

Finance

India, World Bank sign \$250 million agreement to boost rural income

- **The Indian Government on March 5, 2019 signed a \$250 million loan agreement with the World Bank for the National Rural Economic Transformation Project (NRETP)** that aims to help women in rural households shift to a new generation of economic initiatives by developing viable enterprise for farm and non-farm products.
- The loan agreement was signed by Additional Secretary Sameer Kumar Khare on behalf of India and World Bank's Acting Country Director Hisham Abdo.
- **The National Rural Economic Transformation project is additional financing to the \$500 million National Rural Livelihoods Project (NRLP) approved by the World Bank in July 2011.**
- The NRLP, which is currently being implemented across 13 states, 162 districts and 575 blocks, has managed to mobilise more than 8.8 million women from poor rural households into 750,000 self-help groups (SHGs).

Government launches scheme to provide Transport and Marketing Assistance for agriculture products

- The Department of Commerce under the Union Ministry of Commerce & Industry on March 5, 2019 notified a scheme **for Transport and Marketing Assistance (TMA) for Specified Agriculture Products.**
- **The scheme would be included in the Foreign Trade Policy (2015-20).**
- The Transport and Marketing Assistance for specified agriculture products scheme aims to provide assistance for the international component of transportation of agricultural produce to mitigate the disadvantage of higher cost of exporting agriculture products.
- **It will promote brand recognition for Indian agricultural products in the specified overseas markets.**
- The Scheme will be applicable for a period as specified from time to time by the government. At present, the scheme would be available for exports with effect from March 1 to 31, 2019.

India and states

Google launches 'Bolo' app to tutor children to read in Hindi, English

- **Technology giant Google has unveiled a new app called 'Bolo' that aims to help children in primary school learn to read in Hindi and English.**
- The free app, which is being launched in **India first, uses Google's speech recognition and text-to-speech technology.**
- The app features an animated character '**Diya**', who encourages children to read stories aloud and helps if the child is unable to pronounce a word. It also lauds the reader when she completes the reading.
- The Bolo app will be available on Google Play Store in India for all smartphones running Android 4.4 (Kit Kat) and higher, and can also work offline.

Home Ministry launches smart fencing on Indo-Bangladesh border to deter illegal infiltration

- **Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh on March 5, 2019 launched smart fencing under the Comprehensive Integrated Border Management System along the Indo-Bangladesh border in Dhubri district of Assam to deter illegal infiltration.**

- **Two pilot projects covering about 71 Kms on Indo-Pakistan Border (10 Kms) and Indo-Bangladesh Border (61 Kms) of Comprehensive Integrated Border Management System (CIBMS) have been completed.** The stage has been set now for taking up Stage-II and Stage-III covering about 1955 km of the border which cannot be physically fenced.
- The smart fencing project BOLD-QIT (Border Electronically Dominated QRT Interception Technique) has been implemented along the riverine border at Dhubri, as it was not feasible to construct border fencing.
- The 61 km of border area in Dhubri where River Brahmaputra enters into Bangladesh consists of vast char lands and innumerable river channels thus making border guarding in this area a challenging task, especially during rainy season.

Delhi Government Launches 'One Delhi' App

- **To ease the use of public transport in the nation capital, the Delhi government on Tuesday launched a common mobility app 'One Delhi'** to allow users plan more efficiently their journey with Delhi Metro and all city buses.
- **The app was developed by Delhi Integrated Multi-Modal Transit System, or DIMTS.**
- "To make travel easier in Delhi, the app allows users to access all bus stops, bus and metro routes, fares, expected time of arrival (ETA) of buses and metro," the government said in a statement.

Women to get Permanent Commission in Indian Armed Forces

- **The Union Ministry of Defence has taken steps to ensure permanent commission to women officers in the Indian Armed Forces,** implementing the announcement made regarding the same by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on August 15, 2018.
- All branches of the Indian Air Force, **including the post of fighter pilots, are now open for women officers.**
- All non-sea going branches, cadre or specialisation have been opened for the induction of women officers through short service commission.
- Women officers have been granted permanent commission in the Indian Army in all the ten branches where women are inducted for short service commission.

National Centre for Good Governance inks pact with Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs

- **A Memorandum of Understanding, MoU, was signed today between the National Centre for Good Governance (NCGG) and the Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs (IICA)** to ensure better utilisation of infrastructure facilities during training programmes.
- Secretary, Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances, DARPG, K V Eapen and Director General and CEO, IICA Sameer Sharma witnessed the signing of the MoU.
- **Eapen, who is also the Director General of NCGG said IICA will support the good governance centre for utilization of infrastructure facilities during training programme of NCGG at Delhi, and for academic and intellectual interactions for five years.**

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Indore adjudged cleanest city in Swachh Sarvekshan for third year in a row

- **Three cities in Madhya Pradesh bagged top awards in Swachh Sarvekshan 2019** announced by the union government at a function in New Delhi on March 6, 2019.

- Every year, cities and towns across India are awarded with the title of 'Swachh Cities' on the basis of their cleanliness and sanitation drive as a part of the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan that was launched in 2014.
- **Three cities Indore, Bhopal and Ujjain in Madhya Pradesh bagged top awards.** While Indore has now retained the top spot in the survey of being the cleanest city for a consecutive three years, it was a hat trick for Bhopal too, as it was adjudged the cleanest capital city in the 2019 survey.
- **Another city of state, Ujjain was awarded cleanest city in 3 lakh to one million category.**

World

Two Nobel Prizes for literature will be awarded this year: Swedish Academy

- **The Swedish Academy has announced that two Nobel Prizes for literature will be awarded this year.**
- The decision comes after a sex scandal causing the suspension of the award last year.
- **The Academy in a statement at Stockholm said that the Nobel Prize in Literature will awarded this autumn for both 2018 and 2019.**
- The much-awaited award had to be postponed last year for the first time since 1949.

Israeli spacecraft on its maiden Lunar mission sends back its 1st selfie

- **An Israeli spacecraft on its maiden mission to the moon has sent its first selfie back to Earth.**
- **The image shows a part of the Beresheet spacecraft with Earth in the background.**
- **NGO SpacEL and state-owned Israel Aerospace Industries launched the unmanned Beresheet** - Hebrew for **Genesis** -- from Cape Canaveral in Florida on February 22, 2019.
- The 585-kilogram craft took off atop a Falcon 9 rocket from the private US-based SpaceX company . The trip is scheduled to last seven weeks, with the touch down due on April 11.
- So far, only Russia, the United States and China have made the 384,000-kilometre journey and landed on the moon.

China to extend anti-smog measures for 3rd successive winter

- **China has decided to extend anti-smog measures for a third successive winter in a bid to reduce pollution levels.** The Ministry of Ecology and Environment, in a pollution battle plan for 2019 published today, vowed to speed up the elimination of small coal-fired heating boilers in major regions.
- **The 2019 action plan outlined further steps this year to control coal consumption.** The ministry will help draw up new measures aimed at encouraging the use of cleaner-burning replacement fuels and speed up efforts to eliminate small and inefficient coal-fired heating boilers in smog-prone regions.

Venezuelan govt announces to expel German ambassador Daniel Kriener from country

- **The Venezuelan government has announced to expel German ambassador Daniel Kriener from the country.**
- President Nicolás Maduro's embattled government yesterday declared the German ambassador persona non grata and ordered him to leave the country within 48 hours.
- **According to an official statement, he was accused of recurrent acts of interference in internal affairs of Venezuela.**
- Mr Kriener was among a group of diplomats who helped opposition leader Juan Guaidó return to Venezuela on Monday by meeting him at the airport.

Days

India to celebrate 7 March as 'Janaushadhi Diwas'

- Mansukh Mandaviya, the Union Minister of State for Chemicals & Fertilizers, Road Transport & Highways, and Shipping on March 6, 2019 announced **March 7, 2019 will be observed as the 'Janaushadhi Diwas' across the country.**
- **On the occasion of the 'Janaushadhi Diwas', the Prime Minister Narendra Modi will interact with owners of Janaushadhi Kendras and beneficiaries of the Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP) across the country through video conference.**
- Various programmes would be organised at all PMBJP Kendras to increase the awareness about the scheme. These programmes would witness participation of doctors, health experts, NGOs and beneficiaries.