

India and States

UIDAI allows face recognition for Aadhaar authentication

- The UIDAI in January, 2018 allowed face recognition as additional means of Aadhaar authentication to be used in combination with existing ways such as fingerprint or iris scan.
- The move will enable easy authentication for those individuals who face a difficulty in other biometric authentication like fingerprint and iris.
- The facility is being allowed only in a "fusion mode" that is along with other existing means of authentication, and will be available by July 1, 2018, an official release said.
- "This facility is going to help in inclusive authentication of those who are not able to biometrically authenticate due to their worn out fingerprints, old age or hard work conditions," the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) said.
- As of now, two modes of biometric authentication, fingerprint authentication and iris authentication, are allowed under Aadhaar.

Hyderabad To Host World Sweet Festival 2018

- The World Sweet Festival (WSF-2018) will be held in Telangana(Hyderabad) from January 13 to showcase the cosmopolitan nature of Hyderabad in a sweet way. The sweets from around 25 states in India and 15 foreign countries, to be prepared locally by members of various associations, will be displayed at the event, being organized by the Telangana government.
- The 3-day festival would be organised in association with various cultural, language and region-based associations of people, including those from foreign countries living in Hyderabad.

Historic War memorial Teen Murti Chowk renamed after Israeli city Haifa

- The Teen Murti Chowk in central Delhi was formally renamed as Teen Murti-Haifa, after Israeli city Haifa in a solemn ceremony attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Israeli counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu on 14 January 2018.
- The two leaders jointly paid tribute at the memorial. The renaming of the iconic war memorial is aimed at being a symbolic gesture of India's friendship with Israel. The announcement follows the scheduled visit of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to India.

Odisha government introduces new artists' assistance scheme

- The state government of Odisha on 15 January 2018 announced an artists' assistance scheme called the 'Mukshyamantri Kalakar Sahayata Jojana' (MMKSJ) under which 50,000 artists from across the state will get a monthly assistance of Rs 1,200.
- The announcement was made by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik after a meeting, attended by culture minister A C Panda, Chief Secretary A P Padhi and other officials. The state was earlier imparting a sum of Rs 1000 as artist's assistance to 4000 artists.

Home Minister Rajnath Singh inaugurates two-day International Workshop on Disaster Resilient Infrastructure

- Home Minister Rajnath Singh on 15 January 2018 inaugurated a two-day International Workshop on Disaster Resilient Infrastructure, which has been organised by the National Disaster Management Authority in New Delhi.
- Speaking on the occasion, the Minister said that the workshop is a paradigm shift in the field of disaster management globally. He said tremendous foresight and rigour are required to ensure that all new infrastructures are built in such a way that they could withstand the hazards of the present as well as the future.

West Bengal, Kerala, Odisha opt out of Centre's aspirational districts scheme

- Three opposition ruled states –West Bengal, Kerala and Odisha — have opted out of the Centre's Transformation of Aspirational Districts scheme, thus reducing the total number of districts under the programme to 102 from 115, a senior Niti Aayog official said.
- According to another government official, the three states have objected to the criteria set up by the centre for identifying backward districts without taking states into confidence. The Centre has embarked upon a major policy initiative for rapid transformation of districts that are lagging on specific development parameters.
- Earlier in the month, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had addressed the conference of 115 aspirational districts. It was attended by collectors and officers-in-charge of 115 backward districts. During the conference, Modi has also promised to personally visit one well-performing district by April 14, the birth anniversary of B R Ambedkar.

Union Government ends Haj subsidy to empower minorities without appeasement

- The Union Government has decided to end Haj subsidy from this year, as a part of its policy to 'empower minorities without appeasement'. The announcement was made by Minority Affairs Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi on 16 January 2018.
- The Minister stated that the decision is a part of the government's policy to empower minorities with dignity and without appeasement. He further said that despite the withdrawal of the subsidy, a record number of 1.75 lakh Muslims would be undertaking the pilgrimage this year from India after Saudi Arabia increased India's quota by 5,000.

Sri Lanka has become the first one to be connected to India's National Knowledge Network

- India's National Knowledge Network and Sri Lanka's LEARN which connect to educational institutions between the two countries have now been linked with each other through high capacity internet, the government said in January, 2018.
- Law and IT Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad, who is on an official visit to Sri Lanka, inaugurated the connectivity between the two networks.

Kerala's Ernakulam Station Becomes The 1st Disabled-Friendly Railway Station

- Kerala has made permanent ramps at Ernakulam Junction, along with portable ramps to board trains and small wheelchairs to get inside the trains. Luggage porters were trained on how to assist disabled passengers.
- The proponents of the projects have also promised to have an electronic cart for porters to transport disabled and elderly passengers to their trains.
- They have also announced to create disabled-friendly lounges including an AC lounge, and wheelchair friendly washrooms within six months and handed over the project to the railways with an intention to implement the same facilities to other stations all over the state.

Centre, J-K sign MoU for education reforms

- Jammu and Kashmir government in January, 2018 signed a Memorandum of understanding (MoU) to bring normalcy in the state through education reforms.
- Under the MoU titled, 'School Education Transformation Roadmap', signed between the state's Department of School Education and Union Minister of Human Resource Development (MHRD), over 9,000 J-K students could participate in an exchange programme.
- Among other measures, Information Communication Technology (ICT) and digital platforms would also be set up in the state's schools.

Centre approves proposal to procure assault rifles, carbines worth Rs 35 bn

- The government in January, 2018 gave its nod for the procurement of assault rifles and carbines worth Rs 35.47 billion to meet the immediate requirement of troops deployed on the borders on a "fast track basis", the defence ministry said.
- The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC), headed by Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, cleared the procurement of 72,000 assault rifles and 93,895 carbines.
- The procurement is expected to address the shortage of small arms for the armed forces.
- Sources said that tenders will soon be floated to set the ball rolling for the procurement process.
- The procurement could also be done at the government to government (G to G) level.

PM Modi, Israeli PM Netanyahu dedicate iCreate to the nation

- Prime Minister Modi and Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu in January, 2018 dedicated to the nation, the iCREATE facility located on the outskirts of Ahmedabad.
- iCreate is an independent Centre created with the objective of facilitating entrepreneurship through a blend of creativity, innovation, engineering, product design and leveraging emerging technologies to deal with major issues such as food security, water, connectivity, cybersecurity, IT and electronics, energy, bio-medical equipment and devices etc.
- iCreate aims to develop an ecosystem in India to generate quality entrepreneurs.

MoS, Textiles inaugurates 60th edition of India International Garment Fair

- The 60th edition of India International Garment Fair (IIGF) was inaugurated in January, 2018 by Minister of State for Textiles, Shri Ajay Tamta, at Pragati Maidan, New Delhi. Addressing the audience, the Minister said that garment sector is one of the largest providers of employment.
- Recalling that business worth US \$200 million was conducted in the previous edition, the Minister extended his best wishes to all participating buyers and exporters.
- A total of 294 exporters from 11 states, namely Gujarat, Haryana, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Delhi, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal, are participating at the 60th IIGF.

ISRO releases first image taken by Cartosat-2 series satellite

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) on 16 January 2018 released the first image captured by India's recently launched remote sensing satellite, Cartosat-2.
- The image shows a part of Indore city in Madhya Pradesh with the Holkar Cricket Stadium in the centre. The image was acquired on 15 January, three days after the launch of the satellite.

NITI Aayog initiates first course on Sustainable Urban Planning

- The First Global Initiative on Academic Network (GIAN) course on Sustainable Urban planning using remote sensing and Geographic Information System (GIS) was launched on 15 January 2018.
- The course was inaugurated by Niti Aayog's Principal Adviser Ratan P Watal at the Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur's outreach center in NOIDA. The course is being conducted under the Global Initiative on Academic Network (GIAN) Program of the Ministry of Human Resource Development with active support by NITI Aayog and Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.

India, US to conduct joint military exercise 'Vajra Prahar'

- The Indo-US joint military exercise 'Vajra Prahar' will be undertaken at the Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM) in Seattle, US in the third week of January.
- The exercise would see a 45-member Special Forces team from Indian Army's Southern Command train alongside US soldiers.
- 'Vajra Prahar' is an Indo-US Special Forces joint training exercise, which is conducted alternately in India and the US.

NIFT to host International Conference 'Rediscovering Culture

- National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT) is organizing an International Conference: 'Rediscovering Culture: Transforming Fashion', with the aim of initiating a conversation on fashion, culture, textiles, crafts and sustainability.
- Some of the leading designers who will be showcasing their work at the inaugural event through a fashion show include Manish Arora, Rajesh Pratap Singh, Suket Dhir, Sanjay Garg, Sunita Shanker, Swati Kalsi, Payal Pratap, Pratima Pandey, to name a few.

Andhra CM launches e-Pragati platform

- Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu in January, 2018 launched the e-Pragati CORE platform, which will be a common portal for all citizen services online.
- As envisioned by the Chief Minister, a single source of truth and one portal to monitor everything, from insights to action, will be enabled by this platform.

Madhya Pradesh becomes first state to achieve door-to-door garbage collection target

- The state government of Madhya Pradesh has claimed that the state has become the first one in the country to fully achieve the target of door-to-door garbage collection in areas under urban bodies.
- The announcement was made by the state's Urban Development and Housing Minister Maya Singh during a "Swachha Bharat Abhiyan 2018" review meeting held on 15 January.

NHRC holds Open Hearing and Camp Sitting in Jaipur

- The two-day Open Hearing and Camp Sitting, organised by the National Human Rights Commission to address the grievances of the people began in Jaipur on 18 January 2018.
- Chairman Justice HL Dattu would be inaugurating the hearing of the cases. Following the inauguration, the Commission would be taking up 169 complaints in the Open Hearing, which will be heard by the Chairperson and other members.
- The complaints relate to the grievances and atrocities against the persons belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes due to action, inaction or omission by the public authorities.

India successfully test-fires indigenously developed ICBM Agni-5

- India on 18 January 2018 successfully test-fired the indigenously developed long-range surface-to-surface ballistic missile, Agni-5, off the coast of Odisha.
- The state-of-the-art missile, developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation DRDO, was test fired successfully from the Abdul Kalam Wheeler Island.

Kolkata Police introduces LED-fitted uniforms to ensure safety of traffic cops

- The Kolkata Police has introduced uniforms with LED lights attached to them for traffic police officers, who work after sunset, especially during the winters.
- The "body lights" will help the commuters and the drivers spot the officers from a reasonable distance and cut the risk of fog-related road crashes.

Snapdeal celebrates Republic Day 2018 with "Pride of India" e-store

- Snapdeal's "Pride of India" e-store celebrates 69 years of the Indian Republic with special curated products to bring unique handloom and handicraft items from all parts of the country.
- The store also has products from famous Indian brands, patriotic themed items and quirky stuff uniquely related to India.

Hardeep Singh Puri announces commencement of India's first-ever 'Livability Index'

- Union minister Hardeep Singh Puri in January, 2018 announced the commencement of the country's first-ever 'Livability Index' to rank 116 cities.

- An official said that the result of the exercise will be announced in June.
- Among the cities to be assessed for the 'Livability Index', include Delhi's three municipal corporations, Bangalore (Karnataka), Kochi (Kerala), Ghaziabad, Meerut, Varanasi, Allahabad and Lucknow (Uttar Pradesh) and Faridabad in Haryana.
- The cities will be assessed on 15 core parameters like governance, social infrastructure, education, employment, health and safety and security.
- The 'Livability Index' will also take into account physical infrastructure like housing, open spaces, land use, energy and water availability, solid waste management and pollution, among others.

'PadMan' has become the first Indian film to be showcased at the Oxford Union

- Actor-producer Twinkle Khanna has been invited to speak at the Oxford Union - one of the reputed debating societies in the world. She is expected to showcase her maiden production venture Pad Man, starring her husband Akshay Kumar, at the Union on January 18. Twinkle Khanna will talk about why is it important to discuss menstrual hygiene and how the story of PadMan (Arunachalam Muruganatham in real life) has played a big part in creating awareness among rural South Indian population.
- She will also discuss the need to break the taboo around menstruation and the stigma attached to it globally.
- This will also be the first Indian film to be showcased and discussed at the Oxford Union. The society founded in 1823 has since invited world leaders and influencers to discuss topics of importance. Some of the speakers include Sashi Tharoor, the Dalai Lama, Michael Jackson, Malala Yousafzai, Salman Rushdie and Morgan Freeman.

Uber enters into partnership with Eastern Railway

- App-cab company Uber in January, 2018 entered into a partnership with Eastern Railway to help travellers avail a ride at Howrah station, which is one of the busiest railway terminals in the country.
- Uber will set up booking zones at the station where even those who do not have the app will be able to book a ride, a spokesperson for the company said.

Telangana inks MoU with Clean Authority of Tokyo

- The Telangana government has entered an MoU with Clean Authority of Tokyo in the field of Municipal Solid Waste Incineration Facilities in January, 2018.
- On the Third-day of his tour to Japan to woo foreign investors, Telangana business delegation led by IT and Industries Minister KT Rama met with industrial heads and front leaders of Multi-National Companies in Tokyo.

9 more cities selected for 'Smart City' mission, 3 from Uttar Pradesh

- Housing Minister Hardeep Singh Puri in January, 2018 released the list of nine new cities to be funded under the Centre's flagship 'Smart City' mission.
- The government has allocated Rs 12,824 crore to be invested in 409 projects to make these cities 'Smart Cities'. Of the nine cities, 3 are from Uttar Pradesh, 1 from Bihar, 1 from Tamil Nadu, 1 from Daman & Diu, 1 from Arunachal Pradesh and 1 from Lakshadweep.

Here's are the nine cities announced in January, 2018:

1. Silvassa, Dadra and Nagar Haveli
2. Erode, Tamil Nadu
3. Diu, Daman & Diu
4. Biharsharif, Bihar
5. Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh
6. Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh
7. Moradabad, Uttar Pradesh
8. Saharanpur, Uttar Pradesh
9. Kavaratti, Lakshadweep

Union Government launches 100 accessible websites for Divyangs

- The Union Social Justice and Empowerment Minister Thaawarchand Gehlot on 19th January 2017 launched 100 accessible websites for Divyangs.
- The divyang-friendly websites, especially for the visually impaired, use features such as screen readers and screen magnifiers, which can relay website content to the user in audio format. According to Social Justice Minister, 900 such websites will be launched in a phased manner.

PMSMA crosses 1 Cr mark in antenatal check-ups

- The Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan (PMSMA) has crossed one crore mark in antenatal check-ups.
- The programme was launched in 2016 to fulfil Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision and ensure comprehensive and quality antenatal checkups to pregnant women across the country. The PMSMA has provided quality antenatal checkups to pregnant women on the 9th of every month.

Tamil Nadu government to introduce Aerospace & Defence policy

- The Tamil Nadu government is planning to come up with an exclusive Aerospace and Defence policy.
- The policy's main objective would be to achieve a 30 per cent share of the defence sector in India and creating high-end employment opportunities for around 100,000 people in the state.

Union Government launches Cyber Surakshit Bharat initiative

- The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) launched Cyber Surakshit Bharat initiative in association with National e-Governance Division (NeGD) and industry partners at an inaugural event in Delhi on 19th January 2018.
- The move is aimed at strengthening the cybersecurity ecosystem in India, in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision for a 'Digital India'.

Rajasthan to have candidates' picture on EVMs in upcoming bypolls

- Rajasthan's Chief Election Officer Ashwani Bhagat announced on 19th January 2018 that the Electronic Voting Machines in the state's by-polls would carry photographs of candidates contesting elections.
- The by-polls are due on 29th January in Ajmer and Alwar Parliamentary seats along with Mandalgarh Assembly seat.

President to felicitate women achievers at Rashtrapati Bhawan

- President Ram Nath Kovind would be felicitating exceptional women achievers who are the first to set a milestone in their respective fields at Rashtrapati Bhawan on 20th January 2018.
- The information was shared the Women and Child Development Ministry through an official release. The statement read that 112 women have been selected after an extensive research process by the Ministry.
- The women being felicitated are those who have been the first in any field like the first woman judge, first woman porter, first woman to head a missile project, first para-trooper and first Olympian. For the same, a list of 227 women was compiled through various sources including Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Sports, Limca Book of Records, press clippings and internet.

Manipur CM launches health assurance scheme for poor & disabled people

- Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh in January, 2018 launched the Chief Minister-gi Hakshelgi Tengbang (CMHT), a pioneering health assurance scheme for the poor and disabled people.
- The chief minister launched the CMHT along with 10 advanced life support ambulances as a gift of Statehood Day to the people of Manipur at a function at Khuman Lampak Indoor Stadium, said a government press release.
- Speaking at the occasion, Singh said CMHT was a dream-scheme of his government.

- The CMHT will provide cashless treatment to the poor at government hospitals, health centres and other empanelled selected private hospitals.
- The scheme will provide cover up to Rs 2 lakh per eligible family identified from the Socio Economic Caste Census (SECC) in the treatment of seven critical identified critical ailments - cardiovascular diseases, kidney ailments, neurological conditions, liver ailments, cancer, neo-natal diseases and burns per year.

First ever jallikattu in Coimbatore on January 28

- The first ever bull taming sport of Jallikattu in the district would be held on January 28.
- The groundbreaking ceremony for laying 'vadivasal', the gate through which bulls are sent to the arena, was performed in January, 2018 at Chettipalayam on the outskirts.
- Jallikattu is being jointly organised by the District Administration and Omkar Foundation.

Maharashtra leads the way in toilet construction in Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban)

- Maharashtra has constructed the maximum number of individual household toilets under the Centre's flagship Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban) scheme, followed by Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh, according to official data.
- Till November last year, as many as 42.72 lakh household toilets have been constructed against the target of 66.42 lakh, recording an achievement of nearly 64 percent.
- The government launched Swachh Bharat Mission in 2 October, 2014 with an aim of eliminating open defecation, manual scavenging and scientific management of municipal waste by 2 October, 2019.
- The Centre is focusing on construction of toilets to make the cities open defecation free by 2019.

Maharashtra to launch weather advisory system for farmers

- The Maharashtra government is all set to introduce a system to issue daily district-wise weather advisory to farmers across the state.
- "The system has a capacity to generate weather alerts for every ten minutes, if required. The state is taking a step forward to explore the possibility of issuing weather advisory for farmers to minimise their crop losses due to adverse weather conditions," Agriculture Commissioner Sachindra Pratap Singh told PTI.
- The first automatic weather station (AWS) in Maharashtra became operational on May 1 last year. The weather station helps in measuring the wind direction, wind speed, air temperature, relative humidity and records amount of rainfall, the officer said.

Odisha government launches OeHMIS project

- The state government in January, 2018 launched Odisha e-Hospital Management Information System (OeHMIS) to provide a computerized platform for online recording of clinical parameters of patients and reporting of performance criteria of hospitals.
- According to the system, patients can be registered online and can view and download their individual electronic health records at their doorstep through web portal or mobile application.

India to host 16th International Energy Forum meet

- The 16th International Energy Forum (IEF) Ministerial meeting will be held in New Delhi on April 10 to 12.
- While addressing a press conference, Union Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas Dharmendra Pradhan said, "The 16th International Energy Forum Ministerial meeting will be held on April 10 to 12, 2018, which will be hosted by Government of India in New Delhi and co-hosted by the Government of China and South Korea."
- Representatives from 92 countries will be participating in the conference, including 72 member countries of IEF and 20 guest countries, the minister added.

NGT orders 'intensive survey' of rivers in western UP

- The NGT has ordered "intensive survey" of the Kali, Krishna and the Hindon rivers in western Uttar Pradesh and directed the inspection of 316 industries, which are allegedly polluting the water bodies.

- The NGT bench headed by acting Chairperson Justice U D Salvi has constituted a committee comprising officials from the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), state pollution control board and UP Jal Nigam to jointly inspect and carry out survey of the rivers and groundwater in six districts in the western part of the state.

India to launch ocean pollution observation system

- India is all set to have its own automated ocean pollution observation system this year that is expected to help monitor ocean pollution levels besides offering insights on the changes in the marine system.
- According to SSC Shenoi, Director of Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS), the new ocean data acquisition system called automated moorings will be the first of its kind in India. He said that the system would be very effective in getting the data about ocean pollution, which will then be used to understand the quality of water.

Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban launches Smart Star-Rating for garbage-free cities

- Hardeep Singh Puri, Minister of State (I/C) for Housing and Urban Affairs along with the Chief Minister of Goa, Manohar Parrikar launched the 'Protocol for Star Rating of Garbage-Free Cities' in Goa on January 20, 2018.
- The SMART star-rating initiative, developed by the Swachh Bharat Mission – Urban would rate the cities on a 7-star rating system, which would be based on multiple cleanliness indicators for solid waste management.

ixigo introduces India's first augmented reality feature for Train Passengers

- ixigo Introduces India's First Augmented Reality Feature for Train Passengers
- ixigo, India's leading travel marketplace, has introduced India's first augmented reality (AR) feature on its trains app. The AR Coach Position feature will enable train travellers to accurately locate their coach positions for over 13,000 passenger trains at more than 7,000 railway stations across India.

India set to become food exhibition, distribution hub with 'Indus Foods'

- India is laying concrete plans to become a hub for retail, distribution and exhibition in the food space over the next few years through 'Indus Foods', the global food and beverage show which kicked off in January, 2018 at Greater Noida.
- Also, Indian players in the processed food segment are likely to improve their exports to Gulf states, West Asia and Russia, if business interest by foreign buyers on day 1 show is anything to go by.

Ministry of Tourism launches Incredible India digital calendar

- In line with the government's Digital India initiative, Minister of State for Tourism (Independent Charge) and Minister of State for Electronics and Information Technology, K.J Alphons launched the Incredible India digital calendar in New Delhi in January, 2018.
- He also released the Incredible India wall and desk calendar for 2018.
- The Incredible India digital calendar application enables users to know about the events and festivals happening in India on the go.

Andhra Pradesh inks MoU with Hitachi India Limited for e-governance

- The State government signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Hitachi India Limited (HIL) in January, 2018 to facilitate the development of the Hitachi MGRM Citizen Lifecycle E-Governance platform in AP.
- The MoU was signed in the presence of Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, Finance Minister Yanamala Ramakrishnudu and IT Minister Nara Lokesh in Davos.

Govt awards 325 air routes in tier 2, 3 cities under UDAN-2

- The government on Wednesday awarded 325 routes to airlines as well as helicopter operators, enhancing air connectivity to 73 new airports and helipads in tier 2 and tier 3 cities, including Kargil in the frontier Ladakh region.
- The announcement was made after the conclusion of the second round of bidding for the Centre's regional connectivity scheme, also known as UDAN (Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik), which aims to take flying to the masses and enhance flight services to smaller cities.
- Eleven fixed-wing operators have been granted rights for 67 proposals and four helicopter operators have been awarded 23 proposals, an official of the civil aviation ministry said at a press briefing in New Delhi.
- Among the major domestic carriers, IndiGo has bagged 20 proposals, SpiceJet got 17 while Jet Airways won 4 proposals.
- The government will spend Rs 620 crores in providing viability gap funding or subsidy to airlines and helicopter operators for RCS flights.

International Dam Safety Conference to begin in Thiruvananthapuram

- India is set to host the International Dam Safety Conference - 2018 on January 23-24 at Thiruvananthapuram, the capital city of Kerala.
- The conference would be inaugurated by Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and the inaugural function would be presided over by Union Minister of State for Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation Arjun Ram Meghwal.

New schemes launched for young scientists

- Minister for Science and Technology, in January, 2018 launched four new schemes which seek to help young researchers to realise their potential more fully for their own benefit as well as for the betterment of the society at large.
- The first initiative called Teacher Associateship for Research Excellence (TARE) Scheme aims to tap the latent potential of faculty working in state universities, colleges and private academic institutions who are well trained but have difficulty in pursuing their research due to varied reasons including lack of facilities, funding and guidance.
- The scheme facilitates mobility of such faculty members to carryout research in well established public funded institutions such as IITs, IISc, IISERS and other National Institutions including NITs, CSIR, ICAR, ICMR laboratories and Central Universities located preferably nearer to them. Upto 500 teachers will be supported under this scheme.
- The second initiative called Overseas Visiting Doctoral Fellowship will seek to enhance international mobility of Indian research students with a view to create a pool of globally trained manpower. The scheme will provide opportunities for research students to access top class research facilities in academia and laboratories across the world. This scheme will offer fellowships for up to 100 PhD students admitted in the Indian institutions to take up training in overseas universities and institutions of repute working in areas of importance for the country for periods up to 12 months during their doctoral research.

UP Cabinet approves 'one district, one product' scheme

- The Uttar Pradesh Cabinet has approved 'one district, one product' scheme to promote products indigenous to every district.
- The implementation of the scheme will boost economic development of the state and also help in the generation of five lakh new jobs annually. Under the scheme, one product indigenous to every district would be showcased at the three-day UP Diwas event.

NHRC issues notice to Odisha Govt over closure of schools

- The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has issued a notice to the Odisha government and the Centre, after a media report revealed that a large number of government-run primary and upper primary schools have been closed in the state due to less number of students.

- The NHRC stated that the media report has raised the issue of Right to Education of young students, mostly belonging to poor families of Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe and other backward communities.

Supreme Court asks Centre to set up Mahanadi water tribunal

- The Supreme Court has directed the Centre to set up a tribunal within a month to resolve the dispute between Odisha and Chhattisgarh over the sharing of water from river Mahanadi.
- The orders were issued by a bench of Justices comprising SA Bobde and L Nageswara Rao. The bench stated that all the pending issues can be raised before the tribunal. It, however, refused to grant any stay sought by the Odisha government on the seven small dams across Mahanadi river, which flows through Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Odisha before pouring into the Bay of Bengal.

Second Offshore Patrol Vessel 'Vijaya' launched

- The multi-national construction and engineering firm, Larsen & Toubro (L&T) announced on January 22, 2018 that it has launched the second offshore patrol vessel (OPV) for the Indian Coast Guard at its greenfield defence shipyard in Kattupalli near Chennai.
- According to JD Patil, Senior Executive Vice-President and whole-time Director (Defence), L&T, the OPV-2 is the ninth defence vessel launched by L&T in the current financial year.
- The indigenously built vessel 'Vijaya' is equipped with state-of-art radar, navigational and communication system.

Microsoft introduces AI for real-time translation in Hindi, Bengali, Tamil

- As India celebrates its 69th Republic Day, Microsoft in January, 2018 announced to bring Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Deep Neural Networks to improve real-time language translation for Hindi, Bengali and Tamil.
- With Deep Neural Networks-powered language translation, the results are more accurate and the sound more natural.

Akshay Kumar launches Pad Banks in Maharashtra villages

- Akshay Kumar is one of few Bollywood stars who understand the importance of addressing relevant social issues through entertainment. After the success of 'Toilet: Ek Prem Katha', a film that talked about open defecation, Kumar will be back on screen with another socially relevant film 'PadMan'.
- 'PadMan' is based on 'The Sanitary Man of Sacred Land', a short story from Twinkle Khanna's book, The Legend of Lakshmi Prasad. The film is inspired from the life of Arunachalam Muruganantham, a social activist from Tamil Nadu who invented low-cost sanitary pads.

Pradhan Mantri LPG Panchayat launched in Jharkhand

- Jharkhand Chief Minister Raghubar Das in January, 2018 launched 'Pradhan Mantri LPG Panchayat' in the state from Balijore village in Dumka district.
- Addressing on the occasion, Das said that so long women were developed, the country would not be developed and whatever projects were being made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi was being made keeping women's development in mind.
- The government's thought is that even the poor families live with dignity, an official release said quoting the chief minister.

Haryana govt sets up 26 portable cabins for homeless

- In view of the prevailing cold conditions in the state, the Haryana government has installed 26 portable cabins for the urban homeless in nine districts, an official spokesperson said in January, 2018.
- The cabins have been set up in Panchkula, Faridabad, Gurugram, Sonapat, Panipat, Yamunanagar, Kurukshetra, Bahadurgarh and Rohtak districts.

Himachal Government launches Nutrition Scheme for HIV-positive children

- On the occasion of National Youth Day, Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur launched a state-level nutrition scheme for HIV-positive children that aims to boost the immunity of over 400 youths up to 18-year-olds.
- The Chief Minister also made it mandatory for every expecting mother to go for HIV test in order to start the treatment early.

International spice conference in Jaipur from Feb 4-7

- The third edition of international spice conference will be held at Jaipur from February 4 to 7. Over 750 delegates from various countries, including representatives of international spice associations, policy makers, and farmers, are expected to participate in the four-day meet that would deliberate on effective strategies and innovative technologies that foster sustainable farming, improve the livelihood of spice farmers, address spice industry challenges, food safety concerns and demand supply disparity.
- The central theme of the 2018 conference would be 'Managing Disruptions through Transformation and Collaboration'.

WCD Ministry launches MIS portal for Anganwadi Services Training Programme

- The Management Information System (MIS) portal for Anganwadi Services Training Programme was launched by Rakesh Srivastava, Women and Child Development Secretary in New Delhi on January 24, 2018.
- The portal has been developed by the Ministry of Women and Child Development in collaboration with National Informatics Centre (NIC) for the submission of applications and estimates by NGOs for carrying out Anganwadi Services (ICDS) Training through Anganwadi Workers Training Centres (AWTC) and Middle-Level Training Centres (MLTC).

Maharashtra bans sale of tobacco at shops selling FMCG items

- The Maharashtra government on January 24, 2018 banned the sale of tobacco in shops selling Fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) items in the state.
- The state government announced a ban on the sale of tobacco at shops selling chips, chocolates and other edible items. The move aims to ensure that youngsters do not get addicted to tobacco products.

India, Vietnam sign MoU for cooperation in I&B sector and space

- India and Vietnam on January 24, 2018 exchanged Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) for cooperation in the field of Information and Broadcasting and space.
- The agreements were exchanged in the presence of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Vietnam counterpart, Nguyen Xuan Phuc.
- The two nations agreed to enhance cooperation in the field of Information and Broadcasting based on principles of equality and reciprocity pursuant to their national laws and regulations.

Prime Minister holds bilateral talks with ASEAN Leaders

- Ahead of the India-ASEAN commemorative summit, Prime Minister held a bilateral meeting with Sultan of Brunei, His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassan-al Bolkiah in New Delhi on January 25, 2018.
- Modi also held talks with his Thailand counterpart Prayut Chan-o-cha and Prime Minister of Singapore Lee Hsien Loong. Later, in the evening, the Prime Minister would be meeting the President of Indonesia Joko Widodo.

Indian Navy launches third Scorpene Class Submarine INS Karanj

- INS Karanj, the third Scorpene class submarine constructed by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited, was launched by the Indian Navy on January 31, 2018.

- The submarine was launched by Reena Lanba, President of Navy Wives Welfare Association following the recitation of Sanskrit shlokas from the Atharva Veda and traditional ceremonies associated with the launch of naval platforms.

Rural women in Maharashtra to get sanitary pads for just Rs 5

- The state government of Maharashtra on January 30, 2017 approved a proposal to provide sanitary napkins at a subsidised rate of Rs 5 to women living in rural areas.
- The decision was taken during the state Cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis. It is aimed at promoting menstrual hygiene among young girls and women.
- According to the state's Women and Child Development Minister Pankaja Munde, the decision would be effectively implemented from the International Women's Day on March 8, 2018.

President Ram Nath Kovind approves Bill to hike salary of judges

- President Ram Nath Kovind on January 31, 2018 approved The High Court and Supreme Court Judges (Salaries and Conditions of Service) Amendment Act, 2018, a Bill that seeks to hike the salaries of Supreme Court and High Court judges.
- The Bill was passed in the Winter Session of Parliament. Following the approval of the President, the Chief Justice of India will draw a monthly salary of Rs 2.80 lakh, up from the current Rs 1 lakh.

UP government announces jobs to dependants of martyred jawans

- Uttar Pradesh state government on January 30, 2018 announced that it will provide employment on compassionate grounds to the dependants of the martyred Jawans of armed forces and Central Para Military forces who had a domicile of origin in Uttar Pradesh.
- The decision was taken at a cabinet meeting headed by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

Snapdeal, National Book Trust launch Har Hath Ek Kitab at the World Book Fair

- This World Book Fair at New Delhi, National Book Trust and Snapdeal have come together to spread awareness around importance of education, especially aiming to inculcate a reading habit amongst the underprivileged kids through their initiative 'Har Hath Ek Kitab'.
- On this occasion, National Book Trust and Snapdeal have launched an online portal www.harhathekitab.com to expand its outreach, so that people from across the country can support the movement by gifting books for underprivileged kids.

IAF becomes 1st organisation in the world to scale Seven Summits

- After scaling Mt Vinson in Antarctica, Indian Air Force (IAF) has become the first organisation to accomplish the "Seven Summit", climbing the highest mountains of each of the seven continents.
- Mt Vinson, standing tall at 16050 feet, is the most pristine and remotest mountain on earth.
- Gp Capt Tripathi had also flied the tri-colour and IAF flag on the highest peaks of other six continents.

UK, India collaborate to improve public transport

- Transport for London (TfL) and the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways India (MoRTH) signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on bilateral cooperation in urban transport policy, planning, technology transfer and institutional organisation for transport on January 10.
- Union Minister Nitin Gadkari along with Chief Technology Officer and Director of Customer Experience TfL, Shashi Verma signed the MoU.

Railway Ministry launches SFOORTI App to help track both passenger and freight trains

- In a major digital initiative to help plan the traffic flows and optimize freight operations, the Ministry of Railways in January, 2018 launched Smart the Freight Operation Optimisation and Real Time Information (SFOORTI) App for Freight Managers.
- This application provides features for monitoring and managing freight business using Geographic Information System (GIS) views and dashboard.

Northeast Frontier Railway introduces new Fogpass technology

- The Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has introduced a new GPS-based system in all locomotives for auto warning to train drivers during the foggy season.
- The new system called FogPASS (Fog Pilot Assistance System for Safety), consisting of an in-built battery and GPS antenna with a magnetic base, has been installed in all locomotives in the NFR.
- The system is also expected to ensure timely running of trains.

West Bengal govt launching water ATMs in city, districts

- West Bengal Panchayat and Rural Development and Public Health Engineering Minister Subrata Mukherjee in January, 2018 said the state government has launched a water ATM project to provide bacteria-free drinking water in schools.
- The government is setting up water ATMs in the city and suburbs and the machines are made in Germany, he told reporters on the sidelines of an award programme. "If someone can prove the presence of harmful bacteria in any such water ATM, he will be given Rs 2 lakh.

US travel advisory puts India at level 2

- The US in January, 2018 issued a new travel advisory for countries including India, which its officials said is "user friendly" as it is based on ready-to-understand level of advice ranging from one to four.
- India has been ranked Level 2 (exercise increased caution), while Pakistan has been placed in Level 3 (reconsider travel). Level 1 advises travellers to exercise normal precaution, while Level 4, which has countries like Afghanistan, recommends "Do Not Travel".
- Now every country has a travel advisory based on this system, which has replaced all the previous such advisories.

ISRO successfully launches its 100th satellite

- India successfully launched its 100th satellite 'Cartosat-2 Series' from Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Andhra Pradesh's Sriharikota Island in January, 2018.
- For the mission, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) used PSLV-C40 launch vehicle, which is carrying 31 satellites, including three from India and 28 from six other countries.
- The weather observation 'Cartosat-2 Series' satellite and 29 others will be inserted into a 505-kilometre sun-synchronous orbit after about seventeen and a half minutes since its liftoff.

PM Modi ranked among top 3 world leaders in survey

- Ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Switzerland for Davos summit, an international survey has ranked him among the top three leaders of the world.
- An annual survey by Gallup International has put Prime Minister Modi at number three among the global leaders.
- The respondents in the survey, which was conducted among the people across 50 countries, had rated Prime Minister Modi ahead of China's Xi Jinping, Russian President Vladimir Putin, British Prime Minister Theresa May, Israel's Benjamin Netanyahu amongst others.
- The top ranking in the survey went to German Chancellor Angela Merkel, followed by French president Emmanuel Macron.

PM Modi inaugurates National Youth Festival 2018 in Uttar Pradesh

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi in January, 2018 addressed the public at five-day National Youth Festival (NYF) via video conferencing.
- The festival, being held at the Gautam Buddha University in Greater Noida, commenced on the occasion of the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda in January, 2018.
- The inaugural function was co-chaired by Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, and Union Minister for State (Independent Charge) of Youth Affairs and Sports Col. Rajyavardhan Rathore. The guest of honour on the occasion was Union Minister for Culture (Independent Charge) Mahesh Sharma.
- The festival is organised by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports in collaboration with the Uttar Pradesh government.
- The theme of the festival is 'Sankalp Se Siddhi', to capitalise on the demographic dividend of young India, to capture the vibrancy and fresh perspective of youth and to pledge to accomplish the Goal of New India.

Himachal Pradesh health worker Geeta Verma featured in WHO Calendar

- Geeta Verma, a health worker from Sapnot village in Mandi district, has figured in the World Health Organization (WHO) calendar for 2018 for ensuring 100 per cent coverage in her area of operation under the measles and rubella programme.
- Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur in January, 2018 congratulated Geeta on making the state proud. He exhorted all employees to work with dedication.

Kerala to use robots to clean sewers, end manual scavenging

- Robots will soon replace men in cleaning up sewer holes in Kerala, ending the age-old practice of manual scavenging in the southern state. 'Bandicoot', the robot developed by the startup firm Genrobotics, will be used for cleaning sewer holes.
- The Kerala Water Authority (KWA) and Kerala Startup Mission (KSUM) in January, 2018 signed an MoU for transfer of technology and products, including use of the robots for the purpose. The MoU was signed between Kerala Water Innovation Zone under KWA and KSUM at the Chief Minister's office in Thiruvananthapuram, a statement said.
- 'Bandicoot' will start its work, so far mostly done manually, by cleaning sewer holes in the city during the coming famed Attukal Pongala festival in Thiruvananthapuram in March, it said.

MEA discontinues last page of passport

- The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) in January, 2018 decided to discontinue the last page of the passport, containing information about parents, address, Emigration Check Required (ECR) and old passport details.
- The Ministry decided that the last page of the passport and other travel documents issued under the Passports Act, 1967 and Passport Rules, 1980 would no longer be printed.

Election Commission constitutes Umesh Sinha Committee to suggest changes to RP Act, 1951

- The Election Commission of India on 11 January 2018 constituted a 14 member committee to suggest changes to Section 126 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 (RP Act) in view of social media expansion.
- The Committee will be chaired by Senior Deputy Election Commissioner Umesh Sinha.

Indu Malhotra, first woman lawyer to be directly promoted as Supreme Court judge

- The senior advocate Indu Malhotra has been recommended as a judge of the Supreme Court by the collegium of Supreme Court.
- Indu Malhotra would become the first woman lawyer to be directly appointed as a judge of the highest court.

Film contest launched for Saubhagya scheme

- The government has taken the 'short movie' route to promote its flagship Saubhagya scheme, which aims to provide free electricity connections to about 4 crore needy people this year.

- Rural Electrification Corporation (REC), a public sector unit functioning under the purview of the Ministry of Power, is organising a short film-making contest to create awareness about the electrification scheme launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in September last year.
- As per the officials, the scheme is meant only for the common masses and the objective of the contest is to involve general public as ambassadors of the programme.

India, UK ink pacts on illegal migrants' return, sharing intelligence

- India and the UK have signed two agreements on return of Indians, who are living in Britain as illegal migrants, and sharing criminal records and intelligence.
- The development comes close on heels of India seeking UK's help in early extradition of liquor tycoon Vijay Mallya from Britain to face the law at home in connection with cases of fraud and money laundering amounting to around Rs 9,000 crores.
- The memorandums of understanding (MOUs) were signed by UK's Minister of Immigration Caroline Nokes and India's Minister of Home Affairs Kiren Rijiju in January, 2018.

Johnson & Johnson partners with Maharashtra government on health interventions

- Maharashtra's mine workers who face an increased risk of tuberculosis will be part of awareness programmes on the illness, as part of a partnership that the Maharashtra Government recently formalized with Johnson & Johnson.
- Other interventions under the ambit of the agreement include hospital acquired infections and maternal and infant mortality, a J&J note said.
- The collaboration would also look at infection prevention, diabetes, obesity and menstrual hygiene and support healthcare professionals and nurses in the State to develop skills in these areas.

Rashtriya Sanskriti Mahotsav-2018 begins in Karnataka

- The Centre is set to organise the seventh edition of the "Rashtriya Sanskriti Mahotsav-2018" in Karnataka from January 14 to January 20.
- "The Union Culture Ministry has decided to organise Rashtriya Sanskriti Mahotsav under the Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat matrix in Karnataka to celebrate the idea of unity in diversity," the government said in a statement.
- Parliamentary Affairs Minister Ananth Kumar and Culture Minister Mahesh Sharma will inaugurate the 'Mahotsav' on January 14 at 7.30 pm at the Jnana Jyothi Auditorium on Palace Road in Bengaluru.

Assam government recognises 1.9 crore as legal Indian citizens in first NRC draft

- The Assam government late in January, 2018 night published the much-awaited draft of the National Register of Citizens (NRC), recognising the names of 1.9 crore people out of a total of 3.29 crore applicants as legal citizens of India. The rest of the names of applicants continued to remain "under various stages of verification" and are likely to be recognised in the final draft.
- The NRC authorities had received applications from 68.27 lakh families comprising 3.29 crore individuals.
- About 1.39 crore cases continued to remain under examination, scrutiny or field verification, Sailesh said.

Nagaland declared as 'disturbed area' till June-end under AFSPA

- The entire Nagaland has been declared as "disturbed area" for six more months, till June-end, under the controversial AFSPA, which empowers security forces to conduct operations anywhere and arrest anyone without any prior notice.
- In a gazette notification, the Union Home Ministry said it is of the opinion that the area comprising the whole of Nagaland is in such a "disturbed and dangerous condition" that use of armed forces in aid of the civil power is necessary.

Health Ministry launches Allied and Health care Professional Database

- Aiming to make data repository robust, the Union Health Ministry in January, 2018 launched the Allied and Health care Professional Database which will help the government to track the number of professionals and streams of allied and health care professions in the country.
- According to the ministry, more than 3, 000 professionals have already registered on the portal during the testing phase.

Rajya Sabha completes entire Zero Hour agenda for first time

- The Rajya Sabha in January, 2018 made a record of sorts as it took up all the Zero Hour issues and special mentions listed in the agenda for that period, Chairman M. Venkaiah Naidu said. The first hour of every sitting of Parliament is generally reserved for the asking and answering of questions. Zero Hour is the immediately following the Question Hour has come to be known as "Zero Hour".
- It starts at around 12 noon (hence the name) and members can, with prior notice to the Speaker, raise issues of importance during this time. Typically, discussions on important Bills, the Budget, and other issues of national importance take place from 2pm onwards.
- Why is it called Zero Hour? While dictionary defines 'Zero Hour' as the "the critical moment" or "the moment of decision", in parliamentary parlance, it is referred as the time gap between the end of Question Hour and the beginning of the regular business. Zero Hour doesn't find a mention in the Rules of Procedure and hence it's considered an informal procedure for the members of Parliament to raise matters of serious importance.

India and Pakistan exchange 27th list of Nuclear Installations

- India and Pakistan on 1 January 2018 exchanged the lists of their nuclear installations under an agreement that aims to prevent both sides from attacking such facilities. This is the twenty-seventh consecutive exchange of such a list between the two countries.
- The exchange was done through diplomatic channels simultaneously at New Delhi and Islamabad.

Maneka Gandhi launches online portal 'NARI' for women empowerment

- Union Minister of Women & Child Development Maneka Sanjay Gandhi on 2 January 2018 inaugurated the online portal 'NARI' for women empowerment. NARI stands for 'National Repository of Information for Women'.
- The portal contains information about schemes being run by both Central as well as the States Governments.
- 'NARI' portal has been developed by the Union Ministry of Women & Child Development.

Arunachal Pradesh becomes second ODF state in Northeast

- The state of Arunachal Pradesh has become the second state in the Northeast, after Sikkim, to be declared Open Defecation Free.
- The feat was deemed completed after three remaining districts in the state - Upper Subansiri, Siang and Changlang - were declared Open Defecation Free (ODF) on 31 December 2017.
- In total, the state has 21 districts and it managed to achieve the feat much before the national deadline of 2 October 2019.
- The project undertaken under Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin) was bolstered by the state government's incentive of Rs 8000 per toilet.

India International Coffee Festival to be held in Bengaluru

- After a gap of four years, Bengaluru will host the seventh edition of India International Coffee Festival (IICF) in January 2018.
- This gains significance as India has bagged the chance to host World Coffee Conference of International Coffee Organisation (ICO) in 2020.

Famous Dhanu Jatra Concludes in Odisha

- Curtains were drawn on the famous Dhanu Jatra of Bargarh in Odisha, believed to be the largest open air theatre in the world, with the death of tyrannical king Kansa and coronation of Ugrasen in January, 2018.
- During the 11-day festival that kicked off on December 23, Bargarh town was made to resemble Mathura — the birthplace and homeland of Lord Krishna. The festival is based on Krishna Leela and Mathura Vijay.

Surajkund crafts fair 2018: Uttar Pradesh would be theme state

- Uttar Pradesh would be the theme state for the 32nd Surajkund International Crafts fair, beginning from the first week of February at Faridabad in Haryana.
- Besides participation of all states, about two dozen countries would also take part in the fair, Haryana Tourism Minister Ram Bilas Sharma said in January, 2018. He said the fair is aimed to preserve Indian folk traditions and cultural heritage.

Republic Day Parade to Have Record 10 Chief Guests as PM Invites ASEAN Leaders

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the nation in his final radio programme for 2017; ‘Mann Ki Baat’ and he ended the 30-minute speech with an announcement that this year’s Republic Day parade will have the ASEAN leaders as chief guests.
- He said the year 2017 was special for both ASEAN and India because the Southeast Asian bloc completed its 50 years of formation and the year also marked 25 years of India's partnership with the grouping.

Guests

Person	Nation
Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah	Brunei
Hun Sen	Cambodia
Joko Widodo	Indonesia
Thongloun Sisoulith	Laos
Najib Razak	Malaysia
Htin Kyaw	Myanmar
Rodrigo Roa Duterte	Philippines
Halimah Yacob	Singapore
Prayuth Chan-ocha	Thailand
Nguyễn Xuân Phúc	Vietnam

India, Sri Lanka to sign MoU on Traditional Systems of Medicine and Homoeopathy

- The Union Government is planning to sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Sri Lanka for cooperation in areas of traditional systems of medicine and homoeopathy.

The MoU aims to establish cooperation in the following areas:

- Promotion including the regulation of teaching, practice, drugs and drugless therapies, traditional medicine and homeopathy.
- Exchange of experts for the training of practitioners, paramedics, scientists, teaching professionals and students in traditional systems of medicine and homeopathy.

MoU signed between ofo, Pune Municipal Corporation

- ofo, a station-free app based bike-sharing platform signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) to support the Pune Cycle Plan - a comprehensive bicycle master plan for integrated city-wide cycle tracks across Pune.
- Prepared with support from the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Government of India, the Pune Cycle Plan sets out to create the necessary infrastructure for proper cycle tracks, a city-wide cycle network, seamless

public sharing bicycle schemes and development of cycle promotion activities for encouraging the use of this eco-friendly mode of transport.

BSF launches 'Operation Alert' along 200 km border to curb militant movement

- The Border Security Force (BSF) has launched "Operation Alert" along the over 200 kilometer long International Border (IB) in Jammu and Kashmir to curb the increasing movement of infiltrating militants from across the border.
- The BSF gave a military send off by organising Wreath-laying ceremony at Frontier headquarters in the honour of the late Head Constable Radha Pada Hazara, who was killed in sniper firing by Pakistan rangers along the IB in Samba sector yesterday.

Centre launches online tutorial to train doctors in detecting cancers early

- A first-of-its kind online tutorial, meant to train doctors in small towns and far-flung areas in early detection, prevention, palliation, rehabilitation and treatment of various cancers was launched by the Centre in January, 2018 in collaboration with the Tata Memorial Hospital, Mumbai.
- The course is intended for physicians, gynecologists, dentists and other healthcare professionals who are not oncologists, but can help in early detection and diagnosis of cancers. The online video lectures, as part of seven-week course, are also designed to update oncologists with the evidence based guidelines and skill for the management of cancer.

Ahmedabad surgeon uses robots in coronary surgery first time outside US

- Ahmedabad-based, internationally-reputed cardiologist Tejas Patel in January, 2018 said he has introduced vascular robotic technology for the first time anywhere outside the US to perform coronary angioplasty and stenting.
- Patel told reporters that the new technology, which he had implemented on 57 patients in a month, would make India a frontrunner in the modern healthcare system with almost zero failure rate in angioplasty and stenting.

Nation-wide cleanliness survey 'Swachh Survekshan' launched

- The nation-wide cleanliness survey 'Swachh Survekshan' was launched across India on 4 January 2018.
- The announcement for the same was made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 31 December 2017 while addressing the nation in the 39th edition of his monthly radio-address 'Mann Ki Baat'.
- The main objective of the survey is to evaluate the achievements in the cleanliness level in urban areas.
- Deemed as the world's biggest survey, it will be conducted in over 4,000 cities with a population of more than 40 crores.
- It will commence on 4 January and will run till 10 March 2018.

Union Cabinet approves setting up of AIIMS in Bilaspur

- The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 3 January 2018 approved the establishment of AIIMS in Bilaspur, Himachal Pradesh.
- The new AIIMS will be set up under Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY). The cost of the project is Rs 1351 crore.

Goa to host second edition of Bird Festival between Jan 12-14

- Goa will be hosting the second edition of the Bird Festival between January 12-14 at Cotigao Wildlife Sanctuary and Galjibag beach in Canacona in South Goa.
- The event is being hosted by the Forest department in association with Goa Tourism Development Corporation and Goa Bird Conservation Network.

Goa to be the new host for 3rd Science Film Festival

- A film festival based on Sci-Fi genre is about to start in a few days. The 3rd edition of Science Film Festival 2018 will be held in Goa this year.
- Participants can fill their online form on the official website to participate in the competition
- The 3rd edition of SCI-FI short film competition is open in two categories: films duration more than 5 minutes and films duration up to 5 minutes

Meghalaya CM inaugurates 40 mw Umtru hydro-electric project

- Meghalaya Chief Minister Mukul Sangma inaugurated the 40 mw Umtru hydro-electric project at Dehal in Ri Bhoi district.
- Inaugurating the Rs 629 crore project yesterday, he said the state has various potential areas for power generation and called on the local indigenous people to participate in the process of state building.

India's first National Park for differently abled people inaugurated in Hyderabad

- In a first of its kind, the authorities in Hyderabad are set to open a park meant for people with special needs. Dubbed as National Park for Special Needs, the park will have special equipment for children with a various physical disabilities.
- Spread over an acre of land at Nalgonda crossroads and developed with a cost of Rs 52.10 lakh, unique aspect of the park is that it has been divided into five blocks, with each block or section providing services to children and even adults who have various kinds of disabilities.

Delhi government launches mobile health van for homeless addicts

- Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia in January, 2018 flagged off a mobile health van to treat homeless drug addicts.
- Sisodia launched the van at a government night shelter in Yamuna Bazar area of north Delhi.
- The Deputy Chief Minister said the biggest challenge of homeless in the area and the prime inhibitor for them using night shelters is drug addiction.

Himachal CM announces 'Gudiya' helpline to fight crime against women

- In one of his key decisions after taking over as Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister, Jai Ram Thakur in January, 2018 announced setting up of 24x7 'Gudiya' helpline for safety of women. The helpline will work directly under the supervision of the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) and action will have to follow mandatorily within 48 hours.
- Gudiya is the nickname given to 16-year-old schoolgirl from Kotkhai who went missing on her way home from school at Mahasu and whose body was later found dumped in the forests two days later. After widespread protests, including violence in which the police station at Kotkhai was set ablaze, the case was referred to the CBI by Himachal Pradesh High Court.

Indian Navy & Cochin Port Trust enter into MoU

- The Indian Navy and Cochin Port Trust (CPT) have entered into an Memorandum of Understanding for utilising the Port's berthing facility at Mattancherry wharf for Naval ships.
- As per the MoU, Cochin Port's Q2 and Q3 berths at Mattacherry wharf, totaling 228 metre quay length, would be handed over to the Indian Navy for five years for berthing their ships.
- The Indian Navy had requested for an exclusive berthing facility in Cochin Port for berthing their ships during reconstruction period of their berths.

Haryana becomes first state to launch High Risk Pregnancy portal

- Haryana has achieved the distinction of becoming the first state in the country to launch High Risk Pregnancy (HRP) Portal. This portal not only helps in early identification of high-risk pregnant cases up to the grass-roots

level but also ensures their timely referral to the civil hospitals for further management and delivery by specialists.

- The Union ministry of health and family welfare and Niti Ayog have acknowledged the portal as a good practice to be implemented at the conference held in Delhi Friday

International kite festival begins in Gujarat

- The international kite festival which attracts kite flyers from across the country and the world, began in January, 2018 in Ahmedabad.
- The international kite festival was inaugurated by Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani at Sabarmati Riverfront. The Governor O.P. Kohli was also present on the occasion.
- Kite enthusiasts from across India and also foreign countries are participating in the week-long festival that is being celebrated across cities in Gujarat.

Centre sanctions construction of 14,000 bunkers along LoC, International Border

- 4,000 community and individual bunkers would be constructed along the Line of Control (LoC) and the International Border (IB) for border residents facing Pakistani shelling in Jammu division, officials said in January, 2018.
- While 7298 bunkers would be constructed along the LoC in the twin districts of Poonch and Rajouri, 7162 underground bunkers would be constructed along the IB in Jammu, Kathua and Samba districts, the officials said.
- The Centre recently sanctioned the construction of 14,460 individual and community bunkers at a cost of Rs 415.73 crore for people living along the LoC and IB.

Indian Railways to equip all 8,500 stations with Wi-Fi

- All railway stations -- nearly 8,500 across the country, including those in rural and remote areas -- will be equipped with Wi-Fi facilities at an estimated cost of Rs 700 crore (\$110 million).
- As part of the government's ambitious Digital India initiative, the national transporter has currently commissioned Wi-Fi services at 216 major stations enabling about seven million rail passengers to log on to the free Internet facility.

MHA ranks Coimbatore's R.S. Puram police station as No. 1 in the country

- The RS Puram police station (B-2) in the city won the ministry of home affairs' trophy for the best police station in the country, in the category of Smart police stations, in January, 2018.
- Director general of police TK Rajendran and station inspector T Jothi received the trophy from union home minister Rajnath Singh at the 'All India Conference of Director Generals/Inspector Generals of Police -2017' held at Takenpur in Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh.
- While Panjagutta police station in Telangana ranked in the second place, Gudumba police station in Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh nabbed the third place.

Govt releases AISHE 2016-17; no. of students enrolling for higher education up by 0.7%

- The number of students enrolling for higher education in India saw a marginal 0.7 per cent increase in 2016-17, according to a government survey released in January, 2018.
- Human Resource Development (HRD) Minister Prakash Javadekar released the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) for the year 2016-17 in New Delhi in January, 2018. It said the gross enrolment ratio (GER) in higher education had gone up 25.2 per cent in 2016-17 from 24.5 per cent in 2015-16.
- The country has set an aggressive target of achieving 30 per cent GER in higher education by 2020. GER is the total enrolment in higher education among the population in the age group of 18-23.
- According to the survey, the number of universities in the country rose to 864 last year as compared to 799 in 2015-16.

- Tamil Nadu had the highest GER in the country at 46.9 per cent. Bihar is at the bottom with 14.9 per cent of its youth in the age group of 18 to 23 enrolling for higher education.

In a first, ITBP to sponsor India tour for elderly citizens living in border areas

- In a major policy move, China frontier guarding force ITBP will sponsor India-wide excursion tours for senior citizens living in border areas of Arunachal Pradesh and Ladakh to build strong ties with the people, described as “strategic assets” by home minister Rajnath Singh.
- The paramilitary force has also decided to almost double, to a dozen in a year, the number of such regular educational tours for the children living in border areas.

India's second FTII to be set up in Arunachal Pradesh

- Arunachal Pradesh would get its first Film and Television Institute, being set up by the Union Government as part of tapping the potential of the Northeastern region, Union Minister Jitendra Singh said in January, 2018.
- This would be the second such one in the country. The first Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) was set up in Pune, an autonomous institute operating under the Information and Broadcasting Ministry.

Pratyush, India's first multi-petaflops supercomputer launched

- On 8 January India took a major step ahead in upgrading computing capacity in the area of weather forecasting and climate monitoring. Union Minister for Earth Sciences Dr. Harsh Vardhan inaugurated a supercomputer system at the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM) in Pune, taking its total high-performance computing (HPC) power to as high as 6.8 Petaflop.
- With this, India will now occupy the fourth position, next only to the United Kingdom, Japan and USA in terms of a dedicated capacity for HPC resources for weather and climate purposes.
- The new supercomputer has been named ‘Pratyush’.
- The supercomputer set up at a cost of Rs. 450 crore.

Bhopal Becomes The First Railway Station In India To Install Sanitary Napkin Vending Machine

- In a first, Bhopal’s main railway station—Bhopal Junction—has installed an automated sanitary pad dispenser. The machine, appropriately named Happy Nari, was set up on 1 January, 2018.
- Identifying the need to provide hygiene products for women at the station, the Railway Women Welfare Association of Bhopal joined hands with a local NGO Arushi.

18th All India Whips' Conference: Union Government proposes rolling out e-Sansad and e-Vidhan

- The 18th All India Whips’ Conference was inaugurated by Union Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Chemicals & Fertilizers Ananth Kumar on 8 January 2018 in Udaipur, Rajasthan. The conference will conclude on 9 January 2018.
- Rajasthan Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje Scindia was the Chief Guest for the Inaugural Session of the Conference.
- During this two-day conference, Kumar will consider rolling out e-Sansad in Parliament and e-Vidhan in State Legislatures with an aim to digitize and make their functioning paperless.

Indian Railways to deploy “Drone” cameras to enhance safety and efficiency in train operations

- The Indian Railways has decided to deploy “Drone” cameras (UAV/NETRA) for various railway activities especially maintenance of tracks, project monitoring and other railway infrastructure.
- All the zonal Railways have been directed to procure such cameras. This is in-line with Railways’ desire to use technology to enhance safety and efficiency in train operations.
- Under this initiative, West Central Railways with headquarter at Jabalpur (M.P) has become the first Zonal Railway to procure “Drone” cameras in Indian Railways.

Delhi govt launches common card for bus, metro rides

- Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in January, 2018 launched a common card for rides on public buses and the metro, terming it a big step in the city's transport sector.
- Delhi is the first city in the country to have a common mobility card, which can at present be used on 200 DTC and 50 cluster buses plying on different routes, apart from metro trains.
- The buses of DTC's Raj Ghat Depot-I and Rohini Depot-I plying on different routes and those of Cluster scheme's BBM depot-II will have the facility as of now.

BSES launches rooftop solar single-point for apartment complexes

- In an initiative to promote clean energy, BSES, one of Delhi's two electricity distribution companies (discoms), in January, 2018 launched the country's first solar rooftop consumer aggregation programme for residential buildings to provide the installations at a single point for the entire apartment complex.
- The sister discom BSES Rajdhani Power Ltd's (BRPL) "Solar City Initiative", designed to maximise rooftop solar power use in south and west Delhi, was launched at an event by Delhi Power Minister Satyendar Jain.

Centre releases Rs. 20 cr for Defence Innovation Centre in Coimbatore

- The Ministry of Defence has announced release of Rs. 20 crore to the Coimbatore District Small Industries' Association (Codissia) for setting up a Defence Innovation Centre.
- Making this announcement, Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said MSME units and start-ups engaged in manufacture of components for the defence sector could use the centre for conduct of tests and trials.

India's first customized online course for women entrepreneurs launched in IIM Bangalore

- The Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Bangalore in January, 2018 announced the launch of Women Start-up Programme (WSP) which will be India's first customized online and classroom initiative for aspiring female entrepreneurs.
- The programme launched by the institute's NS Raghavan Centre for Entrepreneurial Learning (NSRCEL).
- The programme is being jointly funded by finance company Goldman Sachs and Centre's Department of Science & Technology (DST).

Playing national anthem in cinema halls not mandatory: SC

- Recalling a 2016 order, the Supreme Court in January, 2018, January 9, 2018, said that playing National Anthem before screening movies is not mandatory.
- It also added that if a cinema hall decides to play the National Anthem before the screening, the patrons have to mandatorily stand up and show respect. The differently-abled are exempted from this rule, though.

Matunga, India's first station with all-woman staff, enters Limca Book of Records 2018

- The first all-women station in India, Matunga on Central Railway (CR), manned by a staff of 41 women, has entered the Limca Book of Records, an official spokesperson said in January, 2018.
- The unique initiative was taken by CR General Manager D.K. Sharma in July 2017 with the aim of empowering women, said CR spokesperson Sunil Udasi.
- Incidentally, Kulkarni holds the distinction of becoming the first woman assistant station manager to be recruited on the CR's Mumbai Division in 1992.
- Now, she and her all women staff handle the overall operations of the busy Matunga station with positive and encouraging results, said Udasi.

India and Saudi Arabia sign bilateral annual Haj 2018 Agreement

- India and Saudi Arabia on 7 January 2018 signed the bilateral annual Haj 2018 agreement, giving the green signal for India's decision to revive the option of sending Haj pilgrims through sea route also.
- The agreement was signed by Union Minister for Minority Affairs Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi and Haj and Umrah Minister of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, His Excellency Mohammad Saleh bin TaherBenten at Makkah.

UIDAI introduces 'Virtual ID' for Aadhaar to privacy

- UIDAI in January, 2018 introduced a new concept of 'Virtual ID' which Aadhaar-card holder can generate from its website and give for various purposes, including SIM verification, instead of sharing the actual 12-digit biometric ID.
- This will give the users the option of not sharing their Aadhaar number at the time of authentication.
- The Virtual ID, which would be a random 16-digit number, together with biometrics of the user would give any authorised agency like a mobile company, limited details like name, address and photograph, which are enough for any verification.
- The Virtual ID will be a temporary and revocable 16 digit random number mapped to a person's Aadhaar number and the Aadhaar-issuing body will start accepting it from March 1, 2018.
- From June 1, 2018, it will be compulsory for all agencies that undertake authentication to accept the Virtual ID from their users.

IIT establishes its first food testing lab in Kharagpur

- The Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT) has established its first food testing lab at its Kharagpur campus.
- The agricultural and food engineering department's Analytical Food Testing Laboratory received the National Accreditation Board for Calibration and Testing Laboratories (NABL) accreditation, which empowered the IIT Kharagpur to certify food items for their nutritional value and also check for adulteration.

India to sign pact with UK on illegal migrants

- India will sign an MoU with the United Kingdom to enable the return of illegal Indian migrants within a month of their detection by authorities, an official said in January, 2018.
- The Memorandum of Understanding comes ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's proposed visit to the UK in March.
- The British authorities will first identify the illegal migrants, inform the Indian authorities, followed by police verification back home.

Cabinet approves India-Canada MoU for cooperation in Science & Technology

- The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in January, 2018, approved a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Canada for cooperation in the field of Science & Technology.
- The MoU will provide a mechanism and help foster scientific cooperation between R&D and academic institutions of the two countries.

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