

## **INTERNATIONAL**

### **1st Syria Peace Congress begins in Sochi**

The Syrian National Dialogue Congress began in the Russian city Sochi. The first Syrian peace talks have been sponsored by Russia, Iran and Turkey. Authorities from Syria's Kurdish autonomous region will not be participating in the talks. One of the main aims of the congress is to bring Syria closer to creating a post-war constitution.

### **US lifts ban on refugees from 11 'high risk' nations**

The United States has announced that it is lifting the ban that it had imposed on refugees from 11 nations, which it termed as high-risk countries. Despite resuming the process of accepting the refugees, the US Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen stated that those seeking to enter the US would have to come under much tougher scrutiny than in the past. The new screening measures include additional interviews of applicants' family members and close scrutiny of potential ties to organized crime. The move comes as President Donald Trump presses for sharp turn in overall US immigration policy.

### **Sauli Niinistö re-elected President of Finland**

Finnish President Sauli Niinistö was re-elected to the position following a landslide election victory over his closest challenger Pekka Haavisto. With all ballots counted, Niinistö had 62.7 percent of the vote, while his leading rival, Pekka Haavisto of the Greens, had 12.4 percent. Niinistö, 69 is a former finance minister and parliament speaker. He has been a highly popular president since he took office in 2012.

### **Miloš Zeman wins another term as Czech President**

Czech President Miloš Zeman has won a second 5 year term as head of state after beating his opponent Jiří Drahoš with a thin margin. Zeman, in 2013, became the first president of the country, which was formed only 2 decades ago, to be elected by the voters & not politicians. Overall, he is the third president of the country, which was formed following the division of Czechoslovakia in 1993.

### **Juan Orlando Hernandez sworn-in as President of Honduras**

Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernandez was sworn in for a second term amid protests over what the opposition calls electoral fraud. At a ceremony in capital Tegucigalpa, the President promised to begin a process of reconciliation to unite the Honduran family. Hernandez, a 49-year-old lawyer, is Honduras' first President to be re-elected, a key point in the protests against him. The country's 1982 constitution bars presidents from seeking a new term and conservative politicians deposed a leftist president in 2009 for allegedly even considering re-election. But Hernandez won a Supreme Court ruling in 2015 to get around that prohibition.

### **Doomsday Clock set to 2 mins to midnight closest since 1953**

The Doomsday Clock close the planet is to an apocalypse was set at 2 minutes to midnight, the closest since 1953 during the Cold War. The Clock was moved 30 seconds forward compared to 2017, citing growing nuclear risks and climate dangers. The Clock is maintained since 1947 by scientists worldwide including 15 Nobel Laureates.

### **US Senate confirms Jerome H Powell as Chairman of Federal Reserve**

The United States Senate on January 24, 2018 confirmed the appointment of Jerome H Powell as the Chairman of the Federal Reserve System, the Central banking system of the United States. Powell's appointment was approved by the Senate by vote of 85 to 12, as he was supported by a majority of Democrats and nearly all republicans. Powell was nominated for the post in November 2017 by President Donald Trump. Powell will replace Janet Yellen, whose term will end in February 2018. Yellen was appointed by President Obama in 2014 and has been the first woman to hold the position.

### **George Weah sworn-in as Liberian President**

Former football star George Weah was sworn in as president of Liberia, completing the country's first transition between democratically-elected leaders in three generations. In his inauguration speech, Mr Weah said he couldn't offer any "quick fixes" but rather steady progress towards the goals of Liberians. His biggest priorities, would be to fight corruption and pay civil servants "a living wage", and show the private sector that Liberia was "open for business".

### **Malta's Valletta becomes Europe's Capital of Culture**

Valletta, the capital of Malta, was officially named European Capital of Culture 2018. Valletta will share the title with Leeuwarden, a city in the Netherlands. Notably, the 'European Capitals of Culture' initiative aims to highlight the diversity of European culture and to increase the citizens' sense of belonging to a common cultural area.

### **Romania names MEP Viorica Dancila as first female PM**

European lawmaker Viorica Dancila has been named as Prime Minister-designate in Romania making her the country's third head of government in a year and its first female premier. It was announced after the sudden resignation of former Prime Minister Mihai Tudose.

### **UK appoints 'Minister for loneliness'**

The Prime Minister of United Kingdom, Theresa May has announced the appointment of Sports minister Tracey Crouch as the Country's first 'Minister for loneliness'. The move has been made to tackle the isolation felt by more than one in ten people in the UK. In her additional role, Tracey Crouch would be required to develop a strategy to address loneliness in the nation.

### China builds World's Biggest Air Purifier

China constructed a 330-foot tall air purifying tower dubbed the "world's biggest air purifier". The tower, which is being tested by researchers, has produced more than 10 million cubic meters of clean air since it was launched. The air purification system works through greenhouses covering about half the size of a soccer field around the base of the tower.

### Assange given Ecuadorian citizenship

Ecuador's Foreign Minister Maria announced that the country has granted citizenship to WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange. In 2012, Assange, an Australian-Ecuadoran, had sought refuge at Ecuadorian Embassy in London to avoid extradition to Sweden, where he faced an investigation over rape allegations. He was granted asylum, and has been staying at Ecuadorian Embassy in London since then.

### Sri Lanka reimposes ban on women buying alcohol

Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena has ordered to reimpose ban on women buying alcohol or working in places that sell or manufacture liquor. The 1979 law prohibiting the sale of any type of alcohol to women was overturned in an effort to restore gender neutrality. However, the move was opposed by hardline sections of the majority-Buddhist nation forcing the President to reimpose the ban.

### China became second internet service provider for Nepal

The Hong Kong and Beijing based China Telecom Global (CTG) – a company formed in 2012 – has teamed up with Nepal Telecom to provide alternate cyber-connectivity to Nepal. So far, Nepal had been linked to the global internet network through Indian telecom operators, using optical fiber connections in Biratnagar, Bhairahawa and Birgunj, among others. But a new terrestrial fiber cable launched in 2016 by CTG will now connect Nepal and China through the Jilong (Rasuwagadhi) border gateway.

### Saudi Arabia allows women to visit the country without a male companion

Women aged 25 and above will now be allowed to visit Saudi Arabia alone, without being accompanied by a male companion. The move is a part of Saudi Arabia's broader plans to issue tourist visas.

### 'IRON FIST'- US, Japan joint Military Drill begins

American and Japanese military forces have launched joint exercise named Iron Fist. The 13th annual Iron Fist exercises kicked off in the U.S. western state of California. More than 500 U.S. Marines and sailors are partnering with about 350 members of the Japanese Ground Self-Defense Force to train in fire support operations and amphibious assaults.

### Iran bans teaching of English language in primary schools to block cultural invasion

Iran has banned the teaching of English in primary schools after Islamic leaders warned that early learning of the language opened the way to a Western "cultural invasion". According to the Iran's Supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, it does not mean opposition to learning a foreign language, but a promotion of a foreign culture in the country and among children, young adults, and youths. The teaching of English in Iran usually starts between the ages of 12 to 14 but some primary schools below that age also hold language classes.

### East Jerusalem for Palestinian capital

Arab states will push for the international community to recognize East Jerusalem as the capital of a Palestinian state. This announcement comes a month after US President Donald Trump recognized the city as Israel's capital. Many Arabs consider the eastern part of Jerusalem as the capital of a future Palestinian state.

### US lists Pakistan with ten other nations for Religious Freedom Violations

The United States has placed Pakistan on 'Special Watch List' for "severe violations" of religious freedom. It is only country to be put under the newly-formed list. Moreover, US also re-designated about 10 countries as 'Countries of Particular Concern' under its International Religious Freedom (IRF) Act. They are Burma (Myanmar), China, Eritrea, Iran, North Korea, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

### Himalayan Hydro Expo 2018 kicked off at Kathmandu

The Himalayan Hydro Expo 2018 kicked off at Kathmandu, the capital Nepal. President of Nepal Bidya Devi Bhandari inaugurated the exhibition. Delegates from various countries including India, China, Austria, Czech Republic and Norway are participating in the expo. The basic objective of Expo is to unleash massive hydropower potential of Nepal and bring all stakeholders under one roof.

### Iceland becomes first country to legalise equal pay

A new law making it illegal to pay men more than women has taken effect in Iceland. The legislation makes Iceland the first country in the world to legalise equal pay between men and women. Under the new rules, companies and government agencies employing at least 25 people will have to obtain government certification of their equal-pay policies. Those that fail to prove pay parity will face fines.

### Israel passes law requiring super-majority to relinquish control over Jerusalem

Israel's parliament passed a law requiring a supermajority to relinquish control over any part of Jerusalem, a move that could hamstring the city's division in any future peace deal. The amendment bars the government from ceding Israeli sovereignty over any part of Jerusalem without approval of at least 80 of the legislature's 120 members. But the law itself can be overturned with a simple majority, making it largely symbolic. The law also permits the government to remove outlying Palestinian neighborhoods from the city.

### Six countries enter UN Security Council

Equatorial Guinea, Ivory Coast, Kuwait, Peru, Poland and the Netherlands formally joined the ranks of the non-permanent members of the United Nations Security Council to make a difference. The six new countries, voted on by the 193-member General assembly for two-year terms, will have a strong voice in matters dealing with international peace and security during their time on

the U.N.'s most powerful body. The UN Security Council has 15 members, including five with permanent seats who have the power to veto resolutions – Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States. The six countries who left the UN Security Council recently are Egypt, Italy, Japan, Senegal, Ukraine and Uruguay.

#### California's new law on cannabis use

California has become the largest state in the US to legalise recreational cannabis use. As of 1 January 2018, adults aged over 21 can possess up to an ounce (28 grams) of the drug and can grow up to six marijuana plants at home. Sacramento is California's capital. Democrat Hillary Clinton is the president of California.

#### Bulgaria takes over revolving EU presidency

Bulgaria, has taken over the European Union's six-month revolving presidency with the ongoing migrant crisis and Brexit among the top items on its agenda. It takes over from Estonia. The presidency, which rotates between different EU member states, will give an opportunity to improve its image as the bloc's most corrupt country. Bulgaria will have to manage a June deadline for EU leaders to agree an overhaul of the so-called Dublin Regulation, under which the country where an asylum seeker arrives is responsible for them.

#### No more aid to Pakistan: Trump

Showing zero tolerance towards terrorism, the US President issued a tough warning to Pakistan and said that United States will no longer give any fund to Pakistan. The statement comes soon after the recent talks that the Trump administration was considering cutting off aid to Pakistan. In this changing scenario the US President Donald Trump slammed the Pakistan, saying that this South Asian country has given nothing but the lies and deceit to US. It has provided safe haven to terrorists.

#### China shuts down its legal Ivory Trade

Two years after a joint pledge with the United States to ban the domestic trade in ivory, all of China's government-licensed carving factories and ivory retailers are about to close. China is one of the world's biggest consumers of ivory products. By the end of 2017, it has imposed a near-complete ban on buying and selling ivory.

#### Venezuela raises minimum wage 40%

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro has announced a 40 percent increase to the minimum wage. New wage level would protect workers against Washington's economic war to sabotage socialism. The government is in fact fomenting a vicious cycle in a country already wrestling with the world's fastest inflation. To counter those price increases, Maduro has been raising the minimum wage, but quickening inflation coupled with a depreciating bolivar currency has plunged millions into poverty. Venezuelans will now earn some 797, 510 bolivars a month, factoring in food tickets, or just over 7 Dollars on the widely used black market index.

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## INDIA & WORLD

#### India becomes third largest producer of crude steel

According to recent report published by World Steel Association (WSA), India has overtaken US to become the world's third largest steel producer in 2017. India's crude steel production has grown by 6.2% to 101.4 million tonnes (MT) in 2017 compared to 95.5 MT in the previous year.

#### India ranks sixth in the list of wealthiest countries

India has been ranked sixth in the list of wealthiest countries with total wealth of 8,230 billion US dollars, while the United States topped the chart. According to a report by New World Wealth, India was the best performing wealth market globally in 2017 as its total wealth swelled from 6,584 billion dollars in 2016 to 8,230 billion dollars in 2017, registering a 25 per cent growth.

#### India cheapest country to live in after South Africa: Survey

According to a survey by GoBankingRates ranked nations, India is ranked second only to South Africa as the cheapest country to live or retire. These rankings are based four key affordability metrics: Local purchasing power index, rent index, Groceries index, and Consumer price index.

#### VINBAX: Indian, Vietnam hold first military exercise in Jabalpur

The India-Vietnam Bilateral Army Exercise (VINBAX-2018) was conducted at Jabalpur in Madhya Pradesh. It is the first military exercise between the two countries. The six day-long military exercise (from January 29 to February 3, 2018) was conducted as part of joint training undertaken with friendly foreign countries by Indian Army.

#### India, Vietnam release first-ever Commemorative Stamps

India and Vietnam released first ever set of commemorative postage stamps to mark the long-term friendly bilateral relationships between the two countries. The stamp was released by AN Nanda, Secretary, Department of Posts. The two set of stamps released carry picture of Sanchi Stupa and Thien Mu Pagoda.

#### India ranks 177 In Environmental Performance Index

India ranks 177 among 180 countries in the Environmental Performance Index (EPI) 2018, according to a biennial report by Yale and Columbia Universities along with the World Economic Forum. India ranked 141 in 2016 report. The report was released on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. Switzerland leads the list, followed by France, Denmark, and Malta.

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

India and Vietnam on 24th January 2018 exchanged Memorandums of Understandings (MoUs) for cooperation in the field of Information and Broadcasting and space. The agreement were exchanged in the presence of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Vietnam counterpart, Nguyen Xuan Phuc.

#### **PM Modi holds Bilateral Talks with 3 ASEAN Leaders**

On the eve of the ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit to celebrate 25 years of India-ASEAN partnership, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had separate bilateral meetings with leaders of three ASEAN nations – Myanmar, Vietnam and Philippines in New Delhi. The PM first met his Vietnamese counterpart Nguyen Xuan Phuc and held talks with on issues of mutual interest. Next, he met the Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte and covered a wide range of subjects. Myanmar's State Councillor Aung San Suu Kyi also met the PM later in the evening.

#### **India ranked 81st on Global Index of Talent Competitiveness**

India was ranked 81st among 118 countries in 2017 Global index of talent competitiveness (GTI) list. India has improved its position from 92nd last year. The index measures ability of countries to compete for talent i.e. how countries grow, attract and retain talent. It is produced by global business school INSEAD in partnership with Adecco Group and Human Capital Leadership Institute (HCLI) of Singapore.

#### **Sri Lanka bans import of non-airbag equipped vehicles from July 1**

Sri Lanka restricted the import of the vehicles which do not carry airbags for driver and front seat passenger, Anti-Locking Braking System standards (ABS) and three-point seat belts for driver and passengers traveling front and rear seats. This decision after considering the representations made by motor vehicle importers and manufacturers for a lead time to make required adjustments to comply with the proposed emission standards and safety measures.

#### **17 Indian fishermen arrested in Pakistan**

Seventeen Indian fishermen have been arrested for allegedly fishing in Pakistani waters and a court here remanded them into custody. Most of the fishermen belonged to Gujarat. The 17 Indian fishermen were arrested for fishing in Pakistan's territorial waters, according to the Maritime Security Force. The arrests come after the release of 145 Indian fishermen on December 28.

#### **India ranks 62nd on WEF's Inclusive Development Index**

India was ranked at the 62nd place among emerging economies on an Inclusive Development Index of World Economic Forum (WEF). In the report, China is on 26th position and Pakistan is on 47th. Norway remains the world's most inclusive advanced economy, while Lithuania again tops the list of emerging economies, according to the report. India was ranked 60th among 79 developing economies in 2017. Among advanced economies, Norway is followed by Ireland, Luxembourg, and Switzerland in top three.

#### **India becomes 43rd Member of Australia Group**

India has joined the Australia Group export control regime and has become the 43rd Member of that Group. It is an informal forum which seeks to ensure that exports do not contribute to the development of chemical or biological weapons. The inclusion will raise India's stature in the field of non-proliferation and help in acquiring critical technologies. India has managed entry into Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), the Wassenaar Arrangement and Australia Group despite not being a signatory to the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

#### **Indian peacekeepers rebuild Akoka bridge**

Indian peacekeepers in UN Mission in South Sudan have re-built a key bridge in record time in strife-torn South Sudan's Akoka village. In June 2017, heavy rains washed away a 300-metre-long road segment across a river in Akoka village. This bridge will enable people to cross the river and reach a town to access basic services.

#### **Coast Guards of India, Japan undertake joint naval exercise**

The biennial search and rescue exercise between Indian Coast Guard (ICG) and Japan Coast Guard (JCG) was held near Chennai, Tamil Nadu in Bay of Bengal. This was eighth such in series of 'National Maritime Search and Rescue Workshop and Exercise'. Ships and aircraft of Coast Guards from India and Japan, Indian Navy and Indian Air Force (IAF) and National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT) took part in it.

#### **India, Israel sign 9 agreements in space, defence, cybersecurity**

India and Israel have signed nine agreements to boost cooperation in the areas of space, cyber security and oil and gas between both countries. The agreements were signed following delegation-level talks headed by Prime Ministers Narendra Modi and his Israeli counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu in New Delhi. Netanyahu is first Israeli Prime Minister to visit India in span of last 15 years and second one overall. Ariel Sharon was first and only Israeli Prime Minister to visit India in 2003.

#### **Teen Murti Chowk renamed after Israeli city Haifa**

The iconic Teen Murti Chowk in central New Delhi was renamed as Teen Murti-Haifa after Israeli City Haifa in solemn ceremony attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Israeli counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu. The idea of renaming Teen Murti road and chowk after Haifa was proposed in New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) council meeting during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Israel in July 2017. This year marks the centenary year of Battle for Haifa. The renaming of the iconic war memorial is aimed at being symbolic gesture of India's friendship with Israel.

#### **WEF ranks India 30th on global manufacturing index**

The World Economic Forum (WEF) has ranked India at 30th position on a global manufacturing index. In its first "Readiness for the future of production" report, Japan has been found to have the best structure of production and is followed by South Korea, Germany, Switzerland, China, Czech Republic, the US, Sweden, Austria and Ireland.

#### **Pakistan frees 147 Indian fishermen on humanitarian grounds**

Pakistan released 147 Indian fishermen from Malir Jail in Karachi as a goodwill gesture. As per the list was given to the Indian High Commission by the Pakistani government, 457 Indian prisoners including 399 fishermen and 58 civil prisoners are in Pakistani jails. The fishermen were arrested for fishing illegally within the marine border limits of Pakistan and have completed their prison term. The Edhi Foundation provided them with clothes and Rs 5,000 each. Fishermen from India and Pakistan are frequently detained for illegally fishing in each other's territorial waters since the Arabian Sea does not have a clearly defined marine border and the wooden boats lack the technology to avoid being drifting away.

#### World Book Fair 2018 starts in New Delhi

The 26th edition of the World Book Fair has begun on January 6, 2018 at Pragati Maidan, New Delhi. It will come to an end on January 14. The main theme of the World Book Fair is 'Environment and Climate Change'. It is being organised by National Book Trust, in association with ITPO. The 2018 World Book Fair hosts European union as the Guest of Honour country. The EU member States will exhibit publications in English and other European languages.

#### India excludes Pakistan from a SAARC Initiative

India has excluded Pakistan from the list of SAARC member countries with which it will be connecting its state-of-the-art National Knowledge Network (NKN) for sharing scientific databases and remote access to advanced research facilities. The government has kicked off the process of appointing a telecom company that will connect and extend the NKN to research and education networks in six South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation member states – Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka.

#### India and Pakistan exchange list of nuclear sites for 27th consecutive year

India and Pakistan have exchanged list of their nuclear installations and facilities with each other under the Agreement on the Prohibition of Attack against Nuclear installations. This is the 27th consecutive exchange of such list between two countries after first list was exchanged on 1 January 1992. This is an annual exchange of conducted in 1st January between them to prevent them from attacking each other's nuclear facilities. The exchange is part of an agreement between the two nuclear-armed neighbours meant to prevent attacks on nuclear facilities by each other.

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## NATIONAL

#### President launches Pulse Polio programme for 2018

President Ram Nath Kovind has launched Pulse Polio Immunization (PPI) Programme for year 2018 by administering polio drops to children at the Rashtrapati Bhavan. The event was organised on the eve of the National Immunisation Day (NID), observed on 28 January. More than 17 crore children of less than 5 years across the country will be given polio drops as part of Government's drive to eradicate polio from the country.

#### Nation Celebrates 69th Republic Day

The Country celebrates its 69th Republic Day on 26th January. The family members of Corporal Jyoti Prakash Nirala (Posthumous) of the Indian Air Force (IAF), who died fighting militants in Kashmir valley, received India's highest peacetime gallantry award, Ashok Chakra. This is the third Ashok Chakra for the IAF and its first for ground combat.

#### Prime Minister Narendra Modi presents National Bravery Awards to 18 children

Prime Minister Narendra Modi honored 7 girls and 11 boys with the National Bravery Awards. Praising the resolve of the awardees. The children felicitated by him in the past hailed from "rural and simple background". The awardees include a 14-year-old Karnataka girl who died while trying to save two boys from drowning.

#### India, 5th Most Attractive Market for Investments: PwC Survey

India has emerged as the fifth most attractive market for investments and the optimism over global economic growth is at a record level, as per the survey of CEOs by global consultancy PwC. The US remains the top spot for global investment. Around 46% of global CEOs consider the US as one of the three most important countries for growth, followed by China (33%) and Germany (20%) at second and third places, respectively. India (9%) bumps Japan (8%) as the fifth most attractive market in 2018.

#### OPV Vijaya: Indian Coast Guard patrol vessel launched

The second indigenously built offshore patrol vessel (OPV) named Vijaya built by Larsen and Toubro (L&T) Shipyard for Indian Coast Guard (ICG) was launched at Kattupalli Shipyard, Tamil Nadu. It is expected to be inducted into service by September 2018 after trials on the equipment.

#### Nirmala Sitharaman became the First Woman Defence Minister of India to fly in Sukhoi 30

Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman undertook a sortie in IAF's frontline combat jet Sukhoi-30 MKI in the western sector of Rajasthan. She is the first woman defence minister of India to fly a sortie in an IAF Sukhoi-30 MKI fighter aircraft. Sukhoi-30 MKI is a nuclear-capable aircraft which can penetrate deep into enemy territory and is the most potent component of our nation's air power.

#### All 14 types of Rs 10 coin valid, legal tender: RBI

All the 14 designs of Rs 10 coin are valid and legal tender for transactions, the Reserve Bank amid reluctance by certain traders to accept the coins. "It has come to the notice of the Reserve Bank that in certain places there is reluctance on part of traders and members of public to accept Rs 10 coins due to suspicion about their genuineness", RBI said while reiterating legal tender status of the coins of different designs. It has also asked banks to accept coins for transactions and exchange at all their branches.

#### India test-fires Nuclear-Capable ICBM Agni-V

India test-fired its nuclear-capable Agni-V inter-continental ballistic missile (ICBM), which has a strike range of over 5,000km. The ICBM can reach the northern-most parts of China. Agni-V was last tested in December 2016, in what was described as the fourth and final experimental test of the three-stage ICBM.

#### Ministry of Petroleum launches Saksham 2018 campaign

Saksham (Sanrakshan Kshamta Mahotsav) is an annual flagship event of Petroleum Conservation Research Association (PCRA) under the aegis of Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas, Govt. of India. The event focuses on the active involvement of the Oil & Gas PSUs along with other stakeholders like State Governments, for creating focused attention on fuel conservation through people-centric activities. The month-long campaign aims to intensify efforts for making citizens aware of the conservation and effective utilization of petroleum products.

#### UIDAI introduces face authentication to further strengthen Aadhaar security

The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) decided to enable 'Face Authentication' in fusion mode on registered devices by July 1, so that people facing difficulty in other existing modes of verification such as fingerprints, iris, and one-time-password (OTP) could easily authenticate. Not only will this new facility help in an inclusive authentication of those who are not able to biometrically verify their identity, due to worn out fingerprints, old age, or hard working conditions, but also add another layer of security.

#### Migrant Workers to have Orange Passports

New passports for citizens who have Emigration Check Required (ECR) status will have orange cover jackets, instead of the traditional dark blue. Indian passports have a blue cover, diplomatic and official passports have white and red jackets, respectively. Applicants who haven't cleared 10th standard are given a passport with ECR category.

#### Delhi is richest state, Jain wealthiest community: NFHS-4 wealth index

According to wealth index released on basis of data from fourth round of National Family and Health Survey (NFHS-4) Delhi is richest state and Jain wealthiest community in the country. The NFHS-4 was conducted among more than 6 lakh households in 2015-16. It was largest sample size and was carried out just couple of years ago that provided useful source of information in analysing India's socio-economic landscape.

#### Ministry of Railway launches SFOORTI App

In a major digital initiative to help plan the traffic flows and optimize freight operations, Ministry of Railways launched Smart Freight Operation Optimisation & Real Time Information (SFOORTI) App for Freight Managers which provides features for monitoring and managing freight business using Geographic Information System (GIS) Views and Dashboard. With this application, movement of freight trains on Geographic Information System (GIS) view can be tracked. Both passenger and freight trains can be tracked over Zones/Divisions/ Sections in single GIS View.

#### Kajol named ambassador for Swachh Aaad Swachh Bharat

Actress Kajol, an active supporter of eradicating preventable deaths from hygiene-related issues, has become an advocacy ambassador for a Swachh Aaad Swachh Bharat initiative. Kajol took to Twitter to urge people to become "swachhta doot" and contribute to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Swachh Bharat Abhiyan.

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

The senior advocate Indu Malhotra has been recommended as a judge of the Supreme Court by the collegium of Supreme Court. Indu Malhotra would become the first woman lawyer to be directly appointed as a judge of the highest court. Along with Indu Malhotra, Justice K M Joseph has also been cleared for elevation to the apex court. Justice K M Joseph is presently chief justice of Uttarakhand High Court.

#### Government restricts use of national flag made of plastic

The central government insisted people not to use national flag made of plastic, ahead of Republic Day celebrations. An advisory from the Union Home Ministry has said that, since plastic flags are not biodegradable like paper flags, they do not decompose for a long time. Keeping in mind the proper disposal of national flag made of plastic, without affecting its dignity, the advisory has restricted the usage of plastic bags. The advisory has stated that on important national, cultural and sports events, only flags made of paper are to be used by public as per the Flag Code of India, 2002. These paper flags should not be discarded or thrown on the ground after the event. They should be disposed of in private without affecting the dignity of the flag.

#### 108 years old Monorail used by Maharaja of Patiala is now operational

One important heritage attraction at National Rail Museum- a 108 years old monorail, which was used by Maharaja of Patiala Lt Bhupinder Singh, became operational on 11 January 2018. The National Rail Museum announced to start this heritage train on every Thursday for visitors. This monorail, hauled by steam locomotives, is one of its kinds in the world. National Rail Museum (NRM) is the focus of Rail heritage of India, a source of fascination and interest in railways for all. The Museum promises to take the visitors on an exciting journey into the Railway history and heritage and depict their contribution to the industrial and economic progress of the country.

#### National Anthem not mandatory in Cinema Halls: SC

The supreme Court has ruled that playing the national anthem before screening movies in cinema halls is not mandatory. The ruling modifies November 2016 order of Supreme Court that made the playing of national anthem in cinemas mandatory. A bench headed by the Chief Justice Dipak Misra accepted the Union Government's affidavit that said a 12-member inter-ministerial committee had been set up to suggest changes in the 1971 Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act. However, exemption to the disabled people from standing in cinema halls during the national anthem will remain in force till the committee takes a decision. The inter-ministerial committee will now take a final call on the matter.

#### PM Modi inaugurates 1st PIO Parliamentary Conference in Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurates the first Persons of Indian Origin (PIO) Parliamentary Conference in Delhi on the occasion of Pravasi Bharatiya Divas. The day is celebrated every year to mark the contribution of the overseas Indian community in the development of India. It also commemorates the return of Mahatma Gandhi from South Africa to Mumbai on 9 January 1915. In the Conference, the biggest delegation was from Guyana with 20 members of parliament and three mayors. Established in 2003, and sponsored by the Ministry of External Affairs of the Government of India, the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas is held from 7-9 January every year.

#### Gujarat tops Logistics Performance Index Chart

Gujarat has topped the logistics index chart, according to a Report released by Union Minister for Commerce & Industry Suresh Prabhu in New Delhi. The chart is an indicator of the efficiency of logistical services necessary for promoting exports in particular and economic growth in general. Among 22 states, Gujarat is followed by Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra on the index. The ranking is based on the analysis of perception with regard to eight parameters, including infrastructure, services, regulatory process and safety of cargo. Among the Union Territories, Daman & Diu occupied the top slot followed by Delhi and Chandigarh. As regards the hilly states, Tripura was on top followed by Mizoram and Meghalaya.

#### HRD Ministry releases All India Higher Education Survey

The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education of Indian has registered an increase from 24.5% in 2015-16 to 25.2% in 2016-17 according to latest All India Higher Education Survey (AIHES) released by HRD Ministry. The survey findings were based on responses of 795 universities, 34,193 colleges and 7,496 standalone institutions. There are total of 864 universities, 40,026 colleges and 11,669 standalone institutions in the country.

#### Three Ministries sign MoU for a Technology Mission for Indian Railways

Three Ministries of the Union Government, the Ministry of Railways, Ministry of Human Resource Development and the Department of Science & Technology signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) at Rail Bhawan, New Delhi for Joint funding of Technology Mission for Indian Railways.

#### Nation-wide cleanliness survey 'Swachh Survekshan' launched

The nation-wide cleanliness survey 'Swachh Survekshan' was launched across India on 4 January 2018. The main objective of the survey is to evaluate the achievements in the cleanliness level in Urban areas. Deemed as the world's biggest survey, it will be conducted in over 4,000 cities with a population of more than 40 crores. It will run till 10 March 2018.

#### APGVB introduces Desktop ATMs in Rural India

The Andhra Pradesh Grameena Vikas Bank (APGVB) has operationalised its first desktop ATM in Telangana. The mini-ATM within the branch premises will facilitate customers to withdraw small amounts. At the same time, regular bank account holders can withdraw money and do other banking activities. With these ATMs, there will be no need for separate ATM rooms, so there is no security issue. This initiative is the biggest under the SBI and among the best regional rural banks (RRBs).

#### Assamese and Manipuri versions of PM Narendra Modi Official Website launched

The Assamese and Manipuri language versions of Prime Minister's Official website- [www.pmindia.gov.in](http://www.pmindia.gov.in) were launched. Now the PM INDIA website is available in 11 regional languages namely Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Kannada, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Odia, Punjabi, Tamil and Telugu in addition to English and Hindi.

#### WCD launches online portal 'NARI' for women empowerment

Union Minister of Women & Child Development Maneka Sanjay Gandhi has inaugurated the online portal 'NARI' for women empowerment. NARI stands for 'National Repository of Information for Women'. The portal contains information about schemes being run by both Central as well as the State Governments.

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## STATES

#### Himachal CM launches 'Shakti' app for women's safety

The Chief Minister of Himachal Pradesh, Jai Ram Thakur has launched the 'Shakti' app for women's safety in the state. The app, which comes with a panic button, was developed by the National Informatics Centre (NIC) of the Himachal Pradesh government. It would be available in both Hindi and English languages and would not require internet connectivity.

#### Kolkata becomes 1st Indian Metro to get a Floating Market

Kolkata has become the first Indian Metro to get a Floating Market. The market will be located on a water-body with boats doubling up as shops. The market, located on the eastern fringes of the city, was inaugurated by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. The aim is to rehabilitate over 200 shopkeepers from a nearby market that was demolished for the widening of the Eastern Metropolitan Bypass. The market will host at least 114 boats, each one accommodating two shops.

#### Maharashtra bans sale of Tobacco at shops selling FMCG items

The Maharashtra Government has banned the sale of Tobacco in shops selling Fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) items in the state. The move aims to ensure that youngsters do not get addicted to tobacco products.

#### Manipur Govt launches health assurance scheme for poor & disabled people

Manipur Government has launched the Chief Minister-gi Hakshelgi Tengbang (CMHT), a health assurance scheme for the poor and disabled people. It was launched by Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh. The CMHT scheme will provide cashless treatment to poor at government hospitals, health centres and other empanelled selected private hospitals.

#### India's 1st Garbage Festival Organised in Chhattisgarh

The Raipur Municipal Corporation in Chhattisgarh organized the three-day 'Kachra Mahotsav 2018'. It is India's first Garbage Festival. The festival aimed to increase awareness, use the waste generated in the city creatively, and to showcase multiple techniques for reusing things that are labeled as garbage.

#### Maharashtra govt launches 'Balasaheb Thackeray Shaheed Sanmaan' scheme

The Maharashtra government launched 'Balasaheb Thackeray Shaheed Sanmaan' scheme, under which family members of martyrs would be provided jobs with the Maharashtra State road Transport Corporation (MSRTC). The scheme was announced in the presence of Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis and Shiv Sena chief Uddhav Thackeray. Under this, apart from jobs, wives of martyrs would also be provided with lifetime free bus passes. The MSRTC also launches a scheme for the youth in the Naxal-affected areas, under which driving training schools would be started for them.

#### Khandu inaugurates World War II Memorial Museum in Arunachal



Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu inaugurated the World War II Memorial Museum in the state's Changlang district bordering Myanmar. Built by the Union Culture Ministry, the Rs 2.25 crore museum in memory of those who laid down their lives in World War II is located adjacent to the historic Stilwell Road and is expected to boost international and domestic tourist inflow especially from Southeast Asian countries.

#### **Maharashtra becomes first state to unveil Public Cloud Policy**

Maharashtra became first state in country to unveil Public Cloud Policy that virtually mandates state government departments to shift their data storage onto cloud. Earlier in October 2017, State Government had formed four-member committee to draft policy framework on cloud usage, which had submitted a policy document that's being now adopted as public cloud policy.

#### **Odisha CM launches 'Mukhyamantri Kalakar Sahayata Yojana'**

Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik has launched the 'Mukhyamantri Kalakar Sahayata Yojana' (MMKSJ) – an assistance scheme for Artists in the state. Around 50,000 artists will be benefited from this. The government has decided to give Rs 1,200 per month as artist assistance. The CM confirmed that the government has also changed the eligibility criteria for availing MMKSJ. Under the new scheme, a male artist can avail assistance after attaining the age of 50 years instead of the existing 60 years. The age criteria for female artists have been reduced to 40 years from 50 years.

#### **Sikkim Govt allows people to forge fraternal ties with trees**

Sikkim Government has allowed people from state to forge fraternal ties with trees. In this regard, State Forests, Department has issued notification titled Sikkim Forest Tree (Amity & Reverence) Rules 2017. The purpose of this move is to preserve trees by encouraging people to forge relationship of brotherhood or sisterhood with trees through tradition practice locally known as Mitini or Mith/Mit.

#### **PM inaugurates Rajasthan's first oil refinery at Barmer**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has inaugurated the project commencement of the Rajasthan Refinery at Pachpadra in Barmer district. This is the first oil refinery in the state. The 43,000 crore rupee project is a joint venture between HPCL and the Rajasthan government. The refinery is expected to be operational in 4 years and the state will have an additional income of 34,000 crore rupees from it. The project is expected to generate thousands of direct and indirect jobs.

#### **Bhopal becomes India's 1st Railway Station to have 'Happy Nari' Pad-Vending Machine**

Bhopal railway station has become the first railway station in the country to have a sanitary napkin vending machine. The machine dispenses two sanitary napkins at the cost of Rs 5 only. The sanitary pads vending machine has been named 'Happy Nari'. This is the first railway station in India to have a sanitary napkin vending machine.

#### **Bihar government bans electronic cigarettes in state**

Bihar government has banned manufacture, distribution, sale, purchase, display, and advertisement of electronic cigarettes in the state. Anyone violating the ban will attract a jail term of up to 3 years, the government notification stated. E-cigarettes are smoked through electronic nicotine delivery system, which uses liquid nicotine, propylene glycol, glycerine, and water among other substances.

#### **A R Rahman named brand ambassador of Sikkim**

Music maestro A R Rahman was named the official brand ambassador of Sikkim at the ceremony of the Sikkim Red Panda Winter Carnival in Gangtok. He is also referred to as the "Mozart of Madras". This is the first time that the Himalayan nation has chosen someone to become the brand ambassador of the state.

#### **Chandigarh records the highest GER for girls**

Chandigarh has recorded the highest Gross Enrolment Ratio or GER for females in all categories of higher education at 68.8 percent. Across India, according to the report, of the total number of colleges, only 9.3 percent are exclusively for girls and 15 universities for women. The overall GER of the country has increased from 24.5 percent in 2015-16 to 25.2 percent in 2016-17.

#### **Haryana becomes First State to launch High Risk Pregnancy Portal**

Haryana has become the first state in the country to launch High Risk Pregnancy (HRP) Portal. This portal not only helps in early identification of high-risk pregnant cases up to the grass-roots level but also ensures their timely referral to the civil hospitals for further management and delivery by specialists. This innovative web application has been designed to track every high risk pregnant woman till 42 days after delivery, so that she receives adequate treatment during the ante-natal period for healthy outcome of pregnancy.

#### **Lalu jailed for 3.5 years in fodder scam**

RJD chief Lalu Prasad was sentenced to three-and-a-half years in jail and fined Rs 1 million by a special CBI court in a fodder scam case relating to fraudulent withdrawal of Rs 89.27 lakh. This is the second time that he has been jailed in the fodder scam. Prasad faces another three scam cases for illegal withdrawal from three other treasuries.

#### **International kite festival begins in Gujarat**

The international kite festival which attracts kite flyers from across the country and the world began in Ahmedabad. The international kite festival was inaugurated by Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani at Sabarmati Riverfront. The state government-sponsored festival will culminate on January 14, which is celebrated as Uttarayan (Makar Sankranti).

#### **CM Nitish receives Mufti Mohammad Sayeed award in J&K**

Bihar Chief minister Nitish Kumar has been given the first Mufti Mohammad Sayeed Award for Probity in Public Life. The award was constituted recently by the Jammu and Kashmir government to commemorate the death anniversary of PDP founder and two-time J&K chief minister Sayeed who died on January 7, 2016 after nearly a week-long hospitalization in New Delhi. Sayeed was father of J&K CM Mehbooba Mufti.

#### **Meghalaya signs host city contract for 39th National Games in 2022**



Meghalaya signed the Host City Contract with the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) for hosting the 39th National Games in 2022. The tripartite contract was signed between the IOA, the Meghalaya State Olympic Association, and the state government. Meghalaya had made the bid to host the 39th National Games after successfully co-hosting the South Asian Games in 2017.

#### **Haryana makes Solar plants mandatory in new buildings**

The Haryana government has mandated installation of Solar Photovoltaic Power plant in new buildings as per specified norms. This has been done in a move to conserve electricity and use it efficiently. The government says the move aims to efficient use of electricity and its conservation in the state.

#### **171st Araadhanai Music Festival begins in Tamil Nadu**

The 171st Araadhanai Music Festival of one of the Trinities of Carnatic music Saint Thyagaraja begins in Thiruvaiyaru, Tamil Nadu. The festival was inaugurated by Governor Banwarilal Purohit. The main function of the festival is the choral singing of Thyagaraja's five kritis in Ghana ragas. Over 1,000 musicians from all over the world are expected to pay homage to Saint Thyagaraja during the course of the five-day festival.

#### **Bhavantar Bharpai scheme in Haryana**

To counter farm distress, Haryana government has launched Bhavantar Bharpai scheme (or the price deficit compensation scheme for vegetables). It is set on the lines of Minimum Support Price-type (MSP) formula for four vegetable crops, namely, potato, onion, cauliflower and tomato. The launch of the scheme is aimed at ensuring income of up to Rs 48,000 to 56,000 per acre to farmers.

#### **Kolkata bans public display of weapons**

The Kolkata Police has come out with a notification banning public display of weapons in the city for the whole of 2018. The order is effective from January 2. The notification specifies certain exemptions, but religious processions are curiously not among them. The order will not extend to persons like the President of India, governors of state and Lt-governors or commissioners.

#### **Arunachal Pradesh declared open defecation-free State**

Arunachal Pradesh was officially declared Open Defecation Free (ODF) state. It is second State from Northeast, after Sikkim and overall fifth state after Himachal Pradesh, Kerala and Haryana to be declared ODF state. The announcement comes after three remaining districts – Upper Subansiri, Siang and Changlang were officially declared ODF. Arunachal Pradesh has total 21 districts and it attained this major cleanliness feat under Swach Bharat Abhiyan much before (one year and 10 months ahead) the national deadline of October 2, 2019.

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## **CONFERENCES**

#### **48th World Economic Forum annual meet begins in Davos**

The 48th annual meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF) began on January 23, 2018 in Davos, Switzerland with the theme 'Creating a Shared Future in a Fractured World'. WEF Founder and Executive Chairman Klaus Schwab declared the summit open amid the ski-resort receiving record snowfall. Schwab welcomed members from business, politics, academia and media as well as the first timers with a round of applause. The summit would witness participation from over 3,000 world leaders, business patrons, academicians, philanthropists and politicians from across the world.

#### **First International Dam Safety Conference held in Thiruvananthapuram**

The first International Dam Safety Conference-2018 was held in Kovalam, Thiruvananthapuram (Kerala) from January 23-24, 2018. It was inaugurated by Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and was presided over by Union Minister of State for Water Resources Arjun Ram Meghwal.

#### **10th Global Forum for Food & Agriculture held Berlin**

The 10th edition of Global Forum for Food & Agriculture was held in Berlin, Germany from 18th -20th January 2018. The theme of this year's event is "Shaping the future of livestock – sustainably, responsibly, efficiently". Indian delegation to the event is led by Union Minister of State (MoS) for Agriculture & Farmers Welfare Gajendra Singh Shekhawat.

#### **India attends its first SCO military cooperation meeting**

India, for the first time, took part in a meeting of the international military cooperation departments of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in Beijing, China, since joining the bloc last year. This is the first meeting attended by India in the field of defence cooperation under the SCO framework. The SCO comprises of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India and Pakistan.

#### **4th ASEAN-India Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture & Forestry held in New Delhi**

Agriculture ministers of ASEAN countries met for the fourth sitting in New Delhi. The topic of discussion was based on food and agricultural future developments. On this occasion, Union Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh stated that India is committed towards the agenda set by United Nations and ASEAN countries have been working together for the prosperity of the agriculture sector as well.

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## **AWARDS**

#### **Asha Bhosle to get Yash Chopra Memorial Award**

Bollywood playback singer Asha Bhosle will be given the 'Yash Chopra Memorial Award'. She will be the fifth winner of the award. The name of Asha Bhosle is in the Guinness World Records for recording over 11,000 songs in 20 different languages. The award will be presented to Asha Bhosle in February 2018. The award has been instituted by the TSR Foundation of T. Subbarami Reddy in memory of producer-director Yash Chopra, who died in 2012.

#### Parliamentary Group to confer Outstanding Parliamentarian Awards to five MPs

The Parliamentary Group has decided to confer Outstanding Parliamentarian Awards to five Members of Parliament. They are Dr. Najma Heptulla: She is former Lok Sabha MP and was selected for this award for the year 2013. Hukumdev Narayan Yadav: He is Lok Sabha MP and was selected for this award for the year 2014. Ghulam Nabi Azad: He is Rajya Sabha MP and was selected for this award for the year 2015. Dinesh Trivedi: He is Lok Sabha MP and was selected for this award for the year 2016. Bhartruhari Mahatab: He is Lok Sabha MP and was selected for 2017.

#### Grammy Awards 2018- Complete List of Winners

The 60th Annual Grammy Awards, honoring the best achievements from October 2016 to September 2017 were held at Madison Square Garden in New York City, the USA. James Corden was the host of the ceremony for the second year in a row. It was Bruno Mars' night at the Grammy Awards held in New York, with the three biggest wins – Album Of The Year and Record Of The Year for '24K Magic' and Song Of The Year for 'That's What I Like'. Here's the list of winners of the 60th Grammy Awards. Best Album: Bruno Mars' '24K Magic'. Best Song: Ed Sheeran, 'Shape of You'. Best Record: Bruno Mars, 'That's What I Like'. Best Pop: Bruno Mars, 'That's What I Like'. Best Solo: Bruno Mars, 'That's What I Like'. Best Dance Music: Bruno Mars, 'That's What I Like'. Best Vocal: Bruno Mars, 'That's What I Like'. Best Performance: Bruno Mars, 'That's What I Like'. Best Recording: Bruno Mars, 'That's What I Like'. Best Film: Bruno Mars, 'That's What I Like'. Best TV: Bruno Mars, 'That's What I Like'. Best Children's: Bruno Mars, 'That's What I Like'. Best Compilation: Bruno Mars, 'That's What I Like'. Best Soundtrack: Bruno Mars, 'That's What I Like'. Best Producer of the Year: Bruno Mars, 'That's What I Like'. Best Classical: Bruno Mars, 'That's What I Like'.

#### Nobel laureate Kailash Satyarthi wins US Documentary Grand Jury Award

A film on the life of Nobel laureate Kailash Satyarthi has won the US Documentary Grand Jury Award at the Sundance Film Festival being held at Park City in Utah. The documentary, titled 'Kailash' has been directed by debutante Derek Doneen. It traces the journey of Satyarthi and his efforts to eliminate child trafficking and child labour. The film has been produced by Davis Guggenheim and Sarah Anthony, and co-produced by Purnima Raghunath.

#### Prime Minister's Shram Award for 2016 announced

The government announced that the Prime Minister's Shram Awards for 2016 are to be awarded to 50 workers with departmental undertakings, public sector undertakings and private sector units employing 500 or more workers. This year, no nomination was found suitable for the prestigious 'Shram Ratna Award'. Twelve workers from SAIL, BHEL and TATA Steel Ltd have been awarded 'Shram Bhushan', which carries a cash award of Rs 1 lakh and a Sanad. Eighteen workers from Naval Dockyard, Ordnance Factory, rashtriya Ispat Nigam, TATA Steel, Hindalco Industries, Paradeep Phosphates Ltd, Brahmos Aerospace will receive Rs 60,000 and a Sanad as Shram Vir/ Shram Veerangana Award. Twenty workers will receive a cash award of Rs 40,000 and a 'Sanad' as Shram Shree/ Shram Devi Award from Cement Corporation of India, Naval Ship Repair Yard, TATA Motors, Surat Lignite Power Plant, Larsen & Toubro Ltd etc.

#### IAF Corporal Jyoti Prakash Nirala posthumously conferred with Ashok Chakra

President Ram Nath Kovind awarded India's highest peacetime military decoration Ashok Chakra (31) posthumously to Indian Air Force (IAF) Garud commando Corporal Jyoti Prakash Nirala. He had laid down his life after gunning down two terrorists in Jammu and Kashmir. He is the third Ashok Chakra for the IAF and its first for ground combat. Other two IAF officers are Rakesh Sharma (first and still only Indian citizen to go to space) and Flying Officer Nirmaljit Singh Sekhon posthumously decorated with the Param Vir Chakra in 1972.

#### Padma Awards 2018 announced: Full list of recipients

The President has approved the awards for 85 individuals, which includes 3 Padma Vibhushan, 9 Padma Bhushan and 73 Padma Shri. Fourteen of the awardees are women and 3 persons have been awarded posthumously. In sports personalities, former India cricket captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni and multiple world champion cueist Pankaj Advani have been conferred with the third-highest civilian award, Padma Bhushan. The 2017 World Weightlifting Champion Saikhom Mirabai Chanu and former Asian Games gold medalist tennis player Somdev Devvarman have been conferred with the Padma Shri. The awards are announced on the eve of the Republic Day every year. Padma Vibhushan (2nd highest civilian award):

S. No.	Winner	Category
1.	Ilayaraja	Art (Music)
2.	Ghulam Mustafa Khan	Art (Music)
3.	Parameswaran Parameswaran	Literature & Education

Padma Bhushan (3rd highest civilian award):

S. No.	Winner	Category
1.	Pankaj Advani	(Billiards/Snooker)
2.	Mahendra Singh Dhoni	Sports (Cricket)
3.	Alexander Kadakin (Foreigner/Posthumous)	Public Affairs

- ## Tamil Nadu CM Edappadi K Palanichamy receives UNESCO Award

## Shah Rukh Khan honoured with Crystal Award at World Economic Forum

### Morgan Freeman receives Life Achievement Award

## President felicitates 112 women achievers

### Mangalajodi Eco Trust won UNWTO Award

## Angelina Jolie to receive ASC Governors Awards

**President Ram Nath Kovind presents Sangeet Natak Akademi Awards 2016**

75th Annual Golden Globe Awards

The 75th Annual Golden Globe Awards honored the best in film and American television of 2017. The ceremony was organized at Beverly Hills, California, United States (US). The Golden Globe Awards are the annual awards that honour the best in Motion Pictures and American Television for the previous year. This year The Shape of Water had received most overall nominations of show with seven, while Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri and Big Little Lies both won most awards with four each.																														
Winners	of			various			awards			are			as			follows:														
Best	Motion			Picture			Drama:			Three			Billboards			Outside	Ebbing,	Missouri.												
Best	Motion			Picture			Musical/Comedy:			Toro			Lady			Bird.														
Best	Director	in		Motion		Picture-Drama:		Guillermo		del		(The		Shape		of		Water).												
Best	Actor	in		Motion		Picture-Drama:		Gary		(Darkest		Hour)		as		Winston		Churchill.												
Best	Actress	in		Motion		Picture-Drama:		McDormand		(Three		Billboards		Outside		Ebbing,		Missouri)	as	Mildred	Hayes.									
Best	Actor	in		Motion		Picture		or		Comedy:		James		Franco		(The		Disaster	Artist)	as	Tommy	Wiseau.								
Best	Actress	in		Motion		Picture		Musical/Comedy:		Saoirse		Ronan		(Lady		Bird)		as	Christine	"Lady		Bird"	McPherson.							
Best	Actor	in		a		Supporting		role		in		Motion		Picture:		Sam		Rockwell		(Three		Billboards		Outside	Ebbing,	Missouri)	as	Officer	Jason	Dixon.
Best	Actress	in		a		Supporting		role		in		Motion		Picture:		Allison		Janney		(L,		Tonvra)		as		LaVona		Golden		

## SPORTS & GAMES

Mumbai Marathon, the richest race in India with a prize money worth 4 lakh 5,000 dollars came to a conclusion with Ethiopia's Solomon Deksis winning it. Another Ethiopian, Shumit Akalnaw became the first runner-up, while Joshua Kipkorir from Kenya came second. Indian Olympic athletes T Gopi and Nitender Singh Rawat also took part in the Tata Mumbai Marathon. While T ZGopi won in the Indian Elite category, Nitender Singh Rawat came second. Sudha Singh of Central Railways won the Mumbai Marathon in the Indian Elite Women category.

#### India defeats Pakistan to win Blind Cricket World Cup 2018

India beat Pakistan by two wickets to win the Blind Cricket World Cup 2018 for the second time after a thrilling match at Sharjah Cricket Stadium, the UAE. Hosts Pakistan had set India a target of 308 runs at a loss of eight wickets in their allotted 40 overs after they were put into bat. India conquered the modest target in the 39th over, with two balls to spare and eight wickets lost. For his brilliant all-round performance, Sunil Ramesh was declared the man of the match.

#### Manav Thakkar World No. 2, Diya Chitale No. 5 in TT rankings

Manav Thakkar climbed to World Number 2 in the boys under-18 category while Diya Chitale rose to Number 5 in the girls under-15 category in the International Table Tennis Federation rankings. The top place is within striking distance, which will become India's moment of crowning glory. He has also broken into the top-15 in the boys' under-21 rankings. Among other successes, recently crowned Junior National Champion Payas Jain has climbed to the 11th spot, and right behind him is Jeho H at No. 12. In the girls' under-18 category, Bengaluru lass Archana Girish kamath has moved up from 34 to 18. Selena Selvakumar has also been inching up, and is now at No. 37. Archana has also eased into the top-50 of the under-21 category as well.

#### India rise three places in latest FIFA rankings

India jumped three rungs to be placed 102nd in the first FIFA rankings of the year 2018. India, who are just above 103rd placed Qatar, are ranked 14th among Asian countries. India garnered 13 points in the last one month for a total of 333 points. The Indians remained unbeaten in 2017, having won seven of their nine matches while two ended in draws. India had also qualified for the 2019 AFC Asian Cup. Iran is the top-ranked Asian team at the 34th position.

#### Virat Kohli named as Captain of ICC's Test and ODI Teams of the Year

Virat Kohli was named the captain of the International Cricket Council (ICC) Test and One-Day International (ODI) teams of the year that included four other Indians as well. Kohli scored 2,023 runs at 77.80, including eight centuries and three half-centuries in 18 matches during the qualification period. He surprisingly pipped Australian skipper Steve Smith for the ICC's Test team captaincy. The Test team also comprises Cheteshwar Pujara and Ravichandran Ashwin. Kohli, the Winner of the Sir Garfield Sobers Trophy and ODI Cricketer of the Year awards, was chosen to lead the ICC ODI team, which includes Rohit Sharma and Jasprit Bumrah as the other two Indians.

#### North and South Korea to March under Unification Flag in Winter Olympics

North and South Korea have agreed to march together under a single unified Korea flag at Winter Olympics in the South. They also agreed to field a joint women's ice hockey team after rare talks at the truce village of Panmunjom. These are the first high-level talks between the two Koreas in more than two years. The Games will take place in February 2018 in Pyeongchang in South Korea.

#### Goldberg to be in WWE Hall of Fame

WWE (World Wrestling Entertainment) announced that Goldberg will be inducted into the WWE Hall of Fame class at a ceremony in 6th April 2018, in New Orleans. Goldberg retired from in-ring competition in 2017. He is the first to be listed in the WWE's 2018 Hall of Fame class. He is 51 years old. He made his debut in WWE in 2003. Earlier, he was associated with the World Championship Wrestling.

#### Ronaldinho confirms his retirement from Football

Brazilian World Cup winner Ronaldinho has formally confirmed his retirement from football, more than two years since his last appearance as a professional, reports in Brazil. The 37-year-old former Paris Saint-Germain and Barcelona star, a key member of the Brazil side which won the World Cup in 2002, last played in 2015 during a brief stint with Fluminense.

#### Rabada, 22-yr-old, is the youngest No. 1 Test bowler since the 19th century

South African pacer Kagiso Rabada, who recently became the top-ranked bowler in Test cricket, is the youngest bowler ever to top the ICC Test rankings for bowlers. Rabada achieved the feat at the age of 8,261 days, surpassing the record of former England bowler George Lohmann, who became the highest-ranked Test bowler aged 8,288 days in February 1888.

#### Bahrain to host first-ever 'Baby Olympics'

Bahrain has unveiled plans to stage the first ever Baby Olympics in April, where medals will be contested by two to four year-olds, in a bid to promote the Olympic principles and exercise at a young age. The Bahrain Olympic Committee (BOC) intends to include five disciplines. The Athletics competition will host three events: medley relay for four year-olds, a hurdles toddle for three year-olds, while participating two year-olds will cross a specially designed stretch of 15 meters in a freestyle race.

#### Aditya Mehta wins Kolkata Open 2018 International Invitation Snooker C'ship

Professional player Aditya Mehta won the Kolkata Open 2018 International Invitation Snooker Championship in the capital city of West Bengal Kolkata. This is his third Kolkata Open title since its inception. In the thrilling final he defeated Englishman Professional Player Allie Burden.

#### Anchal Thakur bags Bronze, India's 1st International Medal in Skiing

Anchal Thakur made history as she won India's first ever international medal in skiing. The 21-year-old Manali resident clinched bronze in the coveted Alpine Ejder 3200 Cup. The Championship was organised by the Federation Internationale de Ski (skiing's international governing body) in Erzurum, Turkey. She won the medal in the slalom race category.

#### Yusuf Pathan suspended for 5 months for doping

Indian all-rounder Yusuf Pathan has been suspended for five months for failing a dope test during a domestic match last season. The Baroda all-rounder had inadvertently ingested a prohibited substance – Terbutaline, which can be commonly found in cough syrups.

#### Philippe Coutinho joins Barcelona, becomes 2nd Most Expensive Transfer in World Soccer History

Team Liverpool sold Brazilian football player Philippe Coutinho to Team Barcelona for 160 million Euros (\$192 million). With this, transfer of Philippe Coutinho has become the 2nd Most Expensive transfer in World Soccer History. World's most expensive transfer is Brazilian football player Neymar's transfer from Barcelona to Paris Saint Germain team in 200 million pounds in 2017.

#### Gilles Simon Wins Inaugural Tata Open Title

Gilles Simon of France has lifted the inaugural Tata Open Maharashtra Tennis trophy. In the summit clash in Pune, the unseeded French player defeated second-seeded Kevin Anderson in straight sets. Simon is ranked 89 in the world, while Anderson is ranked Fourteen. Simon had knocked out defending champion and third seed Roberto Bautista Agut.

#### Elina Svitolina Wins Brisbane International

Elina Svitolina secured her first WTA title in Australia with a straight-sets victory in the Brisbane International final. Svitolina beat Belarusian qualifier Aliaksandra Sasnovich. Nick Kyrgios moved a step closer to claiming his first ATP title on home soil with a semifinal win over defending champion Grigor Dimitrov. He will face American Ryan Harrison in finals.

#### 24th Federation Cup All India Carrom Championship

Kajal Kumari and Moha. Ghufan, both representing Petroleum Sports Promotion Board (PSPB), registered contrasting wins to bag the women's singles and men's singles crowns respectively in the LIC of India sponsored 24th Federation Cup All India Carrom Championship.

#### Federer-Bencic Lead Switzerland to Hopman Cup Title

Switzerland won their third Hopman Cup as Roger Federer and Belinda Bencic beat Germany's Alexander Zverev and Angelique Kerber in the deciding mixed doubles to secure a 2-1 victory in the final at the Perth Arena. It was Federer's second Hopman Cup triumph after victory in 2001 alongside then world number one Martina Hingis.

#### Bellucci to come back from 5-month ban

Brazilian tennis player Thomaz Bellucci was given a five-month suspension for doping. The 30-year-old Bellucci was tested positive for the diuretic hydrochlorothiazide. Bellucci said the positive test was the result of a contaminated vitamin supplement.

#### Sathiyar surpasses Kamal to be highest-ranked Indian paddler

G Sathiyar has surpassed the legendary Sharath Kamal to become India's highest-ranked player in the International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) rankings, which also have an unprecedented nine players in the top-100.

#### Indian Golfer Shiv Kapur wins Royal Cup at Pattaya

Indian golfer Shiv Kapur won the Royal Cup at Pattaya, which is his third Asian Tour title of 2017. The 35-year-old, who had just one win in almost 11 years till April 2017, has now won three times in last eight months. This latest win marks Kapur's fourth Asian Tour win and sixth international title as he won twice on European Challenge Tour also.

#### Vidarbha defeats Delhi to win Ranji Trophy for the First Time

Vidarbha have created history by winning the Ranji Trophy for the first time in history with a thumping nine-wicket win over Delhi at the Holkar stadium in Indore. Rajneesh Gurbani's 6/59, including a hat-trick and a century from Akshay Wadkar were the key moments in Vidarbha scripting a fairytale run. For Delhi, Dhruv Shorey was the star with a century and a fifty but Rishabh Pant's side came up short on the given day.

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## ECONOMY

#### RIL becomes India's 1st firm to Cross Rs6-lakh crore Market Capitalization

Reliance Industries (RIL) become the first Indian company to cross the Rs6-lakh crore mark in market capitalisation as its shares touched a 52-week high of Rs974.5. RIL is owned 40% by its chairman Mukesh Ambani, making him the richest Indian with the personal wealth of \$40.7 billion and the 20th richest globally, according to Bloomberg's billionaire index.

#### India to grow at 7.4% in 2018: IMF

According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), India is projected to grow at 7.4% in 2018 as against China's 6.8%, making it the fastest growing country among the emerging economies. Due to demonetization and implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST), India's economy slowed down a little bit to 6.7% in 2016. In 2017, India's growth rate dropped to 6.7%. In its latest World Economic Outlook update released in Davos, Switzerland on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum, the IMF projected a 7.8% growth rate for India in 2019.

#### India's richest 1% have 73% of wealth

The richest 1% in India cornered 73% of the wealth generated in the country last year, a new survey showed. Besides, 67 crore Indians comprising the population's poorest half saw their wealth rise by just 1%. It is according to the international rights group Oxfam. The annual Oxfam survey is keenly watched and is discussed in detail at the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting.

#### Brazil bans buying cryptocurrencies

Brazil's securities regulator prohibited local investment funds from buying cryptocurrencies. Brazil regulator bans funds from buying cryptocurrencies. The prohibition has been imposed, citing the reason that Cryptocurrencies cannot be considered financial assets. Owing to this decision, Brazilian funds cannot directly invest in cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin.

#### India contributes \$50,000 to UN Youth Envoys office

India contributed \$50,000 to United Nations (UN) Secretary-General Antonio Guterres's Office of Envoy on Youth to help with its mission of involving young people in the world body's goals. The contribution was handed over by Paulomi Tripathi, a First Secretary in India's UN Mission to the Youth Envoy Jayathma Wickramanayake. India contributes \$50,000 to UN Youth Envoy's office January 15, 2018.

#### India a top borrower from China-sponsored AIIB in 2017

India has emerged as a top borrower from the China-sponsored Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) with USD 1.5 billion worth of loans last year and USD three billion more in the pipeline. India is the second largest shared holder in the bank which has an authorised capital of USD 100 billion. China is the largest shareholder with 26.06 per cent voting shares in the bank. India is the second largest shareholder with 7.5 per cent followed by Russia 5.93 per cent and Germany with 4.5 per cent.

#### World Bank Report projects 7.3% growth for India in 2018

The 2018 Global Economics Prospect (GEP) released by the World Bank has projected India's growth rate to 7.3% in 2018 and 7.5 for the next two years i.e. 2019 and 2020. According to report, India, despite initial setbacks from demonetisation and Goods and Services Tax (GST), is estimated to have grown at 6.7% in 2017, higher than 6.5% estimated by Government.

#### Karnataka tops States with Investment Intentions of Rs. 1.49 lakh crore

Karnataka topped all states with investment intentions of Rs. 1.49 lakh crore till October 2017, according to R V Deshpande, Karnataka Minister for Large, Medium Industries and Infrastructure Development. The investment was 43 percent of the country's total investment intentions. Karnataka topped in FDI inflows and has performed well in exports, contributing about 40 percent in electronics and software services.

#### India GDP growth likely at 6.5% in 2017-18: CSO

The Indian economy will expand by 6.5% in 2017-18, according to the new data of the government's Central Statistics Office (CSO). It had released its first advance estimate for India's GDP growth rate in the current financial year. The economy had grown by 6.3% in the September quarter, after slumping to a three-year low of 5.7% GDP growth in the June quarter as the implementation of goods and services tax (GST) and demonetisation took their toll. The Indian economy grew at 7.1% in 2016-17.

#### Pakistan State Bank allows use of Chinese Yuan for Bilateral Trade & Investment activities

Pakistan has allowed Chinese currency Yuan for exports and financing transactions. According to Pakistan, external affairs ministry, both public and private sector enterprises of Pakistan and China are free to choose Yuan for bilateral trade and investment activities. As per current foreign exchange regulations, Chinese Yuan is an approved foreign currency for denominating foreign currency transactions in Pakistan.

#### Saudi Arabia, UAE introduce VAT for first time

Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates (UAE) became first countries of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) to introduce Value Added Tax (VAT) for the first time to increase their revenue away from oil reserves. The other members of 6 member GCC— Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman and Qatar – have also committed to introduce VAT, though some have delayed plans until at least 2019.

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## **SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY**

#### First India-designed vaccine 'Rotovac' passes WHO test

For the first time, a vaccine conceived and developed from scratch in India has been "pre-qualified" by the World Health Organisation. The Rotovac vaccine, developed by the Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech Limited last year, was included in India's national immunisation programme. To be "pre-qualified" means that the vaccine can be sold internationally to several countries in Africa and South America. While several vaccines from India have been pre-qualified, this is the first that was entirely developed locally and, according to experts, is a sign that there is a credible industrial, scientific and regulatory process in place to develop vaccines in India.

#### NASA develops aircraft that can fold wings mid-flight

NASA successfully applied a new technology that allows aircraft to fold their wings between zero and 70 degrees while in flight. Built from a shape memory alloy, the system operates without a hydraulic system, reducing the wing weight by up to 80%. The technology's potential aerodynamic benefit includes increased controllability, which may result in a more fuel-efficient aircraft.

#### Japan launches new observation satellite

Japan's Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) has successfully launched a new Earth observation satellite, equipped with X-band radar. ASHARO-2, developed by Japanese tech firm NEC, will perform Earth-observation tasks for five years from its orbit at an altitude of about 500 km. This was the first launch of a JAXA Epsilon rocket ordered by a private company.

#### China launches two BeiDou-3 navigation satellites into space

China has successfully launched two BeiDou-3 satellites to provide navigation and positioning services to countries along Belt and Road initiative (BRI) by the end of 2018. The two satellites were designated as BeiDou-3 M7 and BeiDou-3 M8 (26th and 27th satellites) in BeiDou Navigation Satellite System (BDS).

#### ISRO's PSLV-C40 lifts off from Sriharikota



ISRO's PSLV-C40 carrying Cartosat-2 series satellite and 30 other spacecraft lifts off from Sriharikota. The "Cartosat-2 Series" and 29 other satellites inserted into a 505-kilometer sun-synchronous orbit. Later, the payload Microsat developed by the ISRO will be taken down to a lower orbit at 359-kilometer height and launched using the 'multiple engine switch-on' method. This is the fourth time the novel method has been used by the ISRO for placing satellites in multiple orbits in a single flight.

#### India's fastest supercomputer 'Pratyush' unveiled

India's fastest and first multi-petaflops (PF) supercomputer named Pratyush was unveiled at Pune-based Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM). The supercomputer has been named as 'Pratyush' meaning Sun. It will help India with better forecasts in terms of monsoon, extreme events, cyclones, tsunamis, earthquakes, air quality, lightning, fishing, hot and cold waves, flood and drought among others.

#### Pak Navy successfully tests missile in Arabian Sea

The Pakistan Navy demonstrated its ability to respond to any aggression by conducting a test fire of a cruise missile – Harba Naval Cruise Missile, which is a surface-to-surface anti-ship missile, from its newly commissioned Fast Attack Craft (Missile), PNS Himmat, off Karachi in the North Arabian Sea.

#### NASA to launch Parker Solar Probe to explore sun's outer atmosphere

NASA is going to launch Parker Solar Probe in 2018 to explore the sun's outer atmosphere. It will be launched onboard of Delta IV Heavy launch vehicle. It will perform its scientific investigations in a hazardous region of intense heat and solar radiation. The primary goals of mission are to Trace how energy and heat move through solar corona, Explore what accelerates solar wind as well as solar energetic particles.

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## PERSONS IN NEWS

### A) APPOINTMENTS

#### Indian-American Adobe CEO Shantanu Narayen to lead USISPF Board

Indian-American Adobe CEO Shantanu Narayen has been elected as the Vice Chairman of the US-India Strategic and Partnership Forum. It is a new organisation set up to enhance business relations between India and the US. The new representative body – US-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF) was set up to promote bilateral trade and work on creating meaningful opportunities that have the power to change the lives of citizens. The USISPF now has 31 board members.

#### IOA names Sisodia as Chef de Mission for CWG 2018

The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) appointed Vikram Singh Sisodia as the Chef de Mission for the 21st Commonwealth Games to be held at Gold Coast in Australia. Sisodia is currently the Joint Secretary of the IOA.

#### Vijay Keshav Gokhale to take charge as new Foreign Secretary

Vijay Keshav Gokhale, a senior diplomat of the external Affairs Ministry, will take charge as the next Foreign Secretary. Gokhale would be succeeding S Jaishankar, who is retiring from the post. The 1977-batch IFS officer, Jaishankar was appointed as the Foreign Secretary in January 2015, for a term of two years. He was given a one-year extension in January last year.

#### Mazumdar-Shaw, Rajiv Lall joins USIBC

Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, chairman and managing director of Biocon Ltd, IDFC Bank founder Rajiv Lall have been appointed to the board of US India Business Council for 2018. The board is comprised of industry leaders from the US and India. The US India Business Council will work to advance the US-India strategic and economic relationship by advocating for policy changes.

#### Rajesh will be next Ambassador to Niger

Shri Rajesh Agarwal, presently Counsellor, High Commission of India, Port Moresby has been appointed as the next Ambassador of India to the Republic of Niger. He is expected to take up his assignment shortly. Niger is a landlocked country in Western Africa named after the Niger River. The capital city is Niamey.

#### Usha Ananthasubramanian becomes 1st Woman IBA Chief

Usha Ananthasubramanian, MD and CEO, Allahabad Bank, has been elected the first woman chairman of Indian Banks' Association (IBA). Usha was elected IBA Chairman for the year 2017-18 by its Managing Committee. IBA Chairman's position fell vacant following the superannuation of Jatinder Bir Singh. Rajnish Kumar.

#### FICCI appoints Dilip Chenoy as Director General

Industry Chamber Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) has appointed Dilip Chenoy as its Director General. Prior to this, he was Chairman of Sant Longowal Institute of Engineering and Technology and Member, Board of Advisors, IILM. He was awarded the Game Changer Award in 2015 and the Rashtriya Media Ratan Award in 2013.

#### Ashok Lavasa assumes charge as Election Commissioner of India

Ashok Lavasa has assumed charge as the Election Commissioner (EC) of India. He was appointed to the post by President Ram Nath Kovind. Lavasa succeeds Om Prakash Rawat, who was elevated as the Chief Election Commissioner. The third member of the top election body is Election Commissioner Sunil Arora. Lavasa's term as Election Commissioner would end in October 2022 and would thereafter serve as the Chief Election Commissioner.

#### Scientist S. Somanath takes charge as Director of Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre

Noted scientist S Somanath took charge as Director of Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC), Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala. He succeeded K Sivan, who was recently appointed as Chairman of ISRO. Prior to his elevation, he was Director of Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre (LPSC), the lead centre responsible for liquid engines and stages for all launch vehicles and satellite programs of ISRO.

#### Om Prakash Rawat appointed New Chief Election Commissioner

Election Commissioner Om Prakash Rawat was appointed as the next chief election commissioner (CEC) of India. Mr Rawat is the 22nd CEC of India. He succeeded Achal Kumar Joti. The government also appointed former finance secretary Ashok Lawasa as an Election Commissioner. Mr Rawat will take over the office from 23rd January 2018 onwards. Sunil Arora is the other Election Commissioner.

#### Sudeep Lakhtakia appointed as new DG of National Security Guard

Senior IPS officer Sudeep Lakhtakia was appointed as new Director General of National Security Guard (NSG). He will succeed SP Singh, who retired from the post. Lakhtakia is a 1984-batch IPS officer of Telangana cadre. He is currently serving as special DG of Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF).

#### Anandiben Patel appointed as Governor Madhya Pradesh

President Ramnath Kovind has appointed former Gujarat Chief Minister Anandiben Patel as Governor of Madhya Pradesh. She will replace Gujarat governor Om Prakash Kohli who is holding additional charge of office of Governor of Madhya Pradesh.

#### FB appoints its 1st African-American Member to Board

Facebook has appointed outgoing American Express CEO Kenneth Chenault to its board, making him the first African-American to be on the board. Chenault serves on the Boards of IBM and Procter & Gamble and is also a Harvard Law School graduate.

#### S Selvakumar appointed CMD Of SPMCIL

The government appointed senior IAS officer S Selvakumar as Chairman and Managing Director (CMD) of Security Printing and Minting Corporation of India Ltd (SPMCIL). Selvakumar has replaced Anurag Agarwal. The state-owned SPMCIL produces banknotes, coins, postage stamps, non-judicial stamps and other official documents.

#### Vice Admiral AB Singh assumes charge as new Chief of Staff

Vice Admiral Ajendra Bahadur Singh took over as the new Chief of Staff, Western Naval Command from Vice Admiral Ravneet Singh. Vice Admiral Singh was the Deputy Commander-in-Chief, Strategic Forces Command, prior to his current appointment.

#### Anil Khanna to Head IOA Finance Commission

Senior sports administrator Anil Khanna was named Chairman of the Finance Commission of the Indian Olympic Association, which also formed a four-member advisory committee. The advisory committee comprises Tarlochan Singh, GS Mander, S Regunathan and BS Landge. The IOA also formed a Medical Commission and Games Technical Conduct Committee and nominated office bearers of IOA and National Sports Federations (NSFs) to the Committees.

#### Harjinder Singh appointed as Chef de Mission for 23rd Winter Olympic Games

Harjinder Singh was appointed as the Chef de Mission of Indian Contingent participating in the 23rd Winter olympic Games to be held in Pyeongchang, South Korea in February 2018. Singh's appointment was confirmed by the Indian Olympic Association (IOA). Currently, Singh holds the post of General Secretary in the Ice Hockey Association of India.

#### Dilip Asbe appointed MD & CEO of NPCI

National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) has appointed Dilip Asbe as Managing Director and CEO of the organisation. Prior to this, Asbe was CEO-in-charge of NPCI. He had come in place of AP Hota. Asbe has been in the NPCI since its inception and has played a pivotal role in designing, building, operationalising and managing large-scale payment processing platforms like the Unified Payments Interface (UPI), Bharat Interface for Money (BHIM), Immediate Payment Service (IMPS), India's home-grown card network RuPay, and several other initiatives.

#### Indian-origin businessman Sunny Verghese appointed Chairman of WBCSD

Singapore-based Indian-origin businessman Sunny Verghese was appointed Chairman of World Business Council for Sustainable development. Verghese, 57, is the first World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) Chair from the agri-sector. He succeeded Paul Polman, the CEO of Unilever, on January 1 and will serve a two-year term. He is the Co-Founder and the CEO of Singapore's agri-business group Olam International Limited. WBCSD is a global network of more than 200 CEOs who are responsible for combined revenue of more than US \$8.5 trillion and 19 million employees.

#### Rocket expert K. Sivan appointed as new chairman of ISRO

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has appointed rocket scientist K. Sivan as next Secretary of the Department of Space and Chairman of Space Commission and Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO). He will succeed A.S. Kiran Kumar and will have term of three years.

#### Former RAW chief Rajinder Khanna appointed Deputy NSA

Rajinder Khanna, the former chief of India's Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), was appointed as the new Deputy National Security Adviser (NSA). Khanna served as the chief of India's external intelligence agency RAW for a fixed two year period from December 2014. His appointment to the new post was approved by the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet, headed by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The employment would be on a contractual basis.

#### Vijay Keshav Gokhale appointed as Foreign Secretary of India

The government announced the appointment of Vijay Keshav Gokhale, former ambassador in Beijing, as the new Foreign Secretary to replace S. Jaishankar who retires on January 28. He will take over from Jaishankar who was appointed Foreign Secretary on January 29, 2015, for two years and given a one-year extension in January last year.

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### B) RESIGNS

#### Romanian PM Mihai Tudose resigns after losing party support

Romania's left-wing Prime Minister Mihai Tudose resigned after losing the backing of his party due to internal power struggles, barely seven months after his predecessor suffered the same fate. He handed in his resignation after senior members of the ruling Social Democrats (PSD) voted to withdraw their support at a leadership meeting.

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### C) DEATHS

#### Founder of IKEA, Ingvar Kamprad passes away

Ingvar Kamprad, the Founder of Swedish furniture giant Ikea, died at the age of 91 at his home. Kamprad was the world's eighth-richest person with a net worth of \$58.7 billion. He had founded Ikea at the age of 17, building it into the world's largest furniture retailer.

#### India's Green Revolution pioneer Dr Gurcharan Singh Kalkat passes away

Noted agricultural scientist and pioneer of India's Green Revolution, Gurcharan Singh Kalkat (92), passed away in Chandigarh after a brief illness. He was known for his role in bringing Green Revolution and several exemplary agricultural reforms in Punjab. His contribution had ensured overall development and a phenomenal growth in the agriculture sector.

#### Ursula K. Le Guin, best-selling science fiction author passes away

Ursula K. Le Guin, the award-winning science fiction and fantasy writer who explored feminist themes and was best known for her Earthsea books, has passed away at the age of 88. Le Guin won an honorary National Book Award in 2014. Le Guin's first novel was Rancannon's World in 1966. Her book, 'The Left Hand of Darkness' won the Hugo and Nebula awards top science fiction prizes.

#### Hugh Masekela, 'Father of South African Jazz' passes away

Trumpeter, composer and singer Hugh Masekela, affectionately known as the 'father of South African jazz', has died after a long battle with prostate cancer. He was 78. In a career spanning more than five decades, Masekela gained international recognition with his distinctive Afro-Jazz sound. He opened the 2010 FIFA World Cup Kick-Off Concert and performed at the event's opening ceremony in Johannesburg Soccer City stadium.

#### Cartoonist Chandi Lahiri passes away

Eminent cartoonist Chandi Lahiri passed away in Kolkata following respiratory complication. His cartoons reflected the socio-political situation in West Bengal and the entire country for over 50 years. His distinctive style made him an institution & his cartoons were used even in various govt campaigns. Lahiri had also penned several books on cartoons, including 'Bangla Cartooner Itihas'.

#### Hall of Famer Jo Jo White passes away

Basketball Hall of Famer Jo Jo White, a two-time NBA champion with the Boston Celtics and an Olympic gold medalist, has passed away. He was 71. White played 10 seasons for Boston, which drafted him ninth overall from Kansas in 1969.

#### Kapil Mohan, creator of Old Monk rum passes away

Kapil Mohan, the creator of iconic Old Monk rum, passed away at the age of 88. He was the chairperson and managing director of the Mohan meakin brewery. He was awarded India's fourth highest civilian award Padma Shri in 2010. The iconic Old Monk was launched on December 19, 1954.

#### Peter Sutherland, 1st WTO Director-General passes away

Peter Sutherland, the first Director-General of the World Trade Organization (WTO), has passed away in Dublin, Ireland. He was 71. Mr Sutherland became Ireland's Attorney General in 1981 and served as the European Commissioner for Competition from 1985 to 1989. He left the WTO in 1995.

#### World Champion Powerlifter Saksham Yadav passes away

World champion Saksham Yadav succumbed to his injuries at the AIIMS Trauma Centre in New Delhi. He died of a cardiac arrest. Saksham, who won a gold medal in the 2017 world weightlifting championship for India, was seriously injured along with another weightlifter named Rohit. Five men, including Saksham, have died while one other person continues to battle for life after their car met with an accident near the Delhi-Haryana border.

#### Lagaan actor Shrivallabh Vyas passes away

Lagaan actor Shrivallabh Vyas has passed away. He had appeared in over 60 Hindi films, with occasional stints in regional cinema, television and theatre.

#### Former President of Japan's Toyota dies at 88

Toyota's Former President Tatsuro Toyoda, who helped the Japanese auto giant establish a foothold in North America, has died at the age of 88. Toyoda joined the company founded by his father Kiichiro Toyoda in 1953 and in 1984 became the first president of a new firm formed by Toyota and General Motors. Toyoda served as Toyota president between 1992 and 1995.

#### NASA's Astronaut John Young Passes Away

Legendary astronaut John Young, who walked on the Moon and later commanded the first space shuttle flight, has died at 87. Young was the only agency astronaut to go into space as part of the Gemini, Apollo and space shuttle programs and the first to fly into space six times. He was the ninth man to walk on the Moon.

#### Vocalist Radha Vishwanathan passes away

Carnatic vocalist Radha Vishwanathan (83), daughter of M.S. Subbulakshmi, who accompanied the legendary queen of music for nearly 5 decades on stage has passed away. She was suffering from pneumonia for the last few weeks. She was the eldest daughter of Thiagarajan Sadasivam and his first wife, Apithakuchambal (alias Parvathi). However, she was brought up by M. S. Subbulakshmi whom her father married after the death of Apithakuchambal from a scorpion sting.

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### D) VISITORS

#### PM Modi leaves for Davos to attend World Economic Forum

Prime Minister Narendra Modi left for Davos, Switzerland to attend the 48th annual meeting of the World Economic Forum. He will lead the largest-ever Indian delegation comprising Finance Minister Arun Jaitley, Commerce and Industry Minister Suresh Prabhu among others. The theme of the WEF Annual Meeting this year is 'Creating a shared future in a fractured world'. As many as six union ministers, two chief ministers, over 100 CEOs and several other high-profile attendees from India will be a part of the India contingent at WEF. WEF 2018 will also see the largest ever proportion of women leaders including all co-chairs being women this time.

#### Israel PM Benjamin Netanyahu arrives for 'historic' visit to India

Keen to strengthen bilateral relations "even more", Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu arrived on a six-day visit along with the largest business delegation that has ever accompanied an Israeli premier on an overseas tour. The visit marks 25 years since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries and takes place about six months after Modi's trip to Israel, the first by an Indian prime minister to the Jewish state.

#### Sushma Swaraj embarked on tour of 3 Southeast Asian Nations

External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj left on a 5-day visit to three South East Asian countries – Thailand, Indonesia and Singapore. On the first leg of the visit, Ms Swaraj will reach Thailand and will hold an official meeting with Thai Foreign Affairs Minister Don Pramudwinai. During the visit to Indonesia, Ms Swaraj will co-chair the 5th meeting of India-Indonesia Joint Commission. In Singapore, the External Affairs Minister will inaugurate the Regional Pravasi Bharatiya Divas of ASEAN countries. She will have bilateral meetings with the leaders in Singapore.

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### E) MISCELLANEOUS

#### Oxford dictionary's Hindi word of 2017

Oxford Dictionaries has chosen 'Aadhaar' as the Hindi word of 2017. It also becomes the first Oxford Dictionaries Hindi Word of the Year. Widespread discussions & debates around 'Aadhaar' was the reason it was selected as the word of the year. The Hindi Word of the Year was chosen by the Oxford Dictionaries team in India with the help of an advisory panel of language experts.

#### Indian-origin boy Mehul Garg sets new Mensa record

Indian-origin boy Mehul Garg (10) in United Kingdom became youngest applicant in decade to achieve highest score in Mensa IQ test, beating geniuses like Albert Einstein and Stephen Hawking. He scored maximum score of 162 to become a member of Mensa. His score is two points higher than Einstein and Hawking. Mehul Garg is from Reading Boys Grammar School in Reading, southern England. He can solve Rubik's Cube in 100 seconds. He has been shortlisted for 'Child Genius 2018' show on Channel 4.

#### Rachel Morrison 1st Oscar nominated female cinematographer

Rachel Morrison has become the first female cinematographer to receive an Oscar nomination in the 89-year-old history of the Awards. She has been nominated for her work in the film 'Mudbound'. "The job of the cinematographer is to visualise emotion – things we as women are inherently good at," said Rachel while speaking about her nomination.

#### Apple named the world's most admired company for 2018

Technology giant Apple topped Fortune magazine's list of the 'World's Most Admired Companies' for 2018. E-commerce giant Amazon has retained its second spot, followed by Google's parent Alphabet. Social media giant Facebook lost its place in the top ten most admired companies this year and was ranked 12th on the list.

#### Google awarded 72 lakh for finding bugs in Pixel phone

Google awarded nearly 72 lakh to researcher Guang Gong for finding bugs in its Pixel devices. The exploit chain consisted of two bugs which together could inject arbitrary code into system server by accessing a malicious URL in Chrome. Around 67 lakh of the reward was given from Google's Android Security Rewards program, the highest in the program's history.

#### World's fifth largest diamond unveiled in Lesotho

A 910-carat diamond, which is believed to be the world's fifth largest diamond, has been unearthed in Lesotho. The stone was discovered in Letseng mine by Gem Diamonds. The diamond is estimated to be worth at much as \$40 million. The company described the diamond, which is the size of two golf balls, as being of 'exceptional quality'. Since Gem Diamonds acquired Letseng in 2006, the mine has produced some of the world's most remarkable diamonds, including the 603 carat Lesotho Promise.

#### 5 Indian Tech companies feature in "Top 100 Global Tech Leaders" List

Thomson Reuters Corp on 17 January 2018 published its debut 'Top 100 Global Technology Leaders' list, which was topped by Microsoft, followed by Intel Corp and Cisco Systems at the 2nd and 3rd positions respectively. The list, which aims to identify the industry's top financially successful and organisationally sound organisations, also features American tech giants such as Apple Inc, Alphabet Inc, International Business Machines Corp and Texas Instruments Inc amongst its top 10. According to the list, 45 percent of these 100 tech companies are headquartered in the United States. Japan and Taiwan are tied for second place with 13 companies each, followed by India with five tech leaders on the list. By continent, North America leads with 47, followed by Asia with 38, Europe with 14 and Australia with one.

#### Donald Trump awarded bravery medal for scolding Pakistan over terrorism

Afghanistan residents awarded Donald Trump a bravery medal for rebuking Pakistan over its failure in curbing terrorist havens. As per local media reports, the medal has been forged using funds collected by Afghans from the Logar province worth 45,000 Afghanis (\$645) and consists of 15 grams of gold. The US Ambassador in Kabul John R Bass promised that he will soon hand over the medal to the US President. The Syed Farhad Akbari, a community leader in the province, said that more than 300 people at an informal 'jirga,' or council, of concerned citizens, agreed to award the medal to the US president.

#### HP woman featured in WHO's 2018 calendar

A health worker from Mandi district in Himachal Pradesh, Verma has featured in the World Health Organization (WHO) calendar for the year 2018. Verma has found mention in the WHO calendar for her efforts to ensure hundred per cent coverage of her area of operation under the measles and rubella programme. Verma works to immunise the children of shepherds and the Gujjars community in the area.

#### GIA ranked Indian PM Narendra Modi as the No. 3 world leader

Gallup International Association (GIA) has ranked Indian PM Narendra Modi as the No. 3 world leader in its annual survey. This is the highest ever rank bagged by any Indian PM in the GIA global polls. The first rank went to French President Emmanuel Macron (net score 21), followed by German chancellor Angela Merkel (net score of 20). US President Donald Trump and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin were ranked at the eleventh and sixth position respectively in the survey.

#### India tops Domestic Air Traffic Demand at 16.4% in November: IATA

India's domestic air passenger traffic grew by 16.4 percent in November 2017, topping the growth chart worldwide, according to the global aviation body, the International Air Transport Association (IATA). Globally, the total revenue passenger kilometres (RPK) increased 8 percent compared to November 2016. The available seat kilometres (ASKs) or capacity grew by 6.3 percent. The ASK for India was at 10.4 percent, second only to China where capacity grew by 12.9 percent, according to the IATA's monthly data.

#### IndiGo rated world's 4th most punctual 'mega carrier'

India's IndiGo is the fourth most 'mega carrier' in the world, beating British Airways and Lufthansa in a travel analyst company's annual list. Japan Airlines takes the top spot in OAG's list of the world's most punctual 'mega carriers'. Its annual review, the Punctuality League 2018, takes into account airlines' performance on timekeeping. OAG has two separate punctuality lists, one for all airlines, big and small, and another one for 'mega carriers'. The company defines 'on-time performance' as flights that arrive or depart within 14 minutes and 59 seconds (under 15 minutes) of their scheduled arrival/departure times.

#### Jeff Bezos becomes Richest Person Surpassing Bill Gates: Bloomberg Report

Jeff Bezos, founder and CEO of Amazon has become the richest man in the history, overtaking the wealth Bill Gates ever had to his name, according to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index. The Index showed that Bezos' net worth had hit USD 105.1 billion. According to Forbes' tracker, most of Bezos' wealth comes from his 78.9 million shares of Amazon stock. According to Bloomberg Billionaires Index, the richest people in the world are Jeff Bezos, Bill Gates, Warren Buffett, Mark Zuckerberg, Amancio Ortega.

#### France to confer 'Legion de Honour' on actor Soumitra Chattopadhyay

France will confer its highest order of merit, the 'Légion de Honour' on legendary film and theatre actor Soumitra Chattopadhyay at the 42nd International Kolkata Book Fair. The honour will be bestowed on the actor who starred in many of Satyajit Ray's iconic films by french culture and communication minister Francoise Nyssen in Kolkata. The Dadasaheb Phalke Award winner Chattopadhyay, 82, acted in several of Ray's films, including Apur Sansar, Abhijan, Charulata, Aranyer Din Ratri, and Sonar Kella.

#### India's first all-women station in Mumbai enters Limca records

The first all-women station in India, Matunga on Central Railway (CR) in Mumbai, manned by a staff of 41 women, has entered the Limca Book of Records. The unique initiative was taken by CR General Manager D.K. Sharma in July 2017 with the aim of empowering women. Accordingly, women staffers were posted across all departments, like 17 ladies for operations and commercial, six Railway Protection Force, eight for ticket checking, two announcers and two conservancy staffers, and five point persons, totalling 41.

#### MAS chief Ravi Menon named best central bank governor in Asia-Pacific

Ravi Menon, the Managing Director of the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS), has been named the best central bank governor in Asia-Pacific for 2018 by UK-based magazine The Banker. The annual award by The Banker, is based on a selection process involving a survey of bankers and economists.

#### Bharat Biotech's Typbar-TCV: WHO approves Indian typhoid vaccine for global use

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has given its pre-qualification to Typbar Typhoid Conjugate Vaccine (TVC) developed by Hyderabad based Bharat Biotech for global use. Typbar TCV is world's first typhoid vaccine clinically proven to be administered to children from six months of age to adults, and confers long-term protection against typhoid fever. It has been evaluated in Human Challenge Studies at Oxford University.

#### UNESCO enters Turkey's Endangered 'Bird Language' in Intangible Cultural Heritage List

The unusual and very efficient whistle language commonly called "bird language" used as a means of communication by villagers in remote northern Turkey entered the UNESCO list of Intangible Cultural Heritage. UNESCO has accepted the "bird language" of Black Sea villagers as an endangered part of world heritage in need of urgent protection.

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## **PLACES IN NEWS**

#### World's largest underwater cave found in Mexico

Underwater archaeologists and divers in Mexico have announced that they found a passage connecting two underwater caves, creating what they say is the world's largest flooded cave. The combined cave will be known as the Sac Actun system, taking on the name of the longer section. The cave stretches across 216 miles.

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## **BOOKS IN NEWS**

#### CM Naveen releases book on Biju Patnaik

Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik released a book on his father – The Tall Man Biju Patnaik – written by Sundar Ganesan, who said his material on Biju Patnaik "was found scattered all over the world in countries like Indonesia, France, Germany, USA, Russia, Singapore, and other places".

#### Book titled "Dilli Meri Dilli: Before and After 1998" by Sheila Dixit released

The evolution of Delhi and many of its little-known facets have been captured in a book of photographs by one of its architects – former chief minister Sheila Dikshit. In "Dilli Meri Dilli: Before and After 1998", Dikshit tries to look at Delhi not as someone who was its chief minister for 15 years but as a resident who has lived almost her entire life here. The pictorial book traces the evolution of the city of Delhi over the centuries, and puts in perspective its impressive transformation since the beginning of the new millennium.

#### President Kovind unveils Book on Self-Development in Delhi

President Ram Nath Kovind unveiled a book on heartfulness techniques and principles titled 'The Heartfulness Way'. Kamlesh D. Patel is the author of this book. It is the fourth Global Guide of Heartfulness. Joshua Pollock is the second author of this book. It was launched by Commerce and Industries Minister Suresh Prabhu.

#### Manjrekar's autobiography 'Imperfect'

Former India captain Dilip Vengsarkar unveiled Sanjay Manjrekar's autobiography 'Imperfect' at a South Mumbai. The former India batsman-turned-commentator also spoke on his frosty relationship with Sachin Tendulkar and his favourite skipper Imran Khan. Sanjay Vijay Manjrekar is a former Indian cricketer, he played international cricket for India from 1987 until 1996.

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## **COMMITTEES**

#### CABE sub-committee recommends free education for girls up to PG level

The sub-committee of Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) looking into issues of girl's education has recommended free and compulsory education for girls up to post-graduate level across the country. The sub-committee is likely to submit an interim report to Union Human Resource Development Ministry during CABE meeting on January 15, 2018.

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## **DAYS & DATES**

#### 28 January 2018: World Leprosy Day

The World Leprosy Day is observed internationally every year on last Sunday of January month to raise global awareness of Leprosy. This year it was observed on 28 January. Observance of the day focuses on target of zero cases of leprosy-related disabilities in children. The day was initiated by French philanthropist and writer, Raoul Follereau in 1954 as way to raise global awareness of this deadly ancient disease and call attention to the fact that it can be prevented, treated and cured.

#### 25th January 2018: National Voters Day

The Election Commission of India celebrated the 8th National Voters' Day across the country on 25th January for enhanced participation of citizens in the electoral process. The National level function was held in New Delhi. President Ram Nath Kovind gave away awards for best electoral practices to District Collectors, Superintendents of Police and other functionaries involved in election management.

#### 15th January 2018: 70th Army Day

The 70th Army Day is being celebrated on 15th January 2018. The day is celebrated to pay homage and salute to the courageous and brave Indian soldiers who have been sacrificing their lives for protecting the country. Every year on this day, the 'Army Day' is celebrated to commemorate the day when General (later Field Marshal) K.M. Cariappa took over the command of Army from General Sir F.R.R. Bucher, the last British Commander-in-Chief in 1949 and became the first Commander-in-Chief of Indian Army post Independence.

#### 12 January: National Youth Festival

The National Youth Day celebrated every year on 12 January. This is the day when Swami Vivekananda, one of the greatest social reformers, thinkers, and philosophers of India, was born. The Indian government had declared back in 1984 that Swamiji's birthday would be celebrated as the National Youth Day. The main aim behind this is to make sure that the students across the country can be encouraged to learn about the life, the ideas and philosophy of Swami Vivekananda and apply them in their lives. The Theme of the Festival is 'Sankalp Se Siddhi'.

#### 9 January: Pravasi Bharatiya Divas

The Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) is celebrated every year on January 9 to mark the contribution of Overseas Indian community in the development of India. This year's PBD celebrated ASEAN-Indian partnership and was themed Ancient Route, New Journey: Diaspora in the Dynamic ASEAN INDIA Partnership. This year marks 25 years of ASEAN-Indian Partnership which is based on centuries-old cultural, religious and human links, forged on an ancient route of commerce.

#### 4 January: World Braille Day

World Braille Day is celebrated every year on January 4th to commemorate the contribution of Louis Braille for blind people of the world. He invented a reading and writing system which helped blind people in learning and reading. The day marks the importance of teaching and providing equal opportunity to blind people and highlights the problems faced by them. The Braille system is a representation of letters and symbols within a grid in rows. The inventor, Louis Braille created the system after he went blind at the age of five due to an accident.