

Monthly Current Affairs PDF - March 2019

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MONTHLY CURRENT AFFAIRS PDF – MARCH 2019

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BANKING CURRENT AFFAIRS

Rs 7,951 crore fraud unfolds at State Bank of India during Apr-Dec

- Multi-crore rupee fraud has unfolded at the **State Bank of India (SBI)** after the Mumbai-headquartered PSU banking giant informed about **the fraudulent cases** occurred in the nine months from April to December 2018.
- According to PTI report, State Bank of India, in a reply to **RTI**, has said that about **1,885 cases** of cheating have erupted in the first nine months of the financial year 2018-2019.

Bank of Baroda Set To Develop Digital Agri Platform 'Baroda Kisan'

- Bank of Baroda has signed an **MoU with agriculture services companies** to develop an **agriculture digital platform**, Baroda Kisan, which will provide solutions for agricultural requirements.
- BoB has signed the agreement with **Skymet Weather Services**, Weather Risk Management Services, BigHaat, Agrostar India, EM3 Agri Services, and Poorti Agri Services.
- The platform intends to make a holistic approach towards solving agricultural plights by means of providing reliable and customized information, inputs for use, the convenience of renting farm equipment, and market linkage for sale of agriculture produce.

ADB to invest USD 50 mn in solar project developer Avaada

- Asian Development Bank (ADB) has inked an **agreement to invest USD 50 million** in solar energy project developer **Avaada Energy Pvt Ltd** to help the company scale up rapidly.
- The investment will come equally from ADB's Ordinary Capital Resources and **Leading Asia's Private Infrastructure Fund (LEAP)**.
- LEAP is a funding arrangement provided by Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) which is administered by ADB.

HDFC Bank crosses Rs. 6 trillion market capital

- India's most valued lender HDFC Bank Ltd **crossed the Rs. 6 trillion market capitalisation** for the first time, making it only the country's third firm to achieve the milestone.
- Tata Consultancy Services Ltd (TCS) and Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) are the other two companies that crossed the market capitalisation of Rs. 6 trillion. RIL remained the most-valued company with a market value of **Rs. 8.54 trillion**, followed by TCS with a market value of **Rs. 7.51 trillion**.

Forex reserve swells by over \$3.6 billion to \$405.6 billion

- India's foreign exchange reserves surged by a **whopping \$3.602 billion to \$405.638 billion in the week to March 15**, driven by rise in foreign currency assets,
- Forex reserves had increased by \$258.8 million to \$402.035 billion in the previous week.

RBI to reform WMA system for states

- Reserve Bank of India has proposed a rule-based approach in **fixing new Ways and Means limits for the state governments**, replacing the previous expenditure-based system.
- It will set up a panel to recommend parameters of the new system which is aimed at **preventing automatic monetisation of deficits**.

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- The central bank which acts as debt manager for state governments provides short-term loan to them to **bridge temporary liquidity mismatches**. The temporary loan facility is called Ways and Means Advances.

Indian Bank – carrying “Your Own Bank” tag with utmost pride!

- Indian Bank, with over 9400 touch points across the country, has crossed **the milestone business level of Rs. 4.00 lakh crore**.
- The Bank has featured in the most trusted brands in the Public Sector Bank category and has been acknowledged as **India's Best Bank**.
- It has many 'Firsts' to its credit when it comes to merging banking and technology for better, safer and more convenient solutions. The Bank was the first to migrate from **Total Bank Computerization (TBC) to 100% Core Banking Solutions (CBS)**. Installing the first ATM by any public sector bank in 1989, installing the first drive-in ATM of the country during 1990, introducing the first ever voice-guided biometric ATM in 2007 to name a few.
- The Bank launched an industry-first mobile app to block and manage limits of debit card and credit card, the **'IB Smart Remote'**. Because of these factors, carrying the tag 'Your Own Bank', the Bank is looked upon with pride in India.
- On 9th March 2019, **the Bank celebrated _International Women's Day_ and felicitated twelve women achievers. On that day, the Bank also launched _IB- Surabhi_**, a Savings bank Account exclusively for women.

HDFC Bank plans to acquire 9% stake in CSC E-Governance for 14.6 crore

- Private sector lender HDFC Bank will buy a **9.11 per cent stake in CSC E-Governance Services**. The acquisition, for Rs. 14.62 crore, which HDFC Bank termed as a —strategic investment, will be on cash basis.
- HDFC Bank has executed an agreement for **subscribing to 37,993 equity shares of face value of Rs. 1,000** each to be issued by CSC E-Governance Services India Limited at Rs. 3,848 per equity share

Hitachi arm & SBI to roll out digital payments platform

- State Bank of India (SBI) and Hitachi Payment Services Pvt Ltd, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Hitachi Ltd has launched **their merchant-acquiring joint venture, SBI Payment Services Pvt Ltd (SBIPSPL) in Mumbai** for establishing a digital payments platform for India and other countries in the region.
- The joint venture (SBI has a 74 percent stake, and the balance is with Hitachi Payment Services) will facilitate **expansion of the digital payments landscape** in India via its digital payments platform.

ADB to provide USD 26 mn to improve Dibrugarh's drainage

- The Asian Development Bank (ADB) will provide a USD 26-million loan as additional financing for improving drainage infrastructure in **Dibrugarh town of Assam** under the ongoing Assam Urban Infrastructure Investment Program.
- An agreement in this regard was signed between **the ADB and the government**

RBI imposes Rs 2-cr penalty on PNB for non-compliance of SWIFT operations

- The RBI has slapped a **penalty of Rs 2 crore on Punjab National Bank (PNB)** for non-compliance of regulatory directions with regard to SWIFT operations, the state-run lender.
- SWIFT is a global messaging software used for transactions by financial entities. The massive Rs 14,000-crore fraud perpetrated **by billionaire jeweller Nirav Modi and his uncle Mehul Choksi at the PNB** was a case of misuse of this messaging software.

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ICICI Lombard partners with Mobikwik for Cyber Insurance Cover

- ICICI Lombard General Insurance, a leading non-life insurance company, has entered into a strategic **partnership with MobiKwik**, a digital financial services platform, to provide cyber insurance cover for the latter's mobile wallet users.
- The relationship aims to provide protection against unauthorised and **fraudulent transactions online**, across bank accounts, debit/credit cards and mobile wallets. The cyber-insurance can be availed digitally through the app at only Rs. 99 per month and with a sum insured of Rs. 50,000.
- The policy's validity is only for one month. MobiKwik users can enroll under this insurance product at the time of loading money into their wallet or in a standalone format.

State Bank of India to join SWIFT's global payment interface

- State Bank of India will soon sign up with the **Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Transactions' (SWIFT) Global Payment Interface (GPI)** which is set to make cross-border transactions much more secure and transparent
- India's largest lender will join 11 of its counterpart banks that will have subscribed to this payments platform
- SWIFT gpi is being used by **3500 banks across the globe carrying transactions** worth over \$300 billion daily.
- The gpi-enabled banks can also opt for an additional feature called **Payment Control Service (PCS)** where in case of any irregularities during the payments' transaction such as higher-than-usual fund size or uncommon transaction timeframe, the channel can block the transaction and notify the bank

DBS to operate as wholly-owned subsidiary in India from March 1

- The RBI approved merger of Singapore-based DBS Bank's **Indian unit with its wholly owned local subsidiary**, DBS Bank India. The merger will be effective from March 1.
- The wholly-owned subsidiary model allows foreign lenders to be treated as a local bank, removing certain restrictions they face such as those on opening new branches.

PNB to sell part stake in housing finance arm for Rs 1,852 crore

- State-run Punjab National Bank (PNB) is selling part of its stake in PNB Housing Finance **to global private equity firm General Atlantic Group and alternative investment firm Varde Partners for Rs 1,851.60 crore.**
- After the transaction, PNB will continue to hold a 19.78 per cent stake in the housing finance arm, and will remain the promoter and strategic shareholder of the company, the lender informed the stock exchanges As of December 31, 2018, PNB held 32.79 per cent in PNB Housing Finance.

Bandhan Bank gets RBI approval for acquisition of Gruh Finance

- Bandhan Bank has received **no objection from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) for the proposed acquisition of Gruh Finance.** Gruh Finance, the affordable housing finance arm of HDFC Ltd, was taken over in January by Kolkata-based Bandhan Bank in a share-swap deal.
- As part of the deal, Bandhan Bank has **to transfer 14.9 per cent stake** to HDFC for merging Gruh with itself. The deal will allow Bandhan Bank's promoter Bandhan Financial Holdings to come down to about 61 per cent from about 82 per cent, and HDFC to hold around 15 per cent in the merged entity from about 57 per cent in Gruh.

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- The swap ratio for the amalgamation will be 568 shares of Bandhan Bank for every 1,000 shares of Gruh Finance.

Govt and ADB sign US\$ 926 million loan agreement for Mumbai Metro Rail Project

- The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Government of India signed a \$926 Million Loan Agreement to **operationalize two lines for the Mumbai Metro Rail System that will ease the distress of millions of commuters** each day and help provide a cleaner, less congested city.
- The Single Largest Infrastructure Project Loan in ADB history approved by the ADB Board on 26 February 2019 - will help fund lines 2A (Dahisar to D.N. Nagar), 2B (D.N. Nagar-Bandra-Mandale), and 7 (Dahisar [East] to Andheri [East]), totaling about 58 kilometers (km).
- The project will fund 63 six-car trains, signaling and safety systems, and help establish a new dedicated metro operations organization to manage the entire metro network in Mumbai. The Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) will implement the project.

SBI Links Interest On Most Savings Account Deposits To RBI Repo Rate

- State Bank of India has become the first domestic bank to link the interest rate it **offers on savings account deposits to an external benchmark** — the Reserve Bank of India's repo rate.
- By doing so, the bank will effectively link all loan rates to an **external benchmark either directly or indirectly, thereby attempting to speed up the transmission** of any changes in the benchmark monetary policy rate to depositors and borrowers

SBI announced the following changes:

- Savings accounts with deposits above Rs 1 lakh would be priced at 2.75% below the prevailing repo rate of 6.25%. The effective rate works out to be 3.5%, which is unchanged from the prevailing rate on savings accounts.
- Cash credit accounts and overdraft facilities over Rs 1 lakh would be priced at 2.25% over the repo rate. At the prevailing repo rate of 6.25%, this would mean a floor price of 8.5%.
- For all other floating rate products, including retail and corporate loans, the impact of SBI's decision to link savings account deposit rates to the repo rate will be felt indirectly. These loans will continue to be linked to the 1-year MCLR (marginal cost lending rate).
- For savings account holders with balances up to Rs 1 lakh and borrowers with cash credit and overdraft limits up to Rs 1 lakh, interest rates will remain fixed.

Karur Vysya Bank raises Rs. 487 crore through private placement of Tier II bonds

- Karur Vysya Bank announced **that the Capital Raising Committee of the Board has allotted 48,700 Basel III compliant** unsecured, redeemable, non-convertible Tier II Bonds in the nature of debentures of Rs 1 lakh each aggregating Rs 487 crore on private placement basis.

SBI Launched Doorstep Banking Service For Senior Citizens Over 70

- State Bank of India (SBI) has launched **doorstep banking service for senior citizens over 70 years of age and differently-abled customers**. Eligible customers can avail this service at a nominal fee of 100 rupees per transaction for financial transactions and 60 rupees for non-financial transactions.
- Doorstep banking services are available to KYC- compliant account holders, with a valid mobile number registered with the bank and residing within 5 kilometers radius from their home branch. This service will not be available for accounts operated jointly, minor accounts, and accounts of non-personal nature.

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RBI to swap \$5 billion with banks to aid system liquidity

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) offered a **\$5-billion swap facility to banks to aid liquidity** before the end of the financial year.
- The auction will happen on March 26 and **the buy/sell swap** will run up to March 28, 2022, or for a three-year duration.
- The system liquidity is dry to the tune of little **more than Rs 1 trillion**, but it will be acute in the coming days as advanced tax outflow (estimated at Rs 1.5 trillion) and the goods and services tax (GST), which is estimated at Rs 1 trillion, will suck out liquidity from the system.

Corporation Bank celebrates 114th Foundation Day

- Corporation Bank observed **its 114th Foundation Day**. The bank started operating on March 12, 1906, in Udupi under the leadership of Khan Bahadur Haji Abdullah Haji Kasim Saheb Bahadur with a first day business of Rs. 38, 13 Annas and two Paise. To commemorate the 114th Foundation Day, 114 CSR activities were undertaken by the bank across the country.
- Bank Managing Director and CEO P.V. Bharathi, Executive Directors Gopal Murli Bhagat and Birupaksha Mishra and other senior officials were present at the occasion

Paytm Payments Bank launches mobile banking app

- The mobile app will enable **customers to check their balances, raise request for physical debits cards, access digital debit cards, etc.**, with 24x7 help and support.
- The new app is latest addition to PPB's digital banking inclusion effort of a large part of Indian customers. Launched in May 2017, the bank **has enrolled over 43 Million** saving bank customers and has issued over 2 Million physical debit cards and virtual debit card with the inbuilt security feature of single click enabling /disabling.
- Currently, the number of digital transactions through PPBL debit cards are twice than that of cash transactions.

India Signs Loan Agreement with the World Bank for USD 25.2 Million

- The Government of India, **the State Government of Chhattisgarh and the World Bank signed a \$25.2 Million Loan Agreement** to support the State's Reforms in Expenditure Management. This support will cover Expenditure Planning, Investment Management, Budget Execution, Public Procurement, and Accountability.
- The Chhattisgarh Public Financial Management and Accountability Program, which is **the First Bank-Financed State-Level Project in Chhattisgarh** in nearly a decade, will also help the State strengthen its Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) and Tax Administration Systems.

RBI identifies SBI, ICICI and HDFC Bank as Domestic Systemically Important Banks (D-SIBs)

- The Reserve Bank of India has released **the list of Domestic Systemically Important Banks (D-SIBs)**. The Reserve Bank had issued the Framework for dealing with D-SIBs in July 22, 2014.
- Domestic Systemically Important Banks are those banks which if fails would have a significant impact on the economy.
- RBI has a various set of criteria to add a bank to this list. The basic condition is that a bank size should be more than 2% of Indian GDP.

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- The D-SIBs banks are classified into 5 buckets. Bucket 1, Bucket 2, Bucket 3, Bucket 4 and Bucket 5. With Bucket 5 being the most important followed by rest in decreasing order.
- State Bank of India is in Bucket 3, while HDFC and ICICI Bank both are in Bucket 1. Rest all buckets are empty. These three banks are in the D-SIBs list since Sep 04, 2017. No new bank has been added after the revised list is released on March 14, 2019

SBI Launches Cardless ATM Withdrawal With YONO Cash

- The State Bank of India has launched a new service called '**YONO Cash**' for its customers using which customers can withdraw money from ATMs **without using debit cards**.
- This facility is available over 16,500 of its ATMs through the **You Only Need One (YONO)**, mobile app platform for the first time in the country. The ATMs enabled for this service will be called as YONO Cash Point.

RBI categorises IDBI as private bank

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has re-categorised **IDBI Bank as a private sector lender**.
- This comes after **LIC acquired a 51% stake in the bank** on January 21, becoming its majority shareholder.
- IDBI Bank has been under the RBI's Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) framework which bans it from activities including corporate lending and branch expansion.
- The bank's gross non-performing assets (NPAs) shot up to 29.67 per cent of gross advances as at December 31, 2018 against 24.72 per cent in the year-ago period.

India signs loan agreement with World Bank Uttarakhand Disaster Recovery Project

- India has signed a loan agreement with the **World Bank for 96 Million US dollars for additional financing of Uttarakhand Disaster Recovery Project**.
- Finance Ministry in a release stated the World Bank has been supporting the State Government since 2014 to restore housing and rural connectivity and to build the resilience of communities.

Schemes Interest Rates

Savings Deposit : 4%

Senior Citizen Savings Scheme (SCSS) : 8.7%

Public Provident Fund Account (PPF) : 8.0%

National Savings Certificates (NSC) : 8.0%

Kisan Vikas Patra (KVP) : 7.7% (maturity- 112 months)

Sukanya Samriddhi Accounts : 8.5%

RBI to infuse Rs 12,500 crore via OMOs

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said it would **infuse Rs 12,500 crore into the system through open market operations**.
- Based on an assessment of prevailing liquidity conditions and also of the durable liquidity needs going forward, the RBI has decided to conduct purchase of the government securities under open market operations (OMOs) for Rs 12,500 crore.
- The purchase will happen through multi-security auction using the multiple price method. There is an overall aggregate ceiling of Rs 12,500 crore for all the securities in the basket put together. There is no security-wise notified amount.

Axis Bank opens its 4,000th branch in Pune

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- The country's 3rd largest private bank, Axis Bank, has **opened its 4,000th branch** in the country in **Pune** at Eon, Kharadi. The new branch was inaugurated by Amitabh Chaudhry, Managing Director and CEO, Axis Bank, and Ravi Narayanan, President and Head Branch Banking, Axis Bank.
- The bank has added 297 branches in the current fiscal across India

White label ATM allowed to get Source cash directly from RBI

- The Reserve Bank relaxed norms for white label ATM (WLA) operators and allowed them **to buy wholesale cash directly from the central bank** to enhance the viability of white-label ATMs (WLAs)
- It has been decided to allow them to buy wholesale cash, above a **threshold of 1 lakh** pieces (and in multiples thereof) of any denomination, directly from the Reserve Bank and currency chests against full payment

RBI imposes Rs 8 crore fine on 3 banks for non-compliance in Swift operations

- The Reserve Bank of India has imposed a total monetary **fine of Rs 8 crore on three banks - Karnataka BankNSE 0.88 %, United Bank of India and Karur Vysya BankNSE -0.42 % - for non-compliance of directions on Swift messaging software.**
- While the RBI imposed a Rs 4 crore fine on Karnataka Bank, United Bank is facing a penalty of Rs 3 crore. The regulator has levied Rs one crore fine on Karur Vysya Bank.
- The RBI has levied an aggregate penalty of Rs 40 million on the bank for delayed implementation of four of the Swift related operational controls

SBI raises Rs 1,251 cr by issuing Basel III-compliant bonds

- The country's largest lender State Bank of India (SBI) has **raised Rs 1,251.30 crore by issuing Basel III-compliant bonds.**
- "The Committee of Directors for Capital Raising at its meeting deliberated and accorded **approval to allot 12,513** non-convertible, taxable, perpetual, subordinated, unsecured Basel III-compliant additional tier-I bonds, for inclusion in additional tier-I capital of the bank...aggregating to Rs 1,251.30 crore

RBI forms task force to see overseas Rupee

- A central bank group seeking to enhance **India's appeal for rupee traders would study the effects of overseas deals on the pricing of the local unit** as part of the broader objective to move the currency market nerve-centre back home from overseas.
- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) task force would likely also suggest policy measures to strengthen the local markets, helping avoid wild swings in exchange rates for the rupee.

India, World Bank And Representatives Of 5 States Signed Loan Agreement For DRIP

- The World Bank, the Government of India and representatives of 5 States of Government of India and Implementing Agencies signed in New Delhi **the Loan Agreement for Additional Financing of \$137 Million for the Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Project (DRIP).**
- This agreement will help rehabilitate and modernize over 220 selected large dams in the States of Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Tamil Nadu and Uttarakhand. The \$137 Million Loan from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), has a 3-year grace period, and a final maturity of 16 years.

United Bank, HDFC Life Sign Bancassurance Deal

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- **United Bank of India** has signed a bancassurance deal with **private life insurer HDFC Life Insurance Company**. Through this partnership, United Bank's customers will be able to take advantage of HDFC Life's expertise in life insurance products, distribution and customer service.
- United Bank has a strong presence in rural and semi-urban areas, with over 2,000 branches and offices, while HDFC Life is India's largest non-bank-promoted private life insurer.

RBI, Bank of Japan Sign Bilateral Swap Arrangement

- Reserve Bank of India and Bank of Japan have signed a **Bilateral Swap Arrangement (BSA)**. The BSA was negotiated between India and Japan during the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Tokyo in October 2018. The BSA provides for India to access 75 billion US dollars whereas the earlier BSA had provided for 50 billion dollars.
- The BSA was approved by the Union Cabinet in January. India can access the agreed amount of 75 billion dollars for its domestic currency, for the purpose of maintaining an appropriate level of balance of payments or short-term liquidity.

IDBI Bank receives nod to handle import, exports transactions with Iran

- The IDBI has received government **nod to handle import and export transactions** with Iran, a move which would help in promoting two-way trade amid US sanctions on the Persian Gulf nation
- IDBI Bank has been **identified to route the payments**. UCO Bank had in the previous round of sanctions handled rupee payments. Iran is India's third-largest oil supplier after Iraq and Saudi Arabia.
- It was India's second biggest supplier of crude oil after Saudi Arabia. Bilateral trade between India and Iran increased to USD 13.8 billion in 2017- 18 from USD 12.9 billion in the previous fiscal. However, India's exports were only worth USD 2.5 billion to that country.

Government To Infuse Rs 5,042 crore Into Bank of Baroda

- The Finance Ministry has decided to **infuse Rs 5,042 crore into state-owned Bank of Baroda (BoB)** ahead of the merger of two other public sector lenders Dena Bank and Vijaya Bank with BoB. The merger of Dena Bank and Vijaya Bank with BoB would be effective from April 1.

FINANCE AND ECONOMY

Hyundai and Kia to invest \$300 million in Ola, focus on smart mobility solutions

- Hyundai Motor Group and Kia Motors Corporation announced a strategic partnership to invest 300 million dollars (about Rs 2,000 crore) in ride-hailing platform Ola for providing smart mobility solutions.
- It will be Hyundai's and Kia's biggest combined investment to date.
- The agreement will see the three companies extensively collaborate on developing unique fleet and mobility solutions, build India-specific electric vehicles and infrastructure, as well as nurture opportunities for driver partners with customised vehicles on the Ola platform.

GST collection drops to Rs 97,247 cr in Feb

- GST collections in February dropped to Rs 97,247 crore in February from Rs 1.02 lakh crore in the previous month, the Finance Ministry.
- The number of sales return or GSTR-3B filed for the month of January up to February 28, 2019 is 73.48 lakh.

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- "The total gross GST revenue collected in February 2019 is Rs 97,247 crore of which Central GST is Rs 17,626 crore, State GST (SGST) is Rs 24,192 crore, Integrated GST (IGST) is Rs 46,953 crore and Cess is Rs 8,476 crore,"

Tata Communications partners with China Telecom for IoT devices

- Tata Communications announced that it is working with China Telecom Global to launch Internet of Things (IoT) service in the Chinese market
- The partnership will allow companies to deploy and manage IoT devices easily and cost-effectively within China and internationally across multiple industries, including consumer and industrial electronics manufacturing, automotive, transport and logistics
- China Telecom Global and Tata Communications will cooperate to support global IoT opportunities.
- The Tata Communications MOVE service leverages the company's relationships with more than 600 mobile network operators worldwide.
- Through this partnership, China Telecom Global also provides Tata Communications with connectivity for Mainland China, Hong Kong and Macau.

Government extends IGST, compensation cess exemption till March 2020

- The directorate general of foreign trade (DGFT) has extended integrated GST (IGST) and compensation cess exemptions for goods procurement under advance authorisation scheme, export oriented unit (EOU) scheme and export promotion capital goods (EPCG) scheme of foreign trade policy 2015-20 to 31 March 2020.
- This decision is aimed at giving relief to exporters as they do not have to pay IGST at initial point itself. In the GST regime, exporters have to pay the indirect tax and then seek refund, which is cumbersome process.

Fitch cuts India GDP growth forecast for FY20 to 6.8% from previous 7%

- Fitch Ratings Friday cut India's economic growth forecast for the next financial year starting April 1, to 6.8 per cent from its previous estimate of 7 per cent, on weaker than expected momentum in the economy.
- While we have cut our growth forecasts for the next fiscal year (FY20, ending in March 2020) on weaker-than-expected momentum, we still see Indian GDP growth to hold up reasonably well, at 6.8 per cent, followed by 7.1 per cent in FY21,"

OECD cuts global growth forecast over trade, Brexit uncertainty.

- Trade tensions and political uncertainty including Brexit are weighing on the world's economy, the OECD warned Wednesday as it again cut its 2019 forecast for global economic growth.
- The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development lowered its forecast to 3.3 per cent for this year, down from the 3.5 per cent it predicted in November, which was itself a downgrade from a previous 3.7 per cent.

Sebi lifts foreign investment cap in corporate bonds:

- Markets regulator Sebi on Tuesday withdrew the 20 per cent limit on investments by Foreign Portfolio Investors in corporate bonds of an entity.
- In a notification, the regulator said the restriction is being withdrawn in accordance with a circular issued by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

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- In June last year, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) had mandated that no Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) shall have an exposure of more than 20 per cent of its corporate bond portfolio to a single corporate.

NSE subsidiary buys cybersecurity company Aujas for undisclosed sum:

- NSEIT, a wholly-owned subsidiary of National Stock Exchange of India (NSE) has acquired Aujas Networks, a cybersecurity firm whose customers include Japanese financial services group Mitsubishi UFJ and a domestic national identity programme. Financial terms of the private transaction were not disclosed.
- NSEIT which provides IT services said the acquisition will help it to strengthen its cybersecurity offerings.
- The firm would also help to scale the services and capabilities Aujas which will continue to run as a separate entity. It has 400 skilled cybersecurity professionals and over 390 customers globally.

India's April-February fiscal deficit at 134% of FY target: Govt data

- The country's fiscal deficit touched 134.2 per cent of the full-year revised budgeted estimate at the end of February 2019, mainly due to tepid growth in revenue collections,
- In absolute terms, the fiscal deficit for April-February 2018-19 was Rs 8.51 lakh crore as against the revised estimate (RE) of Rs 6.34 trillion for the entire year, according to Controller General of Accounts (CGA) data.

NATIONAL CURRENT AFFAIRS

Tribal Affairs Minister launched MSP for Minor Forest Products:

- The Union Tribal Affairs Minister Jual Oram launched the revised MSP for MFP for the welfare of Tribals at the National Workshop organized by TRIFED under Ministry of Tribal Affairs.
- Minimum Support Price Scheme (MSP) for Minor Forest Produce (MFP) is a centrally-sponsored scheme aimed to ensure fair and remunerative price to MFP gatherers.
- The scheme is officially known as 'Mechanism for marketing of Minor Forest Produce (MFP) through Minimum Support Price (MSP) and development of value chain for MFP' was planned as a social safety initiative for MFP gatherers.

Karnataka to launch water conservation scheme today:

- A water conservation scheme 'Jal Amrutha' was launched by Karnataka chief minister H D Kumaraswamy, in Bengaluru. A function was organized by the Rural Development and Panchayat Raj department at Dr. B R Ambedkar Bhavan in Bengaluru. The state government declared 2019 as the Year of Water.

Google launches 'Bolo' to tutor children to read Hindi, English:

- Google unveiled speech-based 'Bolo' app aimed at rural children, to teach them how to read in English and Hindi. The app is aimed at bridging learning gap in education and is available on Google play store in India. The app, which uses Google's speech recognition and text-to-speech technology and features an animated character 'Diya'. It is a freeto- use app first available in India. It is designed to be work even in offline.

Irani launches scheme for development of knitwear sector:

- Union Minister Smriti Irani Thursday launched a scheme for development of knitting and knitwear sector under PowerTex India, which will be in operation upto March 31, 2020. The Ministry has approved combined SFC (Standing Finance Component) of PowerTex India Scheme and Knitwear Scheme with an outlay of Rs 487.07 crore.

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Government brings transport scheme to boost agriculture exports; to reimburse freight cost through DBT:

- The government introduced a scheme for providing financial assistance for transport and marketing of agriculture products with a view to boosting export of farm commodities to certain countries in Europe and North America.
- Under the Transport and Marketing Assistance (TMA) scheme, the government would reimburse a certain portion of freight charges and provide assistance for marketing of agricultural produce. The scheme covers freight and marketing assistance for export by air as well as by sea.

Aviva Life Insurance launches Wings to empower women at the workplace:

- Aviva Life Insurance has announced the launch of 'Wings', a specially designed mentorship program to empower the female workforce, said a company statement issued today. The program is an initiative of the SHE division of the company, for mentoring all the women employees.
- SHE was conceptualised in 2016 by Aviva India's Women Network, an active community of socially enabled women who take up the charge of addressing causes in the interest of women empowerment. The new initiative has been aimed to empower the women in Aviva to fulfil their professional and personal goals.
- An effective practice of mentoring at the workplace helps women ideate about what they will become, giving them a clearer picture of their future and their growth prospects.

Cabinet approves 'Pradhan Mantri JI-VAN yojana' for financial support to Integrated Bioethanol Projects:

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi approved the 'Pradhan Mantri Jai Indhan- Vatavaran Anukool fasal awashesh Nivaran (JI-VAN) Yojana' for providing financial support to the Integrated Bioethanol Projects.
- The scheme aims to incentivise 2G Ethanol sector and support the industry by creating a suitable ecosystem for setting up commercial projects and increasing Research & Development in this area.
- The Pradhan Mantri JI-VAN Yojana will be supported with the total financial outlay of Rs 1969.50 crore for the period 2018-19 to 2023-24.

Tripura government launched Notun Disha initiative:

- The government of Tripura announced 'Notun Disha' (New Direction) for assessing the academic level of students in classes III-VIII and then improving their current level. It was launched by state Education Minister Ratan Lal Nath.
- The Notun Disha is a one-month project to provide training to teachers. Training will be provided by NGOs and educational institutions to 800 teachers. In that initiative the state government has decided to distribute laptops to 800 school teachers to assess the level of students' development in different disciplines.

'i-help' initiative launched in Assam:

- The 'i-help' initiative to promote digital electoral literacy in Assam launched in view of the forthcoming Lok Sabha polls. It is a joint initiative of the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) and Common Service Centres (CSC) in Assam

Gram Samridhi Yojana: New scheme to help unorganised food processing sector:

- India's food processing ministry is working on a new scheme — Gram Samridhi Yojana — to bolster the unorganised food processing sector concentrated in rural areas, an official said. About 66% of unorganised food processing units are in rural areas and of these, 80% were family run.

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- The Rs 3,000 crore scheme funded by the World Bank and the centre will help cottage industry, farmer producers' organisation and individual food processors to increase capacity, upgrade technology besides skill improvement, entrepreneurship development and strengthening the farm-to-market supply chain.

IRCTC launches its own payment aggregator system called IRCTC iPay:

- Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC), has launched its own payment aggregator system called "IRCTC iPay". With the launch of IRCTC iPay, passengers will not need any third-party platforms as all payment options like credit card, debit card, UPI – Unified Payment Interface, International Card are integrated into the platform. The back-end support will be provided by Delhi based MMAD communications, which is IRCTC's technology partner.

Mobile app developed by IIPHG, PHFI to combat exam pressure:

- A mobile application to cope with exam related stress and anxiety for students and their parents has been developed by Indian Institute of Public Health Gandhinagar, Gujarat, (IIPHG) in collaboration with National Mental Health Program, Department of Health and Family Welfare, Government of Gujarat. The mobile application is called 'Conquer Exam, Be a Warrior.'

Khattar announces scheme for farmers, families having income less than Rs 15k per month:

- Mukhyamantri Parivar Samman Nidhi' scheme was launched by Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar in Chandigarh. It is primarily meant for farmers of the state who cultivate on land with areas up to 5 acres and the families with an income of less than Rs. 15,000 per month. The scheme would provide a sum of Rs. 6,000 yearly.

Bharat Electronics launches SWAGAT - Automatic Fare Collection Gating System:

- Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL), a defence public sector undertaking, presented SWAGAT - the Automatic Fare Collection Gating System.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the system on Monday as part of the inaugural of Phase I of the Ahmedabad Metro.
- SWAGAT is an initiative steered by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) in collaboration with BEL and Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (CDAC) with the support of Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC), National Payment Corporation of India (NPCI) and State Bank of India (SBI).

CBSE launches new 'Shiksha Vani' app to upload podcast on Class 10, 12 exam evaluation process:

- The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) launched a new podcast app 'Shiksha Vani' to upload podcast on Class 10, 12 exam evaluation process. This app will disseminate crucial information to students and parents in a timely manner. Its first episode, on the evaluation process of Class 10 and 12 board examinations, has been released on the platform.
- This episode is helpful for all the students, as when the examinations proceed, the episode helps students understand how their completed papers will be evaluated.

STATE CURRENT AFFAIRS

Himachal Pradesh: EC officials reach world's highest polling station:

- Tashigang, a small Himachal Pradesh village at an altitude of 15,256 feet, is now the highest polling station in the world. Located around 29 km from the India-China border, this polling station covers two villages of

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Tashigang and Gete. As per the revised electoral rolls, the two villages have 48 voters, of which 30 are men and 18 women.

MP's Cong govt issues ordinance to give 27 pc quota to OBCs:

- The Madhya Pradesh government Saturday issued an ordinance raising reservation for Other Backward Classes (OBC) to 27 per cent from the present 14 per cent.

Assam government launched "Rice Knowledge Park" under APART:

- Rice Knowledge Bank-Assam is an agriculture webportal. It is dedicated to magnifying knowledge on rice production technologies and techniques, best production practices and state agriculture facts. It was launched under the World Bank funded project – Agri-business and Rural Transformation (APART).
- This portal is the efforts of Assam Rural Infrastructure and Agricultural Services Society (ARIAS), Assam Agricultural University (AAU) with technical assistance from the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI).

NTPC to set up 100 MW floating solar power project in T'gana:

- State-owned NTPC Limited is setting up a 100 mw Floating Solar Photo Voltaic (PV) Solar Project at Ramagundam in Telangana.

CM Rawat lays foundation stone for Doon-Mussoorie ropeway project:

- Uttarakhand Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat laid the foundation stone for the Dehradun-Mussoorie ropeway project which is considered to be a tourist novelty.
- The Rs 300-crore ropeway project is expected to be completed in three years.

Arecanut gets its first GI tag for 'Sirsi Supari':

- Arecanut (also known as supari or betel nut) is the latest entrant in the list of agricultural produce with a geographical indication (GI) tag.
- 'Sirsi Supari' grown in Uttara Kannada district of Karnataka has received the Geographic Indication (GI) tag.
- The arecanut has unique features like a round and flattened coin shape, particular texture, taste and has a hard seed. These features are not seen in arecanut grown in any other regions.
- It is cultivated in Yellapura, Siddapura and Sirsi taluks in Karnataka.

Ancient tribal language Gondi to be taught in tribal districts of MP:

- In Madhya Pradesh, ancient tribal language Gondi will be taught in tribal districts. Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath has decided to include Gondi in the primary education curriculum of the state's tribal-dominated districts

Country's first oil museum to come up in Guwahati

- Assam, the state where oil was discovered and produced for the first time in the country more than a century ago, will have the first Oil Museum in the country.
- All major oil and gas PSUs of the country – ONGC, IOCL, HPCL, BPCL and EIL are coming together for this project, which was launched by Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan. The oil museum will be named after KD Malaviya, called the father of India's hydrocarbon industry. The museum to come up at a cost of Rs 104 crore.

Govt planning to set up yarn bank:

- The government is planning to set up a yarn bank in all powerloom centres and clusters, so that weavers could get their raw materials in enough quantity and at a reasonable price.

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- This would also help weavers to plan their production program in advance. Each yarn bank would cost around Rs 2 crore.

Kerala's jaggery gets GI tag:

- The Marayoor Jaggery, a traditional and homemade product manufactured at Marayoor, a place in Idukki district of Kerala, has bagged Geographical Indication tag.
- Marayur jaggery is known especially for its organic and traditional production using the sugar cane cultivated in the region. Jaggery is a dark brown sugar balls made from sugarcane and no chemicals are added during the manufacturing process.

New railway zone for Andhra, to be headquartered in Visakhapatnam: Piyush Goyal

- Union Railway Minister Piyush Goyal announced a new railway zone for Andhra Pradesh, that is the Southern Coast Railway and it will be headquartered in Visakhapatnam. It will be the 18th zone in the country.

India's first LGBTQ clinic and HIV treatment centre inaugurated in Mumbai:

- The country's first HIV treatment centre and holistic clinic for the for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) community has been inaugurated in Mumbai. A patient gets tested at India's first holistic LGBTQ clinic and community-based HIV clinic at Humsafar Trust, Santacruz, Mumbai.
- The centre will give free counselling and provide Anti-Retroviral Therapy (ART). ART is the use of HIV medicines to treat the infection, and is recommended for everyone who is infected with virus and delays the progression of the disease.

India's deepest shaft cave discovered in Meghalaya:

- India's deepest shaft cave Krem Um Ladaw has been discovered in Meghalaya's East Khasi Hills district during the annual 'Caving in the Abode of the Clouds Expedition'. The cave has a 105 m deep shaft entrance passage, Meghalaya Adventurers' Association General Secretary Brian Kharpran Daly said. This comes a year after the world's longest sandstone cave was discovered in Meghalaya.

Delhi Cabinet adds 1,000 low-floor AC electric buses to its public transport fleet:

- The Delhi Cabinet on Saturday approved a proposal to add 1,000 low-floor AC electric buses to the national capital's public transport fleet, claiming to be the first city in the country having a large number of such vehicles.

Smriti Irani inaugurates "Titanwala Museum" in Rajasthan's Bagru:

- Union Textiles Minister Smriti Irani Monday inaugurated the 'Titanwala Museum' in Bagru that showcases the Chhipa community's hand-block printing.
- The museum is an example that art and culture are not dependent on the government for being nurtured or preserved. It will go a long way in taking the name of Bagru on the world map

INTERNATIONAL CURRENT AFFAIRS

EU Parliament approves ban on single use plastics

- The European Parliament has approved a law to ban single-use plastic by 2021 in the EU.
- The law states that over 80 to 85 percent of marine litter is plastics, with single-use plastics representing 50 percent and fishing-related items representing 27 percent of the total.

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Pak elected OIC body's deputy chairman

- Pakistan has been elected as the deputy chairman of the general body of the Parliamentary Union of Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), an influential grouping of 57 countries, majority of which are Muslim-dominated.
- According to an official announcement, Pakistan was elected deputy chairman of the general body of the Parliamentary Union of the OIC member States (PUIC) in Rabat, Morocco.

World's Largest e-waste Recycling Hub Opened At The Dubai Industrial Park

- The world's largest e-waste recycling plant has been opened in Dubai Industrial Park, Dubai by 'Enviroserve' company with a total cost of \$5 million. It will recycle Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE), IT asset disposition (ITAD), refrigerant gas and specialized waste.
- The processing capacity of this recycling hub is 100,000 tonnes of total integrated waste (per year), of which 39,000 tonnes is e-waste. The project is supported by the Swiss Government Export Finance Agency.

Tesla builds its 'largest energy storage system in Asia'

- In a bid to reduce energy demand and provide emergency backup power to trains in Japan, Tesla has claimed to develop its largest power storage system in Asia.
- According to Tesla, it has installed a bank of 42 Power packs at a train station in Japan's Osaka that can provide sufficient backup power to safely move a train and its passengers to the nearest station in the event of a power outage.

Kazakhstan renames capital Astana after ex president

- "Astana is now officially renamed **Nursultan**," the state-owned Kazinform news agency said after a parliamentary vote.
- Kazakhstan's new interim president Kassym-Jomart Tokayev proposed renaming the capital after he was sworn in following Nazarbayev's shock resignation

UN Security Council adopts resolution to counter terror funding

- The UN Security Council has adopted a resolution that calls upon countries to prevent and counter the financing of terrorism, especially in its new forms.
- Initiated by France, Resolution 2462 is intended to update existing resolutions and adapt them to new forms of financing of terrorism and new challenges in this field, Xinhua news agency reported

U.K. government to remove any limit on the number of PhD-level work visas

- U.K. Chancellor Philip Hammond announced in a Budget update, referred to as the annual Spring Statement, that from Autumn 2019, PhD-level occupations will be exempt from the Tier 2 (General) cap, and at the same time the government will update the immigration rules on 180-day absences so that researchers conducting fieldwork overseas are not penalised if they apply to settle in the U.K.
- Indians are among the largest group of professionals set to benefit from this decision, as they form the largest chunk of highly-skilled professionals within the Tier 2 (General) category of work visas, accounting for 54% of all such visas granted in 2018.
- Indian nationals also marked the largest increase in the grant of Tier 2 visas last year, up by 6% at 3,023 more visas compared to the previous year.

India-Bangladesh Jointly Inaugurated 4 Development Projects

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- Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Bangladesh counterpart Sheikh Hasina jointly unveiled e-plaques for development projects in Bangladesh through video conferencing.
- This was the sixth such video conference between PM Modi and Prime Minister Hasina. Both the leaders launched the e-plaques for these projects in Bangladesh:

1. Supply of buses and trucks,
2. Inauguration of 36 community clinics,
3. Inauguration of 11 water treatment plants,
4. Extension of National Knowledge Network to Bangladesh.

Washington, DC hosted the 16th Meeting of the US-India Counter-terrorism Joint Working Group

- Officials from India and United States held the 16th meeting of the U.S.-India Counter terrorism Joint Working Group and the Second session of the U.S.-India Designations Dialogue in Washington, DC, US.

UNEA adopts India's resolutions on single-use plastic, sustainable nitrogen management

- The United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) has adopted two resolutions piloted by India on single-use plastics and sustainable nitrogen management.
- According to a statement released by the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC), the resolutions were adopted at the fourth session of UNEA which was held in Nairobi from March 11 to 15 on 'Innovative Solutions for Environmental Challenges and Sustainable Production and Consumption'.

Ottawa hosted 16th meeting of the Canada-India Joint Working Group on Counter-Terrorism

- This was decided at the 16th meeting of the Canada-India Joint Working Group on Counter-Terrorism and its Expert Sub-group was held in Ottawa on March 26 and 27, officials said. India offered to host the 17th meeting of the Joint Working Group and the third Expert Sub-group in 2020

EU adds 10 countries, including UAE, to tax blacklist

- The European Union expanded its tax haven blacklist by 10 countries adding the United Arab Emirates and Bermuda despite the objections of powerful member states such as Italy.
- The list, now 15 countries long, was first drawn up in 2017 in the wake of several scandals, including Panama Papers and LuxLeaks, that pushed the EU into doing more to fight tax evasion by multinationals and the rich.

Oman allows US military to use its ports

- Oman signed an agreement with the United States that would allow American ships and warplanes to take advantage of ports and airports.
- The state-run Oman News Agency said the "framework agreement" was aimed at bolstering "Omani-American military relations" in a report on its English-language website

Pentagon sanctions \$1 bn for US-Mexico border wall.

- The Pentagon notified Congress that it has sanctioned the transfer of \$1 billion to begin new wall construction along the US-Mexico border, drawing immediate objections from Democratic lawmakers.
- A Pentagon budget reprogramming notification sent to Capitol Hill on Monday night indicated that up to \$1 billion will go toward building 57 miles of fencing, improving roads and other measures on the southern border

Pakistan okays plan to open Sharda Peeth corridor for Hindu pilgrims in PoK

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- The Pakistan government approved a proposal to establish a corridor that will allow Hindu pilgrims from India to visit Sharda Peeth, an ancient Hindu temple and cultural site in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, according to a media report.
- The Sharda Peeth corridor, when opened, will be the second religious tract after Kartarpur corridor in Pakistan-controlled territory that will connect the two neighbouring nations.

Finland's government resigns over failed health care reform

- Finland's government resigns over failed healthcare reform. Finland's entire government has resigned over its failure to achieve a key policy goal on social welfare and healthcare reform. Prime Minister Juha Sipila said he was "hugely disappointed" in the outcome

London Book Fair's India Pavilion focuses on Gandhi

- With a special focus on Mahatma Gandhi's 150th birth anniversary, the India Pavilion at the ongoing London Book Fair is displaying the digitised version of the 'Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi' and titles on Indian culture, history and folklore.
- An interactive digital media experience on life and times of Mahatma Gandhi, the Statue of Unity, and other major achievements of India are also showcased at the Pavilion, a statement by the Information Ministry

Malaysia joins ICC in boost for beleaguered court

- Malaysia has become a member of the International Criminal Court, in a boost for the beleaguered institution at a time it faces growing criticism.
- The ICC is the world's only permanent war crimes court and aims to prosecute the worst abuses when national courts are unable or unwilling.

LIMA 2019 Aero Expo held in Langkawi, Malaysia:

- Langkawi International Maritime Aero Expo (LIMA-2019) is held in Langkawi, Malaysia from 26 March 2019 to 30 March 2019.
- The event, that takes place once every two years, is one of the largest maritime and aerospace exhibitions in the Asia-Pacific.
- Indian Air Force (IAF) is participating in the Maritime Aero Expo for the first time, during which it will showcase its indigenously developed LCA fighter aircraft, Tejas.
- The anti-submarine warfare corvette INS Kadmatt also participate in LIMA 2019.

India bans Boeing 737 Max 8 planes after Ethiopian Airlines crash

- India grounded Boeing 737 Max 8 aircraft in light of the Ethiopian Airlines crash, in which 157 people were killed.
- SpiceJet has around 12 '737 Max 8' planes in its fleet, while Jet Airways has five.
- "DGCA has taken the decision to ground the Boeing 737-MAX planes immediately. These planes will be grounded till appropriate modifications and safety measures are undertaken to ensure their safe operations," the Ministry of Civil Aviation

SUMMITS & CONFERENCES

Summits and Conferences	Held in
National Security Council	New Delhi
US – India Strategic Security Dialogue	Washington

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FinTech Conclave	New Delhi
79th Indian History Congress	Bhopal
The 34th edition of Aahar – the International Food and Hospitality Fair	New Delhi
14th CII-EXIM Bank Conclave on India-Africa Project Partnerships	New Delhi
International Digital Health Symposium	New Delhi
34th GST Council meeting	New Delhi
First BRICS Sherpa Meeting	Brazil
IEMF's First Workshop organized by NITI Aayog and USAID	New Delhi
7th Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Intersessional Ministerial Meeting	Cambodia
PM Inaugurated Construction Technology India 2019 Expo-cum Conference- 'April 2019 – March 2020' announced as Construction – Technology year	New Delhi
SCO's RATS Council Meeting	Tashkent, Uzbekistan
Refurbished Handloom Haat	New Delhi
International Workshop on Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (IWDRI)2019	New Delhi
DEPwD organized conference on Deendayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme	New Delhi
Inaugural Space Dialogue of India and Japan	New Delhi
Organization of Islamic Corporation (OIC) meeting	Abu Dhabi
India -US DTII meeting	Washington
First ever High-Level Dialogue on Indo-Pacific Cooperation (HLD-IPC)	Jakarta, Indonesia
Indo-Japan workshop on Disaster Risk Reduction	New Delhi
2 day 2019 North Korea – United States Hanoi Summit	Hanoi, Vietnam
Indo-Pacific Regional Dialogue – 2019	New Delhi
4th Round of FTA talks between India and Peru	Lima

RANKS AND INDEXES

Index	Rank	Top
Largest importer of weapons by SIPRI	2 nd	Saudi Arabia
world's largest consumer of gold	1 st	—
Human impacts on species by PLOS biology	16 th (35 species)	Malaysia (125 species)

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Mercer's annual Quality of Living Survey 2019	143 (Hyderabad and Pune)	Vienna
World Happiness Report	140 th	Finland
Global energy transition index	76 th	Sweden
100 Most Influential People in Climate Policy	7 Indians (includes Piyush Goyal and Dr Harsh Vardhan)	Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (Congresswoman, US Congress)
World airport traffic rankings for 2018 by Airports Council International (ACI)	12 th Indira Gandhi International Airport	Hartsfield–Jackson Atlanta International Airport (US)
World's best aviation hub	59 th Indira Gandhi International Airport	Singapore's Changi Airport
Inclusive Internet Index 2019 by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) for Facebook	47 th	Sweden
Most costly prime residential market: Knight Frank Report	16 th (Mumbai)	Philippines
World's Most Expensive Cities Survey	5 th , 7 th and 8 th position (Bengaluru, Chennai and New Delhi respectively)	Caracas in Venezuela

PNB secured the top spot among all public sector banks:

- According to BCG-IBA Report – EASE Reforms for Public Sector Banks, released by Union Minister of Finance & Corporate Affairs, PNB secured the top spot among all public sector banks in the implementation of 'Reforms agenda'. PNB which topped the list with a score of 78.4 out of 100 in the EASE-index was followed by BoB (77.8), SBI (74.6), and Oriental Bank of Commerce (69).

Gurugram became world's most polluted city in 2018:

- Gurugram in the National Capital Region (NCR) emerged as the most polluted region in the world in 2018 as per 2018 World Air Quality Report.
- As per the report, Delhi is the most polluted capital in the world. In the list of polluted cities, Delhi ranked 11th.
- Bangladesh became the most polluted country closely followed by Pakistan and India while Iceland, Finland, Australia, Estonia and Sweden were among the least polluted countries.

Samsung tops consumer-focused brands in India list:

- Samsung, Tata Motors, Apple, Hero MotoCorp and Nike are the top-five consumer-focused brands in the country, according to TRA.
- 'India's Most Consumer-Focused Brands 2019', measures brands on their increase in buying propensity index over the previous year. HDFC is the top amongst Banks in the list and is at the 8th spot. While for Top PSU Bank, SBI is the leader at 12th position overall.

High Gender Pay Gap observed in India as Women earn 19% less than Men: MSI Survey

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- The gap in 2018 was 20% and has narrowed by only 1% in 2019. As per Monster Salary Index (MSI) Survey, a high gender pay gap (GPG) is observed in India, as women earn 19% less than men, where men earn Rs 242.49 and women earn Rs 196.3, that is Rs 46.19 lesser than men.

India offers world's cheapest mobile data packs: UK report

- According to a new report Price comparison site Cable.co.uk, India is home to the cheapest mobile data plans in the world, with one gigabyte (1GB) of data costing an average of \$0.26, compared to USD 6.66 in the UK.
- The cheapest mobile data in Western Europe was found in Finland with an average price of \$1.16 for 1GB of data.
- Denmark, Monaco and Italy all offer packages below \$2. There were 15 countries in Western Europe which had cheaper prices than the UK, Cable found in its study. In Eastern Europe, Poland is the cheapest at \$1.32 per GB, followed by Romania (\$1.89) and Slovenia (\$2.21).
- The most expensive place in the world to buy mobile data is Zimbabwe, where the average cost of 1GB is \$75.20 – 289 times as much as in India.
- The US had one of the most expensive rates, with an average cost of \$12.37 for the same amount of data. The global average came in at \$8.53 for 1GB in the study, which compared mobile data pricing in 230 countries around the world

India's poverty rate reduced as per Global Multidimensional Poverty Index 2018:

- In accordance with the 2018 global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), India's poverty rate has shown a drastic decrease in 10 years, from 55% to 28%. The index has shown that, in the years between 2005-06 and 2015-16, 271 million people are moved out of poverty in India.

Climate Vulnerability Index highest for Assam and Mizoram:

- The Department of Science and Technology (DST) commissioned a study to assess the climate risks faced by States in India. This follows an assessment of the global warming risks faced by 12 Himalayan States. On a scale ranging 0-1, indicating the highest possible level of vulnerability, at the top of the scale were Assam with a score of 0.72 and Mizoram at 0.71
- Whereas Sikkim, with an index score of 0.42 was relatively less vulnerable. Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT) at Mandi and Guwahati, and the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru, coordinated with State authorities in Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, the hill districts of West Bengal, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Jammu and Kashmir, to evolve a common methodology, and determine how districts there are equipped to deal with the vagaries of climate change.

Mukesh Ambani tops Forbes's The World's Richest Sports Team Owners 2019 ranking:

- 1st = Mukesh Ambani – Reliance Industries – Mumbai Indians
- 2nd = Steve Ballmer – Former CEO of Microsoft – NBA team Los Angeles Clippers
- 3rd = Dietrich Mateschitz – Co-founder of Red Bull – Auto racing team Red Bull Toro Rosso Honda, Formula One team Red Bull Racing and MLS club New York Red Bulls

Indian Railways ICF becomes largest rail coaches maker in the world:

- The Integral Coach Factory (ICF) in Chennai has manufactured as many as 301 coaches in the month of February, taking the total for this fiscal to 2,919. This puts the factory among the largest railcar builders in the world, beating top Chinese manufacturers who produce around 2,600 coaches a year. The ICF is now eyeing ending the financial year with over 3200 coaches. The ICF has also churned out the newly launched country's

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fastest train Vande Bharat Express between the April-February period. Indian Railways-owned Modern Coach Factory (MCF) in Rae Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh

Adani becomes first Indian port operator to record 200 MMT cargo movement:

- Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone (APSEZ) has recorded cargo movement of more than 200 million metric tonnes (MMT) at nine ports along the east and west coasts, becoming the first Indian port operator to achieve this milestone.
- Their projections were to reach this milestone by 2020 but they could achieve it ahead of schedule. APSEZ plans to double the growth up to 400 MMT by 2025

Vijayawada Railway Station Gets “Gold Rating” For Green Measures:

- Vijayawada railway station, one of the busiest railway junctions in the country, has received Gold Rating by the Indian Green Building Council. The IGBC-CII, with the support of the Environment Directorate of Indian Railways, developed the Green Railway Stations Rating System to facilitate adoption of green concepts, thereby reduce the adverse environmental impact due to station operation and maintenance and also enhance the overall commuter experience.
- Vijayawada Railway Station was ranked fourth in the Indian Railways for cleanliness among A-1 category stations.

AGREEMENTS AND MOU SIGNED

Govt and ADB sign US\$ 926 million loan agreement for Mumbai Metro Rail Project:

- The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Government of India signed a \$926 Million Loan Agreement today to operationalize two lines for the Mumbai Metro Rail System that will ease the distress of millions of commuters each day and help provide a cleaner, less congested city.

On Women's Day, WCD signs MoU with Skill Development Ministry to provide skills training to women:

- The Ministry of Women and Child Development and the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship entered into an MoU aimed at improving women livelihood and empowering them through skill development. The MOU was signed in the presence of Smt. Maneka Sanjay Gandhi, Minister, Women and Child Development and Shri. Dharmendra Pradhan, Minister, Skill Development and Entrepreneurship.

Adobe, Atal Innovation Mission partner to enhance digital literacy, creativity skills:

- Software firm Adobe has partnered with Niti Aayog's Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) to collaborate on enhancing digital literacy and creativity skills.
- The two parties have signed a statement of intent (SOI) to collectively drive the charter of developing creative skills and spreading digital literacy across all Atal Tinkering Labs in India with the support of Adobe's resources and expertise.
- Adobe will also implement its Digital Disha Programme across 100 schools under Atal Tinkering Labs (ATL) initiative.

ADB to provide USD 26 mn to improve Dibrugarh's drainage:

- The Asian Development Bank (ADB) will provide a USD 26-million loan as additional financing for improving drainage infrastructure in Dibrugarh town of Assam under the ongoing Assam Urban Infrastructure Investment Program.

NCSM collaborates with Google Arts & Culture for online:

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- National Council of Science Museums, Kolkata, a premier organisation under the Union Ministry of Culture, has collaborated with 'Google Arts & Culture' for the largest online exhibition about inventions and discoveries ever curated.
- Christened 'Once Upon a Try' - the online exhibition was launched Wednesday and contains collections, stories and information from over 110 renowned institutions from across 23 countries (including NCSM)
- In the online exhibition the NCSM contributes six interactive stories about the long and glorious Science and Technology heritage of India.

Loan Agreement signed for Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Project.

- The World Bank, Government of India and representatives from the states of Karnataka, Kerala, Odisha, Tamil Nadu and Uttarakhand signed Loan Agreement for additional financing of \$137 Million for the Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Project (DRIP) that will help rehabilitate and modernize over 220 selected large dams.
- This additional funding of \$137 million will be used for the construction of an additional spillway for Hirakud Dam in Odisha and in rehabilitation and improvement of other dams including strengthening the institutional, legal and technical framework for dam safety assurance within the Government of India and in the participating States.

Tax info exchange agreement inked between India and Brunei:

- India and Brunei signed a pact for the exchange of Information and Assistance in Collection with respect to taxes in order to curb tax evasion and tax avoidance in New Delhi.

IBBI Signs Agreement With IFC For effective implementation of Insolvency And Bankruptcy Code:

- The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) signed a Cooperation Agreement with the International Finance Corporation (IFC), a member of the World Bank Group (WBG). The agreement will enable IFC to assist IBBI to further build the capacity of insolvency professionals, and insolvency professional agencies for the purposes of the Code.

Cabinet nod for pact with Germany on occupational safety and health:

- The Union Cabinet approved a pact with Germany for cooperation in the field of occupational safety and health.
- The cabinet approved the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and Germany on cooperation in the field of Occupational Safety and Health (OSH).

India, Pakistan to work 'expeditiously' to operationalize Kartarpur Corridor:

- India and Pakistan on Thursday agreed to work "expeditiously" to operationalise Kartarpur Sahib Corridor and decided to hold a meeting of the technical experts.
- The corridor will facilitate Indian pilgrims to visit the holy shrine of Gurdwara Darbar Sahib at Kartarpur in Pakistan.

ICAR, CSIR to work together in field of food, agriculture:

- The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) have agreed to collaborate in the area of food and agriculture.
- Both the sides agreed to collaborate and work together on mutually agreed areas of agri-foods, medicinal and aromatic plants, nutraceuticals, precision agriculture, big data analysis, use of artificial intelligence, genetic

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modifications in cotton, application of sensors in agriculture, post-harvest management and agricultural mechanization.

IIT Roorkee ties up with ISRO for space tech cell:

- The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Roorkee in Uttarakhand on Friday said it tied up with the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) to set up a Space Technology Cell at its campus.
- The ISRO-IIT Roorkee Space Technology Cell shall pursue advanced research in the areas of relevance to the future technological and programmatic needs of the Indian space programme.

AIIB to provide USD 455 mn for Andhra rural roads project:

- The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) will provide a loan of USD 455 million to finance the Andhra Pradesh Rural Roads Project, which will connect about 3,300 habitations with a population of more than 250, and benefit around two million people. An agreement in this regard was signed between the AIIB and the government.
- The objective of the project is to improve road transport connectivity in previously unserved communities by providing all-weather rural roads in all 13 districts of Andhra Pradesh.

MoU to boost Indo-Afghan digital education initiative:

- The Ministry of Human Resource Development has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Afghanistan government to work on digital education initiatives, which include many prominent programs developed by Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs).
- One of the main objectives of the MoU is to facilitate students and faculty from Afghanistan to enrol and learn from the courses offered on Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds (SWAYAM), which is an online education platform developed by Government of India. It will expose them to latest technology courses and also upskill them in areas of their interest.

Labour Ministry Signs MoU with Simtars, Australia for Cooperation in Occupational Safety:

- Directorate General of Mines Safety (DGMS) and Safety in Mines, Testing and Research Station (SIMTARS) propose to explore opportunities including the feasibility of technical knowledge sharing in the area of occupational safety, health and welfare of persons engaged in mining operations and also training of key persons or members of core group from the Inspectorate, Mining Industry and Academia for formulating the process of systematic implementation and monitoring of the concept of risk based safety management system through this Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).
- The MoU has been signed today between Shri Utpal Saha, Director General Mines Safety on behalf of Ministry of Labour and Employment and Shri Gitesh Agrawal, Queensland Trade and Investment Commissioner on behalf of SIMTARS, Queensland Government, Australia in presence of Shri Heeralal Samaria, Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Employment.

Exim Bank extends \$800 mn credit to Maldives for developmental projects:

- The Export-Import Bank of India (Exim Bank) on Wednesday said it will provide USD 800 million (about ₹ 5,500 crore) credit to Maldives to finance developmental projects. Exim Bank has extended a Line of Credit (LoC) of USD 800 million to Maldives for financing developmental projects.
- An agreement for the LoC was signed between Maldives Finance Minister Ibrahim Ameer and Exim Bank Chief General Manager Sudatta Mandal.

World Bank to give India \$250 mn for women-led businesses in rural areas:

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- The World Bank will provide a \$250-million loan for the National Rural Economic Transformation Project (NRETP) to help women in rural households develop viable enterprises for farm and non-farm products. An agreement in this regard was signed between the World Bank and the Government of India.
- A key focus of the project will be to promote women-owned and women-led farm and non-farm enterprises across value chains; enable them to build businesses that help them access finance, markets and networks; and generate employment.

ADB to invest USD 50 mn in solar project developer Avaada:

- Asian Development Bank (ADB) Tuesday said it has inked an agreement to invest USD 50 million in solar energy project developer Avaada Energy Pvt Ltd to help the company scale up rapidly.

French space agency to open maritime surveillance centre in India:

- The French space agency, National Centre for Space Studies (CNES), signed an agreement with the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) here to set up a maritime surveillance centre in the country. In Bengaluru, strengthening Indo-French space cooperation. The agreement was signed by CNES President Jean-Yves Le Gall and India's space agency Chairman K. Sivan in Bengaluru.

Oman allows US military to use its ports:

- Oman signed an agreement with the United States of America that allow American ships and warplanes to take advantage of his ports and airports. The framework agreement is aimed at bolstering Omani-American military relations.

India signs Loan Agreement with the World Bank:

- An Agreement for IBRD Credit of USD 21.7 Million from World Bank for the Strengthening of Public Financial Management in Rajasthan Project.
- The Project size is approximately USD 31 million, of which USD 21.7 million will be financed by the World Bank, and the remaining amount will be funded-out of the State Budget. The Project duration is 5 years.
- The Project objective is to contribute to improved Budget execution, enhanced accountability and greater efficiency in Revenue Administration in Rajasthan. The Project involves Strengthening of the Public Financial Management Framework; Strengthening of Expenditure and Revenue Systems; and Project Management and Capacity Building among others.

India, African Union ink MoU on health sciences cooperation:

- The Indian Council of Medical Research and the African Union (AU) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) which formalised the India-Africa Health Sciences Collaborative Platform (IAHSP) by establishing a framework.
- India for Africa. MoU on India-Africa Health Sciences Cooperation between @ICMRDELHI & African Union was signed. It will pave way for cooperation in R & D, capacity building, health services, pharmaceutical trade, and manufacturing capabilities.

\$3bn deal inked between India & Russia for new nuclear power submarine:

- India entered into a deal with Russia for leasing of a nuclear – powered attack submarine for Indian Navy worth USD 3 billion for a period of 10 years. Under the pact, Russia will deliver Chakra III, a Akula class submarine to the Indian Navy by 2025. It will be the 3rd Russian submarine to be leased to Indian Navy.

India notifies pact with US for exchange of reports on tax evasion by MNCs:

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- India has notified the inter-governmental agreement with the US for exchange of country-by-country (CbC) reports on multinational companies regarding income allocation and taxes paid in order to help check cross-border tax evasion.

India, Paraguay agrees to promote bilateral investment, explore new areas of collaboration:

- India and Paraguay have agreed to identify sectors of mutual interest to promote bilateral investment and decided to explore new areas of collaboration, including Information and Communication Technology and space and biotechnology.

India, Bolivia signs 8 MoUs:

- On the second day of Indian President's three-day visit to Bolivia, India and Bolivia signed eight MoUs in the fields of culture, Visa waiver arrangement for diplomats, exchange between diplomatic academies, mining, space, traditional medicine, establishment of Centre of Excellence in IT and Bi-Oceanic Railway project.

APPOINTMENTS

Person	Designation
Non-executive chairman of Bank of Baroda	Hasmukh Adhia
Secretary at MoRTH	Sanjeev Ranjan
chairman of Coordination Committee for 2022 Asian Games	Randhir Singh
Finance Secretary	Subhas Chandra Garg
Special expenditure observers	Shailendra Handa and Madhu Mahajan
Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief of Western Air Command	Raghunath Nambiar
Member of Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) Standing Committee	Sardar Singh
Brand ambassador of MG Motors for India	Benedict Cumberbatch
Chairman of National Commission for Backward Classes	Bhagwan Lal Sahni
Ambassador of India to the Republic of Benin	Abhay Thakur
High Commissioner of India to Malawi	Anurag Bhushan
Member of the 15th Finance Commission	Ajay Narayan Jha
Director General Naval Operations	Vice Admiral MA Hampiholi
New ASRB chief	Aditya Kumar Misra
Western Fleet Commander	Rear Admiral Sanjay Jasjit Singh
India's Ambassador to Vietnam	Pranay Kumar Verma
First female prime minister of Estonia	Kaja Kallas
Director of SAIL in Raw Materials and Logistics	Vivek Gupta
Indian Ambassador to Republic of Uzbekistan	Santosh Jha
President of Olympic Council of Asia	Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad Al-Sabah
Goodwill Ambassador of UNDP	Padma Lakshmi
Next Chief of Naval Staff	Vice Admiral Karambir Singh
Commanding-in-Chief of Eastern Air Command	R D Mathur
Chief Scientist at WHO	Soumya Swaminathan

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High Commissioner of India to the Republic of Fiji	Ms Padmaja
Secretary-General of the Medical Council of India	Rakesh Kumar Vats
ICC Cricket Committee Chairman	Anil Kumble
Senegal's President	Macky Sall
Ambassador of India to Saudi Arabia	Ausaf Sayeed
Officer on Special Duty, South Coast Railway by the Ministry of Railways	Shri S.S. Srinivas
Director General of National Archives of India	Venkata Ramesh Babu
First female senator of Pakistan	Krishna Kumari Kohli
Citibank India head	Ashu Khullar
New chairman of LIC	M.R.Kumar
President of Comoros	Azali Assoumani
Special directors in the Enforcement Directorate (ED)	Anup Kumar Dubey and Sushil Kumar
Chairman & Managing Director of Madras Rubber Factory Limited(MRF)	K M Mammen
Director of Bhabha Atomic Research Centre	Ajit Kumar Mohanty
BCCI's ad-hoc Ethics Officer	DK Jain
New Flag Officer Sea Training	Krishna Swaminathan
New Strategic Forces Command (SFC) Chief	Air Marshal NS Dhillon
Prime Minister of Palestine	Mohammad Shtayyeh
India's Ambassador to Mexico	Manpreet Vohra
Ambassador to Armenia	Kishan Dan Dewal
Ambassador of India to the Republic of El Salvador	B.S. Mubarak
Kotak Mahindra Bank's whole-time directors	KVS Manian and Gaurang Shah
Brand Ambassador of PhonePe	Aamir Khan
Non-Executive Chairman of Karur Vysya Bank	N S Srinath
President of Unilever, South Asia	Sanjiv Mehta
Brand Ambassador of PolicyX.com	Virender Sehwal
India's first Lokpal	Justice PC Ghose
Non-executive Chairman of Axis Bank	Rakesh Makhija
First transgender election ambassador	Gauri Sawant
13 th Chief Minister of Goa	Pramod Sawant
CEO of Mercer India	Arvind Laddha
Flag Officer Commanding Maharashtra Naval Area	Rear Admiral Rajesh Pendharkar
Brand Ambassador of Aeronutrix's Fast&Up	Mayank Agarwal
Ambassador of TIFF's 'Share Her Journey'	Rima Das
MD and CEO of ICICI Securities	Vijay Chandok
Ambassador of India to the Kingdom of Morocco	Shambhu S Kumaran
Hitachi Payment Services' Managing Director	Rustom Irani

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Slovakia's president	Zuzana Caputova
Flag Officer Commanding Eastern Fleet	Rear Admiral Suraj Berry
Coach for Indian Men's basketball team	Veselin Matic
BFI President	K. Govindaraj

RESIGNS/RETIREMENT

Person	Designation
India's doubles badminton coach	Tan Kim Her
2 nd Senior-most Judge of SC	Justice Arjan Kumar Sikri
Mizoram Governor	Kummanam Rajasekharan
Avast CEO	Vince Steckler
Bajaj Finserv's chairman	Rahul Bajaj
Kazakhstan President	Nursultan Nazarbayev
AIBA President	Gafur Rahimov
Founder of Jet Airways	Naresh Goyal

SPORTS NEWS

Chris Gayle first player to smash 500 sixes in international cricket

- West Indies vs England 4th ODI Chris Gayle etched his name in the record books by smashing 14 sixes to take his tally of sixes to 506 in international cricket.
- Chris Gayle smashed 162 and also completed 10,000 runs in ODIs.
- Gayle became the 2nd West Indian and 14th overall to complete 10,000 runs in ODIs
- Gayle also became the second batsman after Shahid Afridi to hit 300 or more sixes in ODIs

Deepak bags gold at Makran Cup boxing

- National champion Deepak Singh (49kg) was the lone Indian boxer to notch up a gold, while five others claimed silver medals in the Makran Cup.
- while five others claimed silver medals in the Makran Cup in Chabahar, Iran.
- Deepak defeated Jaafar Naseri in the finals However, none of the other five Indian finalists could win their final bouts.

Roger Federer claims 100th ATP Tour title with Dubai win

- Roger Federer claimed the 100th ATP title of his career by beating 20-year-old Greek Stefanos Tsitsipas 6-4 6-4 in the final of the Dubai Duty Free Tennis Championships.
- The 20-times Grand Slam champion became the second man in the Open era to claim 100 titles after American Jimmy Connors who won 109

Kavinder fetches gold, 4 silver medals for India at Finland boxing tourney

- Kavinder Singh Bisht (56kg) struck gold while Shiva Thapa (60kg) and three others claimed silver medals to end a fine Indian campaign at the 38th GeeBee Boxing Tournament in Helsinki, Finland
- Signing off with silver medals were three-time Asian medallist Shiva Thapa (60kg), rookie Govind Sahani (49kg), Commonwealth Games bronze-medallist Mohammed Hussamuddin (56kg) and Dinesh Dagar (69kg).

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Sailor Upamanyu Dutta clinches bronze in Asian regatta

- Young Mumbai sailor Upamanyu Dutta bagged the bronze medal in the Laser Standard race for men in the Laser Asian Sailing Championship which concluded in Singapore
- Nethra Kumaran of Chennai achieved a creditable 4th position in the Laser Radial event for women.
- The championship saw tight racing between the top Asian Laser sailors who used the event to warm up before the Olympic sailing qualifier event for the upcoming Laser class scheduled in Japan.

Special Olympics World Games 2019 in The UAE Makes History

- Special Olympics World Games 2019 which is being held from March 14 to March 21 in the UAE has made history by welcoming a record-breaking 200 nations ahead of the Games. Of the 200 nations, 195 will compete in the Games and five will observe.
- It is being held in West Asia for the first time. 7,500 athletes will take part in 24 Olympic-style sports over seven days. With the highest number of women taking part and the largest number of Unified teammates on board, the World Games will capture the attention of the globe.
- India returned with 368 medals (85 gold, 154 Silver, and 129 Bronze) at the Special Olympics World Summer Games, held at Abu Dhabi, UAE.

SC appoints PS Narasimha as mediator to resolve disputes of cricket administration in BCCI

- The Supreme Court appointed senior advocate P S Narasimha, who is assisting the apex court as an amicus curiae in the BCCI matter, as mediator for resolving various disputes related to cricket administration in the country.
- A bench of Justices S A Bobde and A M Sapre was informed by Narasimha that former apex court judge Justice (retd) D K Jain has assumed charge as the ombudsman of Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI).

South African JP Duminy To Retire From ODIs After World Cup 2019

- South Africa all-rounder Jean-Paul Duminy has announced that he will retire from 50-over cricket at the end of the ICC World Cup 2019, which is scheduled to commence from May 30 onwards in England and Wales.
- The 34-year-old, who made his debut back in 2004, has already retired from Tests as well as first-class cricket. He will remain available for T20Is as of now.

India to host U-17 Women's World Cup in 2020

- India will host the U-17 Women's World Cup in 2020, International Football Federation (FIFA) President Gianni Infantino announced.
- the FIFA Council meeting held at Miami, USA

Formula 1 2019: Mercedes' Lewis Hamilton clinch victory in Australian Grand Prix

- Valtteri Bottas upstaged his Mercedes world champion team-mate Lewis Hamilton to blitz the field and win the season-opening Australian Formula One Grand Prix in a sizzling performance

ISL 2018-19: Bengaluru FC score in extra time to lift maiden ISL title

- Bengaluru FC clinched their maiden Indian Super League title as Rahul Bheke found a championship-winning header in the dying minutes of the final against FC Goa, in Mumbai

Asian Youth Championship 2019 Concludes: India Finishes 2nd, China Tops

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- In Asian Youth Athletics Championships in Hong Kong, boys medley relay team won a gold medal for India on the final day to help Indian youth team finish second in the overall medals tally with a total of 26 medals including 8 gold, 9 silver and 9 bronze medals.
- China topped the overall medals tally with 31 medals that included 12 gold, 11 silver and eight bronze medals and Japan finished third with 20 medals that included 6 Gold, 8 Silver and 6 bronze.

India Clinch SAFF Women's Championship For 5th Time

- India has lifted South Asian Football Federation SAFF Women's Championship fifth time in a row. Keeping its winning streak India defeated host Nepal in the final by 3-1 in Biratnagar, Nepal.
- India's Dalmia Chhibber scored first goal of the match in 26th minute. India's Indumathi Kathiresan and Sabitra Tamang of Nepal remained top scorer of the tournament, both scored four goal each.

Suresh Raina 1st Cricketer To Score 5,000 Runs in IPL

- Chennai Super Kings' Suresh Raina has become the first ever cricketer to reach 5,000 runs in Indian Premier League. The 32-year-old left-handed batsman achieved the feat after scoring 15 runs in the IPL 2019 opener against Royal Challengers Bangalore.

Seamaster 2019 ITTF Challenge Plus Or Oman Open Table Tennis Held In Muscat

- The Seamaster 2019 ITTF Challenge Plus commonly called Oman Open table tennis held in Muscat, Oman.
- Indian players G Sathyan and Archana Kamath excelled in the tournament. G Sathyan won a bronze medal in the tournament.
- Archana Kamath bags U-21 silver with an excellent run in the Oman Open.

12th Asian Airgun Championships Concludes: India Clinches 25 Medals

- Indian shooters continued their dominance claiming five gold medals on the final day of the Asian Airgun Championships to sign off with a total of 25 medals in Taoyuan, Taipei.
- India finished with 16 gold, 5 silver, and 4 bronze medals. Yash Vardhan and Shreya Agrawal bagged three gold medals

Veselin Matic Set To Be India's Basketball Coach

- Veselin Matic, who took Iran to an Asian Games bronze medal in 2010, is set to be appointed as the new head coach of the Indian men's basketball team.
- The Serbian's name had been cleared by the sports ministry. A veteran international coach, Matic helped Iran qualify for its first ever World Championship (2010) with victory in the 2009 FIBA Asia Championship.

18-yr-old Diksha 2nd Indian Golfer To Win Ladies European Tour

- 18-year-old Diksha Dagar has become the second Indian to win an event on Ladies European Tour after clinching South African Women's Open in Cape Town.
- Aditi Ashok was the first Indian to win on the Ladies European Tour after clinching Hero Women's Indian Open in Gurugram in 2016.

DEFENCE NEWS

PINAKA Guided Weapons System Successfully Test Fired

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- Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) successfully test fired the PINAKA guided WEAPON rocket system from Pokhran range in Rajasthan.
- The weapon system is equipped with state-of-the-art guidance kit comprising of an advanced navigation and control system. The weapon systems impacted the intended targets with high precision and achieved desired accuracies.

U.S. And South Korea End Military Exercises ‘Foal Eagle 2019’ And ‘Key Resolve’:

- The United States and South Korea decided to call off their joint exercise “Foal Eagle” and “Key Resolve” and instead bifurcate them into smaller exercises. This is being done to ease tensions with North Korea. “Key Resolve” will be replaced by “Dongmaeng” which is also known as alliance in English, Foal Eagle drills will be replaced by a smaller battalion-sized exercise.
- This decision has been made after there was a failure to reach an agreement on denuclearisation during the summit in Hanoi, Vietnam between President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

‘Mainamati Maitree Exercise 2019’ Between BSF And BGB Held In Tripura

- Border Security Force (BSF) and Border Guards Bangladesh (BGB) took part in the 3-day ‘Mainamati Maitree Exercise 2019’ as a part of ‘Confidence Building Measures’ between India and Bangladesh held in Agartala, Tripura.
- The main objective of this exercise was to plan and conduct anti-smuggling and anti-criminal activity related operations with an aim to achieve better joint operational efficiency and border management in the area.

Indo-Sri Lanka Joint Exercise Mitra shakti-VI To Be Held in Sri Lanka

- Exercise MITRA SHAKTI is conducted annually as part of military diplomacy and interaction between armies of India & Sri Lanka.
- The joint exercise for the year 2018-19 will be conducted in Sri Lanka. Troops from 1st Battalion the BIHAR Regiment of the Indian Army and Gemunu Watch Battalion of Sri Lankan Army would be jointly undertaking the exercise.
- The aim of the exercise is to build and promote close relations between armies of both the countries and to enhance ability of joint exercise commander to take military contingents of both nations under command.
- The joint training exercise MITRASHAKTI – VI between Indian and Sri Lanka Army kick-started at Diyatalawa in Sri Lanka. MITRASHAKTI is one of the largest bilateral armies to army exercises conducted in the region.

IAF inducts four Chinook heavy-lift helicopters

- Four Chinook heavy-lift helicopters made in the US were inducted into the Indian Air Force (IAF)
- After inducting the helicopters, IAF chief B S Dhanoa said induction of Chinook will be a game changer the way the Rafale is going to be in the fighter fleet.
- The Indian Air Force formally inducted the CH 47 F(I)- Chinook heavy-lift helicopters into its inventory at Air Force Station Chandigarh. IAF had signed a contract with M/s Boeing Ltd in September 2015 for 15 Chinook helicopters.

Indo-Bangladesh Joint Military Exercise Sampriti 2019 Concludes

- Exercise Sampriti-VIII, a joint Indo-Bangladesh military exercise which witnessed participation of a company group of 9th Battalion the Rajputana Rifles from the Indian Army and the Company of 36 East Bengal Battalion, Bangladesh Army concluded at Tangail, Bangladesh.

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- The closing ceremony was graced by HE Mrs. Riva Ganguly Das, Indian High Commissioner who highlighted the special bonds between the two nations.
- The exercise was the 8th edition in the Sampriti series, which started in 2009.

US Special Operations Forces Hold Exercise With NSG In Hyderabad

- The United States Special Forces Group stationed in Japan is involved in a joint exercise with India's National Security Guard in Hyderabad, aimed at enhancing the capabilities of the armed forces of the two countries.
- The US forces are from the 1st Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) stationed out of Okinawa in Japan. The Hyderabad-exercise would help build interoperability and comradeship between the two forces and was designed to enhance the capabilities of both Indian and U.S. armed forces.

Indian Navy Nuclear, Biological, Chemical Training Facility Launched

- The Indian Navy's state of the art Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Training Facility (NBCTF) was inaugurated by Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Sunil Lanba at INS Shivaji, Lonavala. The training facility has been named ABHEDYA, which means impenetrable in Sanskrit.
- The Goa Shipyard Limited had signed the contract with the Indian Navy for the construction of the facility in March 2016. The new facility is expected to help train personnel of naval ships fitted with nuclear, biological and chemical detection and protection systems.

'Vijit' Becomes 1st Indian Coast Guard Ship To Visit Indonesia

- Highlighting the close maritime proximity between India and Indonesia, Indian Coast Guard Ship 'Vijit' became the first-ever Coast Guard ship to visit Sabang, Indonesia.
- During its maiden voyage, officers and crew of Vijit will hold interaction with officials of Bakamla (Indonesian Coast Guard), Indonesian Armed Forces and the civil administration at Sabang, read a press release from Indian embassy in Jakarta.

INS Kadmatt at Langkawi, Malaysia to Participate in LIMA-19

- Indian Navy's frontline ASW corvette, INS Kadmatt arrived at Langkawi, Malaysia on a 7 days official visit.
- The ship is scheduled to participate in the 15th edition of Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace Exhibition, LIMA-19 during the visit.
- INS Kadmatt was commissioned into the Indian Navy in January 2016.
- The ship would be participating in numerous activities at Langkawi, including the International Fleet Review (IFR) by the Prime Minister of Malaysia, maritime and air demonstration, Sea Exercises with 29 other participating navies, cultural exchange programmes, cross visits to ships, and sporting events.

Bilateral joint exercise between India, Oman to begin from 12th March

- The third edition of the bilateral joint exercise between India and Oman, Al Nagah 2019 will begin from 12th of this month (March) at Jabel Al Akhdar Mountains in Oman.
- It will continue till 25th of March. In the exercise, both the armies will exchange expertise and experience in tactics, weapon handling and firing.

1st Indian Army Mountaineering Expedition To Mt Makalu Flagged Off

- First Indian Army Mountaineering Expedition to Mt Makalu (8485m) comprising five Officers, two JCOs and eleven OR was flagged off by Director General Military Training.

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- In furtherance of the objective of summiting all challenging peaks above 8000M, Indian Army is launching its maiden expedition to Mt Makalu in Mar-May 2019.
- Mt Makalu is considered amongst the most dangerous peaks and summiting the peak is considered extremely challenging due to inclement weather conditions and freezing temperatures.

Africa-India Field Training Exercise AFINDEX-19 Begins

- The inaugural Africa-India Field Training Exercise-2019 for India and African nations called AFINDEX-19 started with a grand opening ceremony at Aundh Military Station, Pune.
- Contingents of the 17 African Nations came together for the opening ceremony along with a contingent of Maratha Light Infantry representing India.
- The aim of the exercise is to practice the participating nations in planning and conduct of Humanitarian Mine Assistance and Peace Keeping Operations.

India, Australia To Hold Bilateral Exercise AUSINDEX In Vishakhapatnam

- The third edition of the biennial, bilateral exercise AUSINDEX 19 between India and Australia will be held in Vishakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh.
- The upcoming exercise will focus on anti-submarine warfare and will see Australia's largest defence force deployment in India.

BOOKS & AUTHORS

Name of Book	Author/Released by
Mann Ki Baat – A Social Revolution on Radio	Arun Jaitley
Dictionary of Martyrs of India's Freedom Struggle in 1857-1947	PM Modi
Every Vote Counts	Navin Chawla
The Fate of Butterflies	Nayantara Sahgal
Book on PM's selected speeches "Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas"	Arun Jaitley
'Bharat 2019' and 'India 2019'	Amit Khare
Designing Destiny: The Heartfulness Way	Spiritual teacher Kamlesh Patel
Indian Fiscal Federalism	Dr. Y. V. Reddy and Dr. G. R. Reddy
The Great Disappointment: How Narendra Modi Squandered a Unique Opportunity to Transform the Indian Economy	Salman Anees Soz

Indian word 'chuddies' added to Oxford Dictionary:

- The Indian English word 'chuddies' recognized as official English word by the Oxford English Dictionary (OED).

AWARDS & RECOGNITIONS

Awards	Winners
2019 World's Most Ethical Companies	Tata Steel
Green Era Award for Sustainability	TVS motor company

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First Prize in the category of TV Cinema Spot at International Golden City Gate Tourism Awards 2019	The Ministry of Tourism, Government of India
Best Domestic Water Purifier Award 2018-19	Kent RO Systems Pvt. Ltd
Templeton Prize	Brazilian physicist and astronomer Marcelo Gleiser
Non-Life Insurer of the Year Award 2019	Bharti AXA General Insurance
Awarded the exploration rights for Abu Dhabi's Onshore Block 1	Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited, and Indian Oil Corporation Limited
Commonwealth Youth Award for the Asian Region	Padmanaban Gopalan
Best Bank Award by the Tamil Nadu government for W-SHG	Indian Bank
Windham-Campbell prize	Raghu Karnad for his debut book, 'Farthest Field: An Indian story of Second World War'
Cleanest city award for the third straight year under Swachh Survekshan, 2019.	Indore
Vyas Samman 2018	Leeladhar Jagudi
2019 Missile Systems Award	Satheesh Reddy
Global Teacher Prize for 2019	Peter Tabichi
Golden Peacock Innovative Product Award – 2019	ACKO General Insurance
Turing Award	i). Google Brain researcher Geoffrey Hinton ii). Facebook chief AI scientist and NYU professor Yann LeCun iii). University of Montreal professor Yoshua Bengio
Bodley Medal	Amartya Sen
Pravasi Bhartiya Samman Award	Dr Rajendra Joshi

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

IIT Kharagpur students develop app to detect fake currency:

- Researchers at IIT Kharagpur have developed a smartphone-based application to detect counterfeit currency and also provided solutions for industrial operations ranging from thermal power plants to nuclear radiation tracking.
- The image processing application which can detect counterfeit currency, can be installed on smartphones and thus used by people at various points to reduce the chances of fraud.
- A user can upload a currency note image and the mobile app would verify its authenticity using 25 features extracted from the front and rear side of the currency note. In case of detection of a fake note, the user will also be notified.

Signalchip unveils India's first semiconductor chips for 4G/5G connectivity:

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- Bengaluru-based fabless semiconductor company, Signalchip, unveiled India's first semiconductor chips for 4G/LTE and 5G NR modems, which would enable high-speed wireless communication. These chips put India into an elite group of countries that own this widely used fundamental technology.
- The series of chips, code-named 'Agumbe' (a small village located in Shimoga district in Karnataka) are the result of over eight years of research and development by Signalchip engineers.

SAIL launches smart garbage bins made of steel:

- Steel Authority of India Ltd (SAIL) has launched smart garbage bins made of stainless steel. These smart garbage bins will be able to send a signal to the garbage collection vehicle about the 'fill-up' position of the bin, aiding better cleaning and lower human intervention.
- The environment-friendly garbage bins will be made of SAIL SALEM stainless steel. These will be installed in underground Reinforced Cement Concrete (RCC) pits at the Smart Garbage Station. This will help prevent the spread of stink and diseases.

BHEL installed first solar electric vehicle charging station:

- Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) has set up its first solar electric vehicle charger on the Delhi-Chandigarh Highway. The first in a series of charging station on the entire 250 kilometer stretch was inaugurated by A R Sihag, secretary, Department of Heavy Industry (DHI) in the presence of BHEL Chairman Atul Sobti in Sonapat, Haryana.
- The project is covered under the Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of (Hybrid) & Electric Vehicles in India (FAME) scheme of Department of Heavy Industry (DHI).
- Recently the Cabinet government approved FAME II scheme with an outlay of Rs. 10,000 crore over a period of three years. To be implemented from April 1, 2019, the scheme envisages setting up of about 2700 charging stations across the country so that at least one charging station is available in a grid of 3x3 km².

Flipkart introduces robot-based sortation tech at facility in Bengaluru:

- E-commerce marketplace Flipkart has introduced the country's first robot-based sortation technology, automated guided vehicles (AGVs), at its sortation facility in Bengaluru.
- A Flipkart statement said the company has introduced over 100 AGVs at its sortation facility in Soukya, Bengaluru, which help sort packages by pin code, leading to an increase in process efficiency.

ISRO unveils 'Young Scientist' programme to train students in space science:

- ISRO has launched the special programme for school children 'Yuva Vigyani Karyakram' (Young Scientist programme) to impart basic knowledge on space technology, space science and applications to the young ones to arouse their interest in space activities.
- State-run Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) announced the launch of its Young Scientist programme to train class 9 students in space technology and its applications.

Mission Shakti: India's anti-satellite test sends a stark message to China:

- Defence Research and Development Organisation, DRDO successfully conducted an Anti-Satellite (A-SAT) missile test, under Mission Shakti from Dr A P J Abdul Kalam Island in Odisha. A DRDO-developed Ballistic Missile, Defence Interceptor Missile successfully engaged an Indian orbiting target satellite in Low Earth Orbit (LEO) in a Hit to Kill mode.

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- The missile travelled a distance of almost 300 km from earth and hit the target within three minutes of its launch. With this achievement, India has now become the only fourth nation after US, Russia and China to have such capability.

People in Japan temple unveiled a robot “Goddess”:

- A 400-year-old Kyoto-based temple has unveiled a robotic avatar of the Buddhist Goddess of Mercy, Kannon, in an attempt to keep the younger generation connected with Buddhism.
- The robot named 'Mindar', can join its hands and move its eyes and torso while delivering 25-minute-long sermons to worshippers.

IIT-Delhi researchers develop AI-based detector for malaria, TB, cervical cancer:

- Researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) here have developed an artificial intelligence (AI)-based low-power electronic hardware system that can help in detecting malaria, tuberculosis, intestinal parasite and cervical cancer in a few milliseconds.
- The research focuses on building a neuromorphic system which can be used for healthcare access in resource-constrained areas with limited access to human specialists.

NASA announced world’s first all-female spacewalk:

- NASA announced Two NASA astronauts Anne McClain and Christina Koch are scheduled to carry out the first ever all female spacewalk in history on March 29.
- Both will walk outside the International Space Station (ISS) as members of Expedition 59, on a mission to replace batteries installed last summer. 35 years after the first woman performed a spacewalk. They will receive ground support from flight director Mary Lawrence and Kristen Faccioli of the Canadian Space Agency in NASA's Johnson Space Center in Texas.

IIT Madras converts petroleum waste toluene into useful product:

- Using platinum nanocatalyst, a two-member team at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras has successfully converted petroleum waste-product toluene into benzoic acid. Benzoic acid is used as a food preservative (E210) and medicine for fungal/bacterial infection. Toluene is converted into benzoic acid through selective and controlled oxidation in the presence of a catalyst — binaphthyl-stabilised platinum nanoparticles (Pt-BNP).

China launches new communication satellite, completes 300 launches of Long March rocket series:

- The 'ChinaSat 6C' satellite was launched at around 12.28 am (local time) from Xichang Satellite Launch Center in Sichuan province. The 19-story-tall rocket is expected to provide high-quality radio and television transmission services.
- It marked the 300th launch of the Long March carrier rocket series, developed by the China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation.
- The communication satellite can cover China, Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific island countries.

ISRO, French space agency seal agreement on maritime security:

- National space agency ISRO and its French counterpart CNES on Wednesday sealed an agreement to set up a joint maritime surveillance system in the country in May.
- The two nations will explore putting up a constellation of low-Earth orbiting satellites that will identify and track movement of ships globally – and in particular those moving in the Indian Ocean region where France has its Reunion Islands.

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IIT-M signs MoU for device to make water from air:

- The Indian Institute of Technology - Madras (IIT-M), has signed a memorandum of understanding with Teerthaa, a sustainable technology company, to develop a device that can generate potable water from atmospheric air, said a statement issued by the institute on Friday. Called 'NERO,' the device will produce four to five litres of potable water per day and will immensely benefit residents of the region that face water crisis.

IMPORTANT DAYS

Date	Important Days	Themes
1	Zero Discrimination Day	Act to change laws that Discriminate
1	World Civil Defence Day	Children's safety, our responsibility
3	World Hearing Day	Check your hearing!
3	World Wildlife Day	Life below water: for people and planet
4	National Safety Day	Cultivate and sustain a safety culture for building nation
7	Janaushadhi Diwas	_____
8	International Women's Day	Think equal, build smart, innovate for change Campaign theme: #BalanceforBetter
2 nd Thursday	World Kidney Day	Kidney Health for Everyone Everywhere
15	World Sleep Day	Healthy Sleep, Healthy Aging
15	World Consumer Rights Day	Trusted Smart Products
18	Global Recycling Day	Recycling Into The Future
20	International Day of Happiness	Happier Together
21	International Day of Forests	Forests and Education
21	World Down Syndrome Day	Leave No One Behind
21	International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination	Mitigating and countering rising nationalist populism and extreme supremacist ideologies
22	International Water Day	Leaving no one behind
22	Bihar Diwas or Bihar Day	_____
23	Shaheed Diwas or Martyr's Day	_____
23	World Meteorological Day	The Sun, the Earth and the Weather
24	World Tuberculosis (TB) Day	It's time

OBITUARY

Field	Person
Russian Nobel Prize winner for physics	Zhores Alferov
Art Historian and Picasso Biographer	Sir John Richardson
Goa CM	Manohar Parrikar
WWE legend	King Kong Bundy whose real name was Christopher Pallies

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Veteran Bengali Actor	Chinmoy Roy
Former White House Economist	Alan B. Krueger
Former New Zealand batsman	Bill Playle
Veteran Hindi Newsreader	Vinod Kashyap
Former Deputy Prime Minister and senior Communist leader of Nepal	Bharat Mohan Adhikari
Kenyan athlete	Daniel Rudisha
American Rock Guitarist	Dick Dale
Founder of Warwick manufacturing Group	Lord Kumar Bhattacharyya
U.S. Olympic cycling medallist	Kelly Catlin
Senior journalist and environmental activist	Darryl D'Monte
Former Union minister	V. Dhananjaya Kumar
Former Supreme Court judge	Satya Brata Singh
YSR Congress party leader and former Andhra Pradesh Minister	Y.S. Vivekananda Reddy
1971 India-Pakistan war hero	Captain Mohan Narayan Rao Samant
Co-inventor of the World's First Handheld Electronic Calculator	Jerry Merryman
Prominent Lingayat pontiff and Basava Dharma Peetha President	Maate Mahadevi
Legendary Composer and Four-Time Oscar Winner	André Previn
Renowned Indian artist	Haku Shah
Former Puducherry LG	Virendra Kataria
Bangladeshi singer	Shahnaz Rahmatullah
Kannada actress	L V Sharada Rao
Chief adviser of All India Matua Mahasangha	Binapani Devi
Social activist	Ghulam Nabi Rather
Karnataka cabinet minister	Channabasappa Sathyappa Shivalli
Folk Artiste and Radio commentator	Vinjamuri Anasuya Devi
FIA Formula One director	Charlie Whiting
American songwriter and producer	Scott Walker
Veteran journalist, academician, social worker and columnist	Prafulla Rajguru
Malayalam writer and poet	Ashita
Mumbai activist who fought against illegal constructions and slumification of Mumbai's gothans	HS D'Lima
Russian cosmonaut, who made the first of his three flights to space in 1963	Valery Bykovsky
Former Australian Spinner and Coach	Bruce Yardley