

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.