

Banking and Finance

SBI inks MoU with Bank of China to boost business opportunities

- The country's largest public sector lender **State Bank of India (SBI)** has signed a pact with the **Bank of China to boost business opportunities**.
- SBI has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Bank of China (BoC), third-largest bank in the world by capital size and one of the major players in the Chinese banking sector, **to enhance business synergies between both the banks, State Bank of India (SBI) said in a release**.
- Through this pact, both SBI and BoC will gain direct access to their respective markets of operation, the release said.
- **SBI said it has a branch in Shanghai and BOC is opening its branch in Mumbai.**

Delhi School of Economics wins 'SBI Numero YONO' contest

- The team of **Delhi School of Economics** emerged victorious at the grand finale of inter-college quiz contest - **'Numero YONO' held here recently**.
- Gokul S, Abdul Vahid P.A and Akash Verma represented Delhi School of Economics among the nearly 3000 teams in the regional rounds to bag the Numero YONO title along with annual scholarship of Rs. 5.76 lakh.
- SBI Chairman Rajnish Kumar along with his wife Reeta Agarwal felicitated the winners with 'Numero YONO' trophies and scholarship cheques.

Goods & Services Tax: Decisions taken by the GST Council regarding GST rate on Real Estate Sector

- **The Goods & Services Tax (GST) Council held its 34th meeting on March 19, 2019** to discuss the details for implementation of the recommendations made by the council in its **33rd meeting for lowering GST rate in Real Estate Sector**.
- The council approved the transition plan to move towards new tax rates for the real estate sector in addition to giving builder an option to continue with the old tax rate, if they want.

IBBI, SEBI sign MoU for better implementation of Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code

- **The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI)** on March 19, 2019 signed a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) for better implementation of Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016**.
- The IBBI and the SEBI together seek effective implementation of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code and its rules and regulations which aim to promote entrepreneurship and debt market.
- **The MoU was signed by Anand Baiwar, Executive Director of the SEBI and Ritesh Kavdia, Executive Director of IBBI.**

Steel Ministry organises vigilance conclave

- **The Union Ministry of Steel had organised a two-day vigilance conclave in New Delhi**, which concluded on March 19, 2019.

- **The Conclave was aimed at sensitising the officials of Steel PSUs on the basic principles and procedures to be followed while taking important administrative and commercial decisions** relating to various functions including procurements, contracts, personnel and finance.
- In the 2-day conclave, basic issues concerning vigilance, adherence to rules and regulations relating to public procurements, transparency in tendering processes, e-procurement, GeM, GFR, e-auction, ethics in governance, complaint handling system and other matters of importance were deliberated upon.

India and states

33rd edition of India-Indonesia Coordinated Patrol commences at Port Blair

- **The 33rd edition of the India-Indonesia Coordinated Patrol (Ind-Indo Corpat) began on March 19, 2019.**
- The patrol will be held at **Port Blair, Andaman & Nicobar Islands** from March 19 till April 4, 2019.
- The coordinated patrol aims to underscore India's peaceful presence and solidarity with friendly maritime neighbours, in order to ensure good order in the maritime domain, consolidate interoperability and strengthen the existing bonds of friendship between India and Indonesia.

India, Sri Lanka to conduct joint exercise 'Mitra Shakti-VI'

- **The annual joint exercise between India and Sri Lanka, 'Mitra Shakti-VI',** will be conducted from March 26 to April 8, 2019 for the year 2018-19 in Sri Lanka. The exercise is conducted every year as a part of military diplomacy and interaction between the armies of the two nations.
- While the Indian side will be represented by the troops from 1st battalion of the Bihar Regiment, the Sri Lanka army would be represented by the Gemunu Watch Battalion.
- The key aim of the exercise is to build and promote close relations between armies of both the nations and to enhance the ability of joint exercise commander to take military contingents of both nations under command.

International Air Transport Association: SpiceJet joins global airlines' grouping IATA

- Indian budget carrier, **SpiceJet** on March 19, 2019 **announced its membership of global airlines' grouping 'International Air Transport Association' (IATA).**
- **SpiceJet is the first Indian low-budget carrier to join the IATA,** which has over 290 airlines as members including Air India, Jet Airways and Vistara.
- SpiceJet's IATA membership is significant as SpiceJet plans to rapidly expand its international footprint.
- The membership will allow SpiceJet to explore and grow its collaborations with international member airlines of the IATA grouping through interlining and code shares.

Appointments

Pinaki Chandra Ghose appointed as India's first Lokpal

- **India gets its first Lokpal six years after the passage of Act,** former Supreme Court judge, **Pinaki Chandra Ghose** was on March 19, 2019 **appointed as India's first Lokpal also known as the anti-corruption ombudsman.**
- **Ghose appointment was approved by the President Ram Nath Kovind.** Besides this, the President also appointed four judicial and four non-judicial members of the Lokpal.

EC appoints Shailendra Handa & Madhu Mahajan as Special Expenditure Observers

- **Election Commission has appointed two eminent former Civil Servants Shailendra Handa and Ms. Madhu Mahajan as Special Expenditure Observers** for the upcoming Lok Sabha Elections.
- **Shailendra Handa has been deployed in Maharashtra and Madhu Mahajan has been deployed in Tamil Nadu.**
- An official release said, both these officers have rich experience of working in Investigation Wing of I.T Department and have supervised many successful search and seizure actions unearthing tax evasion in complicated cases.
- The Special Observers will supervise and monitor the work being done by the electoral machinery.

Days

International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination observed globally

- **International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination 2019** was observed globally on **21 March, 2019**.
- The theme of 2019 International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination was "**Mitigating and countering rising nationalist populism and extreme supremacist ideologies**".

International Day of Forests observed

- **International Day of Forests 2019** was observed globally on **21 March, 2019**.
- The theme of International Day of Forests 2019 was "**Forests and Education – Learn to Love Forests**".

World Poetry Day observed globally

- **World Poetry Day** was observed globally on **21 March, 2019**.
- A decision to proclaim 21 March as World Poetry Day was adopted during **UNESCO's 30th session held in Paris in 1999**.

World Puppetry Day observed globally

- **World Puppetry Day** was observed globally on **21 March, 2019**.
- World Puppetry Day is observed by **Union Internationale de la Marionnette, (UNIMA)** in Magdeburg.

International Nowruz Day observed globally

- **International Nowruz Day** was observed globally on **21 March, 2019**.
- **Nowruz is an ancestral festivity marking the first day of spring and the renewal of nature** observed in Afghanistan, Albania, Azerbaijan, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkey and Turkmenistan.

World

Kazakhstan to rename country's capital Astana as Nursultan

- **Kazakhstan's parliament today voted to rename the country's capital Astana as Nursultan** in honour of longtime ruler Nursultan Nazarbayev, a day after he resigned as president.
- The state-owned Kazinform news agency said after a parliamentary vote Astana is now officially renamed Nursultan. Kazakhstan's new interim president Kassym-Jomart Tokayev proposed renaming the capital.
- **Astana replaced Kazakhstan's largest city Almaty as the capital in 1997.**

Indian-origin Jagmeet creates history, enters Canadian Parliament

- **Indian-origin Jagmeet Singh has created history in Canada by entering the House of Commons as the first non-white leader of a major opposition party** in the country.
- The 40-year-old was elected as the leader of the New Democratic Party in the federal by-elections, which were held on February 25.
- The arrival of the leader, wearing a turban, into the house on March 18 was cheered by all the members.
- His induction into the house on March 18, coincided with the induction of a senior woman member into Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's cabinet.

Germany initiates move to designate Masood Azhar as global terrorist

- **Germany has initiated a move at the European Union to designate the Chief of Jaish-e-Mohammed, Masood Azhar as a global terrorist.** The move comes days after China blocked a motion at the **UN Security Council to ban him.**
- Germany has been initiating talks with several European Union member states to list Azhar as a global terrorist, which will result in his travel ban as well as the freezing of his assets in the 28-country bloc.
- According to reports, Germany has also floated a proposal in this regard but no resolution has been moved yet. All the 28 EU member nations will have to support the move in order to ban the JeM Chief, as the bloc decides on such issues under the principle of consensus.

Italy to join China's Belt and Road initiative despite US objections

- **Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte pledged on March 19, 2019 to make Italy the first group of seven nations to join China's ambitious Belt and Road initiative,** despite objections from the United States and concerns within his governing coalition.
- Speaking to parliament, Conte said that Italy's signing of a memorandum of understanding for the infrastructure-building venture, which is due to happen during the upcoming visit by the Chinese premier, would not in the least put into question Italy's position within the strategic trans-Atlantic alliance or with European partners.
- Italy's signature would be considered a major legitimization of the project that envisions overland and maritime routes connecting China with Europe.

Kazakhstan's President announces sudden resignation after nearly three decades in power

- **Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbayev abruptly announced his resignation from the position on March 19, 2019** after nearly three decades in power.
- The 78-year-old leader has ruled the central Asian nation ever since it emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s.
- He is the only leader that independent Kazakhstan has ever known. Hence, his sudden resignation raises uncertainty over the future course of the nation.

Sports

Afghanistan records maiden Test win

- **Afghanistan's cricket team on March 18, 2019 recorded its maiden Test win** after beating **Ireland** by seven wickets in a one-off game at **Dehradun in Uttarakhand**.
- The test victory came to Afghanistan nine months after making its debut in the traditional format. **The nation scored 314 in the first innings. Chasing 147 for victory, it achieved the target in second innings, scoring 149 for 3.**
- On the other hand, Ireland scored 172 in the first innings and 288 in the second innings. Afghanistan's Rahmat Shah was named the Man of the Match for his twin fifties.

Two young Indian shuttlers break into top 100 in latest BWF rankings

- **Young Indian shuttlers Lakshya Sen and Riya Mookerjee** on March 19, 2019 broke into the top-100 among men's and women's singles players in the latest World Badminton Rankings.
- Making a massive jump of 28 places, India's **Lakshya Sen is currently placed at the 76th position, while Riya Mookerjee climbed up 19 spots to be placed 94th.**
- In the women's singles rankings, **P V Sindhu and Saina Nehwal are static at the sixth and ninth positions respectively.**
- In the men's singles rankings, India's highest placed shuttler Kidambi Srikanth remained static at the 7th position, while Sameer Verma is placed at the 14th position and B Sai Praneeth moved up three places to be placed 19th.

Abu Dhabi to host T10 Cricket League

- **The Zayed Cricket Stadium in Abu Dhabi will be hosting an exclusive T10 Cricket League** for the next five years, starting with the 2019 season.
- So far, there were two short formats in cricket including ODI and T-20. Now, a third format, T-10 has been introduced.
- Abu Dhabi Cricket, in partnership with Abu Dhabi Sports Council and the Department of Culture and Tourism- Abu Dhabi, has signed a five-year agreement with the organisers of the **T10 Cricket League.**