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# MONTHLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

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February, 2018

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### ***Narendra Modi inaugurates Global Investment Summit in Guwahati***

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi in February inaugurated the two-day Global Investment Summit in Guwahati, a first of its kind initiative in the northeast, and said a new terminal being constructed at Guwahati airport would boost the region's connectivity with Asean countries.
- Addressing the event, being held at the Sarusojai Stadium in Guwahati, the Prime Minister expressed his happiness that Bangladesh and Bhutan have opened their consulate offices in Guwahati and said the northeast is at the heart of India's 'Act East Policy'.
- Modi said the initiatives taken by the BJP-led NDA government at the Centre for the last three and half years "are becoming evident" and that his government had spent Rs 5,300 crore every year in northeastern states to improve the railway network.

### ***Assam Government, NBCC sign MoU for construction of Twin Tower Trade Centre in Guwahati***

- Assam Government on February 2, 2018 signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the National Building Construction Corporation (NBCC) for construction of 65-storey Twin Tower Trade Centre in Guwahati.
- The agreement was signed under the pro-active "Act East Policy" of the Union Government aiming at elevating and harnessing the strengths of North-East India and reducing the isolation of the region by improving all round connectivity and civic infrastructure.
- The Union Government has planned an investment of approximately Rs 45000 crore for the development of India's North-Eastern regions bordering China, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Myanmar.
- The agreement was signed ahead of the two-day Global Investors' Summit 'Advantage Assam'.

### ***IWAI signs project agreement with the World Bank for Jal Marg Vikas Project on Ganga***

- Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) on February 2, 2018 signed a project agreement with the World Bank for Jal Marg Vikas Project on river Ganga.
- World Bank entered into a USD 375 million loan agreement with the Department of Economic Affairs, Union Ministry of Finance for Jal Marg Vikas Project (JMVP).
- The signing of the project agreement follows the approval of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs for the implementation of the USD 800 million JMVP for capacity augmentation of navigation on National Waterway-1 (River Ganga) from Varanasi to Haldia.
- Out of the remaining amount, USD 380 million is to be sourced through the Union Government counterpart funds from budgetary allocation and proceeds from the bond issue. Another USD 45 million will come from private sector participation under the PPP mode.

### ***GPX Global to invest Rs 400 crore in second data centre in Mumbai***

- Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis in February said GPX Global is investing Rs 400 crore for its upcoming tier 4 data centre in Mumbai.
- GPX Global Systems already has a data centre at Andheri, in which it has invested Rs 700 crore.

### ***Indian Railways adopts GCC services for contractors***

- Union Minister Piyush Goyal in February said the Indian Railways have introduced new General Conditions of Contracts (GCC) for Services to define the terms and conditions for contractors engaged in service contracts for non-operational areas.
- The non-operational areas include - housekeeping, facilities management, Consultancy among others, as distinct from Works.

- It also stated that the new policy of General Conditions of Contract for Services, for the first time, introduces the concepts of digital labour management system, stepped performance guarantee in place of security deposit, access to liquidity as a qualifying criteria and specific provisions violation of which will lead to disqualification of bidders.

#### ***Bitcoin-based earnings subject to taxation, clarifies CBDT Chairman***

- Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) Chairman Sushil Chandra in February clarified that money earned from bitcoins would be applicable for taxation.
- Amid the rising popularity of Bitcoins, the Government has time and again, reiterated that such kind of virtual currencies will not be considered legal tender in India.
- Recently, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley in his Budget speech stressed that the Government does not consider cryptocurrencies as legal tender, and will take measures to eradicate use of cryptocurrencies for illegitimate activities.

#### ***Govt to launch KUSUM scheme to promote solar farming among farmers***

- Union government announced a fund of Rs 1.4 lakh-crore for the ambitious Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahaabhiyan (KUSUM) scheme. The scheme will work towards promoting solar power production a.k.a. solar farming up to 28,250 MW to help farmers.
- The Union Budget 2018-2019 has allotted Rs 48,000 crore to lead the scheme for a period of ten years.

#### **KEY FACTS ABOUT THE KUSUM SCHEME**

- KUSUM scheme will provide 1.75 million off-grid agricultural solar pumps
- It will build 10,000 MW solar plants on barren lands for solar farming
- Farmers will be given a chance to earn extra income if they help produce additional power by setting up solar power project on their barren land
- The energy produced by the farmers on their barren land will be bought by the state electricity distribution companies (DISCOMS)
- The scheme is likely to decrease the consumption of diesel in the agriculture sector (used in pumps)
- KUSUM scheme also includes the distribution of 17.5 lakh solar pumps for which 60 per cent subsidy will be given to the farmers.

#### ***Union Government announces few clarifications regarding Mukhya Mantri Anila Bhagya Yojana***

- The Union Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas on February 6, 2018 clarified that Ministry had advised Karnataka Government to implement MMABY as a complementary Scheme of PMUY and follow the procedure of implementing the Scheme through Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) only, which is being followed in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Assam, Punjab and Haryana.
- The clarification came after the Ministry saw the advertisement of the Government of Karnataka in Times of India (Bengaluru Edition) wherein it has been published that Mukhya Mantri Anila Bhagya Yojane (MMABY) is being implemented in collaboration with Government of India.

#### ***RBI keeps interest rates unchanged at six per cent, reserve repo rate at 5.75 per cent***

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in February kept the repo rate and reverse repo rate unchanged at 6 percent and 5.75 percent respectively.
- The central bank's six-member Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), in its Bi-monthly Monetary Policy Statement, 2017-18, noted that the GVA growth as per the first advance estimates (FAE) released by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) is estimated to drop to 6.1 percent in 2017-18 from 7.1 percent in 2016-17
- Consumer price index (CPI) inflation for 2018-19 is estimated in the range of 5.1-5.6 per cent in H1, including diminishing statistical HRA impact of central government employees, and 4.5-4.6 per cent in H2, the RBI said in its statement.

### ***GST Council recommends relief in GST on Circus, Dance and Theatrical Performances***

- The GST Council has recommended that the threshold price limit of Admission Ticket for circus, dance, theatrical performances including drama or dance, award functions, pageants, concerts, musical performances, and recognized sporting events may be increased from Rs. 250 per person to Rs.500 per person.
- The limit was increased for the purpose of GST exemption on Circus, Dance and Theatrical Performances. The Council has further recommended that admission to planetarium may also be given the benefit of this threshold exemption of up to Rs 500 per person.

### ***GST Council recommends relief in GST on services provided by the Resident Welfare Associations***

- In its 25th Meeting held on January 18, 2018, the GST Council recommended several measures granting relief from GST on a number of goods and services. One of the important reliefs granted by the Council was on the services provided by the members of a Resident Welfare Association (RWA).
- For this purpose, the Council recommended increase in the limit of contribution made by members of a Resident Welfare Association (RWA) from Rs 5000 to Rs 7500 per month per member.

### ***GST rate on admission to amusement parks and ballet reduced from 28% to 18%***

- The GST Council recommended reduction of GST rate on services by way of admission to Amusement Parks including theme parks, water parks, joy rides, merry-go-rounds, go-carting and ballet from 28 per cent to 18 per cent. These services up till now attracted GST of 28 per cent.
- This change came after the council received requests from several quarters that amusement parks promote social wellness and learning for children and their families in a real active entertainment and therefore, the rate may be reduced to 18 per cent.

### ***RBI grants payment extension to select MSMEs***

- In a bid to relieve Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) of payment-related woes, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in February announced that select companies would be provided additional time to repay loans.
- Post the announcement of the sixth bi-monthly monetary policy statement, the RBI's six-member Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) said Goods and Services Tax (GST)-registered MSMEs with aggregate standard exposure of up to Rs. 25 crore with amounts overdue as on September 2017 would be allowed 180 days more to make repayments.
- Presently, banks and NBFCs in India classify a loan account as Non-Performing Asset (NPA) based on 90 and 120-day delinquency norms, respectively.
- To this, the RBI noted that formalisation of business through registration under GST had adversely impacted the cash flows of the smaller entities during the transition phase with consequent difficulties in meeting their repayment obligations to banks and NBFCs.

### ***NHAI to launch pilot project for implementation of "Pay as You Use" Tolling on Delhi-Mumbai Highway***

- The National Highways Authority of India on February 7, 2018 announced to launch a pilot project for the implementation of the "Pay as you use" tolling on Delhi-Mumbai Highway to study the implement ability of the system in the country.
- The pilot project involves implementing a satellite based electronic toll collection system running on GPS/GSM technology for around 500 commercial vehicles on the Delhi Mumbai national highway. The project will run for one year.

### ***First ever India-UK Createch summit produces £58m in commercial deals***

- The India - UK Createch Summit took place in Mumbai in February and is the first conference in India dedicated to the new and emerging field.

- This summit takes place at an exciting time and explored how the technology and creative industries are converging to produce a new wave of innovation which is leading to the development of new products and businesses.
- Virtual and augmented reality, robotics and artificial intelligence are increasingly commonplace, and are redefining how we live.

#### ***AxisDirect launches WhatsApp Virtual Assistant***

- Leading stock broking house, AxisDirect, announced the launch of WhatsApp broadcast services to provide timely and personalised market information to investors on the go.
- In this age of information overload, retail investors often find it a time-consuming process to track updates related to markets as well as their investment portfolio. The feature combines the convenience by leveraging WhatsApp as a medium of communication and offers personalisation by sending relevant content to users.

#### ***Jammu and Kashmir, Dubai Ports form JV for developing inland hubs***

- In a significant move, the Jammu and Kashmir government and Dubai Ports Group in February inked a pact for a joint venture involving maiden Rs 1,500 crore foreign direct investment for setting up inland logistic hubs in Jammu and Srinagar capital cities.
- A high-level delegation of the Dubai Ports Group (DP World) led by its Chairman and CEO Sultan Ahmed Bin Sulayem arrived by a chartered flight here this morning to discuss the modalities for setting up inland logistics hubs in Jammu and Srinagar.

#### ***Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India amends regulations for insolvency resolution process***

- Insolvency resolution professionals will now be required to assess the fair value and liquidation value of the entity undergoing insolvency proceedings, with the latest set of amendments to the regulations.
- The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) has amended the norms pertaining to insolvency resolution process for corporate persons.

#### ***RBI launches Ombudsman Scheme for NBFCs***

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) launched 'Ombudsman Scheme' for non-banking financial companies (NBFC) for redressal of complaints against them.
- As per the RBI, this Scheme will offer a speedy and cost-free complaint redressal mechanism relating to deficiency in the services by NBFCs covered under the Scheme.
- The Scheme will be known as 'Ombudsman Scheme for Non-Banking Financial Companies, 2018'.
- According to the apex bank, the Scheme will cover all deposit-taking NBFCs for now and based on the result and experience gained, it would extend the scheme to cover those NBFCs who have the asset size of Rs. 100 crore and above with customer interface.
- The Ombudsman Scheme will provide an Appellate mechanism under which the complainant/ NBFC has the option to appeal against the decision of the Ombudsman before the Appellate Authority.
- The NBFC ombudsmen will function and the complaints of customer as per zone wise. For this NBFC ombudsmen will discharge their functions from four offices in Chennai, Mumbai, Kolkata and New Delhi.
- As per the RBI notification, for redressal of grievance under Ombudsman Scheme, the complainant must first approach the concerned NBFC.
- NBFC Ombudsman will not charge any fee for filing and resolving customers' complaints.
- If the NBFC does not reply within a period of 30 days (one month) after receipt of the complaint from complainant or the NBFC rejects the complaint, or if the complainant is not happy with the reply given by the NBFC, then the complainant can file the complaint with the NBFC Ombudsman.

#### ***Reserve Bank of India to link base rate with MCLR***

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in February said that it will link the base rate with the Marginal Cost of Funds based Lending Rates (MCLR) from April 1 to ensure expeditious transmission of its policy rate to borrowers.
- Although the RBI had introduced the MCLR system with effect from April 1, 2016, the central bank in a statement said that a large proportion of bank loans continue to be linked to the base rate.
- The RBI Deputy Governor NS Vishwanathan on February 7, after the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting, had said that the apex bank had decided to harmonize the methodology of determining benchmark rates by linking base rate to MCLR, as it is more sensitive to policy rate signals.

#### ***Emirates Group signs MoU with AP to boost aviation sector***

- The Emirates Group signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in February with the Andhra Pradesh Economic Development Board, Government of Andhra Pradesh, to establish a framework for collaboration in the aviation sector.
- The MoU was signed by Sheikh Ahmed Bin Saeed Al Maktoum, Chairman and Chief Executive Emirates Airline & Group, and Krishna Kishore, CEO, Andhra Pradesh Economic Development Board (APEDB), according to a statement from APEDB.

#### ***CCI imposes Rs 135.86 crore penalty on Google for search bias***

- The Competition Commission in February imposed a fine of Rs 136 crore on internet giant Google for unfair business practices in the Indian market for online search.
- After a detailed probe on the complaints filed in 2012, the regulator through a majority order said the penalty is being imposed on Google for "infringing anti-trust conduct".
- Google's specialised search options that lead to its commercial flight unit, prohibitions imposed under the negotiated search intermediation agreements and ranking of universal results prior to 2010 were found to be violating competition norms.

#### ***CCEA approves enhancement of target under Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana***

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs on February 7, 2018 approved enhancement of the target of Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) from 5 crore to 8 crore with an additional allocation of Rs 4800 crore.
- The decision came after witnessing huge response to Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) from women particularly in rural areas and to cover households not having LPG connection. The revised target of PMUY will be achieved by 2020.
- While increasing the target, the Government also addressed the difficulties faced in the implementation of the scheme such as the left behind genuinely poor households which were not addressed in the Socio Economic Caste Survey (SECC) list.

#### ***Defence Minister appoints panel to expedite capital acquisition for armed forces modernisation***

- To expedite capital acquisitions to bolster armed forces preparedness, Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has constituted a 13-member Raksha Mantri Advisory Committee on Ministry of Defence Capital Projects (RMCOMP).
- As per the Defence Ministry, under the terms of reference of the committee, it has to undertake an independent review and check the status of ongoing critical projects worth more than Rs 500 crore.
- The committee will be headed by Vinay Sheel Oberoi, a former secretary in the government and the committee will have tenure until the end of August 2018.

#### ***Cabinet approves hike in MSP for Copra for 2018 season***

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, approved the increase in the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for Fair Average Quality (FAQ) of "Milling Copra" to Rs 7500 per quintal for 2018 season from Rs. 6500 per quintal in 2017.
- The MSP for FAQ of "Ball Copra" has been increased to Rs 7750 per quintal for 2018 season from Rs 6785 per quintal in 2017.

**Cabinet approves changes in the Major Port Authorities Bill 2016**

- The Union Cabinet approved the incorporation of the Official Amendments to the Major Port Authorities Bill, 2016, which is pending in the Parliament. The Amendments are based on the recommendations of the Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee.
- As per the amendments, the number of the Labour representatives to be appointed in the Port Authority Board among the serving employees of the Port has been increased from one to two. The number of Independent Members in the Port Authority Board would be minimum two to maximum four.

**Union Cabinet approves implementation of Prime Minister Research Fellows Scheme**

- The Union Cabinet on February 7, 2018 approved implementation of the 'Prime Minister's Research Fellows (PMRF) Scheme' with a total outlay of Rs 1650 crore for a period of seven years beginning from Financial Year 2018-19.
- The scheme was announced by Finance Minister Arun Jaitley in his Budget Speech 2018-19.
- Under this scheme, the best students who have completed or are in the final year of B. Tech or Integrated M.Tech or M.Sc. in Science and Technology streams from IISc, IITs, NITs, IISERs and IIITs, will be offered direct admission in PhD programme in the IITs/IISc.

**Union Cabinet approves ratification of Minamata Convention on Mercury**

- The Union Cabinet on February 7, 2018 approved the proposal for ratification of Minamata Convention on Mercury and depositing the instrument of ratification, enabling India to become a Party of the Convention.
- The approval will bring about ratification of the Minamata Convention on Mercury along with flexibility for continued use of mercury-based products and processes involving mercury compound up till 2025.

**Bank of Baroda launches 'Baroda DigiNext'**

- Bank of Baroda in February launched 'Baroda DigiNext', a product for digitising cash management of corporate and government customers, the public sector lender said in a release.
- Baroda DigiNext aims at bringing the benefits of the new digital landscape to its corporate and government customers by seamlessly connecting them with their customers, suppliers, employees and revenue departments, it said.

**BoB signs MoU to become preferred lender for FPOs in Maharashtra**

- Nationalised banks are hopeful of increasing lending to the priority sector following the Budget announcement of 100 per cent tax deduction for the next five years for farmer producer organisations (FPOs) with a turnover of up to Rs 100 crore.
- The Small Farmers' Agribusiness Consortium (SFAC) has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Bank of Baroda, which has become a preferred lender for FPOs in Maharashtra.
- It has already entered into an agreement with the consortium for lending to FPOs in the rest of the country. India has about 4,000 FPOs promoted by various organisations such as SFAC, Nabard and other development institutions.

**Union Cabinet approves auction of 60 Discovered Small Fields of ONGC, OIL**

- The Union Cabinet on February 7, 2018 approved the Discovered Small Fields (DSF) Policy Bid Round-II of 60 un-monetised discoveries of ONGC and OIL under Nomination and Relinquished Discoveries.
- Out of these 60 un-monetised discoveries, 22 fields belong to of Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) Limited, 5 belong to Oil India Limited (OIL) and 12 are abandoned fields from the New Exploration and Licensing Policy (NELP) Blocks.

**Union Government launches ASH TRACK Mobile App for management of fly ash**

- Union Minister of State for Power and New & Renewable Energy RK Singh on February 9, 2018 launched a Web-Based Monitoring System and a fly ash mobile application named 'ASH TRACK'.
- Both the platforms are expected to enable better management of the ash produced by thermal power plants by providing an interface between fly ash producers such as thermal power plants and potential ash users such as road contractors, cement plants, etc.
- The proper management of fly ash is essential for the environment as the ash produced by the power plants occupies a lot of land space.

#### **WhatsApp releases payment-enabled beta version in partnership with NPCI**

- WhatsApp has released a payment-enabled beta version of its messaging app in India. ET had reported January 18 that Facebook-owned WhatsApp could go live with payments as early as this month. The beta has been released to some users, sparking social media chatter.
- The exercise is being undertaken in partnership with the National Payments Corporation of India, the umbrella body for digital payments. Other users tweeted screenshots of registration, linking to bank accounts and executing transactions. WhatsApp didn't respond to queries.
- As per initial reports, WhatsApp allows peer-to-peer payments through the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) infrastructure. 'Payments' shows up in the options for attachments in the chat window.

#### **RBI panel bats for self-regulation, legal reforms for fintech companies**

- The Reserve Bank of India has recommended innovation labs, more partnerships and data protection laws, dedicated organization structure under each financial regulator tighter regulations and a self-regulatory body for FinTech companies.
- Last year, RBI had set up an inter-regulatory Working Group to study the entire gamut of regulatory issues relating to FinTech and Digital Banking in India. Chaired by Sudarshan Sen, Executive Director of RBI, the group includes members of Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) and Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA), CRISIL rating agency and technology heads from State Bank of India, HDFC Bank and A.P. Hota, former CEO of NPCI (National Payments Corporation of India).

#### **PNB signs pact with National e-Gov Services**

- Punjab National Bank has signed an agreement for information utility with National e-Governance Services Limited.
- The objective of the agreement is to augment the information infrastructure in India.
- The agreement will enable storing of financial information that will help substantiate defaults and verify claims expeditiously. This will in turn facilitate resolution in the National Company Law Tribunal in a time bound manner, according to a PNB release.

#### **Paisabazaar.com collaborates with Microsoft to build 'industry first' technologies**

- Online lending marketplace Paisabazaar.com has entered into a partnership with Microsoft to drive an 'industry first' technology innovation on its platform using artificial intelligence and machine learning.
- As part of the overall partnership, Paisabazaar.com will move its entire infrastructure to Microsoft Azure.
- Paisabazaar.com receives customers from varied segments from more than 750 cities and towns across India every month. By building cutting-edge technology on Microsoft cloud, Paisabazaar.com intends to offer customized, tailor-made and secure solutions for each consumer coming to its platform.

#### **India Post Payments Bank to enable Digital Payments in Post Offices by April 2018**

- The India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) on February 10, 2018 announced that it will enable Digital Payments in Post Offices by April 2018, as scheduled earlier.
- The announcement came after some sections of the media reported revision in timelines of the India Post Payments Bank Expansion Programme.

- Once the proposed India Post Payments Bank Expansion Programme is accomplished, IPPB will be providing the largest financial inclusion network in the country, covering both urban as well as rural surroundings.
- It will provide digital payment services at the doorstep with the help of Postmen and Gramin Dak Sewaks (GDS).

**Gadkari releases India's first manual on road expansion**

- Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari in February released India's first highway capacity manual "Indo-HCM" which will guide road engineers and policymakers on issues related to road expansion.
- Developed by the Central Road Research Institute (CRRI), the manual is based on an extensive, country-wide study of the traffic characteristics on different categories of roads like a single lane, two-lane and multi-lane urban roads, inter-urban highways and expressways, and the associated intersections on these roads. While launching the manual, Gadkari expressed hope that the manual would help in scientific planning and expansion of road infrastructure in the country.

**RBI announces Revised Framework for Resolution of Stressed Assets; withdraws CDR, SDR, S4A and JLF**

- The Reserve bank of India (RBI) on February 12, 2018 has revised the new stressed assets framework to tighten its rules around bank loan defaults and asked banks to immediately identify defaults and make disclosures every Friday to the RBI credit registry from February 23.
- In order to accelerate resolution of the bad loans problem at Indian Banks, the RBI has abolished half a dozen existing loan-restructuring mechanisms which includes **Corporate Debt Restructuring Scheme, Flexible Structuring of Existing Long Term Project Loans, Strategic Debt Restructuring Scheme (SDR), Framework for Revitalising Distressed Assets, Change in Ownership outside SDR, and Scheme for Sustainable Structuring of Stressed Assets (S4A) and the Joint Lenders' Forum (JLF) with immediate effect.**
- RBI, according to its release, said that in view of the enactment of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 (IBC), it has been decided to substitute the existing guidelines with a harmonised and simplified generic framework for resolution of stressed assets.

**Revised Framework**

**Early identification and reporting of stress**

As per the RBI circular, lenders shall identify incipient stress in loan accounts, immediately on default, by classifying stressed assets as special mention accounts (SMA) as per the following categories:

| SMA Sub-categories | Basis for classification – Principal or interest payment or any other amount wholly or partly overdue between |
|--------------------|---|
| SMA-0              | 1-30 days   |
| SMA-1              | 31-60 days  |
| SMA-2              | 61-90 days  |

- The RBI said that lenders shall report credit information, including classification of an account as SMA to Central Repository of Information on Large Credits (CRILC) on all borrower entities having aggregate exposure of Rs 50 million (Rs 5 crore) and above with them.
- The CRILC-Main Report will now be submitted on a monthly basis with effect from April 1, 2018.
- In addition, the lenders shall report to CRILC, all borrower entities in default (with aggregate exposure of Rs 5 crore and above), on a weekly basis, at the close of business on every Friday.
- If Friday happens to be a holiday in that particular week then on the preceding working day. The first such weekly report shall be submitted for the week ending February 23.

**Timelines for large accounts**

In respect of accounts with aggregate exposure of the lenders at Rs 2,000 crore and above, on or after March 1 (Reference date), including accounts where resolution may have been initiated under any of the existing schemes as well as accounts classified as restructured standard assets which are currently in respective specified periods, the Resolution Plan (RP) shall be implemented as per following timelines.

- i) If in default as on the reference date, then 180 days from the reference date.
- ii) If in default after the reference date, then 180 days from the date of first such default.

#### **Immediate Resolution Plan**

- The central bank has asked all lenders to put in place Board-approved policies for resolution of stressed assets under this framework, including the timelines for resolution.
- As soon as there is a default in the borrower entity's account with any lender, all lenders (singly or jointly) shall initiate steps to cure the default.
- As per the RBI, the resolution plan (RP) may involve any actions / plans / reorganization including, but not limited to, regularisation of the account by payment of all over dues by the borrower entity, sale of the exposures to other entities / investors, change in ownership, or restructuring.

#### **Supervision from RBI**

- RBI said that if there is any failure from the lenders in meeting the prescribed timelines or any actions by lenders with an intent to conceal the actual status of accounts or evergreen the stressed accounts, will be subjected to stringent supervisory/enforcement actions.

#### **Ola, Hike partner for seamless cab services**

- Hike, a homegrown messaging app, announced a partnership with app-based ride sharing company Ola, to bring a hassle-free experience of booking a cab from Hike itself.
- With this partnership, Hike users can book Ola cabs and autos across 110 cities in India from within Hike and can pay directly through the Hike Wallet or in cash.
- Hike users will also have access to Ola's multi-modal commuting offerings, from pocket-friendly options such as Ola Auto, Micro, and Mini to premium categories such as Ola Prime, Ola Prime Play, Ola Prime SUV, and Ola Lux.

#### **Equitas Small Finance Bank launches selfeSavings**

- Equitas Small Finance Bank, the first private sector bank from Tamil Nadu post-Independence, has launched 'selfeSavings', an interactive digital savings account. selfeSavings account can be opened with a web-based interactive video form hosted on [www.equitasbank.com](http://www.equitasbank.com) by using the Aadhaar number, PAN and other basic details, all in under five minutes.
- Customers can set up a mobile banking PIN and start using their account instantly.

#### **Defence ministry clears mega purchase of weapons worth Rs 15,935 crore for armed forces**

- In a major decision, the defence ministry in February approved capital acquisition proposals worth Rs 15,935 crore which included purchase of 7.40 lakh assault rifles, 5,719 sniper rifles and light machine guns to bolster the strength of the armed forces.
- The long-pending proposals were cleared at a meeting of the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC), the defence ministry's highest decision making body on procurement.
- The approval to the proposals come amid increasing hostilities by Pakistan along the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir as well as China's aggressive posturing in several sectors along the nearly 4,000-km-long Sino-India border.

#### **NHAI to launch ranking system for toll plazas**

- The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) on February 10, 2018 announced that it would be launching a ranking system of the toll plazas.
- Speaking on the same, NHAI Chairman Deepak Kumar said that in each quarter, the names of three best toll plazas will be identified and published on the NHAI website. He said that the ranking system will help create a competitive atmosphere, which will, in turn, improve amenities and overall convenience for highway users.

#### ***India-Russia Agriculture Business Summit 2018 held***

- India-Russia Agriculture Business Summit was held on February 13, 2018 in New Delhi. Gajender Singh Shekhawat, Union Minister of State for Agriculture and Sergey Beletskiy, Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Russia addressed the Summit.
- Several business houses and leaders of business associations of both countries attended the event. There was intense discussion on 4 theme sessions on potential areas of collaboration and trade in the fields of agriculture machinery- sanitary and phytosanitary measures; agriculture education and biotechnology; fishery and sea products (including feeding, care and processing); and confectioner's/baker's, dry fruits and coconut products.

#### ***India, Russia celebrate 70 years of bilateral relations in field of agriculture***

- India and Russia on February 14, 2018 celebrated 70 years of bilateral relations in the field of agriculture at Suratgarh in Rajasthan.
- On the occasion, delegations from both India and Russia visited the Central State Farm (CSF) in Suratgarh, which was set up in 1956 with the help of USSR.

#### ***Union Government makes amendments in Small Savings Act***

- In order to remove ambiguities due to multiple Acts and Rules for Small Saving Schemes, Union Government on February 13, 2018 proposed merger of Government Savings Certificates Act, 1959 and Public Provident Fund Act, 1968 with the Government Savings Banks Act, 1873.
- For this, the relevant provisions of the Government Savings Certificates (NSC) Act, 1959 and the Public Provident Fund Act, 1968 will be subsumed in the new amended Act without compromising on any of the functional provision of the existing Government Savings Banks Act, 1873.

#### ***India inks loan agreement with NDB for \$100mn for Rajasthan Water Project***

- India has signed the second loan agreement with New Development Bank (NDB) for 100 million dollars for Rajasthan Water Sector Restructuring Project for Desert Areas.
- This is the first tranche loan approved by the NDB under the Multi Tranche Financing Facility of 345 Million dollars for this project.
- The project implementation period is six years. Rajasthan government will implement the project primarily through its Water Resources Department.

#### ***Yes Bank lists country's first \$600m MTN bond on IndiaINX***

- Private sector lender, Yes Bank in February announced the listing of the Bank's debut US \$600 million bond issue under its maiden US \$1 billion medium-term note (MTN) bond on country's first international exchange BSE's IndiaINX at the International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) at GIFT City here.
- The Yes Bank's MTN programme — a debt note that matures or has a payback period of 5 years — on Global Securities Market (GSM) became the country's first capital raising platform for international investors in any currency.

#### ***Kisht launches India's first 'scan and pay later' credit wallet***

- Kisht, an EMI payment and digital lending platform, in February announced the launch of an exclusive feature 'Scan and Pay Later' credit wallet, a first of its kind in the Indian Fintech ecosystem.

- Customers can now shop on credit using the exclusive “Kisht QR Code” which will be usable in select offline stores and modern retail chains across the country. This launch has widened the markets for OEMs (original equipment manufacturers) and modern retail chains.

#### **BHEL bags order worth Rs 560 crore from NTPC**

- The Central Public Sector Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) has bagged a major order worth Rs. 560 crore from the National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) National Capital Power Station in Dadri, Uttar Pradesh.
- The order was procured by the BHEL against stiff competition from Indian as well as multinational companies.

#### **SBI Launches Global NRI center in Kochi**

- State Bank of India has launched its Global NRI (GNC) center at Kochi - the state that receives highest number of remittances in the country.
- Announcing the launching at a news conference in February, SBI Chairman Rajnish Kumar said that the Global NRI center will be a one-stop customer service center for all NRI banking related services.
- To further enhance the service experience for NRIs, the bank also launched related other services such as Wealth management, SBI Intelligent Assist, Free Post box service, SBI Mingle for NRI's, Remittance facility for US based customers, he added.

#### **Prime Minister inaugurates World Sustainable Development Summit 2018**

- Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the World Sustainable Development Summit 2018 (WSDS 2018) at Vigyan Bhawan in New Delhi on February 16, 2018.
- The summit is the flagship forum of The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI).
- The summit's theme this year is 'Partnerships for a Resilient Planet'.
- The summit addressed several issues including combating land degradation, air pollution, facilitating a transition to clean energy and creating financial mechanisms to enable effective climate change mitigation.
- It also focussed on measures to increase resource and energy efficiency and effective waste management mechanisms in order to make the cities free of landfills.
- The summit also hosted an exhibition titled 'Greenovation' that showcased the latest technological advancements to meet Sustainable Development Goals.

#### **WhatsApp gets NPCI nod for BHIM UPI launch**

- The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) in February has accorded its consent to roll out WhatsApp BHIM UPI beta launch with limited user base of one million and low per transaction limit.
- Four banks will join the multi-bank BHIM UPI model in the coming weeks and full feature product shall be released after the beta test is successful, NPCI said in a release.

#### **India, Iran sign 9 agreements during Hassan Rouhani's visit: MoUs on medicine, trade and connectivity**

- Iran president Hassan Rouhani visited India between 15 and 17 February. In his first-ever visit after taking over as President of Iran, Rouhani met Prime Minister Narendra Modi in February and held "substantive and productive" talks to boost cooperation in areas of defence and security, trade and investment, and energy, the Ministry of External Affairs said.
- At the end of the meeting, the countries exchanged nine major MoUs, which covered the areas of connectivity, trade, agriculture and taxation. Perhaps, two of the most important MoUs that were signed were the MoU on Chabahar Port and the agreement for Avoidance of Double Taxation and Prevention of Fiscal Evasion.

#### **List of MoUs Signed**

- Agreement for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with respect to taxes on Income.

- MoU on Exemption from Visa requirement for holders of Diplomatic Passports.
- Exchange of Instrument of Ratification of Extradition Treaty.
- Lease Contract for Shahid Beheshti Port- Phase 1 of Chabahar during Interim Period between Port and Maritime Organization (PMO), Iran and India Ports Global Limited (IPGL).
- MoU on Cooperation in the field of Traditional Systems of Medicine.
- MoU on the establishment of an Expert Group on Trade Remedy Measures to promote cooperation in areas of mutual interest.
- MoU on Cooperation in the field of Agriculture and Allied Sectors.
- MoU on Cooperation in the field of Health and Medicine.
- MoU on Postal Cooperation.

#### ***PhonePe partners with IOCL for deployment of PoS terminals***

- Flipkart's payments platform PhonePe has signed a partnership with Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL) to deploy its recently launched Point of Sale (POS) device at IOCL retail outlets.
- These devices will initially be piloted in 30 IOCL outlets in Bengaluru and then rolled out across the country in a phased manner later this year. This is the company's first major deployment of its Point of Sale devices that was launched in October this year.
- PhonePe said that over 10,000 POS units, which doubles up as a traditional calculator, has been installed in Bengaluru within three months of its launch.

#### ***JSW Energy inks MoU with Maharashtra to make EV, storage system***

- Sajjan Jindal led JSW Energy announced in February that it has signed a pact with Maharashtra for setting up manufacturing unit for electric vehicles (EV) and Energy Storage Systems in the state.
- In August last year, the company had unveiled its plans to foray into the EVs and energy storage segments saying it will invest up to Rs4,000 crore in the project over the next three years.

#### ***Maharashtra signs Rs 35,000 crore deal with rooftop aircraft maker***

- The Maharashtra government in February cleared the decks for India's first individual aircraft maker Captain Amol Yadav to set up an indigenous factory for manufacturing 20-seater aircraft in Palghar in a Rs 35,000 crore project, an official said.
- Yadav created waves in February 2016, when he constructed a small airplane on his building terrace and displayed it at the 'Make In India' mega-event in Mumbai.
- The Devendra Fadnavis government signed a MoU with Yadav's Thrust Aircraft Pvt Ltd, India, to set up the plant to build small aircraft and develop Palghar as a new aviation hub.

#### ***PM Modi inaugurates World Congress on IT in Hyderabad***

- Describing India as the hot-spot of digital innovation, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said it was the best place to leverage the power of technology and leapfrog into the future.
- Modi was speaking after inaugurating the World Conference on Information Technology (WCIT-2018) in Hyderabad through video-conferencing from Delhi. The event is being held for the first time in India in partnership with NASSCOM, WITSA and the government of Telangana.

#### ***Reliance to invest 60,000 cr in Maharashtra***

- The Chairman and MD of Reliance Industries Limited, Mukesh Ambani announced on February 18, 2018 that his company would be investing around Rs 60,000 crores in a collaborative initiative in the state of Maharashtra, over the next 10 years.
- Reliance would be establishing India's first-ever integrated industrial area for the fourth Industrial Revolution in the state of Maharashtra.

#### ***Nasscom launches platform to upskill 2 million professionals***

- The National Association of Software and Services Companies (Nasscom) on February 19, 2018 launched a platform to upskill two million IT employees and skill two million youth in eight technologies starting with Artificial Intelligence (AI).
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the FutureSkills platform while formally inaugurating the World Congress on Information Technology (WCIT) 2018 through video conference from New Delhi.
- Under the initiative, half of the Indian IT industry's four million employees will be upskilled and another two million potential employees and students will be skilled over the next three to four years.

#### ***RBI sets up Y.H. Malegam panel to look into factors leading to bank frauds***

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has set up a panel under board member Y.H. Malegam, a former president of Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI), to look into the factors leading to increasing incidents of bank frauds.
- The move comes a week after Punjab National Bank said it has fallen victim to a Rs11,400 crore fraud, at the centre of which is billionaire jeweller Nirav Modi.
- The Malegam panel will also look into reasons for high divergence in NPA classification and provisioning by banks.
- The central bank said it had alerted banks thrice on potential malicious use of SWIFT infrastructure since August 2016.

#### ***India's first AI research institute opened in Mumbai***

- Wadhvani AI, India's first research institute dedicated to developing artificial intelligence solutions for social good was inaugurated in Mumbai in February. The institute will focus on researching ways to harness the power of AI to solve deep rooted problems in healthcare, education, agriculture, and infrastructure to accelerate social development.
- Based in Mumbai, the Wadhvani Institute for Artificial Intelligence (Wadhvani AI) is partnering with the government of Maharashtra for its mission to create AI solutions for social impact. The Maharashtra government will help the institute identify problems, and test and scale the solutions.

#### ***Nasscom inks pact with Telangana to set up Centre of Excellence for Data Science and Artificial Intelligence***

- The Telangana government in February signed an agreement with Nasscom to establish a Centre of Excellence for Data Science and Artificial Intelligence here.
- According to state IT minister KT Rama Rao, with an initial joint investment of Rs 40 crore, the CoE will catalyse the growth of the deep tech ecosystem in Telangana, by providing the stimulus for innovation and in-depth research in the areas of data science and artificial intelligence.

#### ***Government approves Rs 2,920 crore highway project in Karnataka***

- The government in February approved a Rs 2,920-crore project for widening a section of national highway-275, connecting Bengaluru and Mysuru, in Karnataka.
- The six-laning of about 61 km is estimated to cost approximately Rs 2,919.
- 81 crore including the cost of land acquisition and pre-construction activities.
- The civil construction cost is about Rs 2,028.

#### ***Cabinet approves creation of National Urban Housing Fund***

- The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given approval for creation of National Urban Housing Fund (NUHF) for Rs.60,000 crores.
- This fund will be situated in Building Materials and Technology Promotion Council (BMTPC), an autonomous body registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860 under the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.
- The Ministry has so far sanctioned 39.4 lakh houses under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban).

#### ***Cabinet approves India-Morocco agreement for cooperation in Rail sector***

- The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi on February 20, 2018 approved the Cooperation Agreement between India and the Moroccan National Railways Office (ONCF) to develop long-term cooperation and partnership in different areas of railway sector.
- The Cooperation Agreement was signed December 14, 2017.

#### ***Cabinet approves new bill to ban Unregulated Deposit Schemes and Chit Funds (Amendment) Bill, 2018***

- The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given its approval to introduce the banning of Unregulated Deposit Schemes Bill, 2018 and Chit Funds (Amendment) Bill, 2018 in the Parliament.
- The Banning of Unregulated Deposit Schemes Bill, 2018 is aimed at tackling the menace of illicit deposit taking activities in the country.

#### ***CCEA approves Silkyara Bend-Barkot Tunnel in Uttarakhand***

- Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved the construction of 4.531 km long 2-Lane Bi-Directional Silkyara Bend - Barkot Tunnel in Uttarakhand.
- The project will be falling along NH-134 (old NH-94) and will be built under Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) Mode.
- It will be funded under NH (O) Scheme of Ministry of RT&H and forms part of Chardham Plan.
- The construction period of the project is 4 years.

#### ***CCEA approves opening up of commercial coal mining to private firms***

- CCEA approved the methodology for auction of coal mines for sale of coal under the Coal Mines (Special Provisions) Act, 2015 and the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957.
- It also allowed private companies to mine the fossil fuel for commercial use, ending the monopoly of state-owned Coal India Ltd (CIL), which is a major reform in the coal sector since its nationalisation in 1973.

#### ***Centre announces special fund to strengthen power transmission in Arunachal Pradesh***

- The Union Government has announced a special fund worth Rs 925 crore to strengthen the power transmission and distribution system in the state of Arunachal Pradesh.
- The announcement was made by the Union Minister of State for Power and New & Renewable Energy, RK Singh while chairing a review meeting of the power sector with senior officers of the state government in Itanagar on February 21.

#### ***EPFO fixes interest rate at 8.55 % for 2017-18***

- The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation, EPFO has declared 8.55 per cent interest rate for 2017-18 for its about 5 crore members.
- This was decided during the meeting of Central Board of Trustees of EPFO in New Delhi.
- For 2016-17, the rate was 8.65 per cent and in 2015-16 the rate was 8.8 per cent.
- In order to maintain the interest this fiscal, the organisation had sold a portion of its investment in the Exchange Traded Funds.

#### ***NITI Aayog Budget Allocation increased by more than 20 per cent***

- As per Budget 2018, the allocations for the NITI Aayog have increased by more than 20 per cent to Rs 339.65 crore in 2018-19 from Rs 279.79 crore in 2017-18.
- Budget envisages a defined role for NITI Aayog in critical areas of artificial intelligence and agriculture policy, apart from reiterating a shared vision for national development in line with NITI Aayog's Three Year Action Agenda, the Seven Year Strategy and the 15 Year Vision Document.

#### ***Telangana, Taiwan sign MoU for better technology partnership***

- The state government of Telangana on February 21, 2018 signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Taoyuan City of Taiwan for better technology partnership in the state, as a part of the closing ceremony of the World Congress on Information Technology (WCIT) 2018.
- The agreement was signed and exchanged between the Principal Secretary to Government, Jayesh Ranjan and Director of the Board, Taoyuan City, Robert Huang in the presence of Telangana's IT Minister KT Rama Rao.
- Taoyuan is one of the fastest growing cities with respect to entrepreneurship, innovation and IoT and Government of Telangana have agreed to partner with it.

### **Union Agriculture Ministry launches six new user friendly features of e-NAM Platform**

The Union Minister of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Radha Mohan Singh on February 21, 2018 launched six new features of National Agriculture Market (e-NAM) Platform with an aim to make it more users friendly.

The new and user-friendly features of the e-NAM platform are MIS Dashboard for better analysis, BHIM payment facility by traders, mobile payment facility by traders, enhanced features on Mobile App, integration of farmer's database, eLearning module in e-NAM website, etc.

1. e-NAM Mobile App
2. BHIM payment facility
3. New and improved Website with eLearning Module
4. MIS Dashboard
5. Grievance Redressal Management System
6. Integration with Farmer Database

### **Uma Bharti launches Bagori Ganga Gram & New Swajal Projects**

- Union Minister of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Uma Bharti on February 20, 2018 launched the Bagori Ganga Gram project, New Swajal Project at Bagori and Gangotri as Swachh Iconic Place at Dunda village in Uttarkashi district of Uttarakhand.
- These both projects will create cleanliness, provide basic amenities to the people of Ganga bank villages and will also generate employment.

#### **Bagori Ganga Gram project**

- Open Defecation Free village Bagori is one of the 24 pilot Ganga Villages picked up to be transformed into Ganga Grams this year.
- Uma Bharti launched the Bagori Ganga Gram project, a solid and liquid waste management scheme with a total expense of Rs 11.88 lakh.

#### **New Swajal Project at Bagori**

- New Swajal Project was also inaugurated at Bagori with a budget of more than Rs 32 lakh. Swajal is a community owned drinking water programme for sustained drinking water supply.
- Currently, Swajal scheme is successfully running in village Sadag since 1996.

### **Union Government sets up 'NITI Forum for Northeast'**

- The Union Government announced on February 21, 2018 that it has issued an order for the setting up of the 'Niti Forum for North-East'.
- The forum will have its Secretariat in the Ministry of DoNER.
- The forum will be co-chaired by the Vice-Chairman of NITI Aayog and Minister of State (I/C), Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER).
- The main task of the forum would be to identify various constraints on the way of accelerated, inclusive and sustainable economic growth in the North East Region of the country.

### **ADB to give USD 84 mn for improving Bihar water supply**

- The Finance Ministry will get a loan of USD 84 million from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to improve water supply in the Bhagalpur and Gaya districts of Bihar.
- The Tranche 2 loan is part of the USD 200 million Multi-Tranche Financing Facility (MFF) for Bihar Urban Development Investment Program that was approved by ADB in 2012, to provide sustainable urban infrastructure and services in four towns - Bhagalpur, Gaya, Darbhanga, and Muzaffarpur.
- Project 2 will improve access to better quality and sustainable water supply, for people of Bhagalpur and Gaya. It will also promote better water management practices that will result in city-wide coverage with 24-hour uninterrupted supply of treated water in both cities.
- Further, loan finances will support civil works sub-projects and would benefit 1.1 million people in two project towns with increased coverage of treated water supply by 2021.

#### **Aditya Birla Idea Payments Bank commences operation**

- Aditya Birla Idea Payments Bank Limited has commenced operations as a payments bank with effect from February 22, 2018, the Reserve Bank of India release said Aditya Birla Idea Payments bank is among seven entities to get a final approval from the banking regulator.
- Airtel Payments Bank Ltd was the first payments bank to start operations in January 2017 followed by India Post.
- So far, Airtel, Paytm, India Post, and Fino Payments Bank have launched their operations.
- One of the challenges for the payments banks is they have to fully meet the KYC (know your customer) norm requirement by RBI before February 28.
- Idea Cellular had applied for a Payments Banks license in a 49:51 joint venture with Aditya Birla Nuvo Limited.

#### **India, Germany sign MOU to promote sustainable urban development**

- India and Germany on February 23, 2018 signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for an 'Implementation Agreement in Sustainable Urban Development and Smart Cities in India' in New Delhi.
- The agreement was signed between Union Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs (MoHUA) and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit(GIZ), India on behalf of Germany.
- It was signed by Ranjan Mishra, Additional Secretary of Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry and Annette Röckel, Deputy Country Director and Tanja Feldmann, Cluster Coordinator, Sustainable Urban and Industrial Development, GIZ India.

#### **Bihar is national topper in FY17 growth, with 10.3 pc**

- Bihar clocked a growth rate of 10.3 per cent in 2016-2017 as against 7.5 per cent in the corresponding fiscal a year ago, riding largely on the back of the services sector, according to the latest Economic Survey tabled in the state Assembly in February.
- Bihar's growth rate is higher than that of the national average of 7.0 per cent, the 12th Economic Survey of Bihar said.
- The state has consistently been revenue surplus, which increased from Rs 5,101 crore in 2012-13 to Rs 10,819 crore in 2016-17, Bihar Deputy CM Sushil Kumar Modi told reporters after tabling the survey on the first day of the Budget Session.
- The surplus, projected to be Rs 14,556 crore during 2017-18, is considered to be the result of better financial management, Sushil Modi, who also holds the finance portfolio, said.

#### **UP Govt. inks MoU with WTC Noida**

- At the UP Investor's Summit 2018, the Government of Uttar Pradesh (GoUP) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with World Trade Center (WTC) Noida to build a Mobile Open Exchange Zone (MOX) around Tech Zone, Greater Noida (TZGN).
- As per the MoU, TZGN shall act as a nucleus for MOX to bring the advantage of growth in the mobile and allied sector to the state.

- Mobile Open Exchange Zone (MOX) is a focused mobile ecosystem that is built on three pillars, i.e. infrastructure, hardware and software, addressing the challenges faced by technology companies through access to skilled human resources and enabling synergies.

### **Telecom Minister Manoj Sinha to Inaugurate 26th Convergence India 2018 Expo**

- The 26th Convergence India 2018 expo, co-located alongside the 2nd Internet of Things 2018 expo, will have Union Minister of State for Railways and Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Communications Manoj Sinha as Chief Guest at the inaugural ceremony in Pragati Maidan, New Delhi on 7 March 2018.
- Aruna Sundararajan, Chairman, Telecom Commission and Secretary, Department of Telecom will deliver the keynote address at the conference inaugural session titled 'IoT Revolutionising India'. There will be a large corporate and industry presence as businesses quickly move to implement IoT solutions to streamline processes, deliver better business outcomes, foster stronger links with the public sector, and improve the bottom line, etc.

### **KisanKraft Ltd, govt of Andhra Pradesh sign Rs. 75 crore MoU**

- KisanKraft Ltd, manufacturer and wholesale distributor of high quality agricultural equipment for small and marginal farmers in February signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the government of Andhra Pradesh for a Rs. 75 crore multi-faceted project focused on agriculture technology.
- The MoU was signed in the presence of chief minister, Andhra Pradesh, N. Chandrababu Naidu, and minister of agriculture, Somireddy Chandramohan Reddy.

### **Google's digital payment app Tez integrates with SBI**

- Google in February announced a deeper integration with the State Bank of India (SBI) for its digital payment app "Tez" that will allow users to now create a SBI UPI Id -- @oksbi and get access to exclusive offers for the SBI customers.
- Launched in September last year, "Tez" claims to have processed over 250 million transactions till date and has over 13.5 million monthly active users across the country.
- "Tez" is built on the Unified Payments Interface (UPI), allowing users make payments from their bank accounts to other accounts from over 70 UPI-enabled banks.

### **IndusInd ties up with blockchain service Ripple to aid global payments**

- Private sector IndusInd Bank has tied up with blockchain solution provider Ripple to enhance global payment transactions in and out of India.
- With this affiliation, Ripple can now provide instant access in emerging markets such as India, Brazil and China, IndusInd Bank said in a release.
- The bank said India witnessed \$65 billion move into the country in 2017.

### **Catholic Syrian Bank ties up with Celebrus Capital for online trading services**

- Catholic Syrian Bank Ltd and Celebrus Capital Ltd have announced a new partnership to offer CSB's customers online trading and demat services.
- With this partnership, CSB's customers can open a Celebrus trading account free of cost and also enjoy preferred rates on brokerage charges/ AMC fees on the demat account.
- CSB customers will have access to Celebrus' mobile trading and investment platform – LEAP – created in association with Thomson Reuters, while enjoying seamless integration between deposits, demat and trading accounts.

### **Moody's upgrades outlook on IDBI Bank to positive on recapitalisation**

- Moody's Investors Service in February affirmed the long-term local and foreign currency bank deposit rating of IDBI Bank at B1 and changed the outlook to positive from stable.

- The rating agency also affirmed the state-run lender and its DIFC branch's long-term foreign currency senior unsecured debt rating at B1 and changed the outlook to positive.
- The positive outlook also factors in the rating agency's view on the expected evolution of the bank's balance sheet, including a stabilization in asset quality and continued stable funding and liquidity positions.
- Under the recapitalisation plan, the bank will get Rs 7,881 crore in new capital by March.

#### ***Capital First gets NHB nod for merger with IDFC Bank***

- Capital First in February said the regulator National Housing Bank (NHB) has approved the merger of the company along with Capital Home Finance and Capital First Securities Limited with IDFC Bank.
- Earlier in January, the company had informed the decision of the board of directors approving amalgamation of the company, Capital First Home Finance Limited, and Capital First Securities Limited (collectively, the 'Amalgamating Companies') with IDFC Bank Limited.

#### ***RBI raises currency derivative trade limit to USD 100 mn***

- The Reserve Bank in February raised the exposure limit under exchange traded currency derivatives (ETCD) trading for residents and foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) to USD 100 million across all currency pairs involving the Indian rupee. The RBI's decision to raise the limit will help entities engaged in forex transactions to maintain their currency risks in a better manner.
- Earlier, the RBI had imposed a limit of USD 15 million for USD-INR and USD 5 million for other currency pairs of Indian rupee with Euro, Japanese Yen and British Pound.

#### ***Singapore Tourism Board inks strategic partnership with Paytm***

- Singapore Tourism Board (STB) recently announced its strategic partnership with India's mobile-first financial services platform Paytm. This makes STB the first National Tourism Organisation (NTO) to partner with Paytm.
- As a part of this partnership, Paytm would run joint promotions on its platform to promote Singapore tourism.
- This will bring Singapore's tourism offerings to Paytm's 300 million strong users. Paytm will be offering up to Rs. 2,500 cashback on flight tickets to Singapore booked through the app. The Paytm platform will house a microsite featuring Singapore's new, inside-out, unified brand 'Passion Made Possible' and related branded content.

#### ***AiIB approves USD 1.5 billion loans to India for infrastructure projects***

- China-based Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) has approved USD 1.5 billion in loans to India for infrastructure-related projects in 2018.
- The funds would be used for investment in India's energy, roads and urban development projects.
- The bank will examine allotting more funds for such projects in 2019.

#### ***New Facilities for UAN-Aadhar linking introduced by EPFO***

- Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) has introduced UAN-Aadhaar linking facility for the convenience of members using EPFO Link in UMANG Mobile App.
- The facility on e-KYC Portal has further added a new feature to link UAN with Aadhaar online using biometric credentials.
- For using this facility with UMANG APP, Member will have to provide his/her UAN. An OTP will be sent to the UAN registered Mobile Number.

#### ***BSNL partners Nokia to roll out 4G services***

- State-run telecom operator BSNL in February signed a pact with telecom gear maker Nokia to roll out 4G services in 10 telecom circles covering western and southern regions of the country.

- Under the agreement, Nokia will deploy the technology in Maharashtra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and Telangana circles, serving large cities, businesses, technology and tourist hubs besides nearly 38 million BSNL subscribers.

### **India to grow 7.6% in calendar year 2018: Moody's**

- Moody's Investors Service in February estimated that India will grow 7.6 per cent in calendar year 2018 and 7.5 per cent in 2019, amid signs of economic recovery from impact of demonetisation and GST.
- "There are some signs that the Indian economy is starting to recover from the soft growth patch attributed to the negative impact of the demonetisation undertaken in 2016 and disruption related to last year's rollout of the Goods and Service Tax," it said.
- The Budget for 2018-19 includes some measures that could stabilise the rural economy that was disproportionately hit by the demonetization policy and is yet to recover, it said.

### **Razorpay enables UPI payments on IRCTC**

- India's first converged payment solutions company, Razorpay, in February announced its collaboration with Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) to help customers make online payments on IRCTC website and mobile app through Unified Payment Interface (UPI), in addition to payments through netbanking, wallets and credit/debit cards.
- Now any passenger with a mobile phone and a bank account will now be able to pay through UPI for booking train and air tickets online and enjoy a seamless checkout experience as it removes the hassle of typing card details or netbanking/wallet password.

### **SBI hikes deposit rates by up to 50 bps across tenors**

- State Bank of India has upped interest rates on domestic retail term deposits (up to Rs 1 crore) by up to 50 basis points across tenors with effect from in February. With India's largest bank hiking retail deposit rates, other banks are likely to follow suit.
- The maximum increase of 50 basis points is in four maturity buckets – 7 days to 45 days; 2 years to less than 3 years; 3 years to less than 5 years; 5 years and up to 10 years. The new interest rate on the 7 days to 45 days maturity bucket is 5.75 per cent (5.25 per cent earlier). On the three maturity buckets above two years, the new interest rate is 6.50 per cent (6 per cent earlier).

### **DAC approves procurement proposals worth Rs 9,435 Cr**

- Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman-led Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) in February approved capital acquisition proposals of the defence services, valued at Rs 9,435 crore.
- These include the procurement of 41,000 Light Machine Guns (LMGs) and over 3.5 lakh Close Quarter Battle Carbines under Buy and Make (Indian) category.
- Out of total quantities envisaged, 75 per cent will be through Indian Industry under Buy and Make (Indian) category and balance through Ordnance Factory Board (OFB)... The total cost of carbines and LMGs for the soldiers of the three services is Rs 4,607 crore and Rs 3,000 crore, respectively, a statement from the defence ministry said.

## **India & States**

### **Ministry of Tourism concludes cultural extravaganza "Bharat Parv"**

- 'Bharat Parv' concluded at the Red Fort (Lal Quila), Delhi in February in the presence of K.J. Alphons, Minister of State (I/C) for Tourism and Dr. Mahesh Sharma, Minister of State (I/C) for Culture.

- The Parv was organized by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India at the Red Fort, Delhi from 26th to 31st January, 2018.
- During the closing ceremony, under "Adopt a Heritage: Apni Dharohar, Apni Pehchaan" project, Letters of Intent for 40 monuments to nine agencies of Phase-II and Letters of Intent for 22 monuments to eight agencies of Phase-III were handed over by the Minister of Culture and the Minister of Tourism.

#### ***India, Pakistan extend Thar Link Express for 3 years***

- India and Pakistan on January 30, 2018 extended their agreement on Thar Link Express, the second solitary rail service between the two nations, for three more years.
- The extension comes at a time tension prevailed along the border between the two countries in Jammu and Kashmir. The agreement to link the two countries by rail was signed in 2006 to facilitate people-to-people contact. The agreement was set to expire in March 2018, but has now been extended to January 31, 2021.

#### ***NHRC issues notice to Centre, Punjab government over use of pesticides***

- The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has issued notices to the Centre and Punjab Government over the reported high incidence of serious diseases in the Malwa region of the state due to excessive use of pesticides and insecticides.
- Taking Suo Motu cognizance of a media report, the Commission asked Union Health Secretary and State Chief Secretary to submit a detailed report within six weeks. They have also been asked to inform about the steps taken, after 2012, when the Commission had disposed the matter on the assurance given by the State Government for an affirmative and prompt action to deal with the menace

#### ***India joins Ashgabat agreement***

- India on February 1, 2018 joined the Ashgabat agreement, which envisages the establishment of an international transport and transit corridor linking Central Asia with the Persian Gulf to significantly ramp up trade and investment.
- The agreement was originally signed on April 25, 2011, among the four founding members - Iran, Oman, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan with an aim to set up a trade and transit corridor between them.
- The External Affairs Ministry in its official release stated that Turkmenistan, as depository state of Ashgabat agreement, informed India on Feb 1 that all the four founding members have consented to the accession of India to the agreement.

#### ***Ola signs MoU with Assam govt to bring app-based river taxis in city***

- Taxi aggregator Ola in February signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Government of Assam to pilot a one-of-its-kind app-based river taxi service in Guwahati.
- The MoU has been signed in the presence of Chandra Mohan Patowary, Minister for Transport, Parliamentary Affairs, Industry and Commerce and Vijay Ghadge, VP of Operations of Ola at the on-going 'Global Investors Summit: Advantage Assam' at Sarusajai Stadium in Guwahati.
- Ola launched in the state of Assam in December 2014 and has since transformed the commuting experience of citizens with a range of offerings for day to day as well as long distance, inter-city and state commute.

#### ***New National Education Policy panel to submit report by March 31***

- The HRD Ministry-appointed panel tasked with drafting a new National Education Policy will submit its report by March 31, 2018.
- Headed by former Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) chief K Kasturirangan, the panel was set up in June 2017.
- Following the submission of the report, Union Ministry of Human Resource Development will deliberate on the report and thereafter suggestions of the committee will be presented to the Union Cabinet for its approval.

### ***National Assessment Survey for Class 10 students launched***

- The Union Ministry Human Resource Development (HRD) on February 5, 2018 launched the second phase of National Assessment Survey (NAS) for examining the learning capabilities of 20 lakh Class 10 students from 45000 schools around the country.
- This will be the largest assessment in the field of education done anywhere in the world.
- Under the first phase, over 20 lakh students of Class 3, 5 and 8 were assessed on several learning outcomes. The assessment was conducted in 2017 and represented that quality of educational outcomes is far from equal across the country.

### ***India contributes \$1 mn to UN Development Partnership Fund***

- India on February 1, 2018 contributed an additional \$1 million to the India-UN Development Partnership Fund, earmarked for South-South cooperation.
- According to the UN Office of South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC), the contribution aims to intensify India's partnerships with other developing countries.
- India had pledged a multi-year contribution of \$100 million to the fund established in June 2017 and has already provided \$6 million within seven months of its launch.

### ***Uber, Ministry of Road Transport and Highways join hands for road safety awareness***

- Taxi aggregator Uber in February reinforced its commitment to road safety in February in the presence of Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari by announcing a slew of measures and initiatives.
- As part of its ongoing efforts to encourage road safety awareness, Uber will be jointly promoting road safety messaging on the Uber app and social media through Ministry of Road Transport and Highways co branded materials and mediums.

### ***India successfully test fires nuclear capable Agni-I ballistic missile***

- India on February 6, 2018 successfully test-fired nuclear capable Agni-I ballistic missile as part of a user trial from a test range off the Odisha coast. The missile was launched as part of a regular training exercise by the Indian armed forces.
- The trial was conducted by the Strategic Forces Command of the Indian Army from Launch Pad 4 of the Integrated Test Range (ITR) at Abdul Kalam Island in Balasore, Odisha.

### ***Google India announces expansion of 'Internet Saathi' program to TN***

- Continuing its digital literacy initiative aimed at empowering women in rural India, Google India and Tata Trusts announced the expansion of its 'Internet Saathi' program in the state of Tamil Nadu.
- Google India and the Tamil Nadu government also announced other initiatives to support the digitisation efforts in the state. Google India will facilitate the provision of Google Cloud credits and access through its affiliate for eligible startups engaged with the government's startup initiative. Google India will also, through its Developer Relations team, provide technical mentorship and advisory support to various startups.

### ***Railways Ministry signs MoU with AYUSH Ministry to augment AYUSH services in Railway hospitals***

- The Ministry of Railways on February 6, 2018 signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Ministry of AYUSH to augment the AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy) system services in Railway zonal hospitals at New Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai and Guwahati.
- The MoU was signed by Principal Executive Director of Health Gajendra Kumar, on behalf of the Ministry of Railways and Advisor Manoj Nesari from Ministry of AYUSH.
- The AYUSH health services will be augmented in B.R. Singh Hospital in Eastern Railway, Perambur Railway Hospital Southern Railway, Central Hospital of Northern Railway, JR Hospital in Western Railway and the Central Hospital of Northeast Frontier Railway.

### ***Hike app, Airtel join hands to embed 'Total' under 'Mera Pehla Smartphone' initiative***

- Messaging app Hike in February announced a strategic pact with Bharti Airtel to embed its new service 'Total' on mobile devices under the telecom operator's 'Mera Pehla Smartphone' initiative.
- A recently-announced offering by Hike, 'Total' allows users to access essential services such as messaging, news, recharge and others without a data connection.
- "Starting March 2018, select smartphones under the 'Mera Pehla Smartphone' will be shipped with Total as a preinstalled feature," said a joint release by the two companies.
- Commenting on the development, Kavin Bharti Mittal, Founder and CEO of Hike, said, "With 'Total' on 'Mera Pehla Smartphones', first-time users will find it easy understand and navigate a smartphone. Using data is also simplified and 'Total' users can get online with special data packs starting as low as Re 1".

### ***Google India, NCERT collaborates to launch 'Digital Citizenship and Safety' lessons in schools***

- In order to make the Internet a safer place for everyone, Google India and National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) have recently signed a pact to integrate a course on "Digital Citizenship and Safety" in the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) curriculum in schools.
- Students from class 1 to class 12 across 1.4 million schools in India would now learn how to become good and responsible digital citizens, through structured classroom modules on the social, ethical and legal aspects of Internet safety, as reported by IANS.

### ***India successfully test-fires nuclear capable ballistic missile Prithvi-II***

- India on February 7, 2018 successfully test-fired indigenously developed nuclear capable Prithvi-II missile from launch complex three of the Integrated Test Range at Chandipur near Balasore, Odisha.
- The user trial of this surface-to-surface ballistic missile was a complete success. The trial was carried out by the specially formed Strategic Force Command (SFC) of the India Army and was monitored by the scientists of Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).

### ***South Central Railway becomes 1st rail zone with 100% LED lighting at stations***

- The South Central Railway (SCR) in February said it has become the first railway zone in the country to complete 100 per cent LED lighting at all the stations under its jurisdiction.
- The SCR has been on the forefront of adopting energy conservation measures. It has attained the status of becoming the first zone in the Indian Railways to complete 100 per cent LED lighting in all the 733 stations under its jurisdiction, Chief Public Relations Officer M Umashankar Kumar said in a release.
- SCR General Manager Vinod Kumar Yadav complimented the officers and staff for the achievement.

### ***Udyanotsav 2018 begins with Mughal Gardens dressed in yellow and white***

- Udyanotsav 2018 has started in full swing. It is one of the biggest attractions of Delhi, which makes it a must-visit. The Mughal Gardens' gates will only remain open till March 9, from Tuesday to Sunday, 9:30 am to 4:00 pm. There are many special features of the gardens this year, which are not to miss.
- Rashtrapati Bhavan's biggest assets are the huge presidential gardens known as Mughal Gardens.
- The gardens are open to the public in February to March every year to celebrate the Udyanotsav.
- President Ram Nath Kovind inaugurated the gardens with the main attraction of this year's Udyanotsav being bulb flowering plants.

### ***India starts nationwide tiger census with more cameras and mobile app***

- India started the all-India tiger census 2018, the largest survey of wildlife anywhere in the world. In this national tiger census, India will use more technology, including a mobile app MSTripes, with more intensive ground coverage and a higher focus on the northeast to determine the country's tiger numbers.

- The census will not be about the tiger alone. The 2014 census had resulted in the first-ever estimate of India's leopard population, which was put at 11,000. This exercise will go further and will give the estimates of various carnivores, ungulates and other animals in India's forests.

### ***SC directs UP Government to file vision document for protection and preservation of Taj Mahal***

- The Supreme Court on February 8, 2018 directed the Uttar Pradesh government to file a vision document for protection and preservation of the Taj Mahal within four weeks.
- The apex court also directed the state government to explain why there was a sudden flurry of activities in and around the Taj Mahal and the Taj Trapezium Zone (TTZ) and why leather industries and hotels were coming up there.
- TTZ is an area of about 10400 sq km spread over the districts of Agra, Firozabad, Mathura, Hathras and Etah in Uttar Pradesh and Bharatpur in Rajasthan.

### ***ISRO sets up 473 Village Resource Centres for rural development through satellite technology***

- ISRO has established Village Resource Centres (VRCs) on a pilot scale, in association with selected NGOs, Trusts and State Government Departments, to demonstrate the potential of satellite technology for development of rural areas,
- VRCs have provided various space technology enabled services such as tele-healthcare, tele-education, natural resources information, advisories related to agriculture, career guidance to rural students, skill development and vocational training etc.
- Around Rs 18 crores was spent for establishing 473 VRCs.

### ***Cabinet approves rationalization of Autonomous Bodies under Department of Health & Family Welfare***

- The Union Cabinet on February 7, 2018 approved the proposal for closure of Autonomous Bodies, namely, Rashtriya Arogya Nidhi (RAN) and Jansankhya Sthirata Kosh (JSK) and the functions of these bodies were proposed to be vested in Department of Health & Family Welfare (DoHFW).
- The rationalization of Autonomous Bodies under Department of Health & Family Welfare will involve inter-ministerial consultations and review of existing bye laws of these bodies. The time frame for implementation of this decision is one year.

### ***Goa Government Launches Motorcycle Ambulance Service***

- The Goa government in February launched a motorcycle ambulance service to provide quick medical help to patients in need in the coastal state.
- Chief Minister Manohar Parrikar, in presence of Health Minister Vishwajit Rane, unveiled a batch of 20 two-wheeler ambulances which would be deputed in high risk areas like the coastal belt.

### ***President of India addresses 56th convocation of Indian Agricultural Research Institute***

- The President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind, graced and addressed the 56th convocation of the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI) in February (February 9, 2018).
- Speaking on the occasion, the President said that IARI played a critical role in the Green Revolution that changed the course of food production in the country. He was happy to note that students from 14 countries are being educated in this institution. And that IARI is helping in the development of agricultural capacities and research in neighbouring countries.

### ***Centre, Delhi government join hands to curb pollution in Delhi NCR***

- The Union Environment Minister Harsh Vardhan announced on February 8, 2018 that the Union Government and Delhi government have joined hands to combat air pollution in the National Capital Region.
- The Minister stated that 70 teams have been constituted to create mass awareness and test all the mitigation steps taken in the NCR from February 10. The campaign outcome is expected to help the Ministry to form a larger policy framework to apply throughout the year as permanent solutions to air pollution.

### **Govt sanctions Rs 14.9 bn to Army to fortify its bases in J&K, other areas**

- The Defence Ministry has sanctioned Rs 14.87 billion (Rs 1,487 crore) to the Army to fortify its bases in Jammu and Kashmir, Northeast and several other places to plug their security gaps and protect them from any terror attacks, official sources said in February.
- Clearing the project, Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has set a deadline of 10 months for the Army to carry it out.
- The Army headquarters has been told to monitor implementation of the project, they said.
- The sanction to the project comes amid heightened hostilities between Indian and Pakistani armies along the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir and several terror attack targeting military installations.

### **Integrated Automatic Aviation Meteorological Systems inaugurated at INS Garuda**

- The Indian Navy on February 9, 2018 inaugurated the 'Integrated Automatic Aviation Meteorological Systems' (IAAMS) at INS Garuda, naval air station located in Kochi, Kerala.
- The system was inaugurated by Rear Admiral RJ Nadkarni, VSM, Chief of Staff, Headquarters, Southern Naval Command. INS Garuda is the fourth naval air station to be installed with this integrated system.
- The system is an ambitious project of the Indian Navy to modernise the meteorological infrastructure of 9 Naval Air Stations (NAS).

### **Union Minister JP Nadda launches National Deworming initiative 2018**

- Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare J P Nadda on February 10, 2018 launched the National Deworming Initiative on the occasion of the National Deworming Day.
- Under the National Deworming Initiative, Union Government will work to ensure that high quality healthcare is accessible to every child and up to the last mile. The initiative is expected to benefit more than 32 crore children.
- This year, the National Deworming Day will mobilize health personnel, state governments and other stakeholders to prioritize investment in control of Soil Transmitted Helminth (STH) infections.

### **Using toilets at Railway stations to get cheaper**

- According to a new proposal by the Railway Board, using toilets at railway stations could soon be cheaper or even free at smaller railway stations.
- The present 'pay and use' toilet policy allows the contractors who build such toilets to fix its usage rates. The new policy, however, will empower the Divisional Railway Managers to decide if they want these toilets to be paid for or keep them free for public usage.

### **Bihar Government bans sale of loose cigarettes**

- The state government of Bihar has banned the sale of loose cigarettes. The decision aims to serve as a deterrent to kids and youngsters who start smoking by buying loose cigarettes.
- In this regard, a notification was issued on February 9, 2018 by the state health department under Section 20 of Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA), 2003. Bihar is the 12th state in the country to bring such a ban into effect following Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Punjab and Delhi.

### **On World Radio Day, India's first online radio station launched**

- Deeper penetration of smart phones and internet data has given fillip to several non-conventional services and Radio Umang is one of them. Launched recently, listeners can tune in to this online radio station through web streaming or download the app.
- With 24 hours programming, it has found listeners in Hindi speaking regions of India and in over 60 countries worldwide. Themed around love, peace and happiness, the station airs enriching talk shows and soothing soulful music.

**Women Government employees commissioning Surrogacy to get maternity leave**

- The Union Minister of State for Development of North-Eastern Region (DoNER) Jitendra Singh on February 12, 2018 announced that the women Government employees who have commissioned surrogacy will now be entitled to maternity leave.
- Moreover, divorced daughter will be eligible for family pension, if divorce case has been filed before the death of pensioner or family pensioner.
- Singh also announced the increment in the Constant Attendant Allowance on disability pension from Rs 4500 per month to Rs 6750 per month.

**President of India hosts 'LPG Panchayat' at Rashtrapati Bhavan**

- President Ram Nath Kovind on February 13, 2018 hosted the 'LPG Panchayat' at Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi.
- The LPG Panchayat was organised by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas with an aim to provide a platform for LPG consumers to interact with each other, promote mutual learning and share experiences.
- Each LPG Panchayat has about 100 LPG customers coming together near their living areas to discuss safe and sustainable usage of LPG, its benefits and the link between clean fuel for cooking and women's empowerment.

**Union Government lays foundation stone for first dairy plant of East Champaran District in Motihari**

- The Union Minister for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Radha Mohan Singh on February 13, 2018 laid the foundation stone for the first dairy plant in East Champaran District of Motihari.
- During the ceremony, Singh said that India is the prime producer of milk and has been holding the number one position globally over the past two decades. Milk production, which was around 17 - 22 million tonnes in the 1960s, has now increased to 165.4 million tonnes in 2016-17.

**Department of Pharmaceuticals to organise conference on Pharmaceutical & Medical Device sector**

- The Department of Pharmaceuticals (DoP) along with Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) is currently organizing 'India Pharma & India Medical Device 2018' with the theme - 'Affordable and Quality Healthcare.'
- Later, it will also organise a conference on Pharmaceutical & Medical Device sector from 15th-17th February, 2018 in Bengaluru. Union Minister for Chemicals & Fertilizers Ananthkumar will inaugurate this the three-day conference.
- The theme of the Conference will be 'Driving NextGen Pharmaceuticals'

**Health Ministry approves MCI proposal to amend the Screening Test Regulations, 2002**

- The Union Health Ministry on February 13, 2018 approved the proposal of Medical Council of India (MCI) to amend the Screening Test Regulations, 2002.
- The amendment call for making it mandatory to qualify National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) to pursue foreign medical course.
- Indian Citizens or Overseas Citizen of India intending to obtain primary medical qualification from any medical institution outside India on or after May 2018, shall have to mandatorily qualify the NEET for admission to MBBS course abroad.

**India to host 2018 Global Theatre Olympics for first time**

- Union Tourism and Culture Minister Mahesh Sharma on February 13, 2018 announced that India will host the 8th edition of Theatre Olympics 2018 from February 17 to April 8, 2018. Vice President M. Venkaiah Naidu will inaugurate the Theatre Olympics at the majestic Red Fort in New Delhi.
- The theatrical extravaganza will be organized by the National School of Drama under the aegis of Union Ministry of Culture with a total budget of Rs 51.81 crore.

### **Indian army to deploy 2,300 personnel to join UN peacekeeping mission in South Sudan**

- The Indian army would be deploying about 2300 personnel in South Sudan, as a part of UN's peacekeeping mission in the war-torn nation. The announcement was made by Army Spokesperson Col Aman Anand.
- The mission aims to bring about peace and normalcy in the nation. The Indian army personnel chosen for the mission belong to the Infantry battalion of Garhwal Rifles regiment.

### **Three-day national workshop on Automatic Speech Recognition to begin in Kerala**

- A three-day national workshop on Automatic Speech Recognition and its applications will be conducted by the Indian Institute of Information Technology and Management–Kerala (IIITM-K) in Thiruvananthapuram from February 22, 2018.
- The programme would be covering aspects such as speech production, speech signal processing, speech recognition models, Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR) using Deep Neural Networks and its various applications.

### **Union Government introduces extra fee to enter main mausoleum at Taj Mahal**

- The Union Culture Minister Mahesh Sharma has announced that the tourists visiting the Taj Mahal would have to pay more from April 1, 2018.
- As of now, there is no separate fee for entry to the main mausoleum. However, with this decision, those wishing to see the main mausoleum at Taj Mahal will have to pay an extra charge of Rs 200.

### **Gadkari inaugurates electric vehicle chargers at NITI Aayog premises**

- Our Bureau Union Minister Nitin Gadkari urged the industry to make use of the first mover advantage in the electric vehicles segment in the country.
- Gadkari, Minister for Road Transport & Highways, Shipping and Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation, who inaugurated the electric vehicles charging station at the NITI Aayog premises here, said electric vehicles can substitute imports (of crude oil) and are cost effective as well as pollution-free.

### **India's first radio festival to be held in Delhi in February**

- India's first radio festival was held in New Delhi on February 15, 2018, to mark the World Radio Day.
- The festival was organised by the International Association of Women in Radio and Television in partnership with UNESCO.
- It included expert panel discussions, an exhibition and live performances and touched upon the theme for World Radio Day 2018, 'radio and sports'.

### **NITI Aayog, KPIT technologies tie-up to promote innovation in schools**

- IT-based consulting firm KPIT technologies has announced its two-year statement of intent with National Institution for Transforming India- NITI Aayog to promote innovative skills among the students of senior secondary level as part of the government's Atal Innovation Mission(AIM).
- Under the (AIM), the Central government aims at creating open-ended workshops at select Atal Tinkering Laboratories(ATL), which will allow students to learn through the mode of 'do-it-yourself' and help them acquire critical skills.

### **Mumbai to have India's first artificial intelligence centre**

- In a first in the country, the State government will be setting up an institute for artificial intelligence (AI) in Mumbai. Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis will unveil the plan for the institute during the Magnetic Maharashtra Summit, and at the Global Economic Conference in Canada next month.
- The meeting between Canadian Minister of International Relations, Christine St-Pierre, and Mr. Fadnavis was held on AI cooperation in the industrial and service sectors.

- At the Magnetic Maharashtra Summit, which will be inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on February 18, a separate pavilion has been dedicated to emerging technologies and how it could be used to create jobs.

#### ***Mangalore University signs MoU with University of Newcastle***

- Mangalore University and the University of Newcastle, New South Wales, Australia, in February signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to explore opportunities in areas of multi-disciplinary research.
- Kevin Hall, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation), University of Newcastle, and B.S. Nagendra Prakash, Registrar (Administration), Mangalore University, exchanged the MoU in the presence of K. Byrappa, Vice-Chancellor of Mangalore University. The MoU is valid for five years. The areas of research tentatively identified are material sciences, physics and English. There are plans for student and faculty exchange.

#### ***West Bengal becomes first state to opt out of National Health Protection Scheme***

- The state of West Bengal on February 13, 2018 became the first one in India to opt out of the Union Government's National Health Protection Scheme that was announced in Union Budget 2018-19.
- The announcement was made by the state's Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, who said that the state will not waste its hard earned resources to contribute its share to the programme.
- Banerjee said that the centre has drawn up a health plan in which 40 per cent of the fund has to come from states but questioned that why should the state spend on another programme when it already has its own.
- The West Bengal government has already enrolled 50 lakh people under its own Swasthya Sathi programme.

#### ***Tri-service maritime exercise 'Paschim Lehar' begins***

- The Tri-service maritime exercise 'Paschim Lehar' was initiated off India's western coast on February 12, 2018.
- The main objective of the exercise was to build interoperability between the Indian Navy, Indian Army, Indian Air Force and Coast Guard.
- Around 40 ships, submarines and fighter aircraft participated in the exercise.
- In the initial phase, the exercise included a number of weapon firings, including missile, gun and torpedo firings.

#### ***UP Government announces massive job openings***

- The Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh on February 16, 2018 announced massive vacancies within the state government.
- Addressing his maiden budget speech at the state's Legislative Assembly, the Chief Minister announced to bring 1,37,000 vacancies for teachers and 1,62,000 vacancies in the state police department soon.

#### ***India, Indonesia joint military drill begins in Bandung***

- The Indian and Indonesian armies on February 19, 2018 began the sixth edition of their annual military exercises in the West Java province of the archipelago country.
- The opening ceremony of the two-week Garuda Shakti military drill between the Special Forces of the Indian Army and the Indonesian Army was held at Bandung.

#### ***UP unveils new tourism policy to woo tourists and investors***

- The Uttar Pradesh government on February 19, 2018 announced a new tourism policy to increase footfalls as well as investment in the state.
- The state government aims to encourage at least 4-5 persons from each of the 6.5 lakh villages in the country to come and participate in the Kumbh Mela at Allahabad in 2019.
- The Department of Tourism envisages an annual increase in the number of foreign tourists by 10 per cent and domestic arrivals by 15 per cent.

#### ***Delhi Metro travellers can pay bus fare, parking charges with smart cards now***

- Delhi Metro commuters can now pay the fares of feeder buses and a number of parking lots at metro stations through their smart cards.
- Delhi Metro currently has more than 200 feeder buses plying on over 40 routes to ferry commuters to the nearest metro network.

#### ***PM flags of new Mysuru-Udaipur train***

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi on February 19, 2018 flagged off a new express train from Mysuru railway station.
- The Palace Queen Humsafar Express train will run between Karnataka's Mysuru and Udaipur in Rajasthan.
- Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah was also present at the occasion, along with the Prime Minister.

#### ***Botanical Survey of India signs MoU with UK's Natural History Museum***

- The Botanical Survey of India (BSI) and Natural History Museum (NHM) of United Kingdom signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in New Delhi on February 16, 2018 to enhance cooperation in the field of genetic/taxonomic studies, research and training and conservation in India, including species and habitat conservation assessments.
- The MoU was signed by BSI Director Dr. Paramjit Singh and Head of the Algae, Fungi and Plants Division, NHM, Dr. Sandra Knapp, in the presence of Union Environment Minister Dr. Harsh Vardhan.

#### ***Cabinet approves agreement between India, Israel on Film Co-production***

- The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi on February 20, 2018 approved an agreement on film co-production between India and Israel.
- The agreement was signed during the visit of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to India, in the presence of both the Prime Ministers in Hyderabad House in New Delhi on January 15, 2018.
- The agreement on co-production of films with an international party would enable Indian producers to gain access to international funds and collaborate on the script, talent and distribution at international level.

#### ***Cabinet approves proposal for constitution of tribunal to resolve Mahanadi Water Disputes***

- The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi on February 20, 2018 approved the proposal for constitution of a tribunal for adjudication of dispute on Mahanadi River Waters.
- The Tribunal shall determine water sharing among basin States on the basis of the overall availability of water in the complete Mahanadi basin, contribution of each State, the present utilization of water resources in each State and the potential for future development.

#### ***India test-fires nuclear-capable Agni-II missile off Odisha coast***

- Indian Army on February 20, 2018 successfully test-fired nuclear-capable Agni-II ballistic missile from the Abdul Kalam Island off the Odisha coast.
- The missile test was conducted by the Indian Army's Strategic Forces Command with logistic support from the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).
- This was third successful trial of an Agni series missile in the last one month.

#### ***UK, India launch joint research projects on clean water and energy***

- India and United Kingdom on February 19, 2018 jointly launched research projects on 'Water Quality Research' and 'Energy Demand Reduction in Built Environment'.
- These UK-India research projects were launched by V K Saraswat, Member of NITI Aayog; Professor Ashutosh Sharma, Secretary of Department of Science and Technology (DST) India and Daniel Shah, Director of Research Councils UK (RCUK) India.

#### ***India to host World Environment Day 2018***

- Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Dr Harsh Vardhan on February 19, 2018 announced that India will be the Global Host for the World Environment Day 2018.
- World Environment Day 2018 will be celebrated across the globe with the theme 'Beat Plastic Pollution'.
- Plastic is a huge environmental and health issue and the day will be observed with the main focus on creating mass awareness about the hazards of plastic pollution.

#### ***IAF Officer Avani Chaturvedi becomes first Indian woman to fly fighter aircraft solo***

- Scripting history, flying officer Avani Chaturvedi has become the first Indian woman to fly a fighter aircraft, an IAF official said.
- "Chaturvedi became the first Indian woman to fly a fighter aircraft solo when she flew a MiG-21 bison in her first solo flight," the official.
- Three women pilots, Chaturvedi, Bhawana Kanth and Mohana Singh, had undergone strenuous training programme to fly fighter jets.
- They were commissioned as flying officers in July 2016, less than a year after the government decided to open the fighter stream for women on an experimental basis.
- The IAF has already selected the next batch of three women trainee pilots for the fighter stream.

#### ***Gandhi Nagar in Jaipur becomes the country's first all-woman managed non-sub-urban railway station***

- The Gandhi Nagar railway station in Jaipur, in February became the country's first non-sub-urban railway station to be fully-managed by women, officials of the North Western Railway Zone said.
- Gandhi Nagar is important railway station in Jaipur situated on the Jaipur-Delhi rail route with more than 50 trains passing through the station out of which 25 halting at the station.
- The station has footfall of more than 7,000 passengers every day.
- Tarun Jain, chief public relation officer of the zone, said the initiative of an all-woman railway station in the North Western Railway zone, was conceptualized by general manager Singh and divisional railway manager Saumya Mathur and other railway officials made efforts to make it a reality.
- Women staff has appointed in different posts, including points-women (who change the tracks), station manager, chief reservation supervisor, assistant reservation supervisor, inquiry counter and reservation clerk, ticket checker and at the station, Jain said.
- Last year, Matunga railway station in Mumbai was the first in the country to have deployed all-women staff at the station to manage all railway operations. It has now been entered in the Limca Book of Records 2018 for being manned exclusively by women staffers, a first on the Indian Railways. This initiative was started to empower women and create an environment where they can make their own decisions.

#### ***For garbage disposal, Bengal a model for the whole country***

- Union Rural Development Ministry recently has sent instructions to all the state and union territory governments to study and implement the Bengal model.
- TMC Government in West Bengal has used the 100 Days' Work Scheme (NREGA) for garbage disposal by the Panchayats.
- The solid waste management system that the panchayats have implemented is both health-friendly and environment-friendly.
- West Bengal has also been acknowledged by the Centre as being the best in implementing the 100 Days' Work Scheme.

#### ***Government gives nod to 13-digit machine-to-machine SIM numbers from July 1***

- The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has asked telecom service providers to start issuing 13-digit digit numbers for SIM-based machine-to-machine (M2M) services, which will co-exist with 10-digit numbers.
- The DoT had approved the scheme and a letter on it was sent to various departments on February 9, 2018.

- M2M services are those where Internet-enabled devices like point-of-sale machines or even latest refrigerators communicate through a SIM card. This decision will not have any effect on mobile phone SIMs.
- During the meeting, it was decided that 13-digit M2M numbering plan will be implemented from July 1, 2018. From this date onwards, all new M2M mobile connections will be allocated 13-digit numbers only.

#### ***NER's First Regional Centre for Agriculture to be inaugurated in Mizoram in March***

- North Eastern Region' first Centre for Agriculture, with collaboration of Israeli expertise, is going to be inaugurated in Mizoram on March 7, 2018.
- Set up with a cost of Rs 8-10 crore, this centre is exclusively for processing of citrus fruits.
- The project has been set up with the tripartite collaboration of Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Government of Israel and Mizoram Government.

#### ***India successfully conducts night trial of Prithvi-II missile***

- India on February 21, 2018 successfully conducted night trial of indigenously developed surface-to-surface nuclear capable Prithvi-II missile off Odisha coast.
- The Strategic Forces Command of the Indian Army conducted the user trial of this 350 km range missile from a mobile launcher from launch complex-3 of the Integrated Test Range at Chandipur near Balasore in Odisha.
- The trial was a part of randomly selected regular training exercise by the armed forces which reconfirms the Army's readiness to fire it at short notice.

#### ***Light Transport Aircraft SARAS completes the second test-flight successfully***

- India's indigenous light transport aircraft SARAS was successfully test flown for a second time on February 21, 2018. The flight took off from HAL's airport in Bengaluru for a text book flight.
- The flight test was commanded by Wing Commander U.P. Singh, Group Captain R.V. Panicker and Group Captain K.P. Bhat of Indian Air Force- Aircraft and System Testing Establishment.
- This was the second of the 20 test flights planned for SARAS PT1N, before freezing the production version.

#### ***Maharashtra Government to launch cheap sanitary pad scheme***

- The state government of Maharashtra would be launching its new programme, 'Asmita Yojana' on the occasion of the International Women's Day on March 8, 2018 to provide cheap and subsidised sanitary pads to school girls and women.
- Under the scheme, girls studying in Zilla Parishad schools will get sanitary napkin packets at Rs 5, while rural women would be able to avail it at a subsidised rate of Rs.24 and Rs.29.
- The move comes at a time when attempts are being made to remove the taboo associated with the topic of menstrual hygiene by spreading awareness through various mediums including social networking sites, cinema and social campaigns.

#### ***Union Government launches mobile app on Bamboo Housing & Construction***

Hardeep Puri, Minister of State for Housing and Urban Affairs, on February 22, 2018 launched a Mobile App on "Bamboo Housing & Construction".

#### **Launch of publication 'Building Materials and Housing Technologies for Sustainable Development'**

- Hardeep Puri also launched a publication titled "Building Materials and Housing Technologies for Sustainable Development".
- The Publication contains 38 papers covering various subjects with the theme of the National Seminar.

#### **National Seminar on 'Emerging Building Materials and Construction Technologies'**

- All these launches were done on the occasion of the inaugural of the National Seminar on 'Emerging Building Materials and Construction Technologies'- the theme of the seminar. It was organized by Building Materials and Technology Promotion Council (BMTPC).
- The Seminar was organised to take stock of the new initiatives in the field of building materials & construction practices and provide opportunity to all the stakeholders to come together and share their experience & knowledge for the benefit of the nation at large.

#### ***India, France to jointly hold ISA Summit in March***

- Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) Secretary Anand Kumar in February said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and France President Édouard Philippe will jointly hold an International Solar Alliance (ISA) Summit at the President house in New Delhi on March 11.
- Kumar further said that two new programmes on scaling solar e-mobility and storage, and on rooftop solar will be inaugurated during the summit.

#### ***India, Canada sign MoU with International Development Research Centre***

- A Memorandum of Understanding was signed on February 22, 2018 between the India and Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC) to usher the programme based research support in addressing current and future global and local developmental challenges.
- Since 1972, IDRC has funded 551 research activities worth 159 million Canadian dollar in India through institutions, researchers and NGOs.

#### ***India, Canada sign Memorandum of Understanding on sports***

- India and Canada signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on sports in New Delhi.
- The MoU was signed by Union Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore and Canadian Minister for Science and Sports Kirsty Duncan.
- The MoU was aimed at maintaining integrity in sports as well as using sports to succeed on sustainable development goals.

#### ***Airtel, Huawei conduct India's first 5G trial***

- Telecom Major Bharti Airtel and equipment maker Huawei said in February that they have conducted India's first 5G network trial achieving over 3 gigabit per second data speed.
- Huawei said in a statement that both the companies "have successfully conducted India's first 5G network trial under a test set up".
- The trial was conducted at Airtel's network experience centre in Manesar, Gurgaon, it said.

#### ***Srei Infra Advisory, UP govt partner to rejuvenate Agra***

- Srei Advisory, a division of Srei Infrastructure Finance Limited (Srei), and government of Uttar Pradesh in February signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) announcing a new co-operation agreement to rejuvenate Agra as an iconic tourist-cum-holiday destination.
- The proposal is expected to attract investments of around Rs. 25,000 crore in the state of Uttar Pradesh.
- MoU was signed between Srei Advisory and the Department of Infrastructure and Industrial Development, government of Uttar Pradesh.

#### ***India, Sri Lanka hold talks to prevent smuggling***

- India and Sri Lanka resolved to strengthen co-operation in preventing the smuggling of gold, drugs, fake Indian currency notes (FICN), wildlife, and other contraband across their route, and to address trade-related issues such as 'Country of Origin' frauds that impact the revenue of both nations, in a meeting held on February 22 and 23.

- The two-day meeting, which was held after ten years, focused on many areas of mutual interest to combat smuggling and improve trade facilitation by use of data analytics, new investigation techniques, inter-agency coordination, and capacity building.

#### **Assam to observe 'Rhino Day' on September 22**

- In a bid to keep the world famous one-horned rhinoceros of Assam under the global spotlight, the Assam government has decided to commemorate September 22 as 'Rhino Day'.
- The day is exclusively dedicated to the approximately 2500 rhino population in the state and it would be a tribute to the rhinoceros, which are the pride of Assam.
- A State Rhino Project, in line with the National Rhino Project, will also be launched in the state for the protection and conservation of rhinos.

#### **India's first AI University to come up at Amaravati**

- Andhra Pradesh Real Time Governance CEO Ahmed Babu in February said India's first Artificial Intelligence (AI) University would be set up at futuristic capital coming up at Amaravati with the support of Finland. The university would train youngsters on the latest AI technologies.
- He told The Hindu on the sidelines of second day of CII Partnership Summit here that with the support of Finland, where a world-class university is set up at Pori, they would develop the AI University to train youngsters on the latest technologies to make a mark all over the world.
- Mr. Babu said Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu as part of real time governance initiative, was very keen on establishing the AI University at Amaravati for which they were planning to allot 40 to 50 acres. The university would be operational by March, 2019, he disclosed.

#### **DRDO successfully test-flights Rustom 2 drone**

- The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) on February 25, 2018 successfully conducted the test-flight of India's home-made drone 'Rustom 2' at its Aeronautical Test Range (ATR) at Chitradurga, Karnataka.
- This was the first flight-test to test out the user configuration of the drone with higher power engine.
- Rustom 2 is being developed on the lines of predator drones of the United States with an aim to carry out Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) roles for the armed forces with an endurance of 24 hours.

#### **India successfully test-fires nuclear capable 'Dhanush' missile**

- India on February 23, 2018 test-fired the surface-to-surface Dhanush ballistic missile from a naval ship off Odisha's coast.
- The nuclear-capable missile with a strike range of 350 km is a naval variant of the indigenously-developed Prithvi-II missile. It was test-fired from a naval warship positioned near Paradip in the Bay of Bengal.

#### **International Conference on Sustainable Biofuels 2018**

- The two day international conference on Sustainable Biofuels is jointly being organized on February 26-27, 2018 by Department of Biotechnology, Govt. of India and Biofuture platform.
- The conference will seek to a clear understanding of the development in bio-economy made by participating countries, increase awareness of policy makers about the challenges faced by the industry-investor for commercial scale up of advanced biofuels.

#### **Andaman & Nicobar Command to host Milan 2018**

- Andaman & Nicobar Command of Indian Navy will host the multinational mega event MILAN 2018 in the second week of March 2018.
- MILAN provides an excellent opportunity to the participating navies to foster co-operation through naval exercises and professional interactions and to nurture stronger ties.

- MILAN 2018 will be held at Port Blair from March 6 to March 13, 2018.
- The theme of MILAN 2018 will be 'Friendship Across the Seas'.

#### ***National conference on e-Governance to be held in Hyderabad***

- The 21st national conference on e-Governance is being held in Hyderabad.
- Union Government and Telangana Administrative Reforms department are jointly organising the conference with the main theme around- 'Technology for accelerating development'.

#### ***PM launches various development projects worth Rs 1000 crores in Daman & Diu***

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched various development projects worth Rs 1000 crores in Daman & Diu.
- He distributed certificates to beneficiaries of programs and addressed a public meeting at the Daman college ground.
- The Prime Minister inaugurated Air Odisha's flight connecting Ahmedabad with Diu under the UDAN scheme.

#### ***NGT appoints court commissioners for case related to sand mining in Jodhpur***

- The National Green Tribunal appointed court commissioners to verify allegations made in a plea regarding illegal sand mining in Jodhpur district of Rajasthan.
- A bench headed by Justice Jawad Rahim appointed advocates Gaurav Bansal and Rahul Khurana as court commissioners in the case and directed them to submit the inspection report by 30 March.
- The tribunal was hearing a plea filed by local resident alleging illegal mining going in Beri Ganga Forest Block.

#### ***Odisha Launches Khushi Scheme To Provide Free Sanitary Pads To 17 Lakh Students***

- As part of its initiatives to empower women, the Odisha government in February launched a scheme "Khushi" to provide free sanitary napkins to school girls across the state.
- The scheme will be implemented by the health and family welfare department of the state at a cost of 70 crore per year, a senior government official said.

#### ***PM Modi Launches Subsidised 'Amma' Two-Wheeler Scheme In Tamil Nadu***

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi in February launched the subsidised scooter scheme for working women on the occasion of the 70th birth anniversary celebrations of late Tamil Nadu leader J Jayalalithaa.
- It was launched in the presence of Tamil Nadu Chief Minister K Palaniswami and his deputy O Panneerselvam, among others.
- The scheme, with a subsidy component of 50 per cent up to Rs. 25,000 for working women, was launched by PM Modi, who handed over the keys and registration certificate copies to five women beneficiaries.

#### ***UIDAI launches blue coloured Baal Aadhaar***

- The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) has introduced a blue coloured 'Baal Aadhaar' card for children below the age of five years.
- The card will be issued to children in the age group without any biometric details but they will be required to complete a mandatory verification process when they turn five and then again when they are 15 years old.
- The blue coloured Aadhaar card will be given to children below the age of 5 years.
- To get a Baal Aadhaar, no biometric details will be needed.

#### ***Civil Aviation Minister inaugurates Aviation Multi Skill Development Centre***

- Civil Aviation Minister P Ashok Gajapathi Raju inaugurated a first of its kind Aviation Multi Skill Development Centre at the Chandigarh Old Airport Terminal building.
- The centre is a Corporate Social Responsibility initiative of the Airports Authority of India.

#### ***I&B Ministry releases reference annual India 2018 and Bharat 2018***

- Information and Broadcasting Minister Smriti Irani released the reference annual India 2018 and Bharat 2018.
- The books have been published by Publications Division in English and Hindi.
- These books are authentic and comprehensive volumes about government's plans and achievements in various sectors.

#### ***CSIR-NIO Goa announces discovery of methane gas flares in Krishna Godavari basin in Bay of Bengal***

- CSIR-National Institute of Oceanography (NIO), Goa announced the discovery of methane gas flares and active cold seeps from the seabed in the Krishna Godavari basin in the Bay of Bengal.
- The seep sites are distributed over a water depth of 900 metres to 1900 metres.
- These sites are characterized by high concentrations of hydrogen sulfide, calcium carbonate, unique faunal groups and shallow presence of methane hydrates.

#### ***Uma Bharti launches 2nd project of Swajal Yojana in Rajasthan***

- Union Minister of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Uma Bharti, launched the Swajal pilot project at Village Bhikampura, Karauli, Rajasthan.
- The project will ensure the availability of clean drinking water to every household round the year and would also generate employment.
- The pilot Swajal Project at Bhikampura was launched with a budget of more than 54.17 lakh rupees.

#### ***Nitin Gadkari lays foundation stone for NTCPWC at IIT Chennai***

- Nitin Gadkari, Union Minister for Road Transport & Highways, Shipping and Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation, on February 26, 2018 laid the foundation stone for setting up of a National Technology Centre for Ports, Waterways and Coasts (NTCPWC) at IIT Chennai.
- The Union Ministry of Shipping and IIT Chennai also signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in this regard.
- NTCPWC will be set up under the Union Shipping Ministry's flagship 'Sagarmala Programme'.
- It will act as a technology arm of the Ministry of Shipping for providing engineering and technological inputs and support for Ports, Inland Waterways Authority of India and other institutions.

#### ***Telangana launches integrated app "T App Folio" for all government services***

- The Telangana government in February launched an m-Governance mobile application called 'T App Folio' to help citizens with one point access to government services like MeeSeva services, RTA services, fee payments and bill payment services etc.
- While T App Folio has already integrated T Wallet, myGHMC, RTA m Wallet and HawkEye through a single sign-in feature, going forward, the Telangana government plans to bring on-board all mobile apps of its various departments to T App Folio over next 12 months.

#### ***Airtel, Google Partner to Offer Android Go-Powered Smartphones in India***

- Telecom operator Bharti Airtel and technology giant Google have partnered to launch low-cost 4G smartphones powered by Android Oreo (Go edition) in India.
- The entry-level 4G smartphones under Airtel's 'Mera Pehla Smartphone' program will be shipped with Android Oreo (Go edition) starting March this year.
- Notably, mobile manufacturers Lava and Micromax, will make the first set of 4G handsets powered by Android Go.

## PM Narendra Modi's Visit to Palestine, UAE & Oman

The outset of 2018 is proving to be significant in reorienting India's relations with countries in West Asia. While Prime Minister Narendra Modi is on his four-day visit to Palestine, UAE and Oman, External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj was attending the Janadriyah festival in Saudi Arabia as the guest of honour.

Last month, Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu visited India and now Iranian President Hasan Rouhani is all set to visit the country at the end of this week.

With a shift in India's approach from non-alignment to multi-alignment, India has been making attempts to strengthen relationship with the Arab world. Ahead of his visit, PM Modi emphasised the importance of this region and called it a "key priority in our external engagement".

Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Raveesh Kumar said the visit to the four countries was aimed at deepening "our multifaceted ties with the Gulf and West Asian region".

### Palestine

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**Capital:** Ramallah (Narendra Modi visited this city as a Capital)

**Currency:**

- Israeli new shekel
- Egyptian pound
- Jordanian dinar

**Head:** President Mahmoud Abbas

**MoUs signed during Palestine Visit:**

- MOU between India and Palestine for setting up India-Palestine Super-specialty hospital at Beit Sahour in Bethelhem Governorate at a cost of USD 30 million.
- MOU between India and Palestine for construction of India Palestine Centre for Empowering women 'Turathi' at a cost of USD 5 million.
- MOU between India and Palestine for setting up of new National Printing Press at Ramallah at a cost of USD 5 million.
- MOU between India and Palestine for construction of school in Muthalth Al Shuhada Village at a cost of USD 1 million.
- MOU between India and Palestine on construction of school in Tamoon village in Tubas Governorate in Palestine at a cost of USD 1.1 million.
- MOU between India and Palestine for assistance of USD 0.25 million for construction of additional floor to Jawahar Lal Nehru School for Boys at Abu Dees.

The first stop of the four-day visit was Jordan where PM Modi was received by the Jordan PM Hani Al-Mulki in Amman and then met King Abdullah II of Jordan who facilitated his transit to Palestine.

When he reached **Ramallah**, the de facto capital of the Palestine Authority, **Modi became the first Indian Prime Minister to visit Palestine.**

PM Modi was also conferred **The Grand Collar of the State of Palestine, the highest Palestinian honour for foreign dignitaries, by Palestine President Mahmoud Abbas.**

### United Arab Emirates

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- **Capital:** Abu Dhabi

- **Currency:** United Arab Emirates dirham
- **Head:** Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan

### MoUs Signed during UAE Visit:

#### MoU between Indian Consortium (OVL, BPRL & IOCL) and ADNOC

- An MOU was signed between Indian Consortium (OVL, BPRL & IOCL) and Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) for acquisition of 10 per cent participating interest in the offshore Lower Zakum Concession. The concession will be for 40 years from 2018 to 2057.
- Under the MoU, 60 per cent of the participating interest will be retained by ADNOC and remaining 30 per cent will be awarded to other International oil companies. This is the first Indian Investment in upstream oil sector of UAE.

#### MoU in the field of Manpower

- Indian Government and Government of UAE signed an MoU in the field of Manpower with an aim to institutionalise the collaborative administration of contractual employment of Indian workers in UAE.
- Under the MoU, both the sides will work together to integrate their labour related e-platforms for ending the existing malpractices, combat trafficking and organize programs for education of workers.

#### MoU for Technical Cooperation

- An MoU was signed between Railways Ministry of India and Federal Transport Authority - Land & Maritime of UAE for technical cooperation in Rail Sector. The MoU aims at cooperation in Infrastructure sector especially Railways.
- It will facilitate development of joint projects, knowledge sharing, joint research and technology transfer. It also envisages formation of a Joint Working Group for institutionalising the cooperation mechanism.

#### MoU for bilateral cooperation in the field of finance

- With an aim to extend the bilateral cooperation in the field of finance, an MoU was signed between Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) and Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange (ADX). It aims to enhance cooperation between both the countries in financial services industry.
- It will facilitate investment in financial markets by investors from both the countries.

#### MoU between Jammu and Kashmir and DP World

- An MoU between Jammu and Kashmir Government and DP World, UAE was signed to establish multi-modal logistics park and hub in Jammu comprising warehouses and specialized storage solutions.

The second leg of PM Modi began upon his arrival at Abu Dhabi where he held talks with Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Commander of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Armed Forces Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

*This was Modi's second visit to the UAE, after the first one in 2015.*

**PM Modi also witnessed the foundation stone laying ceremony of a temple in the UAE via video-conferencing. According to India's Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Navdeep Suri, this first Hindu temple in Abu Dhabi will come up on 55,000 sq m of land and construction will be completed by 2020.**

**Modi met Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) corporate leaders and spoke about the changes that raised India's ranking in the World Bank Ease of Doing Business index.**

### **Oman**

- **Capital:** Muscat
- **Currency:** Omani rial
- **Head:** Sultan Qaboos bin Said al Said

#### Following MoUs were signed during the meet:

1. Agreement on legal and judicial cooperation in civil and commercial matters.
2. Agreement on mutual visa exemption for holders of diplomatic, special, service and official passports.
3. MoU on cooperation in the field of Health.
4. MoU for cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space.
5. MoU on cooperation between Foreign Service Institute, Ministry of External Affairs, India and Oman Diplomatic Institute.
6. MoU on academic and scholarly cooperation sectors between National Defence College, Sultanate of Oman and the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses.
7. MoU in the field of Tourism Cooperation between India and Oman.
8. Annexure to the MoU on Military Cooperation.

During the last leg of his four-day tour, PM Modi landed in Oman on Sunday evening and led delegation-level talks yesterday with Sultan Qaboos bin Said al Said.

PM Modi addressing the Indian diaspora at the **Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Muscat, Oman's capital**, said that India-Oman ties have always remained strong despite the ups and downs in the political environment in both the countries.

He used this opportunity to promote the new **National Health Protection Scheme called Ayushman Bharat** which Modi said was labelled as 'Modicare' by the Indian media.

## Appointments

### India

| Person Name               | Appointed As                      | Organisation/Country   |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| Neelam Kapoor             | Director General                  | Sports Authority of India  |
| Shailendra Kumar          | Chief Secretary                   | Telangana  |
| Amitabh Kant              | CEO                               | NITI Aayog – till June 30, 2019  |
| Sudeep Lakhtakia          | Director General                  | National Security Guard (NSG)  |
| Vinod Tahlilani           | CEO                               | India Gas Solutions Pvt Ltd - the 50:50 joint venture of UK's BP plc and Reliance Industries |
| M M Murugappan            | Executive Chairman                | Murugappa Group  |
| Rohit Gothi               | CEO                               | Hero Cycles  |
| AK Prasad                 | Financial Commissioner (Railways) | Railway Board  |
| Anirban Majumdar          | CFO                               | Home Credit India  |
| Justice Ajay Rastogi      | Chief Justice                     | Tripura High Court   |
| Justice Tarun Agarwala    | Chief Justice                     | Meghalaya High Court   |
| Justice Antony Dominic    | Chief Justice                     | Kerala High Court  |
| Justice Abhilasha Kumari  | Chief Justice                     | Manipur High Court   |
| Justice Dinesh Maheshwari | Chief Justice                     | Karnataka High Court   |
| Hardayal Prasad           | CEO & MD                          | SBI Card   |

|   |                            |  |
|---|----------------------------|--|
| Jyri Strandman                                | COO                        | GoAir  |
| Saurabh Jain                                  | CFO                        | National Investment & Infrastructure Fund (NIIF) |
| Rakesh Singh                                  | Head                       | Private Banking - HDFC                           |
| Swayam Prakash Pani                           | Inspector General          | Kashmir Police                                   |
| Amitabh Bachchan                              | Brand Ambassador           | Muthoot Group                                    |
| Kannada writer,<br>Chandrashekhara<br>Kambara | President                  | Sahitya Akademi                                  |
| Murali Ramaswami                              | Executive Director         | Vijaya Bank                                      |
| K.S Dwivedi                                   | Director General of Police | Bihar  |
| Shivanand Jha                                 | Director General of Police | Gujarat  |

## World

| Person Name                             | Appointed As                         | Organisation/Country                          |
|---|--------------------------------------|---|
| Jerome H Powell                         | Chairman                             | Federal Reserve (USA's central bank)          |
| PepsiCo Chairman and<br>CEO Indra Nooyi | first independent<br>female director | International Cricket Council                 |
| K P Sharma Oli                          | Prime Minister                       | Nepal   |
| Cyril Ramaphosa                         | President                            | South Africa                                  |
| Priyanka Anand                          | Vice President and<br>Head of HR     | South East Asia, Oceania and India – Eriksson |
| Shoaib Akhtar                           | Brand Ambassador                     | Pakistan Cricket Board                        |
| Gaku Nakanishi                          | President & CEO                      | Honda Cars India                              |
| Madhusudan Gopalan                      | MD & CEO                             | P&G India                                     |
| Martin Nydegger                         | CEO                                  | Switzerland Tourism                           |
| Michael McCormack                       | Deputy Prime<br>Minister             | Australia                                     |

### Ref.

- CEO – Chief Executive Officer
- CFO – Chief Financial Officer
- COO – Chief Operating Officer
- MD – Managing Director

## Union Budget at a Glance

- MSP for all unannounced kharif crops will be one and half times of their production cost like majority of rabi crops: Institutional Farm Credit raised to 11 lakh crore in 2018-19 from 8.5 lakh crore in 2014-15.
- 22,000 rural haats to be developed and upgraded into Gramin Agricultural Markets to protect the interests of 86% small and marginal farmers.
- "Operation Greens" launched to address price fluctuations in potato, tomato and onion for benefit of farmers and consumers.
- Two New Funds of ₹10,000 crore announced for Fisheries and Animal Husbandary sectors; Re-structured National Bamboo Mission gets ₹1290 crore.
- Loans to Women Self Help Groups will increase to ₹75,000 crore in 2019 from 42,500 crore last year.
- Higher targets for Ujjwala, Saubhagya and Swachh Mission to cater to lower and middle class in providing free LPG connections, electricity and toilets.
- Outlay on health, education and social protection will be 1.38 lakh crore. Tribal students to get Ekalavya Residential School in each tribal block by 2022. Welfare fund for SCs gets a boost.
- World's largest Health Protection Scheme covering over 10 crore poor and vulnerable families launched with a family limit upto 5 lakh rupees for secondary and tertiary treatment.

- Fiscal Deficit pegged at 3.5 %, projected at 3.3 % for 2018-19.
- ₹ 5.97 lakh crore allocation for infrastructure
- Ten prominent sites to be developed as Iconic tourist destinations
- NITI Aayog to initiate a national programme on Artificial Intelligence(AI)
- Centres of excellence to be set up on robotics, AI, Internet of things etc
- Disinvestment crossed target of ₹ 72,500 crore to reach ₹ 1,00,000 crore
- Comprehensive Gold Policy on the anvil to develop yellow metal as an asset class
- 100 percent deduction proposed to companies registered as Farmer Producer Companies with an annual turnover upto ₹ 100 crore on profit derived from such activities, for five years from 2018-19.
- Deduction of 30 percent on emoluments paid to new employees Under Section 80-JJAA to be relaxed to 150 days for footwear and leather industry, to create more employment.
- No adjustment in respect of transactions in immovable property where Circle Rate value does not exceed 5 percent of consideration.
- Proposal to extend reduced rate of 25 percent currently available for companies with turnover of less than 50 crore (in Financial Year 2015-16), to companies reporting turnover up to ₹ 250 crore in Financial Year 2016-17, to benefit micro, small and medium enterprises.
- Standard Deduction of ₹ 40,000 in place of present exemption for transport allowance and reimbursement of miscellaneous medical expenses. 2.5 crore salaried employees and pensioners to benefit.
- Exemption of interest income on deposits with banks and post offices to be increased from ₹ 10,000 to ₹ 50,000.
- TDS not required to be deducted under section 194A. Benefit also available for interest from all fixed deposit schemes and recurring deposit schemes.
- Hike in deduction limit for health insurance premium and/ or medical expenditure from ₹ 30,000 to ₹ 50,000 under section 80D.
- Increase in deduction limit for medical expenditure for certain critical illness from ₹ 60,000 (in case of senior citizens) and from ₹ 80,000 (in case of very senior citizens) to ₹ 1 lakh for all senior citizens, under section 80DDB.
- Proposed to extend Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana up to March, 2020. Current investment limit proposed to be increased to ₹ 15 lakh from the existing limit of ₹ 7.5 lakh per senior citizen.
- To control cash economy, payments exceeding ₹ 10,000 in cash made by trusts and institutions to be disallowed and would be subject to tax.
- Tax on Long Term Capital Gains exceeding ₹ 1 lakh at the rate of 10 percent, without allowing any indexation benefit. However, all gains up to 31st January, 2018 will be grandfathered.
- Proposal to introduce tax on distributed income by equity oriented mutual funds at the rate of 10 percent.
- Proposal to increase cess on personal income tax and corporation tax to 4 percent from present 3 percent.
- Proposal to roll out E-assessment across the country to almost eliminate person to person contact leading to greater efficiency and transparency in direct tax collection.

## Major Highlights of Union Budget 2018-19

### ***Growth Forecast***

Government says that it is firmly on course to achieve high growth of 8% plus as manufacturing, services and exports are back on good growth path. While GDP growth at 6.3% in the second quarter of 2017-18 signalled turnaround of the economy, growth in the second half is likely to remain between 7.2% to 7.5%.

### **Agriculture**

- **The government would be doubling the farmer's income by 2022, on the occasion of India's 75th anniversary with special emphasis on generating higher income for farmers.**
- The government's emphasis will be on generating higher incomes for farmers, by helping them produce more with lesser cost and earn higher income for their produce.
- The government wants to assist farmers to earn 1.5 times the production cost, and the **Minimum Selling Price (MSP)** for the Kharif Crops has been set at 1.5 times the produce price.
- The government would be working with the states to ensure that all farmers get a fair price.
- Niti Aayog would also be developing appropriate policies through which farmers would be able to get the right price for their crops.
- More than 86 per cent farmers are small and marginal. To assist these farmers, the government has decided to develop and upgrade existing 22,000 rural haats into **Gramin Agricultural Markets (GrAMs)**.
- In these GrAMs, physical infrastructure will be strengthened using **MGNREGA** and other government schemes. The government would be setting up an Agri-Market Infrastructure Fund with a corpus of ₹2000 crore for developing and **upgrading agricultural marketing infrastructure in the 22000 Grameen Agricultural Markets (GrAMs)**.
- Organic farming will be encouraged and women self help groups will be encouraged to take up organic farming under national rural agriculture programme.
- **Allocation of ₹ 1400 crore for food processing**, doubled from last year's budget which allocated ₹ 715 crore.
- Government plans to launch '**Operation Green**' with a corpus of ₹ 500 crore. It will promote **Farmer Producers Organizations (FPOs)**, agri-logistics, processing facilities and professional management.
- **Indian Agricultural Export will be liberalised and 42 mega food parks will be launched.**
- **Kisan credits cards will be provided to fisheries and animal husbandry farmers to help them meet their working capital needs.** Small and marginal farmers will get more benefits.
- **The government has set aside ₹ 10,000 crore for Fisheries and Aquaculture and Animal Husbandry Development Fund.**
- The government has also proposed to launch a **restructured bamboo mission with a fund of ₹ 1290 crore to promote bamboo sector in a holistic manner.**
- **The agricultural credit target has also been increased from ₹ 8.5 lakh crore to ₹ 11 lakh core.**
- The Government is going to introduce a special scheme to support **the state governments of Haryana, Punjab and Delhi to manage the burning of crop residue and reduce pollution.**

## Education, Health and Social Protection

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- **The Finance Minister said that estimated budgetary expenditure on health, education and social protection for 2018-19 is ₹1.38 lakh crore** against estimated expenditure of ₹1.22 lakh crore in 2017-18 .
- The government has **allocated an amount worth ₹ 9975 crore for National Social Assistance Programme this year.**
- **Budget 2018 proposes to treat education holistically without segmentation from pre-nursery to Class 12.**
- To improve the quality of teachers and education, the government would be initiating an integrated B.Ed. programme for the teachers.
- The government has amended the **Right to Education Act to enable more than 13 lakh untrained teachers to get trained.**
- The government has also proposed to increase the digital intensity in education and move gradually from **"black board" to "digital board"**.
- Technology will also be used to upgrade the skills of teachers through the recently launched digital portal **"DIKSHA"**.
- To provide the best quality education to the tribal children in their own environment, it has been decided that by the year 2022, every block with more than 50% ST population and at least 20,000 tribal persons, will have an **Ekalavya Model Residential School.**
- **Ekalavya schools** will be on par with **Navodaya Vidyalayas** and will have special facilities for preserving local art and culture besides providing training in sports and skill development.

- The government has also proposed to launch a major initiative named “**Revitalising Infrastructure and Systems in Education (RISE) by 2022**” with a **total investment of ₹ 1, 00,000 crore** in next four years. **Higher Education Financing Agency (HEFA)** would be suitably structured for funding this initiative.
- The government is also planning to set up a specialised Railways University at Vadodara.
- The government has also proposed to set up two new full-fledged schools of Planning and Architecture, to be selected on challenge mode.
- Additionally, 18 new schools of Planning and Architecture would be established in the IITs and NITs as autonomous Schools, also on challenge mode.
- Lastly, the government would launch the ‘**Prime Minister’s Research Fellows (PMRF)**’ Scheme this year. Under the scheme, the government would identify 1,000 best B.Tech students each year from premier institutions and provide them facilities to do Ph.D in IITs and IISc, with a handsome fellowship. It is expected that these bright young fellows would voluntarily commit few hours every week for teaching in higher educational institutions.
- The Finance Minister announced the world’s largest government funded health care programme titled **National Health Protection Scheme to cover over 10 crore poor and vulnerable families (approximately 50 crore beneficiaries) providing coverage upto 5 lakh rupees per family per year** for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization.
- Government also committed **₹ 1200 crore for the National Health Policy, 2017**, which with 1.5 lakh Health and Wellness Centres will bring health care system closer to the homes of people.
- The Government **also decided to allocate additional ₹600 crore to provide nutritional support to all TB patients at the rate of ₹500 per month for the duration of their treatment.**
- Government will be setting up **24 new Government Medical Colleges and Hospitals by upgrading existing district hospitals in the country.**
- **A total of 187 projects have been sanctioned under the Namami Gange programme for infrastructure development**, river surface cleaning, rural sanitation and other interventions at a cost of ₹16,713 crore.
- **All 4465 Ganga Grams – villages on the bank of river - have been declared open defecation free.**
- Government has identified 115 aspirational districts taking various indices of development in consideration for making them model districts of development.

## Medium, Small and Micro Enterprises (MSMEs) and Employment

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- **A sum of ₹ 3794 crore has been provided for giving credit support, capital and interest subsidy and for innovations.**
- MUDRA Yojana launched in April, 2015 has led to sanction of ₹4.6 lakh crore in credit from 10.38 crore MUDRA loans. **76% of loan accounts are of women and more than 50% belong to SCs, STs and OBCs.**
- **It is proposed to set a target of ₹3 lakh crore for lending under MUDRA for 2018-19** after having successfully exceeded the targets in all previous years.
- **Government will contribute 12% of the wages of the new employees in the EPF for all the sectors for next three years.**
- Government proposed to make amendments in the Employees Provident Fund and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952 to reduce women employees' contribution to 8% for first three years of their employment against existing rate of 12% or 10% with no change in employers' contribution.
- **The Budget proposed an outlay of ₹7148 crore for the textile sector in 2018-19** as against ₹6,000 Crore in 2016.

## Fiscal Expenditure

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The total expenditure of the **Union government is ₹ 21.57 lakh crore.**

The projected fiscal deficit of the **FY 2018-19 is 3.3 per cent of the GDP.**

## Taxation Reforms

- In previous years, the growth rate of direct taxes have been significant. Till January 2018, **growth rate of 18.7 per cent was recorded.** Over 85 lakh new taxpayers filed their returns. The number of effective taxpayers increased from 6.47 lakh crore to 8.27 lakh crore in the previous financial year.
- **The excess revenue from personal income tax is ₹ 90000 crore.**
- No changes in personal income tax slabs.
- Majorly, the personal income tax collection comes from the salaried class. **Around 1.89 crore returns were filed in 2017 and ₹ 1.44 lakh crore was paid as taxes.**
- **100 per cent tax deduction to farmer-producer companies having ₹ 100 crore turnover.**
- Corporate tax will be reduced to 25 per cent for companies **having turnover of up to ₹ 250 crore.**
- Long term capital gains tax of 10 per cent will be levied **for amount exceeding ₹ 1 lakh.**
- This year budget proposes a standard deduction of **₹ 40000 for transport and medical reimbursements. The revenue cost of this reimbursements will be ₹ 8000 crore.**
- Exemption of interest income for deposits in banks and post offices **will be increased from ₹ 10000 to ₹ 50000 for senior citizens.** It applies to all fixed deposit schemes.
- All senior citizens will now be able to claim benefit of **a deduction of ₹ 50000 for any medical expenditure and can claim deduction of ₹ 100000 for critical illnesses.**

## Duties

- Customs duty on mobile phones and parts of televisions **will be increased to 20 per cent from 15 per cent.**
- Customs duty on raw cashew will be **reduced from 5 per cent to 2.5 per cent.**
- The name of the Central Board of Excise and Customs will be changed to **the Central Board of Direct Taxes and Customs.**
- Electronic IT assessment will be rolled out across the country for greater efficiency and transparency.
- No more education cess on imported goods. **Education cess will be replaced by social welfare surcharge of 10 per cent.**

## Infrastructure and Financial Sector Development

- Finance Minister estimated that investment in excess of **₹50 lakh crore is needed to increase growth of GDP and connect the nation with a network of roads, airports, railways, ports and inland waterways.**
- Government **announced increase of budgetary allocation on infrastructure for 2018-19 to ₹5.97 lakh crore** against estimated expenditure of ₹4.94 lakh crore in 2017-18.
- Using online monitoring **system of PRAGATI** alone, **projects worth 9.46 lakh crore have been facilitated and fast tracked.**
- Budget proposes **to develop ten prominent tourist sites into Iconic Tourism destinations by following a holistic approach involving infrastructure and skill development, development of technology, attracting private investment, branding and marketing.**
- Under the **Bharatmala Pariyojana**, about 35000 kms road construction in **Phase-I at an estimated cost of ₹5,35,000 crore has been approved.**
- **99 cities have been selected with outlay of ₹2.09 lakh crore under Smart City programme.**
- Government to preserve heritage cities through **National Heritage Augmentation Yojana.**
- The Finance Minister announced that his Ministry will leverage the **India Infrastructure Finance Corporation Limited (IIFCL)** to help finance infrastructure projects including investment in education and health infrastructure.

- Government announced for creation of livelihood and infrastructure in rural areas, **total amount to be spent by various Ministries will be ₹14.34 lakh crore**, including extrabudgetary and non-budgetary resources of ₹11.98 lakh crore.
- Strengthening the Ground water irrigation scheme **under Prime Minister Krishi Sinchai Yojna - Har Khet ko Pani** – the **Government allocated ₹ 2600 crore for this purpose.**

## Railways

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- Railways Capital Expenditure for the year **2018-19 has been pegged at ₹1,48,528 crore.**
- **18000 km of railway line will be doubled to eliminate capacity constraints.**
- The government would be laying special focus on safety. Hence, special attention would be paid to the maintenance of track infrastructure.
- There would also be an increase in the use of technology such as fog, train protection and warning system.
- The Railways is planning to re-develop 600 major railway stations.
- **All stations with more than 25000 footfall will have escalators.** All stations will also be equipped with high-speed wifi.
- **Mumbai's local train network will have 90 kilometers of double line tracks at a cost of over ₹11,000 crore. 150 kilometers of additional suburban network is being planned at a cost of over ₹40,000 crore**, including elevated corridors on some sections.
- **A suburban network of approximately 160 kilometers at an estimated cost of ₹17,000 crore** is being planned to cater to the growth of the **Bengaluru metropolis.**
- The government had previously laid the foundation of the high-speed bullet Mumbai-Ahmedabad train. **An institute would be set up in Vadodara in Gujarat to train the manpower for the high-speed railway project.**

## Air Transport

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- The Budget proposes to expand the airport capacity more than five times to handle a billion trips a year under a new initiative - **NABH Nirman.**
- **Under the Regional connectivity scheme of UDAN (Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik)** initiated by the Government last year, 56 unserved airports and 31 unserved helipads would be connected.
- The government would also be setting up a coalition for disaster resilient infrastructure. **The centre would be allocating ₹ 60 crores to kick-start the initiative.**

## Digital Economy

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- The Finance Minister said that NITI Aayog will initiate a national program to direct efforts in artificial intelligence.
- Department of Science & Technology will launch a Mission on Cyber Physical Systems to support establishment of centres of excellence for research, training and skilling in robotics, artificial intelligence, digital manufacturing, big data analysis, quantum communication and internet of things.
- The Budget doubled the allocation on Digital India programme to ₹ 3073 crore in 2018-19.

- To further Broadband access in villages, the Government proposes to set up five lakh wifi hotspots to provide net connectivity to five crore rural citizens.
- The Finance Minister allocated ₹ 10000 crore in 2018-19 for creation and augmentation of Telecom infrastructure.
- The government will explore use of blockchain technology proactively to boost digital economy. However, the government will not consider **cryptocurrency** as legal tender.
- Individual Enterprises will now have their own unique IDs.

## Defence

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- India's defence budget for the coming financial year **2018-19 has been increased by 7.81 per cent to ₹ 2,95,511.41 lakh crore.**
- **Out of ₹ 2.95 lakh crore, ₹ 1,95,947.55 crore has been allocated for revenue expenditure and ₹ 99,563.86 crore** for capital expenditure for the defence services and departments under the ministry.
- **First defence corridor will be established in Tamil Nadu, linking Chennai and Bangalore.**
- The government is planning to develop connectivity infrastructure in the border areas. While the construction on the Rohtang tunnel has been completed, the construction of Zojila pass tunnel is progressing well.
- The government has also proposed to construct a tunnel under the **Sela pass**.
- Recognizing the sacrifices made by **the Armed Forces in meeting the security challenges**, the Finance Minister proposed development of two defence industrial production corridors.

## Disinvestment

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- The Finance Minister announced that **2017-18 disinvestment target of ₹72,500 crore has been exceeded and expected receipts of ₹1,00,000 crore.** He set disinvestment target of ₹80,000 crore for 2018-19.
- Three Public Sector Insurance companies- **National Insurance Co. Ltd., United India Assurance Co. Ltd., and Oriental India insurance Co. Ltd., will be merged into a single insurance entity.**
- The Finance Minister announced that **a comprehensive Gold Policy will be formulated to develop gold as an asset class.**
- The Government will also establish **a system of consumer friendly and trade efficient system of regulated gold exchanges in the country.**
- Gold Monetization Scheme will be revamped **to enable people to open a hassle-free Gold Deposit Account.**
- The Budget proposes **to revise emoluments to ₹5 lakh for the President, ₹ 4 lakhs for the Vice President and ₹3.5 lakh per month to Governor.** These emoluments were last revised in 2006.
- **To celebrate the 150 Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, Father of the Nation from 2 nd October 2019,** the Budget set aside ₹150 crore for the activities leading to the commemoration programme.

## Underprivileged

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- The government had launched **Ujjwala Yojana** earlier to make poor women free from the smoke of wood.
- Though initially, their target was to provide free LPG connections to about 5 crore poor women, the government has now proposed to increase the target to 8 crore poor women.
- Under **Saubhagya Yojna**, around 4 crore poor households are being provided with free electricity connections at a cost of ₹ 16000 crore

- **Swachh Bharat Mission-** Under the mission, Government has already constructed more than 6 crore toilets to enable proper hygiene and sanitation especially among women. The government is now planning to construct 2 crore more toilets.
- The government plans to **build houses for all the poor in the country by 2022**. To ensure the same, it launched the **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana in rural and urban areas of the country**.
- Under the Yojana, **51 lakhs houses in year 2017-18 and 51 lakh houses during 2018-19 will be constructed exclusively in rural areas**. In urban areas the assistance has been sanctioned to construct 37 lakh houses.
- The government has also established a dedicated **Affordable Housing Fund (AHF) in National Housing Bank**, funded from priority sector lending shortfall and fully serviced bonds authorised by the Government of India.
- **The government also plans to increase the loans to Self Help Groups of women to ₹ 75000 crore by March 2019**.
- The government has also proposed to substantially increase the allocation of **National Rural Livelihood Mission to ₹ 5750 crore in 2018-19**.
- Further, the ground water irrigation scheme under **Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojna- Har Khet ko Pani** will be taken up in 96 deprived irrigation districts where less than 30 per cent of the land holdings gets assured irrigation presently. **The government has allocated ₹ 2600 crore for the same**.
- In the year 2018-19, for creation of livelihood and infrastructure in rural areas, total amount to be spent by the **Ministries will be ₹ 14.34 lakh crore, including extra-budgetary and non-budgetary resources of ₹11.98 lakh crore**.
- Overall, the budgetary allocation will give way to increased employment opportunities, lead to the development of 3.17 lakh kilometres of rural roads, 51 lakh new rural houses, 1.88 crore toilets and provide 1.75 crore new household electric connections besides boosting agricultural growth.

## Schemes Launched in Budget 2018-19

**1. Kifayati Aawas yojna:** The Central Government will create a dedicated affordable housing fund in National Housing Bank. In the Budget 2018-19, Jaitley said that "My government will set up a dedicated affordable housing fund in the National Housing Bank, which will be funded from the loans given to priority sector." The government has planned that by the end of 2022, everyone will have their own house. For this, more than one crore households are being constructed in the rural areas in the current and next financial year under the Pradhanmantri Awas Yojana.

**2. Ayushman Bharat Scheme (National Health Protection Scheme):** National Health Protection Scheme will be launched to cover 10 crore poor and vulnerable families. Under this, up to Rs 5 lakh will be provided to each family per year in secondary and tertiary care institutions. This scheme will have 50 crore beneficiaries. So far under the National Health Insurance Scheme, insurance cover of Rs 30,000 was available only. This is a big increase in this regard.

**3. Kisan Credit Card to Fishermen:** On the lines of the Kisan Credit Card, the Finance Minister has announced a card to fishermen and cattle owners. This will make enable them to avail the easier loans. The Government says that this will help the people associated with the milk production business in rural areas. Apart from this, financial assistance will also be provided to fisheries.

**4. Gobar-Dhan Yojna (Galvanizing Organic Bio-Agro Resource Fund Scheme):** The government announced a new scheme Gobar-Dhan (Galvanizing Organic Bio-Agro Resource Fund) scheme under its efforts to improve the lives of the villagers. He said that under this scheme, solid waste of dung and fields will be changed into compost, biogas and bio-CNG. He said that under the vision of inclusive society formation, the government has identified 115 districts for development.

**5. National Bamboo Mission:** Finance Minister Arun Jaitley has also proposed the proposal of National Bamboo Mission. An amount of Rs. 1,290 crore will be allocated under this scheme. This will help in the development of bamboo production as an industry. This will help the people of rural and tribal areas.

**6. Eklavya School:** Arun Jaitley said that along the lines of Navodaya schools, Eklavya schools will be established for scheduled caste students by 2022. He said that Eklavya model residential schools will be set up in each Block having more than 50 percent tribal areas and 20,000 tribal people. These schools will be part of Navodaya Vidyalayas and besides training in sports and skill development, there will also be special facilities for preserving local art and culture.

**7. Revitalising Infrastructure and Systems in Education (RISE):** In his Budget 2018 speech, Jaitley unveiled a new scheme called Revitalising Infrastructure and Systems in Education or RISE. The RISE scheme will be financed via a restructured higher education financing agency (HEFA) that is functioning for the last two months as a non-banking financial company. It aims to lend low-cost funds to government higher educational institutions. Presently, HEFA is looking to raise Rs20,000 crore and Budget announcement hiked this number to Rs1 trillion. While HEFA was granted a budgetary allocation of Rs250 crore in the fiscal year 2018, in FY19, the lending body will be provided a budget of Rs 2,750 crore.

**8. Operation Green:** The goal of the scheme is to double the farmers' income by end of the year 2022. With the budget allocation of Rs. 500 Cr, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley has announced about the Operation Green in Union Budget 2018. This scheme will facilitate the farmers of the nation. This will be in line with the operation flood. To reduce the fluctuation in the pricing of Onion, Tomatoes and Potatoes the scheme has been launched.

**9. Prime Minister Fellowship Scheme:** Finance Minister Arun Jaitley also announced the PM Fellowship Scheme during the budget. Under this, one thousand B.Tech students will be given the opportunity to do Ph.D. in IIT and IISc.

**10. Expansion of Ujjwala Scheme:** Modi Government has set a target to provide the number of free LPG connections to the poor families under the Ujjwala scheme to reach 8 crores.

**11. Saubhagya Yojna:** The government has targeted to increase the number of power connections in rural areas to 40 million households. This scheme is one of PM Modi's ambitious plans.

**12. Expansion of UDAN Yojna:** 56 airports and 31 helipads being used less than the capacity will be added in the initiative to connect common man with the 'UDAN Yojna. Along with this, the announcement of the construction of 10 major prestigious destinations for the promotion of tourism was announced.

## Sports

### *India beat Australia for record fourth U-19 World Cup title*

- India in February lifted a record fourth U-19 World Cup trophy after an eight-wicket rout of Australia in the final, underlining their dominant run in the tournament and giving Rahul Dravid the biggest success of his coaching career.
- As it has been the case through out the tournament, India had all their bases covered with bowlers bouncing back to dismiss Australia for 216 from 183 for four at one stage.
- The highly-rated batting, barring a minor blip, completed the job with conviction as India chased down the modest target in 38.5 overs.

### *Mary Kom clinches gold medal at India Open Boxing tournament*

- The five-time World Champion and Olympic bronze medallist, Mary Kom on February 2, 2018 claimed the gold medal in the India Open International Boxing tournament at Thyagraj Indoor Stadium in New Delhi.
- Kom defeated Josie Gabuco from the Philippines in a split 4-1 decision to grab the gold in the women's 48kg weight category. The 12th seeded boxer had earlier booked her place in the finals after defeating Mongolian Altansetseg Lutsaikhan in the semi-final clash.

- In the 64 kg category, the former world and Asian bronze medallist Pwilao Basumatary was the first among the women to fetch gold by claiming a 3-2 win over Thailand's Sudaporn Seesondee. Pinki Rani also fetched gold for India after defeating Mongolia's Jargalan Ochirbat in the final of fly (48-51 kg) category.

### ***India's Deepa, Durga Devi promoted to FIH Umpiring Promising List***

- Hockey India in February congratulated Deepa and Durga Devi on being promoted to the FIH Umpires Promising List for Outdoor Hockey by the International Hockey Federation (FIH).
- International Umpire Javed Shaikh too was promoted to FIH World Panel of Outdoor Hockey.
- 41-year-old Shaikh from Mumbai is presently officiating as Umpire Manager at the Khelo India School Games along with Deepa and Durga Devi as part of the 28-member Technical Officials team delegated by Hockey India in smooth execution of the Games.

### ***Australia cricketer Doug Bollinger retires***

- Former Australia left-arm quick Doug Bollinger in February announced his retirement from all forms of cricket with immediate effect.
- Bollinger, 36, made his Test debut for Australia in 2009 against South Africa and went on to play 12 Tests, picking up 50 wickets at an average of 25.92, with best figures of 5 for 28, which came against New Zealand in Wellington in March 2010.

### ***London to host inaugural athletics World Cup***

- A new World Cup event, featuring eight nations, will be hosted by London this summer.
- The British Athletics announced the news on its official Twitter handle, saying, "We told you something MASSIVE was coming and here it is!"
- The inaugural World Cup event is scheduled from July 14 to 15 at the London Stadium, reports the Telegraph.
- Britain, the United States, Poland, China, Germany, France, Jamaica and South Africa will be part of the event.

### ***Jhulan Goswami becomes the first female cricketer to take 200 ODI wickets***

- Another Indian woman cricketer has created a new record. India's veteran pacer Jhulan Goswami is now the first female cricketer to take 200 ODI wickets. Goswami achieved the feat during the second ODI between India and South Africa.
- The 35-year-old, playing her 166th ODI, dismissed opener Laura Wolvaardt for her 200th scalp. She dismissed the South Africa women opener for nine runs in the final ball of her third over as India clinched a massive 178-run victory in the second ODI to take an unassailable 2-0 lead at Kimberley.
- Interestingly, the first male cricketer to pick 200 ODI wickets was also an Indian -- Kapil Dev.

### ***Shikhar Dhawan becomes first Indian batsman to score century in 100th ODI***

- In a landmark moment, Indian opener Shikhar Dhawan became the first Indian batsman to score a century in his 100th One-day International on February 10, 2018.
- Dhawan reached the historic mark during the fourth ODI of India's six-match series against South Africa at the Wanderers. This was the batsman's first century in South Africa. His score total included two sixes and 10 fours.
- Internationally, Dhawan became the ninth batsman to score a century in his 100th ODI.

### ***Rohan More becomes first Asian to swim across Ocean Seven***

- Pune-based Indian long-distance swimmer, Rohan More, has become the first Asian and the youngest to swim across the Cook Strait between North and South Islands of New Zealand.
- More managed to get a chance to swim across the Cook Strait on February 9, 2018, after a long wait due to bad weather conditions. Despite a sudden drop in water temperature, he covered the distance in eight hours and 37 minutes.

***Pyeongchang Winter Olympics hit by cyber attack***

- The Olympic officials in South Korea on February 11, 2018 said that a cyber attack was responsible for an internet and wifi shutdown during the Pyeongchang Winter Games opening ceremony.
- South Korea's defence ministry and cybersecurity experts are included in the task force investigating the attack, but the possible culprit is being kept under wraps.
- The internal systems crashed just before the much-awaited opening ceremony of the Winter Olympics 2018 but fortunately, it didn't disrupt the high-tech gala, which saw in attendance VIPs from various nations including the sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and US Vice-President Mike Pence.

***Steve Smith wins second Allan Border medal; Ellyse Perry bags Belinda Clark Medal***

- Steve Smith and Ellyse Perry stole the show at the Australian cricket's Allan Border Medal night. While Smith claimed his second Allan Border Medal and was voted as the Test Player of the Year at the annual awards night, Perry was conferred with the Belinda Clark Medal.
- Incidentally, Smith had also won the coveted medal in 2015 and thus became only the fifth player to win it on more than one occasion. Along with Smith, teammate David Warner was voted as one-day player of the year while Aaron Finch was named as T20 International Player of the Year. Meanwhile, young Jhye Richardson was announced as the Bradman young cricketer of the Year.

***Pune adventurer Shital Mahajan sets new record; skydives in saree***

- Pune adventurer Shital Rane-Mahajan set a new record in February as she became the first Indian to skydive donning a traditional Maharashtrian Nauvari Saree.
- Draped in a pretty pink and purple nine-yard saree, the 35-year-old achieved the feat by skydiving from a height of 13,000 feet at Pataya, Thailand's Thai Skydiving Centre.

***India scripts history by clinching first ever series in South Africa***

- Indian team led by an inspirational Virat Kohli in February scripted history by winning its first ever series across formats on the South African soil as they crushed South Africa by 73 runs thereby taking an unassailable 4-1 lead in the six-match ODI series.
- No Indian men's side since its first tour in South Africa back in 1992, has ever won a series across any format. They did win a one-off T20 match in 2006 -- their first ever shortest format but it was a single match event.

***Chennai Open ATP Challenger: Yuki Bhambri becomes the first Indian to reach quarters***

- Yuki Bhambri has become the first Indian tennis player to reach the quarter-finals of the Chennai Open ATP Challenger tournament.
- Second-seeded Bhambri, made it to the last-8 after defeating fellow national Sidharth Rawat in straight sets of 6-2, 6-3.
- For a place in the semi-finals, Bhambri will meet Yasutaka Uchiyama of Japan.

***Commonwealth Games 2018: Wrong date printed on opening ceremony tickets***

- The tickets for the opening ceremony of the 2018 Gold Coast Commonwealth Games have been sent out with the wrong day on them.
- Over 14,000 tickets were printed for the ceremony with Thursday, April 4 written on them, when actually, April 4- the day of the ceremony - is a Wednesday.
- Other reports stated that tickets to certain games including weightlifting, table tennis and triathlon were also sent out with the wrong timings on them.
- The 2018 event will be held in Australia's Gold Coast from April 4th to 15th.

***Odisha becomes first state government to sponsor India hockey teams for 5 years***

- India hockey teams have got a new sponsor. Both the men's and women's hockey team will be sponsored by state government of Odisha.
- The announcement was made by Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik in New Delhi in February as the state government has decided to support the team for a period of five years.
- India men's and women's hockey teams were present at the function in Delhi. Other at the function were International Hockey Federation (FIH) and IOA President Narinder Batra, IOA Secretary General Rajeev Mehta among other dignitaries.
- Though no details of the deal were revealed, Odisha government unveiled a logo that will be on the jerseys donned by players of both teams. The new logo is a summation of Odisha — the Konark Wheel, the state's famed coastline, endangered Olive Ridley turtles, Odissi dance form and hockey.

#### ***Roger Federer surpasses Agassi to become oldest World No. 1 in tennis history***

- Twenty-time Grand Slam winner, Roger Federer became the oldest world number one after he defeated his Dutch opponent Robin Haase in Rotterdam at the ABN Amro World Tennis Tournament on February 16, 2018.
- The Swiss champion once again claimed the top spot after dispatching Haase 4-6, 6-1, 6-1 in the quarterfinals in Rotterdam. In the semi-finals, he would be playing against the winner from the Andreas Seppi and Daniil Medvedev quarterfinal match.
- This is the fourth time that Roger Federer has topped the ATP Rankings. The previous occasions included February 2, 2004, July 6, 2009 and July 9, 2012.
- With this feat, Federer has broken multiple records.
- Firstly at 36 years and 195 days, he surpassed the record of eight-time Grand Slam winner Andre Agassi of being the oldest world number 1. Agassi held the record at 33 years since September 2003.
- Secondly, Federer reclaimed his number one position after a gap of over five years, which is the longest gap between stints as World No 1.
- During this period, Federer won three Grand Slams (two Australian Opens in 2017 and recently in January and Wimbledon last year) and was forced into skipping Grand Slams in 2016 due to injury for the first time since 1999.

#### ***Norway's Bjoergen becomes most successful Winter Olympian***

- Norway's Marit Bjoergen on February 21, 2018 became the most successful athlete in Winter Olympics history by clinching the bronze medal in cross country skiing's women's team sprint free.
- Kikkan Randall and Jessica Diggins won the gold and the first Olympic cross country title for the United States.
- Bjoergen's bronze with Maiken Caspersen Falla took her total tally to 14 Olympic medals, surpassing fellow Norwegian Ole Einar Bjoerndalen who has 13 in biathlon.

#### ***Woman cricketer Harmanpreet to join Punjab police on March 1***

- India's Twenty20 women's cricket team captain Harmanpreet Kaur is set to join Punjab police as a Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) on March 1, 2018.
- This became possible after Indian Railways relieved Harmanpreet following her request to join Punjab police.
- She had resigned from the Railways last year. Her medical test for the post of DSP had already been completed but she could not join as Indian Railway did not relieve her.

#### ***ICC Rankings: Virat Kohli crosses 900 points in Tests, ODIs***

- India captain Virat Kohli became only the second batsman after South Africa's AB de Villiers, in the history of the game to cross the 900-point mark in Tests and ODIs, as per latest ICC ODI player rankings.
- Pacer Jasprit Bumrah grabbed the joint-top position among bowlers.
- Kohli consolidated his top position with 558 runs in the 5-1 series win over South Africa, during which he slammed three centuries.

#### ***Gymnast Aruna Reddy makes history, becomes first Indian to win World Cup medal***

- Aruna Budda Reddy in February created history by becoming the first Indian gymnast to win an individual medal at the Gymnastics World Cup as she clinched a bronze in the women's vault event here.
- The 22-year-old Reddy, who hails from Hyderabad, scored 13.649 average points to win the bronze at the Hisense Arena. Tjasa Kyssef of Slovenia won the gold with a score of 13.800 while Emily Whitehead of Australia took the silver with 13.699.
- Another Indian in the final round, Pranati Nayak finished sixth with a score of 13.416.
- The sport of gymnastics has a series of World Cup events in a year and they are second in importance after the World Championships.

### ***Karnataka Beat Saurashtra To Win Vijay Hazare Trophy***

- Mayank Agarwal (90) starred with the bat as Karnataka defeated Saurashtra by 41 runs in the Vijay Hazare Trophy final in February.
- Following the win, Karnataka pacer Sreenath Arvind also announced his retirement from first-class and list A cricket.

### ***Tokyo 2020 Olympics mascots unveiled***

- The organising committee of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games announced on February 28, 2018 that two futuristic figures, inspired by anime, have been chosen as mascots following voting by thousands of Japanese children.
- The voting to choose the mascot was conducted across thousands of schools in Japan. The mascots are aimed at boosting children's participation in the Games.

## **World**

### ***Vodafone with Nokia, Audi to set up first 4G network on moon by next year***

- Vodafone is planning to expand its 4G network but this expansion is not happening on earth. That's right! The British telecom major is setting up the first 4G network on the moon to support a mission by PTScientists in 2019.
- The 4G network that will now enable high-definition streaming from the lunar landscape back to earth is part of a project to back the first privately funded moon mission.
- Vodafone Germany, network equipment maker Nokia and carmaker Audi said in February they were working together to support the mission, 50 years after the first NASA astronauts walked on the moon.

### ***Long-lost IMAGE satellite discovered by amateur astronomer: NASA***

- An amateur astronomer on January 20, 2018 recorded observations of a satellite in high Earth orbit. This satellite was a long-lost NASA satellite- Imager for Magnetopause-to-Aurora Global Exploration (IMAGE) satellite.
- The amateur astronomer came across the satellite through signals. Engineers from NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center used NASA's Deep Space Network which consists of a series of ground-based radio telescopes to study the signals, only to discover that these signals were from the IMAGE satellite.

### ***Japan launches world's smallest rocket to carry satellite into space***

- Japan launched the world's smallest rocket to set up a tiny satellite into the orbit. Correcting the error that led to the failure of a similar attempt in January last year, JAXA (Japan's Aerospace Exploration Agency) successfully carried out the operation this time.

- The world's smallest rocket is no more than a utility pole with a length of just 10 metres while the diameter of the rocket measured just 50 centimetres. It took off from the Uchinoura Space Centre in Kagoshima Prefecture after 2 pm and delivered its payload into the prescribed orbit.

#### ***Maldives President declares state of emergency for 15 days***

- Maldives President Abdulla Yameen on February 5, 2018 declared a state of emergency across the country for 15 days, before heavily armed Maldivian troops stormed the country's Supreme Court and arrested two Supreme Court judges Chief Justice Abdulla Saeed and Judge Ali Hameed without specifying the charges.
- Former Maldives President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom was also arrested amid this rising political crisis. Their detention comes following a conflict between the Supreme Court and the President over the release of several imprisoned opposition politicians.

#### ***Bill introduced in US House to end non-defence aid to Pakistan***

- In the United States, a bill was introduced on February 5, 2018 in the House of Representatives to end non-defence aid to Pakistan as it provides military aid and intelligence to terrorists.
- The Bill was introduced by Congressmen Mark Sanford from South Carolina and Thomas Massie from Kentucky. Once implemented, the Bill will prohibit the US State Department and the US Agency for International Development (USAID) from sending American taxpayer money to Pakistan.

#### ***SpaceX launches Falcon Heavy, the world's most powerful rocket carrying car into space***

- US space flight company SpaceX on February 6, 2018 launched the world's most powerful operational rocket 'Falcon Heavy' into the space. The Falcon Heavy blasted off from the Kennedy Space Centre at Cape Canaveral, Florida, United States.
- Falcon Heavy's smooth takeoff wasn't the only surprising thing about this launch, but also SpaceX managed to guide two of the Falcon Heavy's first-stage rocket boosters to land straight back on Earth. They landed in unison at a Kennedy Space Centre landing pad.
- Falcon Heavy carried a red Tesla Roadster car belonging to SpaceX and Tesla founder Elon Musk into space. The car was outfitted with a mannequin dressed in a spacesuit, a high-data storage unit containing Isaac Asimov's science fiction book series, the Foundation Trilogy, and a plaque bearing the names of 6000 SpaceX employees.

#### ***Bermuda becomes first nation to ban same-sex marriage***

- Bermuda has become the first country to annul same-sex marriage. It had instituted same-sex marriage as a law via judicial fiat less than a year ago. In what is believed to be a first-time rollback of civil rights by the British island territory, Bermuda is quickly turning overturning the new law.
- It is a step towards seeking to balance opposition to same-sex marriage on the socially conservative island while complying with European court rulings that make sure same-sex couples are recognized and protected in the territory, according to Governor John Rankin.

#### ***Nancy Pelosi made history of delivering longest eight hour speech in American Senate***

- Nancy Pelosi, Democrate Minority Leader, delivered her speech for more than eight hours in American Senate on 07 February 2018. The House Historian's Office confirmed the lawmaker's record of longest speech to the media.
- The previous record of longest speech dates back to 1909 when a Missouri representative, Champ Clark, spoke for 5 hours and 15 minutes against a tariff overhaul. Nancy Pelosi's speech was ended in 8 hours and 5 minutes.

#### ***China agrees to allow Indian pilgrims to undertake Mansarovar yatra through Nathu La Pass***

- Union Government on February 9, 2018 announced that China has agreed to allow Indian pilgrims to embark on Kailash-Mansarovar yatra through Nathu La Pass in Sikkim after the route was closed in 2017 in the wake of the Doklam standoff.

- The Yatra through this route was not undertaken last year after the Chinese government cited unfavourable conditions to ensure safety of pilgrims and smooth conduct of the yatra.

### ***US Senate approves budget deal including Stopgap Government Funding Bill***

- The US Senate on February 9, 2018 approved a budget deal including a Stopgap Government Funding Bill. The Senate passed the bill by a vote of 71-28 and sent it to the House of Representatives again for approval.
- However, it was too late to prevent shutdown of the Federal Government that was already underway. The shutdown, which technically started at midnight, was the second this year. US Office of Personnel Management advised federal employees to check with their agencies about whether they should report to work or not.

### ***World's First 'Driverless Transport Pods' tested in Dubai***

- In a first move towards the future of transport, the Roads and Transport Authority of Dubai launched the test of the world's first 'Autonomous Pods' during the World Government Summit in February, February 11, 2018.
- Designed and made by NEXT Future Transportation Inc., two full-scale prototypes of these pods were displayed at the Madinat Jumeirah.

### ***Venezuela, Libya suspended from voting in UN General Assembly***

- Venezuela and Libya have been suspended from voting in the UN General Assembly for the third time in three years because of millions of dollars in unpaid dues to the world body.
- The Secretary-General Antonio Guterres informed the General Assembly in late January that 14 countries including Venezuela and Libya were in arrears, and Assembly spokesman Brenden Varma confirmed on February 14 that Venezuela and Libya have lost their vote in the 193-member global organisation as a result.

### ***London City Airport reopens after World War II bomb scare***

- London City Airport has reopened after an unexploded 500 kilogram World War Two bomb was safely moved from the area.
- The bomb was discovered at the King George V Dock on February 11 during planned work at the east London airport. Following the discovery, all flights were cancelled, the airport was shut down and an exclusion zone was put in place, with the closure affecting up to 16,000 passengers and nearby residents being evacuated from their homes.

### ***UNICEF launches 'Every Child Alive' global campaign***

- UNICEF in February launched the "Every Child Alive" global campaign to demand and deliver affordable, quality health-care solutions for every mother and newborn.
- Issuing a statement, UNICEF Nepal said that, in low-income countries, the average newborn mortality rate is 27 deaths per 1,000 births, reports Xinhua.
- Newborns from the riskiest places are up to 50 times more likely to die than those from the safest places.
- According to the Nepal's Demographic Health Survey 2016, one in 48 babies die in their first 28 days of life in the country, making up to 13,000 newborn deaths every year in the Himalayan nation.
- More than 80 per cent of newborn deaths are due to prematurity, complications during birth or infections such as pneumonia and sepsis, according to the report.
- India's neonatal mortality rate (deaths per 1,000 live births) was found to be 25.4, making it the 12th worst among 52 'lower-middle-income countries' that pose risk for newborns.
- India is also the only major country in the world to have a higher mortality for girls than boys.
- While Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan account for 46% of all births and 57% of India's neonatal deaths, Kerala and Goa have neonatal mortality rates of ten per 1,000 live births.
- India has set a Sustainable Development Goal target for neonatal mortality of 12 by 2030.
- To achieve this goal, the country will have to reduce its neonatal deaths by half in the next 12 years.

- India has managed a 66% reduction in under-five deaths between 1990 to 2015 as against the world average of 55%.

#### ***UNICEF issues Blank Statement on Syria, says it has run out of words***

- UNICEF issued a blank statement on February 20, 2018 to express its outrage at mass casualties among Syrian children in the besieged enclave of Eastern Ghouta and neighboring Damascus.
- There were 10 empty lines with quote marks indicating missing text and an explanatory footnote, indicating its incapability to describe children's suffering and its outrage.
- Forces loyal to President Bashar al-Assad have been besieging almost 400000 civilians trapped inside Eastern Ghouta for years.

#### ***India not among top 20 coffee drinking countries***

- In a survey published by the International Coffee Organisation (ICO), India is not among the top 20 coffee drinking countries of the world.
- Finland took the top spot, consuming about 12 kg of coffee per year.
- Norway, Iceland and Denmark occupied the second, third and fourth spots respectively.
- India, which did not figure in the top 20, is the seventh largest exporter of coffee.

#### ***Saudi Arabia to host first Arab Fashion Week in Riyadh***

- Saudi Arabia will host its first-ever Arab Fashion Week in Riyadh in March 2018.
- The move is another step towards opening up of the country under Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman's ambitious transformation programme.
- The Dubai-based Arab Fashion Council said the fashion week will be held in Riyadh from March 26 to March 31, with a second edition already scheduled for October.
- The first Arab Fashion Week is expected to play the role of a catalyst through which the fashion sector will lead other economic sectors such as tourism, hospitality, travel, and trade.

#### ***India contributes USD 1 million aid to Tonga: United Nations***

- India has contributed USD 1 million aid Tonga for rehabilitation efforts after island was hit by Tropical Cyclone Gita which had caused massive destruction across the pacific ocean archipelago.
- India will provide USD 500000 for immediate relief assistance and remaining USD 500000 from the India-UN Development Partnership Fund (UNDP) for the rehabilitation efforts.
- Tonga was recently hit by worst Tropical Cyclone Gita. US's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) had reported it Category 4 cyclone and was the worst on record to hit Tonga.

#### ***Venezuela becomes first country to launch virtual currency 'Petro'***

- Venezuela become first sovereign country to officially launch its own cryptocurrency called Petro backed by oil, gas, gold and diamond reserves.
- Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro claimed that the pre-mined cryptocurrency Petro has raised USD 735 million on the first day of its pre-sale.
- Petro aims to help Venezuela to advance in issues of monetary sovereignty, to make financial transactions and overcome financial blockade.

### **India ranks 42nd in 2017 Global Democracy Index**

- India has been ranked 42nd among 165 independent states on the annual 2017 Global Democracy Index (GDI) released by Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), a UK-based company.
- India's rank has slipped from 32nd in 2016 GDI and its overall score dropped 0.58 points from 7.81 to 7.23. Moreover, India was classified India as a flawed democracy in 2017 GDI.
- The GDI index ranks 165 independent states and 2 territories on basis of 60 indicators grouped in five different categories such as electoral process and pluralism, civil liberties, the functioning of government, political participation and political culture.

### **India gets its first MSE sentiment index**

- Finance Minister Arun Jaitley has launched CriSidEx, India's first sentiment index for micro and small enterprises (MSEs) developed jointly by credit rating body CRISIL and Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) here.
- CriSidEx is a composite index based on a diffusion index of eight parameters and measures MSE business sentiment on a scale of zero (extremely negative) to 200 (extremely positive).
- CriSidEx will have two indices, one for the survey quarter and another for the next quarter once a trend emerges after few rounds of the survey, providing independent time series data.

### **30 % of young people in conflict or disaster-stricken countries are illiterate: UNICEF**

- According to a new study by UNICEF, nearly 30 percent of young people aged between 15 and 24 years in countries affected by conflict and disaster are illiterate, almost triple the global rate.
- The children's agency stated that among these 59 million young people, girls are at the biggest disadvantage when it comes to getting an education. It said that the four impoverished African countries with a long history of instability had the highest rates of young people unable to read or write. Niger with 76 per cent illiteracy among young people tops the list followed by Chad with 69 percent, South Sudan with 68 percent and the Central African Republic with 64 percent.
- According to UNICEF's New Executive Director, Henrietta Fore, these numbers are a stark reminder of the tragic impact that crises have on children's education, their futures, and the stability and growth of their economies and societies.

### **India improves global IP index rank to 44 out of 50**

- India has substantially improved its ranking, to 44, in the latest Global Intellectual Property (IP) index released by the US Chambers of Commerce on Thursday.
- According to the annual report by the Global Innovation Policy Center (GIPC) of the US Chambers of Commerce released in Washington, India has "increased substantially" its score in the latest Intellectual Property (IP) index with a rank of 44 out of 50 countries.
- India's overall score has increased from 25 per cent (8.75 out of 35) last year to 30 per cent (12.03 out of 40) in the latest, sixth, edition of the Index, the report said. Last year, India ranked 43rd out of 45 countries in the index, with an overall score of 8.4 points.
- The US is at the top of the IP index list with 37.98 points, followed by Britain (37.97) and Sweden (37.03). The report analyses the intellectual property eco-system in 50 economies based on 40 unique indicators critical to innovation development on patent, trademark, copyright, and trade secrets protection.

### **NITI Aayog launches 'Healthy States Progressive India Report'; Kerala best, UP worst**

- Kerala has topped the Health Index report prepared by NITI Aayog while Uttar Pradesh appeared at the bottom among larger states, though it has shown improvement in the recent past.

- As per the index report for large states, Kerala was followed by Punjab, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat.
- Besides Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar and Odisha are among the states that performed poorly in the health index.
- According to the index, among large states, Jharkhand, Jammu & Kashmir and Uttar Pradesh are the top three ranking states in terms of annual incremental performance.
- Among small states, Mizoram ranked first, followed by Manipur and Goa.
- Releasing the report, NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant said the policy think tank believes that the Health Index will act as a tool to leverage cooperative and competitive federalism, accelerating the pace of achieving health outcomes.

### ***Mumbai 12th richest city in the world, total wealth at USD 950 billion: New World Wealth Report***

- The financial capital of India, Mumbai, is the 12th richest country in the world, as per a report by New World Health. With a total wealth of USD 950 billion, Mumbai becomes the richest city in India.
- It comes among the top 15 wealthiest cities globally and top 10 cities in terms of billionaire population
- Mumbai is home to 28 billionaires, individuals with USD 1 billion or more in net assets and is termed as the economic hub of India
- It is home to Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE), the 12th largest stock exchange in the world
- The major industries in this city are financial services, real estate and media
- Mumbai overhauled Toronto with a total wealth of USD 944 billion, Frankfurt with USD 912 billion, and Paris with USD 860 billion, while New York tops the list with USD 3 trillion.

### **Other cities that made it to the list**

- London stood at the second position, with a net wealth of USD 2.7 trillion
- Tokyo stood at the third position, with a net wealth of USD 2.5 trillion
- San Francisco came next, with a net wealth of USD 2.3 trillion
- Beijing, with a net wealth of USD 2.2 trillion
- Shanghai, with a net wealth of USD 2 trillion
- Los Angeles, with a net wealth of USD 1.4 trillion
- Hong Kong, with a net wealth of USD 1.3 trillion
- Sydney, with a net wealth of USD 1 trillion
- Singapore, with a net wealth of USD 1 trillion
- Chicago, with a net wealth of USD 988 billion

### ***Chief Minister's Rankings: Chandrababu Naidu & Pema Khandu richest, Manik Sarkar & Mamata Banerjee least wealthiest***

The Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) and National Election Watch (NEW) has released a report on the financial, educational and criminal background of all the current Chief Ministers of state assemblies and Union Territories, after analysing the self-sworn affidavits that they submitted before contesting the elections.

### **Following are the detailed findings of the report:**

#### **Financial Background**

- The average of assets per Chief Minister from state assemblies and union territories was estimated to be around Rs 16.18 Crores.
- Out of the 31 Chief Ministers analysed, 25 were found to be crorepatris, which is nearly 81 per cent of the total.

#### **Chief Ministers with Highest Assets**

- The Chief Ministers with the highest assets included Andhra Pradesh CM Chandrababu Naidu (177 cr+), Arunachal CM Pema Khandu (129 cr+) and Punjab CM Amarinder Singh (48 cr+).

- Among them, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu was found to be the wealthiest with declared assets worth over Rs 1,77,48,95,611 crore.

### Chief Ministers with Lowest Assets

- The Chief Ministers with lowest assets included Tripura CM Manik Sarkar (26 L+), West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee (30 L+) and Jammu and Kashmir CM Mehbooba Mufti (55 L+).
- Among them, the lowest declared assets worth Rs 26,83,195 lakh belonged to Tripura Chief Minister Manik Sarkar.
- Also, the declared assets of West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee include no immovable assets.

### Criminal Background

- Out of the all 31 Chief Ministers analysed from state assemblies and union territories, 11 Chief Ministers were found to have declared criminal cases against them.
- Further, 8 out of the 31 Chief Ministers were found to have serious criminal cases against them including cases related to murder, attempt to murder, cheating and dishonestly inducing delivery of property and criminal intimidation.

### Education, Gender and Age Details

- Among the total 31 Chief Ministers, only 3 Chief Ministers are women.
- In terms of educational qualification, only one Chief Minister has a doctorate degree, 5 are postgraduates, 10 are graduate professionals, 12 others are graduates, while 3 are just 12th pass.
- In terms of age, the oldest Chief Minister is Punjab's Amarinder Singh (74) followed by Kerala's Pinarayi Vijayan (72) and Mizoram's Lal Thanhawla (71).
- On the other hand, the youngest Chief Minister is Arunachal CM Pema Khandu (35) followed by Maharashtra's Devendra Fadnavis (44) and Uttar Pradesh's Yogi Adityanath (45).

### India ranks 81st in global corruption perception index

- India has been placed at the 81st spot among 180 nations in the global Corruption Perception Index for 2017, which was recently released by Transparency International.
- The report has, in fact, named India among the worst offenders in terms of graft and press freedom in the Asia Pacific region.
- The index ranks 180 countries and territories on the basis of their perceived levels of public sector corruption.
- The index uses a scale of 0 to 100, where 0 is highly corrupt and 100 is very clean.
- The index placed India at the 81st place. In the 2016, India was ranked at the 79th position among 176 countries.
- India's score in the latest ranking, however, remained unchanged at 40. In 2015, the score was 38.

### India 7th most targeted nation for Web Application Attacks: Akamai Report

- India has been placed at the seventh spot in the list of targeted countries for Web Application Attacks (WAA), according to a new report titled 'Akamai State of the Internet Security Q4 2017' that released on February 21, 2018.
- The report states that nearly 40 per cent of over 53,000 cyber attacks in India occurred in the financial services sector during 2017.
- The report reveals that security incidents such as phishing, website intrusions and defacements, virus and ransomware have targeted the rapidly growing of the Banking, Financial Services and Insurance (BFSI) sector in India.
- It also stated that the Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attack frequency in the BFSI sector increased by 50 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2017 over the last quarter.
- It also placed India seventh in the list of the top source countries for WAA.

**India ranked 47th in Inclusive Internet Index 2018**

- India was ranked 47th out of 86 nations in the Inclusive Internet Index 2018, which was released by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) on February 26, 2018.
- The EIU was commissioned by social media giant Facebook. This year's index covered 91 per cent of the world's population and an expanded data set of 86 countries, up from 75 countries in 2017.
- The report ranked India at the 47th position when it comes to inclusive Internet and connectivity for all due to low usage and poor quality.
- Among the Asian nations, India featured in the middle at the 12th position from a total of 23.
- India was placed at or near the top of the lower-middle-income bracket on most indicators, except for availability, where it was ranked 13th out of 23.
- India's position is compromised by low usage and poor quality despite relatively strong infrastructure.
- The top five in the list included Sweden at the 1st position followed by Singapore, the United States, Denmark and South Korea.

**Hurun Global Rich List 2018 - India ranked 3rd Globally**

- Hurun Report released the Hurun Global Rich List 2018, a ranking of the US-Dollar-billionaires in the world. Wealth calculations are a snapshot of 31 January 2018.
- The Hurun Global Rich List 2018 ranked 2,694 billionaires from 68 countries and from 2,157 companies in another record-breaking year for the world's billionaires.

**Key findings**

1. **2,694 billionaires in world**, up 437 from last year. Rupert Hoogewerf, Hurun Report chairman & chief researcher, says, "a boom in China, a weak dollar coupled with US tax cuts has driven billionaires to break new records."
2. **Going up: 1,508 listers saw their wealth increase**+ 567 new faces. **Going down:** 363 saw wealth decrease
3. **India reclaims** third spot, which it had lost to Germany last year, with 31 new billionaires
4. **Bill Gates loses top spot to Jeff Bezos**, despite adding US\$10bn to his wealth and after giving away US\$5bn.

**Top 10 Richest**

1. Jeff Bezos
2. Warren Buffett
3. Bill Gates
4. Mark Zuckerberg
5. Bernard Arnault
6. Amancio Ortega
7. Carlos Slim Helu & family
8. Larry Ellison
9. Larry Page
10. Michael Bloomberg

**About India**

India climbs to 3rd position with 131 billionaires. This list would be 170, if we were to consider Indian origin billionaires. Pharmaceuticals led with 19 billionaires, followed by Automobile & Components with 14 and Consumer products with 11. Combined wealth of the Indian Billionaires increased by 49% to US\$454bn. Average age is 64. Mumbai is the preferred hub for most Indian billionaires followed by New Delhi. 31 billionaires migrated from India, with UAE, UK and USA as preferred destinations.

|         |     |   |    |        |     |          |
|---------|-----|---|----|--------|-----|----------|
| India's | Top | 3 | in | Global | Top | 100      |
| 19      |     | - |    | Mukesh |     | Ambani   |
| 87      |     | - |    | Dilip  |     | Shanghvi |

**Top 5 Countries**

1. Greater China
2. USA
3. India
4. UK
5. Germany

**Top 10 Cities**

1. Beijing
2. New York
3. Hong Kong
4. Shenzhen
5. Shanghai
6. London
7. Moscow
8. Mumbai
9. Bangkok
10. Guangzhou

**Days**

| Day   | Observed on    | Theme/Info   |
|---|----------------|--|
| International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation | 6 February     | –  |
| World Cancer Day  | 4 February     | We Can, I Can  |
| World Wetlands Day  | 2 February     | Wetlands for a Sustainable Urban Future  |
| National Productivity Day   | 12 February    | 'Industry 4.0 Leapfrog Opportunity for India'  |
| Darwin Week   | 12-16 February |  |
| World Radio Day   | 13 February    | 'Radio and Sports'   |
| World Day of Social Justice                                       | 20 February    | 'Workers on the Move: the Quest for Social Justice'  |
| International Mother Language Day                                 | 21 February    |  |
| World NGO Day   | 27 February    |  |
| International Polar Bear Day                                      | 27 February    |  |
| Marathi Language Day  | 27 February    |  |
| World Rare Disease Day  | 29 February    | Show your rare; show you care  |
| National Science Day  | 28 February    | <b>Theme</b> – "Science and Technology for a sustainable future."<br><b>Observed because</b> – to mark the discovery of the Raman Effect by Indian physicist Sir Chandrashekhara Venkata Raman |

**Awards**

**India's Umang App, Aadhaar win awards at World Government Summit**

- India's Aadhaar won the best emerging technology award at the recently concluded World Government Summit 2018 in Dubai. India was the 'Guest of Honour' country at the summit.
- The summit acknowledged technology pioneers for providing global solutions to global challenges.

- The Aadhaar project was recognised as the world's largest biometric enabled identification programme, which provides access to service income tax, passport services, bank accounts, social services benefits aimed at providing 1.2 billion citizens unique identification card with fingerprint, eye-print and other vital data.

#### ***Bajaj Finserv's Sanjiv Bajaj named EY entrepreneur of the year***

- Business consultancy firm EY said that it has named Bajaj Finserv's Sanjiv Bajaj as the entrepreneur for 2017, the company said in a statement on Thursday.
- The company also conferred E. Sreedharan, who spearheaded metro projects in Delhi, Kolkata, Kochi, and Lucknow, with the lifetime achievement award.

#### ***Indian engineer awarded Sci-Tech Oscar Award***

- Vikas Sathaye, a Pune-born Indian engineer was recently honoured with the Scientific and Engineering Academy Award at the Oscars Scientific and Technical Awards 2018 at Beverly Hills in Los Angeles, California.
- Sathaye received the award along with his team for their contribution towards the conceptualisation, design, engineering and the implementation of the 'Shotover K1 Camera System' during his stint at Shotover Camera Systems in Queenstown, New Zealand.

#### ***Punjab Regiment, ITBP win 'Best Marching Trophies' for R-Day parade***

- The Punjab Regiment and the Indo-Tibetan Border Police(ITBP) received the 'Best Marching Contingent Trophies by the the Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in Delhi.
- The two contingents received the award for the march past efforts at the Rajghat on India's 69th Republic Day Parade.
- One of the oldest regiments of Indian Army, the Punjab Regiment participated amongst other contingents wherein one Officer, two Junior Commissioned Officers and 144 Other Ranks from all the units of the regiment displayed unmatched talent and glory.
- The Punjab Regiment Republic Day Contingent was earlier adjudged the Best Marching Contingent in the year 1993.

#### ***Vice president M Venkaiah Naidu gives away Prime Minister's Shram Awards***

- Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu honored 338 workers with Prime Minister's Shram Awards.
- 194 prestigious Awards for the Year 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016 were given away by the Vice President at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi.
- The Awardees are employed in Public Sector Undertakings of the Central and State Government and Private Sector Units with 500 or more workers.

## **Books**

- **Exam Warriors** – Book Written by Narendra Modi
- **Why I am a Hindu** – Book written by Shashi Tharoor
- Michelle Obama to release memoir "**Becoming**" in November.
- **A Century Is Not Enough** by Former Indian Captain Sourav Ganguly released.

## **Obituaries**

### ***Sridevi passes away at 54 in Dubai***

- Veteran Bollywood actor and Padma Shri awardee Sridevi, who had an illustrious career spanning over four decades, passed away. She was 54.

- A versatile actor, Sridevi made her Bollywood debut in 1978 with "Solva Sawan".
- While films like "Mawaali" (1983), "Tohfa" (1984), "Mr India" (1987) and "Chandni" (1989) kept her at the top in the box-office game, her outings like "Sadma" (1983), "ChaalBaaz" (1989), "Lamhe" (1991), and "Gumrah" (1993) earned her critical acclaim.
- She went on a hiatus for 15 years after starring in home production -- "Judaai" -- co-starring her brother-in-law Anil Kapoor and Urmila Matondkar. It was director Gauri Shinde's "English Vinglish" in 2012 that marked Sridevi's comeback.
- Last year, she was seen in revenge-drama -- "Mom" -- opposite Nawazuddin Siddiqui and Akshaye Khanna. She shot for a special appearance in superstar Shah Rukh Khan's upcoming film -- "Zero" -- which releases in December.

#### ***Former cabinet secretary T S R Subramanian passes away***

- Former Cabinet secretary TSR Subramanian has passed away. He was 79.
- He was a 1961 batch IAS officer of the Uttar Pradesh cadre.
- Subramanian was the Cabinet Secretary from August 1996 to March 1998.
- He was part of a group of bureaucrats and diplomats on whose petition, the Supreme Court in 2013, rolled out key civil services reforms.

#### ***Renowned litterateur Chandrasekhar Rath passes away***

- Renowned Odia litterateur Chandrasekhar Rath passed away on February 9, 2018 at a private hospital in Bhubaneswar following age-related ailments. He was 89 and is survived by his wife, three daughters and a son.
- Rath has written several novels, short stories, essays and poems during his illustrious career.
- Rath was conferred with several awards including Kendra Sahitya Akademi Award, Odisha Sahitya Akademi Award and Atibadi Jagannath Das Samman for his contribution in the field of literature.
- He was also nominated for the prestigious Padma Shri award this year.

#### ***Ex-cricketer Bevan Congdon passes away***

- Former New Zealand cricketer Bevan Congdon passed away in Auckland on Saturday after a long bout of illness.
- Congdon, who made his debut for New Zealand in 1965, appeared in a total of 61 Tests taking 59 wickets over a 13-year test career.
- He had also captained New Zealand in 17 Tests, winning one of those matches where he also played a crucial role in the first victory against England 40 years ago. He scored 44 in New Zealand's first innings during that match.

#### ***Parbati Ghose, first female filmmaker of Odisha passes away***

- Parbati Ghose, the first female filmmaker of Odisha passed away on February 11, 2018 following a prolonged illness in Bhubaneswar. She was 85.
- Ghose was declared dead when she was rushed to the hospital around midnight after complaining of uneasiness.
- Her performance as the female protagonist in Goura Prasad Ghose's Bhai Bhai, one of the biggest Odia hits in 1956, gave her recognition as a leading actor in the industry.
- After tasting huge success on the big screen, she turned to filmmaking.
- She along with her husband Goura Prasad Ghose directed the film 'Sansara' in 1973.

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## Expected Questions from Union Budget 2018-19

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### Agriculture

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Here are the Expected Questions from Union Budget 2018 on Agricultural Sector

1. Kusum Scheme is announced in the union budget 2018-19 for which purpose? – **To double the income of farmers by 2022**
2. What does “KUSUM” stands for in Kusum Scheme? – **Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahabhiyan**
3. What is the total outlay of Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahabhiyan – Kusum Scheme for farmers? – **₹48,000 crore**
4. Government has announced to provide “Nyuntam Samarthan Mulya” for TOP. What does TOP stands for? – **Tomato, Onion & Potato**
5. Government has announced to extend the Kisan Credit Card facility to – **fisheries and animal husbandry**
6. Government has announced to develop & upgrade how many rural haats into Gramin Agricultural Markets (GrAMs)? – **22,000**
7. How much amount has been allocated for food processing? – **₹1400 crore**
8. Government has announced to launch Operation Green with a corpus of? – **₹500 crore**
9. Government has announced to launch Operation Green for which purpose? - **to address price fluctuations in potato, tomato and onion for benefit of farmers and consumers.**
10. How much amount did government allocate for Fisheries and Aquaculture and Animal Husbandry Development Fund? – **₹10,000 crore**
11. Government has announced to double the income of the farmers by \_\_\_\_\_. – **2022**
12. The government has announced to launch a restructured bamboo mission with a fund of \_\_\_\_\_. – **₹1290 crore**
13. How much agricultural credit target has been set in Budget 2018-19? – **₹11 lakh crore**
14. Government announced to introduce a special scheme to support which of the following states to manage the burning of crop residue and reduce pollution? – **Haryana, Punjab & Delhi**
15. What does GOBAR stands for in Gobar Dhan Scheme? – **Galvanizing Organic Bio-Agro Resources**
16. How many districts have been chosen to create role models for Gobar Dhan Scheme? – **115**

### Social Reforms, Health & Education

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Here are the Expected Questions from Union Budget 2018 on Social Reforms, Health & Education Sector.

1. What is the estimated budgetary expenditure on health, education and social protection for 2018-19? – **₹1.38 lakh crore**
2. How much amount has been allocated for National Social Assistance Programme in the Union Budget 2018-19? – **₹ 9975**
3. In the budget 2018-19, it was announced that every block with more than 50% ST population and at least 20,000 tribal persons, will have an Ekalavya Model Residential School by which year? – **2022**

4. Government recently announce the initiative RISE by 2022 in Budget 2018-19. What does RISE stands for? – **Revitalising Infrastructure and Systems in Education**
5. What will be the total investment in the initiative named “Revitalising Infrastructure and Systems in Education (RISE) by 2022”? – **₹1,00,000 crore**
6. Which of the following organization will fund and monitor the “Revitalising Infrastructure and Systems in Education (RISE) by 2022”? – **Higher Education Financing Agency (HEFA)**
7. How much amount did government allocate for School Education in budget 2018-19? – **₹50,000 crore**
8. How much amount did government allocate for Higher Education sector in budget 2018-19? – **₹35,010 crore**
9. How many fellows would be selected in total under ‘Prime Minister’s Research Fellows (PMRF)’? – **3000**
10. What is the total outlay of ‘Prime Minister’s Research Fellows (PMRF)’? – **₹1,650 crore**
11. Government has announced to transform blackboards to digital boards by \_\_\_\_\_. – **2022**
12. What is the budgetary allocation for National Livelihood Mission? – **₹5750 crore**
13. Central govt. has launched National Health Protection Scheme (NHPS) to provide Health Insurance of \_\_\_\_\_ to poor families. – **₹5 lakh**
14. How much amount of money did the government allocate for Tuberculosis patients? – **₹600 crore**
15. How much amount will the government pay the Tuberculosis patients during their treatment period? – **₹500 per month**
16. Government has announced to set up Health and Wellness Centres with an outlay of? – **₹ 1200 crore**
17. How much amount has been allocated to celebrate the 150 Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi in 2019? – **₹150 crore**
18. The government plans to build houses for all the poor in the country by \_\_\_\_\_. – **2022**
19. The government has established a dedicated Affordable Housing Fund (AHF) in which organization? – **National Housing Bank**
20. The government also plans to increase the loans to Self Help Groups of women to \_\_\_\_\_ by March, 2019. – **₹75,000 crore**

#### **Fiscal Expenditure, MSME & Infrastructure**

1. How much amount has been allocated for medium, small and micro enterprises (MSME) sector towards credit support, capital and interest subsidy as well as to spur innovation? – **₹3,794 crore**
2. In MUDRA Yojana, what percent of loan accounts are of women? – **76%**
3. How much amount has been set as a target for lending under MUDRA for 2018-19? – **₹3 lakh crore**
4. Union Government has announced to contribute what percent of the wages of the new employees in the EPF for all the sectors for next three years? – **12%**
5. What is the proposed outlay for the textile sector in 2018-19 Union Budget? – **₹7,148 crore**
6. The Finance Minister placed the revised estimate of government expenditure for the fiscal at \_\_\_\_\_. – **₹ 21.57 lakh crore**
7. The projected fiscal deficit of the FY 2018-19 is \_\_\_\_\_. – **3%**

8. Government has announced a 100 per cent tax deduction to farmer-producer companies having a turnover below \_\_\_\_\_. – **₹100 crore**
9. As per the Union Budget 2018, corporate tax will be reduced to 25 per cent for companies having turnover of up to what amount? – **₹250 crore**
10. In Union Budget 2018-19, exemption of interest income for deposits in banks and post offices was increased for senior citizens to \_\_\_\_\_. – **₹50,000**
11. Customs duty on mobile phones and parts of televisions was increased to \_\_\_\_\_. – **20 per cent**
12. Government has announce that no more education cess will be levied on imported goods. However, education cess will be replaced by what percent social welfare surcharge? – **10**
13. Government announced increase of budgetary allocation on infrastructure for 2018-19 to \_\_\_\_\_. – **₹5.97 lakh crore**
14. Name the online monitoring system by which projects worth 9.46 lakh crore have been facilitated and fast tracked. – **PRAGATI**
15. Using online monitoring system of PRAGATI alone, projects worth 9.46 lakh crore have been facilitated and fast tracked. What does PRAGATI stands for? – **Pro-Active Governance And Timely Implementation**
16. How many prominent tourist sites have been proposed to be developed into Iconic Tourism destinations by following a holistic approach? – **10**
17. Under the Bharatmala Pariyojana, about 35000 kms road construction in Phase-I at an estimated cost of \_\_\_\_\_. – **₹5,35,000 crore**
18. As per the Budget 2018-19, how many cities have been selected under Smart City programme? – **99**
19. As per the Budget 2018-19, 99 cities have been selected under Smart City programme. What is the outlay? – **₹2.09 lakh**
20. Government announced for creation of livelihood and infrastructure in rural areas, total amount to be spent by various Ministries will be \_\_\_\_\_. – **₹14.34 lakh crore**
21. Strengthening the Ground water irrigation scheme under Prime Minister Krishi Sinchai Yojna - Har Khet ko Pani how much amount did the Government allocate? – **₹2600 crore**

### **Railways, Aviation, Defence & Others**

1. Railways Capital Expenditure for the year 2018-19 has been pegged at \_\_\_\_\_. – **₹1,48,528 crore**
2. How much km of railway line was announced in budget to be doubled to eliminate capacity constraints? – **18000**
3. Mumbai's local train network will have 90 kilometers of double line tracks at a cost of over \_\_\_\_\_. – **₹11,000 crore**
4. 150 kilometers of additional suburban network is being planned in Mumbai at a cost of over \_\_\_\_\_. – **₹40,000 crore**
5. A suburban network of approximately 160 kilometers at an estimated cost of ₹17,000 crore is being planned in which city? – **Bengaluru**
6. A suburban network of approximately 160 kilometers is being planned in Bengaluru with an estimated cost of \_\_\_\_\_. – **₹17,000 crore**
7. According to the budget, all stations with more than how many footfalls will have escalators? – **25,000**

8. For which of the following purpose did the government announce the initiative NABH Nirman? – **to expand airport capacity**
9. The Budget proposes to expand the airport capacity more than five times to handle a billion trips a year. How much amount has been allocated to kick-start this initiative? – **₹60 crore**
10. According to the budget 2018-19, which organization will initiate a national program to direct efforts in artificial intelligence? – **NITI Aayog**
11. How much amount has been allocated for Digital India programme in FY18-19? – **₹ 3073 crore**
12. To further Broadband access in villages, the Government proposes to set up how many Wi-Fi hotspots? – **5 lakh**
13. How much amount has been allocated in 2018-19 for creation and augmentation of Telecom infrastructure? – **₹10,000 crore**
14. India's defence budget for the coming financial year 2018-19 has been increased by what percent? – **81**
15. India's defence budget for the coming financial year 2018-19 has been increased to \_\_\_\_\_. – **₹2,95,511.41 crore**
16. In India's Defence Budget, how much amount has been allocated for revenue expenditure? – **₹ 1,95,947.55 crore**
17. In India's Defence Budget, how much amount has been allocated for capital expenditure – **₹ 99,563.86 crore**
18. First defence corridor will be established in \_\_\_\_\_. – **Tamil Nadu**
19. In Budget 2018-19, it was announced that the first defence corridor will be established in Tamil Nadu. It will link which two cities? – **Chennai & Bengaluru**
20. The government has proposed to construct a tunnel under the Sela pass. In which state Sela Pass is located? – **Arunachal Pradesh**
21. The disinvestment target for FY2018-19 has been set to \_\_\_\_\_. – **₹80,000 crore**
22. Which of the following public insurance companies will be merged into a single insurance entity? – **National Insurance Co. Ltd., United India Assurance Co. Ltd., and Oriental India insurance Co. Ltd**
23. According to the Budget 2018-19, what is the revised salary for the President? – **₹5 lakh**
24. According to the Budget 2018-19, what is the revised salary for the vice-president? – **₹4 lakh**
25. According to the Budget 2018-19, what is the revised salary for the state/UT governors? – **₹3.5 lakh**