the under-served States, in particular.
- PMSSY has two components - setting up of AIIMS in various states and upgradation of existing Government Medical Colleges (GMC).
- PMSSY will lead to development of apex level medical education and nursing education and connected research facilities.

### ***India begins first organised census to estimate population of Indus dolphin***

- The Punjab government along with WWF-India would be conducting the first organised census of Indus Dolphins, one of the world's rarest mammals.
- The move is aimed at conservation of the species. The dolphins are found only in India and Pakistan, confined to the 185 km stretch between Talwara and Harike Barrage in India's Beas River in Punjab.
- It is the first organised census and would be conducted over a period of five days. Previously, the researchers had merely spotted the dolphins.

### ***North Eastern cultural and information centre to be set up in Delhi***

- The Minister of State for Development of North Eastern Region (I/C), Dr. Jitendra Singh announced on May 3, 2018 that a North Eastern Cultural and Information Centre would soon come up in Delhi.
- The announcement was made by the Minister after chairing the review meeting of the 'roadmap for implementation of cabinet approval of schemes for North East Council'. The meeting reviewed the progress of various on-going projects in the North East.

### ***India doing extremely well on electrification: World Bank***

- The World Bank on May 4, 2018 said that India is doing extremely well on electrification with nearly 85 percent of the country's population having access to electricity.

- In the latest report, the World Bank said that India provided electricity to 30 million people each year between 2010 and 2016.

#### ***India and France conduct final phase of Varuna naval exercise near Reunion Island***

- Indian and French navies conducted final and third phase of Varuna naval exercise 2018 near Reunion Island in Indian Ocean region (IOR).
- In the final phase, both navies simulated different possible scenarios such as asymmetric warfare and tested their air defence capabilities.
- 2018 Varuna naval exercise between Indian and French Navy was conducted in three phases and included anti-submarine, air defence and asymmetric engagement exercises.

#### ***India, US hold round 3 of Maritime Security Dialogue in Goa***

- India and United States held the third round of the India-US Maritime Security Dialogue in Goa focussing on cooperation and developments in the Indo-Pacific region.
- Both the sides discussed the developments in maritime domain in Indo-Pacific Region and exchanged views on ways to further strengthen bilateral maritime security cooperation.
- They also reviewed implementation of decisions taken during the previous Maritime Security Dialogues.

#### ***National Conference of 244 selected Districts under Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) held in New Delhi***

- The Ministry of Women and Child Development organized National Conference with the Nodal Officers of 244 Districts, State Nodal Officers and Senior Officers.
- Smt Maneka Sanjay Gandhi, the Union Minister for Women and Child Development inaugurated the event and interacted with 244 new districts with low Child Sex Ratio(CSR), from 25 States/ UTs. Addressing the Conference, the WCD Minister highlighted the need to involve various stakeholders and join hands for achieving the goals of BBBP.
- The Minister suggested several initiatives such as celebrating the birth of Girl Child, engaging Sarpanches and make them aware about various aspects of the scheme and issues of girl child.
- The Minister said that positive environment must be created for Girls. The Minister highlighted need for training of women sarpanches in every district for achieving goals of BBBP.
- Under the BBBP scheme, several local level innovative initiatives focusing on advocacy and community engagements have been undertaken by the Districts across the country. The Minister interacted with DCs/DMs/Nodal officers who shared various initiatives taken by them in their districts.

#### ***Union Government announces project to strengthen Namami Gange Programme through GIS Technology***

- The 11th Executive Committee meeting of National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) recently approved the project encompassing the use of GIS technology for Namami Gange programme with a total budget of Rs 86.84 crore.
- In order to facilitate the Ganga rejuvenation task through the Geographic Information System (GIS) technology, the National Mission for Clean Ganga has tied-up with the Survey of India, the oldest scientific department in the country set up in 1767.
- The project includes use of Digital Elevation Model (DEM) technology which ensures accurate data collection, an important aspect for river basin management planning.

#### ***HRD Ministry launches online professional development programme for faculty***

- The Union Ministry of Human Resource Development has launched a major and unique initiative of online professional development of 1.5 million higher education faculty using the MOOCs platform SWAYAM.
- In the first phase of the initiative, 75 discipline-specific National Resource Centres (NRC) have been identified.

#### ***ISRO develops atomic clock for the indigenous navigation satellites***

- Indian Space Research Organization has developed an atomic clock to be used in navigation satellites. It is supposed to measure precise location data.
- At present, ISRO imports atomic clocks from European aerospace manufacturer Astrium for its navigation satellites. With the development of indigenous atomic clocks, the space agency sure gets a mark of technological advancement.

#### ***Ola launches My Ride, My Cause initiative for social causes***

- Leading ride-sharing company, Ola, in May launched 'My Ride. My Cause.' on its platform to crowdsource funds and support social causes by leveraging its vast network of millions of customers across India.
- Ola has rolled out this special initiative through a unique partnership with Tata Trusts' Alamelu Charitable Foundation (ACF).

#### ***Odisha govt, Tata Trusts sign MoU to set up cancer hospital***

- The Odisha government has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Tata Trusts to set up a cancer treatment and research hospital here, a senior state government official said.
- The MoU was signed in the presence of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik and Tata Trusts Chairman Ratan Tata here yesterday.

#### ***Social Justice Ministry organises 'Cochlear Implant Awareness Programme'***

- The Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD) under Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment organised a 'Cochlear Implant Awareness Programme' on May 6, 2018 at Huda Convention Centre in Faridabad, Haryana.
- The programme was organised by DEPwD in association with Indian Red Cross Society and Sarvodaya Hospital & Research Centre. The Minister of State for Social Justice & Empowerment, Krishan Pal Gurjar was the Chief Guest in the programme.

#### ***India to host 15th Asia Media Summit***

- India would be hosting the 15th Asia Media Summit (AMS-2018) in New Delhi from May 10-12, 2018.
- The annual summit will be organised by Asia-Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development (AIBD) in collaboration with its partners and international organisations.
- Summit's theme: "Telling our Stories Asia and More"

#### ***First Apex Conference for the CEOs of Smart Cities inaugurated in Bhopal***

- India's First Apex Conference for the CEOs of Smart Cities was inaugurated in Bhopal by Hardeep Puri , MoS(I/C) Housing and Urban Affairs.
- The two day Apex Conference is being organized with an objective to provide momentum to the cities and also a platform for cross-learning, sharing and disseminating the experience gained over the past two and a half years.
- The exhibition and presentations by the CEOs will provide useful insights for accelerating project implementation and enable cross learning among Smart Cities. Such knowledge sharing will help the cities to convert ideas into concrete actions as the outcome of the conference.

#### ***First integrated smart cities control centre launched in MP***

- In a major step towards realising the Centre's smart city mission (SCM), the Madhya Pradesh government in May launched the country's first Integrated Control and Command Centre (ICCC) for all seven smart cities of the state in Bhopal.
- The ICCC, installed in a building in Barkheda area of the state capital, would enable the authorities to monitor the status of various smart civic amenities in real-time through the sensors connected to it.

- Bhopal, Indore, Ujjain, Gwalior, Jabalpur, Satna, and Sagar are the seven smart cities under SCM in Madhya Pradesh.

#### ***Google launches Android Things for IoT platform***

- Alphabet Inc's Google launched Android Things (codenamed Brillo), a variant of Android operating system for Internet of Things (IoT) devices such as smart home appliances and other smart machines.
- Its goal is to enable IoT machines developers to be built faster, cheaper and more secure.
- It is Android-based embedded operating system (OS) platform that is aimed to be used with low-power and memory constrained Internet of Things (IoT) devices.

#### ***Government to set up additional 100 One Stop Centres for women safety***

- The Union Ministry of Women and Child Development (WCD) approved setting up of additional 100 One Stop Centres (OSCs) for women affected by violence.
- These OSCs will be set up in Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Mizoram, Nagaland, Odisha, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh.
- The initiative will be funded from Nirbhaya Fund.

#### ***Third edition of UNPCAP inaugurated in New Delhi***

- The third edition of the United Nations Peacekeeping Course for African Partners (UNPCAP) was inaugurated in New Delhi on May 7, 2018.
- The course, which will be held from May 7- 25, is being conducted by the Centre for United Nations Peacekeeping in India (CUNPK) in partnership with the United States. The first and second editions of the course were held in New Delhi in 2016 and 2017 respectively.
- The main aim of the course is to build and enhance the capacity of the African Troop Contributing Countries to the UN and to further train the trainers from these countries.

#### ***India, Guatemala agree to support each other for non-permanent membership of UNSC***

- India and Guatemala have agreed to support each other's candidature for Non-Permanent Membership in the United Nations Security Council. Guatemala will support India's candidature for UNSC membership for 2021-22 while India will do so for Guatemala for 2031-32.
- Naidu's visit is the highest level delegation visit from either side since the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries in 1972.

#### ***Ravi Shankar Prasad launches website of Digital India Internship Scheme***

- Union Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad launched the website of Digital India Internship Scheme in New Delhi on May 9, 2018.
- Under the scheme, 25 interns will be inducted for a period of three months.
- Speaking at the launch, the minister said that the interns will be paid a stipend of Rs 10 thousand per month.
- The Minister appealed to the youth to apply to the internship programme saying that Digital India is important in the scheme of things.

#### ***Guj-Poland sign MoU on organising independence centenary***

- The department of youth and cultural affairs of the Gujarat government will be co-organisers for the centenary celebrations to mark independence of Poland in Delhi and other parts of the world.
- A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed in this regard in May between the Gujarat government and the Poland government.
- The MoU was signed by Polish ambassador to India Adam Burakowski and principal secretary of youth and cultural affairs department V P Patel in presence of Chief Minister Vijay Rupani, as per an official release.

#### ***Union Government approves green licence plates for private electric vehicles***



- The Union Government on May 10, 2018 approved green licence plates bearing numbers in white fonts for private electric-vehicles and yellow font for taxis.
- The objective behind distinctive number plates for e-vehicles is their easy identification for preferential treatment in parking, free entry in congested zones besides other proposed benefits like concessional toll.
- The electric vehicles will bring down vehicular pollution.
- The government also announced its plan to allow youth of 16-18 years to drive electric scooters. As per the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988, those in the age group of 16-18 years can be granted with licence for below 50 CC gearless scooters.

#### ***Haryana to start 31 government colleges for girls***

- Haryana government decided to start 31 government colleges for girls from July 2018.
- Till the construction of college buildings gets completed, these colleges would run in vacant buildings of government schools or other organizations.
- The initiative is aimed at promoting education for girls in the state.

#### ***Operation Insaniyat: India sends second relief consignment to Bangladesh for displaced Rohingyas***

- India sent its second relief consignment under Operation Insaniyat to help tens of thousands of displaced Rohingya Muslims in Bangladesh who fled Myanmar following military crackdown in Rakhine state.
- The second consignment mainly contained 104 tonnes of milk powder, 102 tonnes of dried fish, 61 tonnes of baby food, 50000 raincoats and 50000 pairs of gum boots.
- Indian Navy Ship INS Airavat carried the 373-tonne relief consignment and sailed from Vishakhapatnam.

#### ***Vijay Prahar exercise of Indian Army concludes in Rajasthan***

- Indian Army's month long Vijay Prahar exercise, conducted by South Western Command of Indian Army, concluded in Suratgarh, Rajasthan.
- The month-long exercise was aimed to orchestrate wide spectrum of threats including Nuclear, Chemical or Biological (NCB) attack.

#### ***Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission approves modern animal-free testing for drugs***

- Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission (IPC) approved modern, animal-free tests for drug manufacturers with an aim to spare animals from suffering due to drug experiments.
- It provided guidelines on tests of drugs manufactured and marketed in India.

#### ***India, Panama sign agreement on visa exemption for diplomatic passport holders***

- India and Panama on May 9, 2018 signed an agreement on the exemption of visas for the holders of diplomatic and official passports. The two nations also signed an agreement on strengthening cooperation in the field of agriculture.
- The agreements were signed in the presence of Panama's President Juan Carlos Varela Rodrigues and Vice President and Foreign Minister Isabel de Saint Malo and Indian Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu during his visit to the nation.

#### ***India, Myanmar sign seven agreements as Swaraj meets Suu Kyi***

India and Myanmar in May signed seven agreements including one on land border crossing as External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj discussed with the top leadership here issues related to peace and security and developments in the Rakhine State from where thousands of Rohingya Muslims had fled to Bangladesh after violence last year.

#### ***Seven agreements/MoUs were signed during the visit These included agreement on land border crossing,***

- an MoU on restoration and preservation of earthquake damaged pagodas in Bagan,
- an MoU on assistance to the joint ceasefire monitoring committee,

- an MoU on training of Myanmar foreign service officers.
- An MoU on setting up Industrial Training Centre (ITC) at Monywa, an MoU on ITC at Thaton and Exchange of Letters on extending a maintenance contract for ITC Myingyan were also signed.
- The agreement on land border crossing is a landmark in bilateral relations as it will enable people from both countries to cross the land border with passport and visa, including for accessing health and education services, pilgrimage and tourism, the statement said.
- The MoU on restoration of pagodas at Bagan underlines the enduring cultural and historical links between the two countries.
- The other MoUs on technical assistance and capacity building reflect India's continuing support to Myanmar in accordance with this country's own development plans and priorities.

Swaraj also reiterated India's readiness and commitment to helping the Government of Myanmar in addressing issues related to Rakhine State.

#### ***Narendra Modi announces Rs 100 Cr aid for development of Janakpur in Nepal***

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi in May visited the Janaki temple in this Nepalese town and announced an assistance of Rs 100 crore for the development of Janakpur, believed to be the birthplace of Sita.
- Mr Modi's visit to Nepal is seen as an attempt by both the countries to bring back normalcy in their ties after a spell of uneasiness as it comes little over a month after his Nepalese counterpart Mr. Oli visited India.
- This is the third visit of Prime Minister Modi to Nepal and the first high-level visit from India since the formation of the new Government in Nepal this year.

#### ***UGC approves setting up of nation's 1st Railway University***

- Human Resource Development Minister Prakash Javadekar in May announced signing of a Letter of Intent for the country's first railway university.
- To support the unprecedented growth, the Ministry of Railways has mandated setting up a world class university, the National Rail & Transportation Institute (NRTI) to serve the additional manpower and training and development needs of India's transportation sector.

#### ***SC directs all HC Chief Justices to form anti-sexual harassment panels in all courts***

- The Supreme Court on May 11, 2018 directed Chief Justices or acting Chief Justices of all high courts to set up anti-sexual harassment committees in courts across the country within two months in accordance with a 2013 law.
- The top court also requested Gita Mittal, the Acting Chief Justice of the Delhi High Court to constitute the panel in the high court and in all district courts in the national capital within a week.
- The ruling was made by a three-judge bench comprising Chief Justice Dipak Misra and Justices A M Khanwilkar and D Y Chandrachud.

#### ***Kerala Government to provide free internet***

- The Kerala Government will set up a Joint Venture company 'Kerala Fibre Optic Network Limited' to launch its new optic fibre network.
- The company will implement the Kerala Fibre Optic Network (K-FON) project.
- The K-FON initiative will provide speedy internet connectivity to government offices and educational institutions and to the public at an affordable rate.

#### ***India, Ethiopia hold bilateral talks***

- India and Ethiopia vowed to strengthen cooperation in key areas such as defence, counter-terrorism, trade and investment during the 2nd Joint Committee Meeting on May 9, 2018.
- External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj and Dr Gebeyehu led their respective delegations in the meeting.

### ***Naval Commander's Conference concludes***

- The first biannual Naval Commander's Conference of 2018 concluded on May 11, 2018 after four days of intense deliberations on a wide range of issues.
- The conference was inaugurated by Union Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, who set the tone for the deliberations stating that the Indian Navy is a force to reckon with in the Indo-Pacific region.

### ***India Day held at 71st Cannes International Film Festival in France***

- India Day was held at the 71st Cannes International Film Festival in France on May 11, 2018 to bring together the French and Indian film industries.
- It is being organised by French Embassy in India and UniFrance, promoter of French films abroad at Terrasse UniFrance in Cannes.
- Among celebrities present at 'India Day' will be actor-director Nandita Das for her biopic "Manto"; Ken Scott with actor Dhanush, for "The Extraordinary Journey of the Fakir"; Michelin-star chef Vikas Khanna for his directorial debut "The Last Color" and Antara Rao for her short film "Asthi".

### ***Indian Railways to Introduce Smart Coaches With Black Boxes Soon***

- The Indian railways has unveiled the first batch of smart rail coaches in Rae Bareilly city of Uttar Pradesh. The smart coaches will have black boxes just like aircraft and this technology is being adopted to bring down the incidents of train accidents.
- Talking more about the new technology, an official from Indian railways said that black boxes used in the train are better from the ones used in planes and will also make traveling safer. These boxes will prevent mishaps like derailments. The boxes will also monitor the train on several parameters. And if there is any case of deviation, the surveillance unit would be alerted immediately.
- Besides this, smart coaches will have other features such as smart CCTV cameras, passenger information system, infotainment software and wi-fi access.

### ***Indian and Malaysian Armies conclude Exercise Harimau Shakti 2018***

- Indian and Malaysian Armies on May 11, 2018 concluded the Exercise Harimau Shakti 2018 at the tropical rainforests of Hulu Langat, Malaysia.
- The grand finale of the Exercise was a tactical operation on conduct of attack on the enemy camp.
- During the exercise, both the contingents showcased extremely high standards of their professional acumen, operational abilities, battle drills and physical endurance, an apt reflection of the level of interoperability achieved by them during the Exercise.
- This was the first time when the exercise was organised on the Malaysian land.

### ***President unveils India's first Lithium-Ion charger***

- President Ram Nath Kovind unveiled India's first, indigenous lithium-ion battery charger, developed by Ampere Vehicles here in May.
- The unveiling event took place on the occasion of National Technology Day.
- The event was dedicated to recognise the indigenous technologies, with this year's theme being - 'Commercialising Indigenous Technologies: Journey from Benchside to Business'.
- Dr. Harsh Vardhan, Minister of Science and Technology, was also present during the event, amidst nearly 1000 scientists, technocrats, academicians, students and industry persons.

### ***India, Nepal flag-off Janakpur-Ayodhya bus service under Ramayan Circuit***

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Nepalese counterpart KP Sharma Oli on May 11, 2018 jointly flagged-off a direct bus service between the two sacred cities Janakpur and Ayodhya, as part of the 'Ramayan Circuit'.

- The bus service was launched during PM Narendra Modi's visit to Nepal during May 11-12, 2018. This was the third visit of PM Modi to Nepal and the first high-level visit from India since the formation of the new Government in Nepal in 2018.
- The bus service seeks to promote religious tourism in Nepal and India.
- As per mythological story 'Ramayana', Ayodhya is Lord Rama's birthplace, while, Janakpur is the birthplace of goddess Sita.

#### ***Odisha government launches Sudakshya to improve enrolment of girls in Government ITIs***

- The State Government has recently launched a new scheme 'Sudakshya' to improve the enrolment of girls in Government ITIs from the existing 7 to 30 per cent. The scheme envisages financial assistance for mobilisation of girls, support for training and placement.
- Official sources said the Government has sanctioned 71 ITIs out of which 49 are operational with total intake capacity of 17,699 seats. The remaining 22 ITIs are expected to be completed in 2018-19. All the 49 Government ITIs are affiliated to National Council on Vocational Training (NCVT).
- Besides, a special ITI for PwD has been set up at Jatni for mainstreaming differently abled youths into productive workforce.

#### ***India, Peru sign agreement in field of Renewable Energy***

- India and Peru have signed an agreement in the field of Renewable Energy at Lima, Peru.
- The pact was signed in the presence of Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu and the Prime Minister Cesar Villanueva Arevalo.
- Vice President's visit comes at a time when India is celebrating the 55th anniversary of the establishment of Diplomatic Relations with Peru.

#### ***Three public welfare schemes launched in Rajasthan***

- President Ram Nath Kovind during his maiden two-day visit as head of the state to Rajasthan on May 13, 2018 launched three public welfare schemes.
- The President launched Sundar Singh Bhandari EBC Swarozgar Yojana, Bhairon Singh Shekhawat Antyodaya Swarozgar Yojana and loan and interest waiver scheme for SCs/STs/OBCs, sanitation workers, and the physically challenged at a function held at the Birla Auditorium in Jaipur.
- The schemes were announced by the Rajasthan state government during its 2018-19 budget presentation.

##### **1. Sundar Singh Bhandari EBC Swarozgar Yojana**

- Under the scheme, the government will provide loans of up to Rs 50000 to members of economically backward classes (EBC) from around 50,000 families at 4 per cent interest rate.
- This scheme will help poor sections of the society to generate self-employment.

##### **2. Bhairon Singh Shekhawat Antyodaya Swarozgar Yojana**

- Under the scheme, the state government would provide loans worth up to Rs 50000 at 4 per cent interest rate to about 50,000 families from the scheduled castes and tribes and other backward classes for self-employment.

##### **3. Loan waiver scheme**

- Under the scheme, the Rajasthan state government would be providing Rs 2 lakh worth interest-free loans to people belonging to SC/ ST community and other backward classes for the purpose of skill development and to create resources for employment.
- Besides this, the President distributed cheques to a few beneficiaries under the three new schemes.

### ***UNDP to set up skill development centre in Hyderabad***

- The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) would soon be setting up a skill development centre at 'Bharosa,' an integrated support centre for distressed women and children in Hyderabad, Telangana.
- The centre would be aimed at empowering vulnerable and marginalised women by imparting skills training.
- 'Bharosa,' is a state-of-the-art centre set up by the Hyderabad City Police to support women and children who are victims of violence.

### ***Niti Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant to inaugurate AI startup conclave at Bennett University***

- Niti Aayog chief executive Amitabh Kant will inaugurate an AI Startup Conclave on May 26 at Bennett University, which is hosting the event as part of a nationwide initiative for AI skilling and research.
- Bennett University is spearheading the leadingindia.ai initiative, which has created a network of 100 academic institutions and industries to fulfil the gap in quality workforce and trained manpower in AI technologies. It aims to skilling a million people.

### ***President Kovind inaugurates Global Exhibition on Services-2018***

- President Ram Nath Kovind inaugurated the 4th edition of Global Exhibition on services in Mumbai on May 15, 2018.
- The President also released the logo for Services and launched the portal.
- The exhibition is expected to witness participation from around 25 Indian states and about 100 countries with 625 exhibitors and 500 overseas delegates.

### ***Government to install e-Gates at airports***

- From January 2019, low-risk foreign travelers will not have to wait in long queues at airport immigration counters.
- The Indian government plans to install special automated kiosks — e-Gates — for speedy document and identity verification.

### ***Suresh Prabhu launches Intellectual Property mascot – IP Nani***

- The Minister of Commerce and Industry Shri Suresh Prabhu launched the Intellectual Property (IP) mascot – IP Nani – at the conference on National Intellectual Property Rights Policy in New Delhi in May. An anti-piracy video featuring Mr. Amitabh Bachchan was also launched by the Minister at the event.
- Mascot IP Nani is a tech-savvy grandmother who helps the government and enforcement agencies in combating IP crimes with the help of her grandson “Chhotu” aka Aditya. The IP mascot will spread awareness about the importance of Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) among people, especially children, in an interesting manner.

### ***VK Singh visits North Korea, first high-level visit from India in 20 years***

- In first high-level visit to North Korea from India in two decades, Minister of State for External Affairs General V K Singh was in Pyongyang in May where he held talks with several leaders including Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho on key issues and raised New Delhi's concerns over nuclear proliferation .
- The two-day visit came less than a month before the proposed summit between US President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, and is seen as an effort to reach out to Pyongyang.

### ***India's First all-woman Post Office Passport Seva Kendra starts operations in Phagwara, Punjab***

- The Post Office Passport Seva Kendra (POPSK) run by an all-woman team began its operations in Phagwara, Punjab.
- This kendra was 192nd POPSK in the country and first one to be operated by an all-woman team.
- It will cater needs of people from Kapurthala, Nawandhar and Jalandhar rural districts.

### ***Cabinet approves setting up of National Institute of Mental Health Rehabilitation in Bhopal***

- The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the establishment of National Institute of Mental Health Rehabilitation (NIMHR) in Bhopal as a society under the Societies Registration Act, 1860 under the aegis of the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities.
- The estimated cumulative cost of the project is Rs 179.54 crore in the first three years. This includes non-recurring expenditure of Rs 128.54 crore and recurring expenditure of Rs 51 crore.

### ***Cabinet approves setting up of a central university in Andhra Pradesh***

- The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given its in-principle approval for the establishment of a Central University with the name –‘Central University of Andhra Pradesh’ in Jantluru Village of Ananthapur District, Andhra Pradesh.
- A provision of funds worth Rs 450 crore has been approved for meeting the first phase expenditure towards establishment of the university.

### ***Cabinet approves setting up of a new AIIMS in Deoghar, Jharkhand***

- The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved setting up of a new All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in Deoghar, Jharkhand.
- A provision of funds worth Rs. 1103 crore has been approved for the project and the AIIMS will be set up under the Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY).

### ***4th meeting of SAWEN held in Kolkata, India***

- The fourth meeting of South Asia Wildlife Enforcement Network (SAWEN), an inter-governmental wildlife law enforcement agency, was held in Kolkata, West Bengal (India) from May 8-10, 2018.
- It was the first meeting of SAWEN in India since its inception in 2011.
- The two-day conference was attended by representatives of seven (excluding Pakistan) out of eight member countries - Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Maldives.

### ***4 states, 1 UT sign MoUs for implementation of Ayushman Bharat scheme***

- Four states and one union territory signed MoU with the National Health Mission of the Union Government for implementing Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Swasthya Suraksha Mission (PMRSSM).
- These states and UTs are Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Jammu & Kashmir, Uttarakhand and Chandigarh (UT).

### ***Union Environment Ministry launches Green Skill Development Programme***

- The Union Environment Ministry on May 15, 2018 launched the Green Skill Development Programme (GSDP) with an aim to train over 5.5 lakh workers in environment and forest sectors in the country.
- Union Environment Minister Harsh Vardhan also launched a related mobile app ‘GSDP-ENVIS’ to boost employability and entrepreneurship of the youth in the country.
- The app can be used for information and for applying to the courses.
- The GSDP-ENVIS app can be downloaded on android mobile phones without any hassle.
- The Green Skill Development Programme was initially launched in 2017 as a pilot project in 10 districts only wherein 154 youths, mainly school dropouts, were trained as parataxonomists and biodiversity conservationists.

### ***Guwahati becomes India's first fully solar powered railway station***

- Guwahati now has India's first railway station run by solar power. The project of installing solar panels was commissioned last year in April 2017.
- Around 2352 solar modules with a capacity of generating 700 kwp has been set up over the roof of the Guwahati railway station. Solar panels have been installed at the roof-top solar power plant.
- The solar-powered station is aimed at reducing carbon-footprint as well as cut down power costs drastically.



### ***Indian Railways to protect female train passengers with panic button, CCTV***

- With a view to strengthen security of women passengers in trains, the North Eastern Railway plans to deploy women police personnel on trains during night hours as well as install 'panic buttons' in coaches.
- In a country where crime against women and children is 'rampant', the Indian Railways is taking steps to ensure that women feel secure while travelling in trains. Now, women won't have to depend on helpline numbers or chain-pulling. The national carrier has planned to deploy women police personnel on trains during night hours, and install 'panic buttons' in coaches.

### ***Meeting of stakeholders on Samarth scheme held in Delhi***

- A meeting of stakeholders on Samarth – Scheme for capacity building in textile sector under the Skill India Mission was held in New Delhi on May 14, 2018.
- The meeting, chaired by Union Minister of Textiles- Smriti Zubin Irani, was aimed at familiarising the stakeholders about the scheme and its guidelines.
- The concerns of the stakeholders and challenges faced by them during implementation of the previous scheme were discussed during the meeting.

### ***Punjab to set up panel to check security expenditure***

- The Punjab government stated on May 16, 2018 that it would be setting up a committee to streamline the system of providing security to officials and non-officials, taking cognizance of reports claiming the state lacked a rational policy.
- The decision was taken after Chief Minister Amarinder Singh took cognizance of media reports claiming that absence of prudent norms was causing avoidable financial loss to the state.
- The committee will be headed by additional chief secretary (home), with director general (intelligence) and additional director general of police (security).

### ***PM Narendra Modi inaugurates Zojila tunnel project in Leh***

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi on May 19, 2018 unveiled a plaque to mark the commencement of work on the Zojila Tunnel in Jammu and Kashmir's Leh district.
- The project, worth Rs 6,809 crore, will be India's longest and Asia's longest and strategic bi-directional tunnel, which will provide all-weather connectivity between Jammu and Kashmir's Srinagar, Kargil and Leh districts. It will be finished within five years.
- Speaking on the occasion, the Prime Minister said that he has asked the concerned Ministry to look into ways to reduce the time for the completion of the project. He added saying that the strategically important tunnel will lead to an all-round economic and socio-cultural integration of these regions.
- The tunnel aims to provide safe, fast and cheap connectivity. It will reduce the travel time between Srinagar and Leh to 15 minutes from the current 3.5 hours.
- It will provide all-weather connectivity to the region. The project has strategic and socio-economic importance and shall be an instrument for the development of the economically backward districts in Jammu and Kashmir.

### ***Gujarat Government to launch free treatment scheme for road accident victims***

- The state government of Gujarat would be launching free treatment scheme for the road accident victims on May 18, 2018.
- The announcement for the same was made last week by Gujarat's Deputy Chief Minister Nitin Patel, who also handles Health portfolio.
- Under the scheme, the state government will bear medical expenses of up to 50,000 rupees for each victim of a road accident in the state for the first 48 hours.

### ***IISER develops device to detect and remove arsenic from water***

- Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER) in collaboration with private company has developed a new device 'Arsenic Sensor and Removal Media' to detect and remove arsenic content from water and make it safe and usable by households.
- The device is easy to use, very cost effective and anyone can use it to detect arsenic easily.

#### ***Delhi to become the most populous city: UN estimates***

- According to the United Nations estimates, Delhi is projected to become the most populous city in the world around 2028.
- Tokyo is the world's largest city with population of 37 million inhabitants, followed by New Delhi with 29 million and Shanghai with 26 million.
- The projected population size of New Delhi in 2028 is about 37.2 million.

#### ***Force Motors to build Light Strike Vehicles for Indian Army***

- Force Motors has bagged an order to supply the Indian Army with new Light Strike Vehicles.
- The Light Strike Vehicle has been designed and developed according to the requirements of the military. The design allows for quick ingress and egress. The vehicles can be airlifted and deployed as an advanced fast strike vehicle and have been designed for quick ingress and egress. They are equipped with run flat tyres and have provisions to mount machine guns and a rocket launcher.
- The Light Strike Vehicle employs engines and transmissions from Force Motors' existing line up. They come with all-wheel drive and differential locks for all wheels. Prototypes of the Light Strike Vehicle have been tested over 2 years on tough terrain with temperatures ranging from -30 to 50 degrees Celsius.
- Besides the new Light Strike Vehicle, the Indian Army is also testing Force Motors' engines on the new generation Dhanush Gun, which is expected to replace the Bofors Gun.

#### ***India decides to include Artificial Intelligence in its defence forces***

- After US, Russia and China, India has decided to include Artificial Intelligence in its defence forces with an aim to enhance the operational preparedness of the armed forces.
- A task force has been set up under the chairmanship of N Chandrasekaran to finalise the specifics and framework of the project.

#### ***Home Minister commissions anti-Naxal 'Bastariya' battalion***

- Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh on May 21, 2018 commissioned into service the 'Bastariya' battalion of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), in Raipur.
- The anti-Naxal battalion, created for the first-time with more than 534 tribal youth from Chhattisgarh, has 33 per cent representation of women combatants with 189 women constables.
- The Passing out Parade will be held at a training centre at Ambikapur, a city in Surguja district of Chhattisgarh.

#### ***Hyderabad's Metro Rail To Be India's First To Setup E-Vehicle Charging Stations***

- Hyderabad Metro Rail is planning to soon provide electric vehicle (EV) charging facility at metro stations in partnership with PowerGrid Corporation of India Ltd. With this, Hyderabad Metro will be the first metro rail in the country to provide the facility. The EV charging stations will be monitored and operated remotely by PowerGrid.
- Interestingly, with the involvement of PowerGrid, The upcoming EV charging stations will have vehicle-to-grid (V2G) concept in which EVs can also help in stabilization of the grid. A V2G system enables the flow of power between an electric system or grid and electric drive vehicles such as electric cars (BEV), plug-in hybrids (PHEV) or hydrogen Fuel Cell Electric Vehicles (FCEV).

#### ***India successfully test-fires BrahMos supersonic cruise***

- India on May 21, 2018 successfully test-fired the Indo-Russian joint venture BrahMos supersonic cruise missile from a test range along the coast of Odisha.
- The missile was test-fired from a mobile launcher stationed at Launch pad 3 of the Integrated Test Range (ITR) at Chandipur.
- The trial was conducted to validate its life extension technologies developed for the first time in India by DRDO and team BraHmos.

#### ***First commercial flight lands in Arunachal Pradesh since Independence***

- In what is being considered as a landmark in the Indian civil aviation history, the first fixed-wing commercial aircraft that took off from the Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi Airport in Guwahati landed at the Pasighat Airport in Arunachal Pradesh in May.
- Out of the eight northeastern states, Arunachal Pradesh, now has become the last to be on the country commercial flight service map. Though the state of Arunachal Pradesh had air-transport facility from the pre-independence, it was mainly for the use of armed forces.
- The flight took 1.5 hours to cover the distance of 650km from the Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi Airport in Guwahati to Arunachal Pradesh's Pasighat airport.

#### ***Chhattisgarh to get specialised combat unit 'Black Panther'***

- The state of Chhattisgarh would soon be getting a specialised anti-Naxal combat force called the 'Black Panther'.
- The announcement was made by Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh on May 21, 2018.
- The force would be set up on the lines of Greyhounds unit, a special force in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh that is dedicated to anti-insurgency operations against Naxalites and Maoists.

#### ***Union Government announces compensation of not less than Rs 1 crore to paramilitary jawan who dies in action***

- Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh on May 22, 2018 announced that it is the duty of the Border Security Force (BSF) to protect the boundary of the nation, but their duty have no boundaries.
- Addressing the BSF investiture ceremony in New Delhi, Singh said that the first bullet should not be fired upon the neighbours but if the BSF receives a bullet, no one will ask them why they fired.
- He also commended the work done by BSF, saying that it is not just the first line of defence but the first wall of defence.
- The Home Minister also announced that the family of each paramilitary jawan who dies in action will not be given a compensation less than Rs one crore.

#### ***Assam government to provide pension to 16 lakh senior citizens***

- The Assam government will provide pension to 16 lakh senior citizens of the state.
- Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal has directed the Panchayat and Rural Development department to take necessary step in this direction in a bid to empower the senior citizens.

#### ***India to hold first joint naval exercise with Vietnam***

- India is preparing to hold a naval exercise with the Southeast Asian nation Vietnam.
- For the same, three Indian warships— INS Sahyadri, INS Shakti & INS Kamorta entered the Tien Sa Port in Vietnam on May 21.

#### ***Haryana to launch Chatra Parivahan Suraksha Yojana***

- Haryana government is going to launch Chatra Parivahan Suraksha Yojana for safety of girls in the state.
- Under the scheme, all the girl students will get free travel facility from their home to their educational institutions.

#### ***Railways to use AI to control air circulation***

- In a first, the Indian Railways would use artificial intelligence to control air circulation, to issue emergency alerts and also for supervision and maintenance work in a 10.28-km-long tunnel in Imphal.
- It will also alert the passenger in case of fire and help in quick evacuation in case of an issue.

#### ***INSV Tarini returns to base after successful circumnavigation of the globe***

- Indian Naval Sailing Vessel (INSV) Tarini with its all women crew successfully completed its circumnavigation of the globe and returned to Goa on May 21.
- Union Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, who had flagged off the crew on September 10, 2017, was present to welcome them back home along with other naval officers.
- This is the first ever circumnavigation of the globe by an all-women Indian crew.

#### ***Government to set up national registry of crimes against women***

- The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) is in the process of creating a national registry of crimes against women.
- The announcement was made by the NCRB Chief Ish Kumar on May 21, 2018 at a seminar organised by the Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D) in New Delhi.
- The move comes when there is a growing concern over incidents of sexual assaults.
- The records will be sourced from the Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems (CCTNS).
- The Crime Bureau is in the process of hiring an agency to prepare the whole database.

#### ***National Convention on Rejuvenation of Krishna River held***

- The 'National Convention on Rejuvenation of the Krishna River' was held on May 22, 2018 in Hyderabad, Telangana. The convention was organised by the Indian Water Council (IWC).
- During the convention, experts in water conservation from across the country deliberated on the ways to rejuvenate the Krishna River.
- The inaugural session was addressed by Telangana Irrigation Minister T Harish Rao.
- The convention was IWC's first event which saw the participation of over 300 delegates of government organisations including Rajendra Singh, the 'Waterman of India'.

#### ***Madhya Pradesh launches 'My MP Rojgar Portal'***

- The Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, Shivraj Singh Chouhan has launched 'My MP Rojgar Portal' to provide jobs to youths as per their educational qualification, skills and interest and ensure availability of able candidates to employers as per the need of their business.
- The portal was launched as a part of the 'Ham Chhu Lenge Asman' Mukhyamantri Career Counselling programme 'Pahal' in Model School of Bhopal. It was prepared by the Madhya Pradesh Skill Development and Employment Generation Board under youth empowerment mission.
- The youth will be able to open their employment account on the portal by registering their profile as per their qualification.

#### ***DAC approves measures to simplify Defence Procurement Procedure***

- The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) approved various measures to simplify Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP).
- The changes include devolution of powers within Ministry of Defence and Service Headquarters, deletion of repetitive processes, concurrent running of acquisition process instead of sequential stage clearance, aligning of various documents with revised financial guidelines, amongst others.
- DAC is Defence Ministry's highest decision-making body on capital procurement of Indian Armed Forces (Army, Navy and Air Force).

### ***Election Commission to launch App to help voters to share malpractice proof***

- Election Commission of India (ECI) will launch multi-lingual mobile application called Model Code of Conduct Violation Reporting App ahead of the 2019 Lok Sabha polls.
- The app aims at empowering people across the country to share evidence of malpractice by political parties, their candidates and activists directly with ECI.
- The app will be launched across the country as part of steps taken by ECI to prevent abuse of money and muscle power.

### ***Rajasthan Government launches software for disease monitoring***

- Rajasthan Government launched new software called Nidaan for disease monitoring and strengthening tele-medicine services in the government hospitals.
- The software will provide presumptive diagnosis and monitor seasonal and non-communicable diseases as well as trends of ailments found in specific areas.
- Nidaan Software will facilitate online entries for monitoring of as many as 46 diseases and healthcare services available for their treatment in different institutions.

### ***Uttar Pradesh cabinet approved the introduction of NCERT textbooks in Madarasa Board***

- The Uttar Pradesh cabinet approved the introduction of National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) textbooks in the Madrasa Board.
- NCERT books in Urdu, Hindi and English languages will be introduced to give students a better training and enhanced skill set in madrasas.

### ***Sushant Singh Rajput to promote BHIM app, Women Entrepreneurship Platform***

- Bollywood actor Sushant Singh Rajput would be promoting two major initiatives of NITI Aayog - BHIM app and the Women Entrepreneurship Platform.
- The agreement will be signed soon by the actor with NITI Aayog.
- In an official statement, the NITI Aayog said, as part of its larger mandate to promote digital payments across the country, it has been successfully driving the digital payments campaign in the country.

### ***Prakash Javadekar launches Samagra Shiksha scheme for school education***

- The Union Human Resource Development Minister Prakash Javadekar on May 24, 2018 launched Samagra Shiksha scheme for school education from pre-school to senior secondary levels.
- The scheme will mainly focus on improving quality of education, enhancing the learning outcomes and using technology to empower children and teachers.
- The scheme will be focused on digital education and it will enhance use of digital technology in education through smart classroom and digital boards.
- The scheme will provide holistic education for holistic development.
- It would help improve the quality of education by focusing on teachers and technology.
- An annual grant of Rs 5000- 20,000 will be provided for strengthening of libraries in the schools.
- It is an integrated scheme for school education from pre-school to senior secondary levels.
- The scheme is an integration of three already existing schemes--Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) and Teacher Education (TE).

### ***Chhattisgarh ties up with Dabur to provide herbs for ayurvedic products***

- Dabur India Limited, one of country's leading FMCG companies, would be using medicinal plants and herbs produced in Chhattisgarh in its herbal and ayurvedic products.
- The company, a world leader in ayurveda with a portfolio of over 250 herbal and ayurvedic products, inked a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the state-run Chhattisgarh medicinal plants board. Under the agreement, the board would provide the medicinal plants and herbs to Dabur.

### **India-Nepal militaries to conduct joint battalion level exercise SURYA KIRAN-XIII**

- Joint military exercise SURYA KIRAN-XIII will be conducted between India and Nepal at Pithoragarh, Uttarakhand from May 30 to June 12, 2018.
- This will be the thirteenth edition of the military exercise between India and Nepal.
- The joint military exercise will enhance the level of defence cooperation which will further strengthen the bilateral relations between the two nations.

### **IRCTC introduces VIKALP scheme**

- Indian Railways Catering and Tourism Corporation has introduced VIKALP scheme for passengers in wait-listing to provide berth in another train.
- Under the scheme, passengers from all classes & trains would be able to select 5 trains. However, the scheme does not guarantee a confirmed berth.
- The passengers would also need to be prepared, as they could be shifted to another train leaving even 12 hours prior to the booked one.

### **Odisha to launch mobile app for advance info on lightning**

- The Odisha government has decided to introduce a special mobile application to provide advance information on lightning which has claimed at least 61 lives between April and May 2018.
- The mobile application will be developed to alert smartphone users if they are in a lightning zone. The people using smart phone will get information regarding possible lightning in their areas at least one hour ahead of the calamity.

### **Railways to spend Rs 350cr to train drivers on simulators**

- The Indian Railways will spend around Rs 350 crore to train 1.5 lakh drivers and assistant drivers through virtual reality techniques to bridge the gap between theoretical and practical learning.
- The training will be conducted in 47 centres across zones and the national transporter will soon float a global tender to acquire about 40 simulators for the purpose.

### **World's Largest Bird Sculpture 'Jatayu' to be inaugurated in Kerala**

- Kerala will soon inaugurate the world's largest bird sculpture, Jatayu Earth's Centre in Thiruvananthapuram.
- The replica of bird 'Jatayu', a character in the Ramayana is 65 feet tall & is positioned right at the top of a rock situated 1000 feet above sea level.
- The rock 'Jatayupara' where the structure is based, is the place where Jatayu fell after its wings were cut by Ravana.

### **Indian Navy conducts Prasthan exercise**

- Indian Navy conducted an exercise called Prasthan in the Western Offshore Development area in Mumbai.
- The exercise is held once in every 6 months and aims at integrating maritime stakeholders including, Navy, Coast Guard, Air Force, ONGC, Customs & Port Trust.
- The drills were focused on fire on an oil platform, Oil spill, search and rescue for crashed helicopters, etc.

### **India to attend SCO anti-terror talks in Pak**

- India will be attending the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation-Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure Legal Experts meeting which will be held in Islamabad, Pakistan.
- This will be Pakistan's first SCO meeting, as the country along with India became a member of the organisation in June 2017.

### **Indian Navy commissions fourth ship of Landing Craft Utility MK-IV**



- The Indian Navy on May 25, 2018 commissioned the IN LCU L54, the fourth ship of Landing Craft Utility MK-IV, into its fleet at Port Blair.
- The ship was commissioned by Vice Admiral GS Pabby, AVSM, VSM and Chief of Materiel. The Commissioning of L-54 is in line with the Union Government's Make in India initiative.
- IN LCU L54 is the fourth Landing Craft Utility (LCU) Mk-IV class to be inducted into the Indian Navy.

#### ***PM Modi inaugurates 1st phase India's first Smart & Green Highway, Delhi-Meerut expressway***

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi in May inaugurated the first phase of Delhi-Meerut expressway here.
- Stretching from Nizamuddin Bridge in Delhi to Delhi UP Border, the 14-lane highway will reduce the travel time between the two cities to only 45 minutes from the present about four to five hours.
- Union Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari was also present at the inauguration event.
- Soon after the inaugural ceremony, Prime Minister Modi held a roadshow in an open jeep on the expressway. People in big numbers gathered to get a glimpse of him during the roadshow.
- This project will provide faster and safer connectivity between Delhi and Meerut. People from the NCR, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand will particularly benefit from this project.
- Later in the day, the Prime Minister will also inaugurate the country's first smart and green highway, the Eastern Peripheral Expressway at Baghpat in Uttar Pradesh.
- The 135-km expressway is built at a cost of Rs. 11,000 crore.

#### ***AIIMS gets green nod for developing Rs 2,163 crore super-speciality blocks in Delhi***

- All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) has received green nod for developing super-speciality blocks at Jai Prakash Narayan Apex Trauma Centre (JPNATC) in the national capital at a cost of Rs 2,163 crore.
- State-owned NBCC will be implementing the proposed project that will come up in an area of 60,500 square metre in the JPNATC campus-II at Safdarjung Enclave.
- The construction work is expected to be completed in four years.

#### ***Inter-State Council Standing Committee completes deliberations on Punchhi Commission report***

- The Standing Committee of the Inter-State Council (ISC) headed by the Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh on May 25, 2018 completed its deliberations on all the 273 recommendations of the Punchhi Commission.
- The announcement was made during the 13th meeting of the Standing Committee of the ISC.
- These recommendations will now be placed before the Inter-State Council for decision. With this, the work on Punchhi Commission Report, which had been pending for the last eight years, has been completed. Notably, the ISC meeting in 2016 was held after a gap of 10 years.

#### ***Mumbai to install UAV surveillance, panic buttons to ensure women's safety***

- The Mumbai police are planning to use Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) for surveillance and install 'panic buttons' in order to enhance the safety of women in the city.
- The measures are part of Rs 252-crore Safe City Project, which will be implemented fully in three years. This would be the first time that UAVs would be used in the country for this purpose.
- After the shocking Nirbhaya gang-rape incident of 2012, the Union Home Ministry had invited proposals from police departments of big cities to provide more security to women.
- The Union Government had also allocated funds for such projects.

#### ***Ramdev's Patanjali ties up with BSNL, launches Swadeshi Samridhhi SIM cards***

- After becoming India's most trusted Fast Moving Consumer Goods brand, Yoga guru Baba Ramdev's Patanjali in May entered the telecom sector.
- At an event, Baba Ramdev launched Swadeshi Samridhhi SIM cards, in alliance with Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL).
- Initially, only the employees and office bearers of Patanjali will be able to avail the benefits of the SIM card.

- After its full-fledged launch, people will get discount of 10 per cent on Patanjali products with this card.

#### ***Telangana government enhances retirement age limit for teaching professors***

- The Telangana government has enhanced the retirement age limit for teaching professors of state health department from 58 to 65. This decision was taken in a Cabinet meeting held on May 27, 2018.
- The Cabinet has also approved the proposed farmer's insurance scheme under which every farmer in the age group of 18 to 60 years will be provided with life insurance coverage of five lakh rupees.

#### ***IGI Airport Delhi to Get India's First AI Robot 'RADA' to Assist Flyers, Courtesy Vistara***

- Vistara has come up with a unique robot using Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology that can assist customers, address their queries and entertain them. Named 'RADA', the robot is aimed at helping the airline offer an enhanced on-ground service to its customers.
- During its initial stage, RADA will be placed at Vistara's Signature Lounge at Delhi Airport's Terminal 3 from July 5, 2018, to assist customers using the lounge before they board their flights.
- Vistara states that 'RADA' will be further developed over a period of time in terms of functionality and features for future use cases, after gauging customer feedback.

#### ***UP govt signs MoU to fast-track work on Jewar international airport***

- The Uttar Pradesh government in May signed a pact with Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development Authority (YEIDA), Noida and Greater Noida Industrial Development Authorities to monitor and fast-track the work on the much awaited greenfield Jewar International Airport.
- The signing of the MoU will kick off the process of land acquisition, officials of the state government said. At present, the public hearing for land acquisition is being monitored by the sub divisional magistrate of Jewar.

#### ***Archaeological Survey of India signs MoU with Yatra and BookMyShow***

- The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), an organisation under the Ministry of Culture for archaeological researches and protection of cultural heritage has inked a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Yatra.com and BookMyShow.
- This MoU is aimed at enabling overseas and domestic tourists and visitors to book their tickets online for 141 historical monuments, museums and sites in India, such as Taj Mahal, Qutub Minar, Ajanta and Ellora caves, Red Fort, Sun Temple, which fall under the purview of ASI.

#### ***IPS Officer Krishna Prakash, India's First Civil Servant To Become An 'Ultraman'***

- The Maharashtra cadre IPS officer becomes India's first and only uniformed service officer in Military, Naval, Air-Force and para-military forces to win the 'Ultraman World Championship' title at Australia in May 2018.
- Triathlon is a three-day 515 km (320 mile) multisport race held in Australia every year.

#### ***DAC approves procurement of equipment for Defence Forces***

- The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) approved the procurement of equipment for the Defence Forces valued at over Rs 6900 crore.
- DAC approved procurement of Thermal Imaging (TI) Night Sights for the Rocket Launcher (RL) used by the Army and the Air Force under 'BUY(Indian) IDDM' category through established Indian Vendors.

#### ***4th International Yoga Day's main event to be organised in Dehradun***

- The main event of 4th International Yoga Day celebrations (IDY-2018) will be held on June 21, 2018 at Dehradun in Uttarakhand.
- Vaidya Rajesh Kotecha, Secretary of Ministry of AYUSH, is in Dehradun to initiate the preparations regarding this mega event.

#### ***Akshay launches ad campaign for Swachh Bharat Mission***

- Akshay Kumar launched an advertisement campaign for the Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen) at a Collectors Convention for Toilet Technology.
- The campaign focuses on promoting the twin pit toilet technology in rural India.
- The advertisement campaign is supported by the World Bank.

#### ***Sangeeta Bahl: Oldest Indian woman to scale Mount Everest***

- Sangeeta Bahl, at the age of 53, has become the oldest Indian woman to scale the Mount Everest.
- She scaled the peak on May 19, 2018, with the help of 2 Sherpas.
- She carried a banner to the peak advocating early detection of breast cancer in women & funding for the same.

#### ***Himachal Pradesh Government to promote Organic Farming***

- The Himachal Pradesh government recently launched the 'Prakritik Kheti Khushhaal Kisaan Yojana' (PKKKY) to promote organic farming.
- The government will undertake an integrated approach for promoting organic and zero budget natural farming system.
- PKKKY will enhance agricultural income through the adoption of low-cost climate-resilient farming system.

#### ***Tripura Government to phase out plastic carry bags***

- The Tripura government has set August 15 as the deadline to phase out plastic carry bags completely from the state, as part of the 'Himalayan Cleanup' programme.
- The government urged people to replace their plastic bags with biodegradable ones.
- The Himalayan Cleanup campaign was launched in 12 mountain states in the country to end plastic pollution in the hilly areas.

#### ***Netherlands PM launches 'Clean Air India Initiative'***

- Netherlands Prime Minister Mark Rutte launched the 'Clean Air India Initiative' in Delhi.
- The Clean Air India Initiative is a project between 'Get In The Ring', a platform for start-ups, the Government of the Netherlands, Start-up India and INDUS Forum.
- The campaign aims to curb air pollution in Indian cities by promoting partnerships between Indian start-ups and Dutch companies.

#### ***Now, IRCTC will predict your waitlisted tickets will get confirmed or not***

- The Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) on May 28, 2018 launched its refurbished website that will let passengers know the probability of confirmation of wait-listed tickets.
- Though passengers may not get confirmed berths while booking train ticket every time, but, they can now find out whether their ticket stands a chance of being confirmed.
- The prediction regarding the confirmation of tickets will be based on a new algorithm developed by the Centre for Railway Information Systems (CRIS).

#### ***WHO adopts Resolution on Digital Health initiated by India: JP Nadda***

- Union Health and Family Welfare Minister JP Nadda on May 29, 2018 announced that the World Health Organisation (WHO) has adopted the resolution on Digital Health, brought out by India, during the 71st World Health Assembly.
- The 71st World Health Assembly was held in Geneva and was attended by delegations from all WHO member states.
- The resolution recognises that Digital health technology has a huge potential for supporting Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and improving accessibility, quality and affordability of health services.

#### ***Andhra Pradesh gets its own symbols post split, black buck is state animal***

- Neem and black buck have been declared as the state tree and animal respectively of Andhra Pradesh.
- Rose-ringed parakeet will be the state bird while jasmine the flower, Principal Secretary of Environment and Forests G Anantha Ramu said in an order in May.

#### ***Baba Ramdev's Patanjali launches Kimbho app to compete with WhatsApp***

- Yoga guru Baba Ramdev's Patanjali in May launched a new swadeshi messaging application called Kimbho to compete with WhatsApp, ANI reported.
- "Now Bharat will speak. After launching SIM cards, Baba Ramdev has launched a new messaging application called Kimbho. Now Whats App will be given competition. Our own #SwadeshiMessagingplatform. Download it directly from Google Play store," Patanjali's spokesperson SK Tijarawala tweeted.
- Kimbho caters to private and group chats with free phone and video calling. The application has dozens of features to share text, audio, photos, videos, stickers, quickies, location, GIFs, and doodle, according to its brief on the Google Play Store. The tagline of Kimbho says "Ab Bharat Bolega".

#### ***Union Tribal Affairs Ministry launches exhibition cum sale event 'Pankha'***

- Union Tribal Affairs Minister, Jual Oram on May 29, 2018 launched an exhibition cum sale event 'The Pankha' (Hand-fans) at the TRIBES India Showroom in New Delhi. Noted artist Jatin Das also graced the occasion.
- These Pankhas are on display at Indira Gandhi National Auditorium (IGNA), New Delhi from May 26, 2018 to June 24, 2018.

#### ***Gaj Yatra launched in Garo Hills of Meghalaya***

- Meghalaya's Home Minister James P K Sangma on May 29, 2018 flagged off the Gaj Yatra in Garo Hills of Meghalaya with an aim to raise awareness about the shrinking space for wild elephants in the country and particularly in the state.
- The Gaj Yatra was launched in the presence of Bollywood actor Dia Mirza, the Brand Ambassador of Wildlife Trust of India and other distinguished dignitaries at SMELC Building Dakopgre, Tura.

#### ***Centre plans OFC connectivity push on Indo-China border: Nirmala Sitharaman***

- Union Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on May 29, 2018 announced that the Centre is planning to lay Optical Fiber Cable (OFC) in all the areas bordering China to mitigate connectivity problems being faced by both defence personnel and the civilian population.
- The announcement was made by Sitharaman while she was speaking of the achievements of the four-year-old Narendra Modi government. The Union Cabinet had already discussed the issue of laying OFC and sanctioned the additional fund for the process.

#### ***India releases Rs 33.10 crore to Nepal for 2 road projects***

- India has released Rs 33.10 crore to Nepal for two road packages of Birgunj-Thori Road that are being implemented under Postal Highway Projects in Nepal with grant assistance from the Indian Government.
- The Indian Government has so far released a total of Rs 117.63 crore to the Nepal Government for the implementation of 14 packages of the Postal Highway Projects.

#### ***Madhya Pradesh government to regularise 2, 37,000 contractual teachers***

- The Madhya Pradesh state government has decided to regularise 2, 37,000 contractual teachers in the state.
- The decision was taken at a Cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on May 29, 2018.
- The cabinet also decided that no contractual employee in other government departments will be retrenched.

#### ***Railway Minister seeks passenger cooperation over late running of trains***

- The Union Railway Minister, Piyush Goyal has sought the cooperation of passengers over late running of trains, saying that the delay was caused due to track upgradation work.

- The Minister stated in a tweet that the track upgradation work was being carried out for passenger safety on mission mode.

#### ***Madras HC directs CBSE to ensure no school prescribes non-NCERT textbooks***

- The Madras High Court on May 29, 2018 issued a direction to Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) to ensure that even private schools affiliated to it, follow only NCERT textbooks and not those of private publishers.
- The court passed interim orders on a writ petition filed by advocate M Purushothaman, who accused private schools of dumping too many subjects and books on children.

#### ***UP government to go the e-Office way***

- The Uttar Pradesh cabinet has decided to bring all state government offices under the e-Office system by August 15 to minimise the use of paper.
- The decision, aimed at converting government departments into less paper offices, was taken at a cabinet meeting presided over by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on May 30.

#### ***Defence Minister inaugurates IAF Commanders' Conference***

- Union Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on May 31, 2018 inaugurated the first biannual IAF Commanders' Conference of 2018 at Air Headquarters.
- During the inauguration, the Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal BS Dhanoa briefed the Defence Minister regarding the current status of the IAF and on Exercise 'Gagan Shakti', which was conducted in April 2018.

#### ***1.5 lakh affordable houses sanctioned for urban poor under PMAY (urban)***

- The Union Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs has approved the construction of another 1.5 lakh affordable houses for the benefit of urban poor under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban) with an investment of Rs.7,227cr with central assistance of Rs.2,209 cr.
- The approval was given in the 34th meeting of the Central Sanctioning and Monitoring Committee, held in Delhi on May 30, 2018.

#### ***Indian Railways revises passenger reservation form***

- The Union Ministry of Railways has revised its passenger reservation form to benefit the passengers booking tickets through reservation windows across the nation.
- Now, the VIKALP scheme option will also be available on booking made through reservation windows and not just through online bookings.
- If the option of VIKALP is availed by passengers, he/she would have to mark his/her choice of alternate train departing within 12 hours, 24 hours, 48 hours.

#### ***Tourism Minister to launch first ever guidelines by government on Adventure Tourism***

- The Union Government would soon be issuing first-ever guidelines for Adventure Tourism in India.
- The guidelines on Safety and Quality Norms for Adventure Tourism in India have been formulated along with the Adventure Tour Operators Association of India (ATOAI).

#### ***CRY receives USD 100,000 grant from Oracle***

- The non-governmental child rights organisation, Child Rights and You (CRY) announced on May 30, 2018 that it has received a USD 100,000 grant from global technology major Oracle for a digitally enhanced monitoring system that would potentially improve lives of underprivileged children across 19 states.
- The USD 100,000 grant aims to harness the power of state-of-the-art digital technology in reaching out to underprivileged children of India.

#### ***GSK Consumer Healthcare launches Horlicks Mission Poshan with Amitabh Bachchan***

- Horlicks, the iconic brand from GSK Consumer Healthcare in May announced the launch of "Horlicks Mission Poshan" with legendary actor Amitabh Bachchan as the campaign ambassador.
- Supporting the Government's Rashtriya Poshan Abhiyaan, Horlicks Mission Poshan will focus on the first 1000 days of a child with the objective of addressing malnutrition, stunting and infant mortality. Amitabh Bachchan will be part of many activities planned all-round the year including a 12-hour live Telethon and awareness camps across schools and villages.

## Appointments in May

### India

Person	Appointed as	Organisation/Country
Sudha Balakrishnan	First ever chief financial officer (CFO)	Reserve Bank of India (RBI)
Subhash Chandra Khuntia	Chairman	Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDA)
Harendra Singh	Chief Coach	Indian Men's Hockey Team
Sjoerd Marijne	Chief Coach	Indian Women's Hockey Team
M B Verma	Director	Atomic Minerals Directorate for Exploration and Research (AMD), Department of Atomic Energy (DAE)
Kavinder Gupta	Deputy Chief Minister	Jammu and Kashmir
Ashok Lahiri	Full Time Member	15 <sup>th</sup> Finance Commission
Radhakrishnan Nair	Independent Director	ICICI Bank
Jagdish Mukhi	Acting Governor	Manipur
Justice Ajay Kumar Mittal	Acting Chief Justice	Punjab & Haryana High Court
Manish Misra	Chief Innovation Officer (CIO)	Panasonic India
Nitin Kulkarni	Chief Financial Officer (CFO)	Quick Heal Technologies
Akshay Kumar	Brand Ambassador	Policybazaar & Paisabazaar
Piyush Goyal	Minister	Ministry of Finance and Corporate Affairs
S.S. Ahluwalia	Minister of State	Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology
Mukul Rohatgi	Eminent Jurist	Lokpal Panel
MS Dhoni	Brand Ambassador	Netmeds Marketplace
Ramalingam Sudhakar	Chief Justice	Manipur High Court
K.G. Bopaiah	Pro-Tem Speaker	Karnataka Assembly
K. R. Ramesh Kumar	Speaker	Karnataka Assembly
Uttam Pacharne	Chairman	Lalit Kala Akademi
Amit Khare	Secretary	Union Information and Broadcasting Ministry
Anil Kumar Jha	Chairman-Cum-Managing director (CMD)	Coal India Limited
Rajinder Singh	President	Hockey India
Pravin L. Agrawal	Director	BHEL
H D Kumaraswamy	Chief Minister	Karnataka
C K Prasad	Chairman	Press Council of India (PCI)
Anubrata Biswas	MD & CEO	Airtel Payments Bank
Pradeep Kumar Gupta	Indian Ambassador	Islamic Republic of Mauritan
Mahender Singh Kanyal	Ambassador of India	Republic of Suriname
S. D. Moorthy	Ambassador of India	Republic of South Sudan
Ganeshi Lal	Governor	Odisha



Kummanam Rajasekharan	Governor	Mizoram
Sushil Chandra	Chairman	Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT)
Pankaj Saran	Deputy National Security Advisor (NSA)	India
Lt Gen Ranbir Singh	Commander	Northern Army

## World

Person	Appointed as	Organisation/Country
Justin Langer	Head Coach	Australia Cricket Team
Deepa Ambekar	Interim Judge	New York City Civil Court
Vladimir Putin	President	Russia
Dmitry Medvedev	Prime Minister	Russia
Carlos Alvarado	President	Costa Rica
Mahathir Mohamad	Prime Minister	Malaysia
Shashank Manohar	Chairman	International Cricket Council (ICC)
Gina Haspel	first female director	Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)
Nicolas Maduro	President	Venezuela
Gobind Singh Deo	First Sikh Cabinet Minister	Malaysia
Stacey Cunningham	First Female President	New York Stock Exchange
Nasirul Mulk	caretaker prime minister	Pakistan

## Days observed in May

Day	Observed on	Significance/Theme
Armour Day	1 May	Armoured Corps of Indian Army
International Labour Day	1 May	<b>2018 Theme:</b> "Uniting Workers for Social and Economic Advancement"
World Asthma Day	1 May 2018 (1 <sup>st</sup> Tuesday of May)	2018 Theme: 'Allergy and Asthma'
World Press Freedom Day	3 May	2018 Theme: Keeping Power in Check: Media, Justice and The Rule of Law
World Tuna Day	2 May	2018 Theme: "Is your tuna sustainable?"
International Firefighters' Day	4 May	
National Technology Day	11 May	2018 Theme: 'Science and Technology for a sustainable future'
World Migratory Bird	12 May (2 <sup>nd</sup> Saturday of May)	2018 Theme: Unifying our Voices for Bird Conservation
International Nurses Day	12 May	2018 Theme: Nurses A Voice to Lead – Health is a Human right
World Telecommunication and Information Society Day	17 May	2018 Theme: Enabling the positive use of Artificial Intelligence for All
World Hypertension Day	17 May	2018 Theme: Know your Blood Pressure
International Museum Day	18 May	2018 Theme: Hyperconnected museum: New approaches, new publics

World Metrology Day	20 May	2018 Theme: Constant evolution of the International System of Units
World Bee Day	20 May	2018 Theme: It's a Bee thing or not
HIV Vaccine Awareness Day	18 May	
International Day for Biological Diversity	22 May	2018 Theme: 'Celebrating 25 Years of Action for Biodiversity'
World Turtle Day	23 May	
World Menstrual Hygiene Day	28 May	2018 Theme: #NoMoreLimits
International Day of UN Peacekeepers	29 May	2018 Theme: 'UN Peacekeepers: 70 Years of Service and Sacrifice'
World Digestive Health Day	29 May	Viral Hepatitis, B and C: Lift the Global Burden
Goa Statehood Day	30 May	
World No Tobacco Day	31 May	2018 Theme: 'Tobacco and heart disease'

## Awards and Honors related news

### ***Jacqueline Fernandez becomes first recipient of PETA India's Digital Activism Award***

- For using her massive star power and far-reaching digital presence to advocate for the protection of all animals, Judwaa 2 actor and long-time animal rights proponent Jacqueline Fernandez has won People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) India's Digital Activism Award in the lead-up to National Technology Day on 11 May.
- Her actions for animals online include using social media to ask her fans to support PETA India's #FreeGajraj campaign – an effort that ultimately helped free an elephant used by a temple who had been kept in chains for over 50 years.

### ***Nisha Bhalla conferred with 'WEF Excellent Woman of Excellence award 2018'***

- Women Economic Forum is the largest global gathering of women entrepreneurs and leaders worldwide. This annual event recognises the most successful women across all fields, with guests like Nobel laureate Ouided Bouchamaoui.
- Nisha Bhalla, a 46-year-old holistic coach and consultant from Mumbai was felicitated at the recently concluded Annual WEF 2018 Awards, where she also spoke about 'Economics of Goodness in Giving and Philanthropy'.
- The event was held at Vivanta by Taj, Dwarka in Delhi from April 26 to May 1. Nisha was presented the 'Excellent Woman of Excellence' award for her spiritual service at the event on April 28.

### ***Indian American professor gets USD 1.6M grant to protect kidneys from obesity***

- Tahir Hussain, an Indian American professor of Pharmacology at the University of Houston, received a grant of USD 1.6 million from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to examine a kidney cell that could prevent damage from inflammation caused by obesity.
- The targeted cells express a protein called the angiotensin type 2 receptor (AT2R), which has anti-inflammatory and reno protective actions.
- If activated, the AT2R will protect against chronic and acute kidney injury.

### ***KISS Humanitarian Award 2018 conferred***

- Nobel Peace award winner and the founder of Grameen Bank Prof. Muhammad Yunus was conferred with the prestigious KISS Humanitarian Award 2018.
- Prof Yunus is the second Nobel laureate to be honoured with the award.
- KISS Humanitarian Award is an international award given to someone who has made an exceptional contribution to the society in various fields relating to social issues.

#### ***Sulabh International founder Dr Bindeshwar Pathak honoured with Nikkei Asia Prize***

- The founder of Sulabh International, Bindeshwar Pathak was honoured with the Nikkei Asia Prize in Japan for his contribution to Asia's development.
- Pathak was described as Indian social reformer tackling two of his country's biggest challenges — poor hygiene and discrimination. He was among three who were conferred with this award.
- Nikkei Asia Prize honours people in Asia who have made significant contributions in one of the three areas: Economic and Business Innovation; Science and Technology and Environment; and Culture and Community.

#### ***Japanese director Hirokazu Kore-eda wins the Palm d'or at Cannes 2018***

- Asian, Arab, and women filmmakers scored big at the closing ceremony of the 71st Cannes Film Festival, while Japanese director Hirokazu Kore-eda took home the top prize -- the Palme d'Or.
- Kore-eda, in the festival's main competition for the fifth time, won the Palme d'Or for 'Manbiki Kazoku' (Shoplifters), a deeply felt film about a cobbled-up family existing on the margins of society and fighting to prevent itself from imploding.
- Kore-eda is only the second Asian Palme d'Or winner this millennium (after Thailand's Apichatpong Weerasethakul for 'Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives', 2010). This is the seventh time that a director from Asia has bagged the coveted trophy.

#### ***Polish novelist Olga Tokarczuk wins Man Booker International Prize***

- Olga Tokarczuk has become the first Polish writer to win the Man Booker International Prize.
- Ms Tokarczuk took the £50,000 prize for her novel Flights. She will split the cash with translator Jennifer Croft.
- The annual award goes to the best work of translated fiction from around the world.
- Five judges picked Flights out of 108 submissions. The Man Booker International in a press release described Flights as "a novel of linked fragments from the 17th century to the present day, connected by themes of travel and human anatomy".

#### ***Julia Louis-Dreyfus To Receive 2018 Mark Twain Prize for American Humor***

- Julia Louis-Dreyfus later this year will be honored by the Kennedy Center with the Mark Twain Prize for American Humor, an award given to the world's greatest humorists.
- The "Veep" star will be saluted at a gala performance on October 21.

#### ***INSV Tarini team conferred Nari Shakti Puraskar 2017***

- The Union Minister for Women and Child Development, Maneka Gandhi presented the prestigious Nari Shakti Puraskar 2017 to the members of the INSV Tarini team in New Delhi on May 24, 2018.
- The all-women team comprised six members including Lt Commander Vartika Joshi, Lt Commander Pratibha Jamwal, Lt Commander Swathi Patarpalli, Lt Aishwarya Bodapatti, Lt SH Vijaya Devi and Lt Payal Gupta.

#### ***Singchung Bugun Village Community Reserve wins National Biodiversity Award***

- Arunachal Pradesh's Singchung Bugun Village Community Reserve, a non-governmental organisation, on May 24, 2018 won the National Biodiversity Award 2018 for conserving a bird species 'Bugun Liocichla', a rare wildlife resources found in the area.

- The Singchung Bugun Village Community Reserve was honoured with a citation, a memento and a cash prize of Rs 1 lakh at Hyderabad. Indi Glow and Sange Norbu Phiang, the leaders of the organisation, received the award.

#### ***Kerala cartoonist wins international award***

- Kerala cartoonist Thomas Antony has won an international award, in the best caricature category.
- Antony, currently working as an executive artist with a Malayalam daily, is among the nine winners at the 13th edition of the World Press Cartoon awards, instituted by an organisation based in Lisbon, Portugal.
- The awards are given to the best works published in 2017 in newspapers and magazines from around the world.

#### ***Indian singer Zubeen Garg to receive PETA award***

- India singer Zubeen Garg would be honoured with the 'Hero to Animals Award' from People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) India for his recent appeal to end animal sacrifice at the Kamakhya Temple in Assam.
- Zubeen had expressed his anguish over the ritual of animal sacrifice and appealed for putting an end to the practice while performing at a Bihu function near the temple recently.

#### ***Kailash Satyarthi, AS Kiran Kumar conferred with Santokbaa Humanitarian Award***

- President Ram Nath Kovind on May 30, 2018 presented the 'Santokbaa Humanitarian Award' to Child rights activist and Noble Laureate Kailash Satyarthi and to space scientist A S Kiran Kumar, former Chairman of Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).
- The award was bestowed during President's visit to diamond city Surat, Gujarat in the presence of the Gujarat Governor O P Kohli and Chief Minister Vijay Rupani.

## **Sports related news**

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#### ***India finishes on top in South Asian Junior Athletics Championships in Colombo***

- India on May 6, 2018 finished at the top in the South Asian Junior Athletics Championships in Colombo with 20 gold, 22 silver and 8 bronze medals. The Indian junior athletes also registered five new meet records.
- In girls' triple jump, Priyadarshini Suresh grabbed the gold medal with a record of 12.90 metres, while in girls' javelin throw Sanjana Choudhary bagged the top honours with a record of 48.08.
- In boys' shot put, Ashish Bhalothia set a new record and won the gold medal with an effort of 18.53 metres.
- Triple jumper Kamalraj Kanagaraj also contributed to India's gold medal tally with a record jump of 15.96 metres.

#### ***Gagan Narang, Pooja Ghatkar win silver medal in 10m air rifle event***

- Olympic medalist Gagan Narang made a fine comeback to the 10m air rifle event as he along with Pooja Ghatkar won the mixed team silver medal in the Grand Prix of Liberation international shooting competition in Pilsen, Czech Republic on May 6, 2018.
- The Indian pair, having topped the qualification with 833.2 points, with Pooja shooting 413.5 and Gagan 419.7, came close to overtaking Jurate Cesynaite and Karolis Girulis for the gold, before missing the target by 1.3 point.

#### ***Ettie revealed as 2019 women's World Cup mascot***

- FIFA and Local Organizing Committee in May introduced a young French poussin named Ettie as the official mascot for the 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup in France.
- Ettie, whose name comes from the French word étoile for star, is a young chicken with a passion for life and football. She has strong family connection with Footix, the official mascot for the 1998 FIFA World Cup in France, and is the daughter of Footix.
- After many years of playing football together, Footix realized that Ettie was a talented and fearless player, and was an excellent exhibition of the slogan of the FIFA Women's World Cup France 2019 - DARE TO SHINE.

#### ***Lionel Messi wins fifth European Golden Shoe award***

- Barcelona star striker Lionel Messi has been confirmed to pick the prestigious fifth European Golden Shoe award of his career after finishing the campaign as top La Liga goal scorer.
- The Argentine talisman picked the coveted trophy after smashing a total of 34 goals for Barcelona in their Liga-winning campaign.
- Though Messi was all-but assured of clinching the Golden Shoe award, the Premier League's early finish left Liverpool and Tottenham's star strikers no chance of catching up the Barcelona star.

#### ***AB de Villiers announces retirement from all forms of cricket***

- Star South Africa batsman AB de Villiers announced his decision to retire from all forms of cricket with immediate effect on May 23, 2018.
- The cricketer made the announcement through a video message, in which he said that he had "run out of gas." The 34-year-old batsman said that the time was right for him to hang up his boots, bringing a close to his exceptional 14-year career.
- Overall, De Villiers has played a total of 114 Test matches, 228 ODIs and 78 T20 Internationals.
- He signed off his career with a staggering 20,014 international runs including 8765 in Tests, 9577 in ODIs and 1672 in T20Is and a batting average of over 50 in both Tests and ODIs.
- He would, however, continue to be available for the Titans in domestic cricket.
- De Villiers is regarded as one of the greatest batsmen of all time. He holds many batting records, including the world's fastest ODI 50, 100 and 150, the fastest Test century by a South African and the fastest T20I 50 by a South African.
- He also holds the record for most Test innings without registering a duck (78).

#### ***Cabinet approve to set up India's first sports university in Manipur***

- The Union Cabinet in May approved an ordinance to set up the country's first national sports university in Manipur.
- Briefing reporters on the decisions of the Cabinet, Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said a bill to set up the university in Imphal (west) is already pending in Parliament. He said things will start moving fast once the President signs the ordinance. The Manipur government has already allocated land for the proposed university, he said.
- The ordinance will be on the lines of the bill introduced in Lok Sabha in August 2017. As of now, there are some institutes which offer various courses for athletes and coaches.
- The proposed university is expected to bridge this gap. The proposal to set up the national sports university in Manipur was initially announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, while Rs 100 crore funds for it were allocated in the 2014-15 budget.

#### ***IPL 2018: Chennai Super Kings win 3rd IPL title***

- Shane Watson blasted his second hundred this season and finished with the highest ever score in an IPL final as Chennai Super Kings decimated Sunrisers Hyderabad by eight wickets to win the IPL for the third time.
- Watson finished with 117 not out off 57 balls and was involved in valuable partnerships with Suresh Raina (32) and Ambati Rayudu (16 not out). Watson's unbeaten 117 was the highest score in an IPL final.
- CSK are now only the second team besides Mumbai Indians to win the IPL thrice.

- The victory in May also meant Harbhajan Singh and Rayudu became two of only three people to win the IPL as many as four times.

#### ***Real Madrid Beats Liverpool to win Champions League 2018***

- Real Madrid defeated Liverpool to the UEFA Champions League Final 2018. The final was held in Kiev, Ukrain.
- Gareth Bale scored two goals for Real Madrid, while Benzema scored the opener. Sadio Mane scored from Liverpool's side.
- Liverpool's star player Mohammed Salah(Egypt) got injured in the final.
- This was Real Madrid's 13th Champion's League victory. Cristiano Ronaldo equalled the record of Paolo Maldini by winning 6 UEFA Champions League.

#### ***China beat Japan to clinch 10th Thomas Cup win***

- China won their 10th Thomas Cup to regain their status as the best men's team in the world after a 3-1 win over Japan.
- Two-time world champion Chen Long dropped the first singles when he lost to a determined Kento Momota 9-21, 18-21 at Impact Arena in Bangkok in May.

#### ***Team Japan beat team Thailand 3-0 at BWF Uber Cup 2018 final***

- Thailand's fairytale run at the Uber Cup ended in May when the women's badminton team lost the tournament final 3-0 to top-seeded Japan.
- The victory in the best-of-five contest was the first in the biennial tournament by Japan in 37 years.

#### ***BCCI, UN Environment sign agreement to promote 'green' Cricket in India***

- The BCCI and United Nations Environment on May 27, 2018 signed an agreement to promote green' cricket in India.
- The letter of Intent was signed by BCCI acting secretary Amitabh Choudhary and Erik Solheim, Executive Director of UN Environment, at the BCCI headquarters in Mumbai ahead of the IPL 2018 final between Chennai Super Kings and Sunrisers Hyderabad.

## **News around the World**

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#### ***Dubai gets world's first AI-composed theme song***

- The world's first AI-composed (artificial intelligence) anthem dedicated to a city, titled 'Ode to Dubai', was unveiled at the ongoing Internet of Things Expo (IoT) at the Dubai World Trade Centre (DWTC) in May.
- Whilst it took weeks, months or even years for classical composers to create their piece, AI-powered Aiva finished 'Ode to Dubai' in just 72 hours, according to Barreau.

#### ***Trump announces May as National Mental Health Awareness Month***

- United States President Donald Trump in May has announced May to be observed as National Mental Health Awareness Month.
- While highlighting the initiatives taken by the country to provide treatment and recovery support services to the mentally ill patient, President Trump reflected his disappointment over the stigma attached with mental illness.

#### ***NASA set to launch 'InSight' mission to study Mars' deep interior***



- The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) is set to send its first-ever mission to Mars to study its deep interior and find traces of how it was formed.
- Scheduled to be launched on May 5, 2018, NASA's Interior Exploration using Seismic Investigations, Geodesy and Heat Transport (InSight) will be the first-ever mission dedicated to study the heart of Mars.
- It also will be the first NASA mission, after the Apollo Moon Landings, to place a seismometer on the soil of another planet. The seismometer is a device that measures quakes.

#### ***NASA's Kilopower Reactor could power missions to Mars***

- The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and the Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) on May 2, 2018 jointly demonstrated that the Kilopower portable nuclear fission reactor could enable crewed missions to the Moon, Mars and destinations beyond.
- The Kilopower Reactor Using Stirling Technology (KRUSTY) experiment was conducted at the NNSA's Nevada National Security Site from November 2017 through March 2018. The team successfully established that the system can create electricity with fission power.

#### ***Nobel Prize in Literature will not be awarded this year***

- The Swedish Academy on May 4, 2018 announced that the Nobel Prize in Literature will be not awarded this year following the sex-abuse allegations and other issues within its ranks that have stained the body's reputation.
- The decision was taken in view of the reduced public confidence in the Academy. However, the 2018 prize will be given in 2019.

#### ***US President Trump signs 'faith initiative' to promote religious freedom in US***

- US President Donald Trump on May 3, 2018 signed an executive order to create a faith-based initiative at the White House, which would promote policies that recognize the vital role of faith in American life.
- Trump signed the order during a ceremony in the White House Rose Garden on the occasion of the National Day of Prayer.

#### ***NASA launches InSight spacecraft to Mars to dig down deep***

- A robotic geologist armed with a hammer and quake monitor rocketed toward Mars, aiming to land on the red planet and explore its mysterious insides.
- In a twist, NASA launched the Mars InSight lander from California rather than Florida's Cape Canaveral. It was the first interplanetary mission ever to depart from the West Coast, drawing pre-dawn crowds to fog-soaked Vandenberg Air Force Base and rocket watchers down the California coast into Baja.
- The spacecraft will take more than six months to get to Mars and start its unprecedented geologic excavations, travelling 300 million miles (485 million kilometres) to get there.

#### ***Lebanon conducts first general election in nine years***

- The polling stations opened in Lebanon on May 6, 2018 for the country's first parliamentary election in nine years, a period marked by stretches of political paralysis and war in neighbouring Syria.
- The unofficial results are expected to start coming in and a formal tally is expected to be announced in the coming days.

#### ***12th informal meeting of SAARC Finance Ministers held in Manila***

- The 12th informal meeting of SAARC Finance Ministers was held on May 4, 2018 in Manila, the capital of Philippines in May on the sidelines of the 51st Annual Meeting of Asian Development Bank (ADB).
- The meeting was attended by the Finance Ministers/Heads of Delegations from all SAARC member states and was chaired by Nepal's Finance Minister Yuba Raj Khatriwada.

- According to a press statement issued by the SAARC Secretariat, Khattiwada underscored the need of concerted efforts to attain the objective of South Asian Economic Union as desired by the leaders of SAARC.

#### ***NASA, Uber team up to make flying cars a reality***

- The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) on May 8, 2018 signed a space act agreement with Uber Technologies to explore concepts and technologies related to Urban Air Mobility (UAM) for future air transportation such as flying cars in populated areas.
- Urban Air Mobility is a safe and efficient system for air vehicles, piloted or not, to move passengers and cargo within a city.
- The system could revolutionise the way people and goods move in crowded cities and vitally change the lifestyle.
- Under the agreement, Uber will share its plans with NASA for implementing the urban aviation rideshare network.

#### ***UN Chief Antonio Guterres announces to hold climate summit in September 2019***

- UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on May 8, 2018 announced to hold a climate summit in September 2019 in New York to review the commitments of the 2015 Paris Agreement on Climate Change.
- The announcement was made at the opening ceremony of the 37th session of the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.

#### ***Trump announces US withdrawal from Iran nuclear deal***

- The President of United States, Donald Trump on May 8, 2018 announced US withdrawal from the landmark 2015 nuclear deal with Iran.
- Trump stated through a televised address that the 2015 agreement, which included Germany, France and Britain, was a "horrible one-sided deal that should never ever have been made." He added that the United States "will be instituting the highest level of economic sanction."

#### ***Beijing to hold World Robot Conference***

- The 2018 World Robot Conference will be held in Beijing from August 15 to 19.
- The event will see over 12,000 competing teams and 50,000 participants from more than 10 countries and regions.
- A robot competition will be held during the conference where participants will compete in five categories.

#### ***Renewable industry created 500,000 plus jobs in 2017 globally: IRENA***

- According to the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) report, the renewable energy industry created more than 500,000 new jobs globally in 2017, a 5.3 per cent increase from the previous year, with India and China among the largest employers.
- The report, 5th edition of Renewable Energy and Jobs - Annual Review, was launched at IRENA's 15th council in Abu Dhabi on May 8, 2018.

#### ***China launches Gaofen-5 satellite to monitor air pollution***

- China successfully launched Gaofen-5 satellite, a hyperspectral imaging satellite, to monitor air pollution which is one of the country's major problems.
- The satellite was launched off the back of a Long March 4C rocket from the Taiyuan Satellite Launch Center in northern Shanxi Province.

#### ***World's second oldest rock is from Odisha***

- A rock sample discovered eight years ago from Champua in Odisha's Kendujhar district has put India at the forefront of geological research in the world.

- Scientists have found a grain of magmatic zircon (a mineral that contains traces of radioactive isotopes) in the rock that is an estimated 4240 million years old, making it the world's second oldest rock.

#### ***Sri Lankan army to set up Directorate of Overseas Operations***

- Sri Lankan army announced setting up of the 'Directorate of Overseas Operations' to defend itself against war crimes charges during the three-decade-long LTTE war.
- The Directorate was set up in April 2018 and is already engaged in the collection of the relevant material.

#### ***In a first, Nasa plans to send a helicopter to explore habitat on Mars***

- The US space agency said in May it plans to launch the first-ever helicopter to Mars in 2020, a miniature, unmanned drone-like chopper that could boost our understanding of the Red Planet.
- Known simply as "The Mars Helicopter," the device weighs less than four pounds (1.8 kilograms), and its main body section, or fuselage, is about the size of a softball.
- It will be attached to the belly pan of the Mars 2020 rover, a wheeled robot that aims to determine the habitability of the Martian environment, search for signs of ancient life, and assess natural resources and hazards for future human explorers.

#### ***SpaceX launches most powerful Falcon 9 rocket, carrying Bangladesh's first communication satellite***

- The California-based aerospace company SpaceX on May 11, 2018 launched its most powerful rocket yet 'Falcon 9', which is expected to carry humans to space later this year. The rocket was launched from Cape Canaveral, Florida
- The main aim behind the launching of the Block 5 Falcon 9 rocket was to propel Bangladesh's first high-orbit communications satellite, namely, Bangabandhu Satellite-1.
- The launch was initially expected to take place on May 10, 2018, but due to triggering of the automatic abort switch, the launch was postponed at the last minute.
- After successful liftoff, the rocket returned to an upright landing on the "Of Course I Still Love You" dronship stationed in the Atlantic Ocean.

#### ***Trump cuts funding to NASA system that monitors greenhouse gases***

- US President Donald Trump's administration has cut off the funding for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA) Carbon Monitoring System (CMS). The move comes at a time when the world is struggling to combat climate change.
- According to Science Magazine, the United States has repeatedly proposed cuts to NASA's earth science budget, including NASA's Carbon Monitoring System (CMS).
- The NASA system monitors the flow of greenhouse gases.

#### ***US opens new embassy in Jerusalem***

- The United States of America on May 14, 2018 officially relocated its embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, upholding the Jerusalem Embassy Act of 1995.
- US President Donald Trump did not attend the ceremony in Jerusalem however, he congratulated Israel through a video message broadcast saying that the opening had been "a long time coming."
- The US embassy was opened in Jerusalem on May 14, on the day that marked the 70th anniversary of the founding of the state of Israel, in the presence of several politicians and dignitaries including Ivanka Trump and her husband, Jared Kushner.

#### ***16-year-old Indian becomes youngest woman to scale Mt. Everest***

- A 16-year-old girl from Haryana has registered her name as the youngest woman to scale the world highest peak in May evening, according to local media.

- Born in Hisar of Haryana in north-western India, Shivangi Pathak climbed Mount Everest exploring a message that women could overcome every obstacle to achieve their goals.
- Pathak said that she was inspired by Arunima Sinha, who was the first Indian amputee to scale the nearly 29,000 ft peak.

#### ***China's first private rocket takes off***

- A Chinese based space startup, OneSpace has created history after it became the country's first private company to launch its own rocket.
- OneSpace said that it launched its OS-X rocket, measuring 9 meters tall successfully took off from a base in north-western China.
- The startup company has tied up with the Aviation Industry Corporation of China, a state-owned company to collect data for a research project for this mission.

#### ***Russia launches world's first floating nuclear power plant***

- Russia on May 19, 2018 launched 'Akademik Lomonosov', the world's first floating nuclear power plant at the St Petersburg shipyard.
- The plant is currently towed to a port town called Murmansk in northwest Russia, where it will be loaded up with fuel. The plant would be then taken to a town in the Arctic Circle called Pevek, where it will begin generating power in mid-2019.
- The 'Akademik Lomonosov' is to be the first of a fleet of floating nuclear power stations to be stationed in the Russian Arctic.

#### ***China launches satellite to explore dark side of moon***

- China on May 21, 2018 launched a relay satellite designed to establish a communication link between earth and a planned lunar probe that will explore the dark side of the moon.
- The satellite, known as Queqiao, or Magpie Bridge, will settle in an orbit about 455,000 km from earth and will be the world's first communication satellite operating there.
- China aims to catch up with Russia and the United States to become a major space power by 2030.

#### ***Paraguay inaugurates embassy in Jerusalem***

- Paraguayan President Horacio Cartes inaugurated his country's Israel embassy in Jerusalem on May 21, 2018.
- With the decision, the nation becomes the third one to take the controversial step of moving its embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.
- The first move was made by the United States and Guatemala followed suit just days later.

#### ***UNICEF launches data visualisation app***

- The UNICEF on May 24, 2018 launched a 'data visualisation app' which provides a user-friendly visual representation of complex analytics of the education scenario in the country.
- The app has been made with technical inputs from the UNICEF, in collaboration with the National Institute of Education Planning and Administration (NIEPA) and the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT).

#### ***Nepal becomes first country in South-East Asia to eliminate Trachoma: WHO***

- The World Health Organization (WHO) on May 21, 2018 declared Nepal as free from Trachoma, the world's leading infectious cause of blindness.
- With this, Nepal becomes first country in WHO's South-East Asia Region to eliminate Trachoma.
- Trachoma was the second leading cause of preventable blindness in Nepal in the 1980s.

- In 2002, the Nepal Government augmented its efforts to eliminate the disease by launching the National Trachoma Programme.

#### ***India's Arjun Vajpai becomes world's youngest to scale record six peaks over 8,000 m***

- Indian mountaineer Arjun Vajpai this week became the youngest person in the world to scale six peaks over 8,000 metres when he summited the treacherous Kangchenjunga, the third highest mountain in the world.
- Vajpai, who became the third youngest person to scale the Mount Everest at the age of 16 in 2010, started his journey to the Kangchenjunga peak on April 26 from the Advanced Base Camp, situated at a height of 5,400 metres.

#### ***Colombia to be NATO's first Latin American 'global partner'***

- Colombia would be formally joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) next week. The announcement was made by the country's President Juan Manuel Santos on May 25, 2018.
- With the move, Colombia will become the first Latin American nation to be a part of the alliance. It would be joining the bloc as a 'global partner', which means it will not necessarily have to take part in any joint military action and will be fully accredited in Brussels.
- The NATO alliance comprising 29 member nations reached a partnership agreement with Colombia in May 2017, following the signing of a peace deal with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Farc).

#### ***Hamburg to host 2018 Global Wind Summit***

- The first edition of the Global Wind Summit will be hosted by Germany from September 25-28, 2018 at Hamburg.
- The Global Wind Summit 2018 will be the biggest meeting point for business, networking and information for the whole of the wind industry – onshore and offshore.
- The summit combines two conferences 'WindEnergy Hamburg' and 'WindEurope'.

#### ***Ireland ends abortion ban as 'quiet revolution' transforms country***

- Ireland on May 26, 2018 voted to end the abortion ban, a move hailed as the culmination of "a quiet revolution" in one of the Europe's most socially conservative countries. A quiet revolution has been taking place in Ireland over the last couple of decades.
- Voters voted to liberalise the highly restrictive abortion laws by two-to-one, thus, allowing the government to bring in the new legislation by the end of the year.

#### ***Singapore Airlines to launch world's longest commercial flights in October***

- Singapore Airlines (SIA) will launch the world's longest commercial flights from October 11 between Singapore and New Jersey in the United States of America.
- The 161-seat flight will cover 15,329 km non-stop, with travelling time lasting up to 18 hours and 45 minutes.
- According to the SIA, tickets will be made available for sale progressively across various booking channels starting from Thursday.

#### ***US Capitol to host first-ever gathering of Indian-Americans***

- The US Capitol will for the first time on June 7, 2018 host Indian American elected officials, leaders, philanthropists and some 80 community members running for elected offices in the November mid-term elections.
- Senator Kamala Harris from California, the first ever Indian origin to be elected to the US Senate, is scheduled to deliver a keynote address to the one-of-its-kind of gathering.

#### ***Microsoft becomes third most valuable firm globally***

- Software giant Microsoft has surpassed Google's parent company Alphabet in market capitalisation for the first time in three years, becoming the third most valuable firm globally after Apple and Amazon.
- On May 29, 2018, Microsoft reportedly had a market cap of \$753 billion at the close of trading, almost \$14 billion ahead of Alphabet.
- While Apple leads with a market cap of nearly \$924 billion, Amazon is at a distant second, with nearly \$783 billion.

#### ***International Conference on the TRIPS CBD Linkage to be held on 7-8 June in Geneva***

- The International Conference on TRIPS- CBD Linkage will be held in Geneva on June 7-8, 2018 to revive WTO discussions on issues related to theft of traditional knowledge.
- The conference will be organised jointly by Indian Government, Centre for WTO Studies, Indian Institute of Foreign Trade and the South Centre, an inter-governmental organisation based in Geneva.
- The international conference will bring together indigenous people and communities in developing and developed countries; internationally acclaimed academicians; Geneva-based negotiators; and capital based experts.

## **Indexes, Reports and Lists released in May**

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#### ***World's most polluted cities list of WHO: Indian Government claims pollution dipped in 2017***

- As per the data released by the World Health Organisation (WHO), 14 Indian cities figure in a list of world's 20 most polluted cities in terms of particulate matter PM2.5 levels in 2016. While, in terms of PM10 levels, 13 cities in India figured among the 20 most-polluted cities of the world in 2016.
- The particulate matter PM2.5 includes pollutants like sulfate, nitrate and black carbon, which pose the greatest risk to human health. However, PM2.5 is more dangerous than PM10.
- To the contrary, Indian Government, in its response to the air pollution data released by the WHO, claimed that various pollution-control measures have led to decline in the pollution levels in 2017.
- As per the data released by WHO, Delhi's PM2.5 level in 2016 was at 143 microgrammes/cubic metre, making it the sixth most polluted city in the world.
- However, as per India's Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) data, Delhi's PM2.5 level was 134 microgrammes/cubic metre in 2016 and 125 microgrammes/cubic metre in 2017, showing an improvement.

#### ***India is fifth largest military spender in the world: SIPRI***

- The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) on May 2, 2018 released a report claiming that the world's military expenditure rose to USD 1739 billion in 2017, a marginal 1.1 percent increase from 2016.
- As per the report, India is the fifth largest military spender in the world. India spent USD 63.9 billion on its military in 2017, a 5.5 percent increase in the expenditure from 2016 and a 45 percent increase since 2008.
- The total global military expenditure accounted for 2.2 percent of the global Gross Domestic Product in 2017.
- The increase in global military expenditure has been largely due to the substantial growth in spending by countries in Asia, Oceania and the Middle East, such as China, India and Saudi Arabia.
- The top 5 military spenders in 2017 were the United States, China, Saudi Arabia, Russia and India.
- India and China, together, accounted for 60 percent of the total global defence expenditure of USD 1739 billion in 2017.
- China's military expenditure rose again in 2017 with a total military spending of USD 228 billion in 2017; while, Russia's military spending (USD 66.3 billion) fell for the first time since 1998.



- The US military spending of USD 610 billion was 2.7 times greater than that of China. The US military spending remained constant between 2016 and 2017.
- The total military spending by all 29 North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) members was USD 900 billion in 2017, accounting for 52 percent of world spending.

#### ***India slips to 11th spot in AT Kearney FDI Confidence Index 2018***

- Global consultant AT Kearney on May 3, 2018 released the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) Confidence Index 2018, an annual survey which tracks the impact of political, economic and regulatory changes on the FDI preferences of Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) and Chief Financial Officers (CFOs) of the country.
- The United States (US) topped the index, followed by Canada at 2nd and Germany at the 3rd place.
- The index ranked India at 11th spot, three places down from the previous year. In the year 2017, India was ranked 8th. It is the first time since 2015 that India has been pushed out of the top 10.
- However, India retained its position as the second highest ranked emerging market on the Index. A variety of recent reforms by the Union Government have made the country more business friendly, such as the abolition of the Foreign Investment Promotion Board (FIPB) in 2017 and liberalisation of FDI thresholds for the retail, aviation and biomedical industries.

#### ***India slips to 6th spot in business optimism index; weakest since 2014: Grant Thornton survey***

- With business sentiment at the "weakest" in four years, India slipped to the 6th position globally in the business optimism index for the first quarter of this year, says a survey.
- Business optimism is however at an "all-time high" globally with the index at net 61 per cent, the highest figure recorded in 15 years of research, as per Grant Thornton's quarterly global business survey released in May.
- Noting that business sentiment in India has been the weakest since 2014 in the first quarter, the advisory firm said the confidence has been shaken since the third quarter of 2017 with weakening currency and a surge in oil prices.
- With a score of 89, India is at the sixth place in the index. The top five nations are Austria, Finland, Indonesia, the Netherlands and the US. The conclusions are based on a quarterly global business survey of 2,500 businesses in 37 economies.

#### ***India ranked 4th in Asia-Pacific on power index***

- The inaugural Asia Power index by the Lowy Institute, an Australian think tank, has ranked India at the 4th position among 25 nations in the Asia Pacific region.
- The index measures the overall power of 25 countries and territories across the Asia-Pacific region including nations such as Pakistan, Russia, Australia, New Zealand and the United States.
- The index measures a country's overall power through its weighted average across eight measures of power - economic resources, military capability, resilience, future trends, diplomatic influence, economic relationships, defence networks and cultural influence.
- India was ranked fourth on the parameters of economic resources, military capability and diplomatic influence. It was ranked fifth on resilience.

#### ***Business Optimism Index 2018: India slips to 6th position in first quarter of 2018***

- India was ranked 6th in the first quarter of 2018 on Business Optimism Index released as part of Grant Thornton's International Business Report (IBR).
- The report was prepared based on the results of a survey of 2500 businesses in 37 economies.
- The top five nations are Austria, Finland, Indonesia, the Netherlands and US.

#### ***Forbes World's Most Powerful People list 2018: PM Modi ranked 9th, Xi Jinping tops***

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi was ranked among the 10 most powerful people in the world in the 2018 World's Most Powerful People list that is topped by Chinese President Xi Jinping.
- As per the World's Most Powerful People list, that was released on May 8, 2018, Reliance Industries (RIL) Chairman Mukesh Ambani is the only Indian businessman to feature in the list of 75 most powerful people.
- PM Modi (9th rank) and Mukesh Ambani (32nd rank) are the only two Indians on the Forbes World's Most Powerful People list.

#### **India saw 82 internet shutdowns in 2017-18; highest in south Asia: UNESCO**

- People in South Asian countries experienced at least 97 instances of Internet shutdown, a barometer on freedom of press and expression, between May 2017 and April 2018, with India alone accounting for 82 such cases, according to a UNESCO report.
- According to the Clampdowns and Courage-South Asia Press Freedom Report 2017-18, released recently by the UNESCO-International Federation of Journalists, Pakistan witnessed 12 instances of Internet shutdown, while Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka reported one such case each.
- Internet shutdown and deliberate slowdowns are increasing the world over and are now also a barometer on press freedom and freedom of expression controls. South Asia has witnessed the highest number of Internet shutdowns globally, with India earning the dubious crown for the country with the highest number of Internet shutdowns, the report said.

#### **WHO releases REPLACE guide to eliminate trans-fatty acids from food by 2023**

- The World Health Organisation (WHO) on May 15, 2018 released REPLACE, a guide for the elimination of industrially-produced trans-fatty acids from the global food supply by 2023.
- As per WHO, every year, trans fat intake leads to more than 500000 deaths of people from cardiovascular disease.
- Industrially-produced trans fats are contained in vegetable fats like margarine and ghee, and are often present in snack food, baked foods, and fried foods.
- Manufacturers often use them as they have a longer shelf life than other fats.
- There are two main sources for trans fats - natural sources such as dairy products and meat of ruminants such as cows and sheep; and industrially-produced sources such as partially hydrogenated oils.

#### **What does REPLACE stand for?**

1. REview dietary sources of industrially-produced trans fats.
2. Promote the replacement of industrially-produced trans fats with healthier fats and oils.
3. Legislate or enact regulatory actions to eliminate industrially-produced trans fats.
4. Assess and monitor trans fats content in the food supply.
5. Create awareness of the negative health impact of trans fats.
6. Enforce compliance of policies and regulations.

#### **WHO publishes its first Essential Diagnostics List**

- The World Health Organisation (WHO) on May 15, 2018 published its first 'Essential Diagnostics List', which is a catalogue of tests needed to diagnose the most common conditions along with a number of global priority diseases.
- The list aims to address people's inability to access diagnostic services, which results in them failing to receive the correct treatment.
- Speaking on the same, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said that an accurate diagnosis is the first step to getting effective treatment. "No one should suffer or die because of lack of diagnostic services, or because the right tests were not available," he added.
- The essential diagnostics list concentrates on in-vitro tests like tests of blood and urine.
- It comprises 58 tests for detection and diagnosis of a wide range of common conditions.

- It also comprises 55 tests for the detection, diagnosis and monitoring of 'priority' diseases such as HIV, tuberculosis, malaria, hepatitis B and C, human papillomavirus and syphilis.

#### **Swachh Surveskshan 2018: Indore, Bhopal & Chandigarh are Top 3 cleanest cities of India**

- Union Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs, Hardeep Puri on May 16, 2018 released the results of the Swachh Surveskshan 2018. Indore has emerged as the cleanest city again in India for second year in a row.
- Indore and Bhopal have managed to retain their positions as the top 2 cleanest cities, as that of previous year.

#### **List of national level awardees**

Category	Place
India's Cleanest City - No. 1	<b>Indore</b> , Madhya Pradesh
India's Cleanest City - No.2	<b>Bhopal</b> , Madhya Pradesh
India's Cleanest City - No.3	<b>Chandigarh</b>
India's Cleanest big City	<b>Vijaywada</b> , Andhra Pradesh
India's Fastest Mover big City	<b>Ghaziabad</b> , Uttar Pradesh
India's Best City in Citizens Feedback	<b>Kota</b> , Rajasthan
India's Best City in Innovation & Best Practices	<b>Nagpur</b> , Maharashtra
India's Best City in Solid Waste Management	<b>Navi Mumbai</b> , Maharashtra
India's Cleanest Medium City	<b>Mysuru</b> , Karnataka
India's Fastest Mover Medium City	<b>Bhiwandi</b> , Maharashtra
India's Cleanest Small City	<b>New Delhi Municipal Council</b>
India's 'Fastest Mover' Small City	<b>Bhusawal</b> , Maharashtra
Cleanest State Capital	<b>Greater Mumbai</b> , Maharashtra
Fastest Mover State Capital	<b>Jaipur</b> , Rajasthan
Best State Capital in Citizens Feedback	<b>Ranchi</b> , Jharkhand
Best State Capital in Innovation & Best Practices	<b>Panaji</b> , Goa
Best State Capital in Solid Waste Management	<b>Greater Hyderabad</b> , Telangana

### **Key highlights**

- Chandigarh was ranked as the third cleanest city, moving up from Rank 11 in 2017.
- Uttar Pradesh's Ghaziabad was named as the fastest moving big city of the Swachh Survekshan 2018, moving up to Rank 36 from the previous 351 in 2017.
- Jharkhand was declared as the best performing state, followed by Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh.
- In terms of sanitation coverage, around 2133 cities and urban local bodies have been certified as ODF and 2679 cities have self-declared themselves as ODF and await certification.
- The Swachh Survekshan 2018 was organised by the Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) under the aegis of the Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban) with an aim to estimate levels of cleanliness across cities in the country.
- This cleanliness survey was undertaken by 2700 assessors between January 4 to March 10, 2018.

### **Amitabh Bachchan most engaging Indian actor on Facebook**

- Superstar Amitabh Bachchan has been voted the most engaging Indian actor on Facebook in a new survey.
- According to Score Trends, the 75-year-old actor has over 30 million followers on the popular social networking site.
- The survey ranked Bachchan at number one position with 100 points on Facebook, closely followed by Salman Khan with 95 points and Shah Rukh Khan with 68 points.
- The 'Padmaavat' actor Ranveer Singh was ranked fourth with 52 points and Akshay Kumar was ranked fifth with 49 points.

### **'India sixth wealthiest country with total wealth of USD 8,230 bn'**

- India is the sixth wealthiest country in the world with a total wealth of \$8,230 billion, while the US is the richest nation globally, says a report.
- According to the AfrAsia Bank Global Wealth Migration Review, the US is the wealthiest country in the world with a total wealth of \$62,584 billion, followed by China (\$24,803 billion) at the second place and Japan (\$19,522 billion) at the third place.
- "Total wealth" refers to the private wealth held by all the individuals living in each country. It includes all their assets (property, cash, equities, business interests) less any liabilities. We exclude government funds from our figures. Larger countries have an advantage due to higher populations.
- Other countries in the top 10 wealthiest list includes the UK (\$9,919 billion), Germany (\$9,660 billion), India (\$8,230 billion), Australia (\$6,142 billion), Canada (\$6,393 billion), France (\$6,649 billion) and Italy (\$4,276 billion).

### **India ranks 145th among 195 countries in terms of healthcare access: Lancet Study**

- As per Lancet's Global Burden of Disease study, India ranked 145th among 195 countries in terms of quality and accessibility of healthcare on the Healthcare Access and Quality Index (HAQ Index).
- However, despite such low rankings, India saw improvements in healthcare access and quality since 1990.
- India lags behind its neighbours such as China (48th rank), Sri Lanka (71st rank), Bangladesh (133rd rank) and Bhutan (134th rank).
- However, India's health index was better than that of Nepal (149th rank), Pakistan (154th rank) and Afghanistan (191st rank).
- The five countries with the highest levels of healthcare access and quality in 2016 were Iceland (97.1 points), Norway (96.6), the Netherlands (96.1), Luxembourg (96.0), and Finland and Australia (each with 95.9).
- The countries with the lowest scores were - Central African Republic (18.6), Somalia (19.0), Guinea-Bissau (23.4), Chad (25.4), and Afghanistan (25.9).
- China and India had the widest disparities in healthcare access and quality with 43.5 and 30.8 point differences, respectively.

### **India ranks 44th in IMD's competitiveness rankings**

- India ranked at 44th place in terms of competitiveness in the annual rankings compiled by International Institute for Management Development (IMD).
- As per the rankings, the US is the most competitive economy, followed by Hong Kong and Singapore in the second and third place.
- Out of the 14 Asian countries on the list, India ranked 12th.

### **HDFC Bank's Aditya Puri figures in Barron's top 30 global CEO list**

- HDFC Bank's managing director Aditya Puri has figured in the top 30 global CEOs list published by Barron's.
- The international publication has included Puri in this prestigious list for the fourth consecutive year, HDFC Bank said in a statement.
- Puri's name figured with Jeff Bezos of Amazon; Warren Buffett of Berkshire Hathaway; Jamie Dimon of JPMorgan Chase; Larry Page of Alphabet; Reed Hastings of Netflix; Satya Nadella of Microsoft and Mark Zuckerberg of Facebook, it said.
- "He turned a start-up into a banking giant and helped bring Indians into the modern financial era.
- Even after 24 years at the helm, Puri, 67, elicits effusive praise from investors, with descriptions ranging from, one of the most impressive CEOs we have come across," the statement quoting Barron's said.
- The career banker methodically built a start-up into India's second-largest private-sector bank by market value, it said.

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