TAMIL NADU

- Tamil Nadu Government’s e-Governance Agency (TNeGA) – has signed a MoU with Indian Institute of Management Tiruchi, USA Virginia Tech India Centre for Advanced Research Education and Pontaq-UK India Innovation Fund

- The agreement was signed in the presence of Tamilnadu Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami at the Secretariat
- Under the MoU with IIM-Tiruchi, the agency aims to train senior officials in government departments in various technological issues, to provide digital
services in villages and to bridge the digital divide between the rural and urban areas.

- The MoU with Virginia Tech aims to improve research in government departments, and enhance capabilities in education, health, agriculture and other departments.
- Under the MoU with Pontaq, TNeGA will create a special centre for start-ups, with funds from the Pontaq-UK India Innovation Fund.

- **The Chief Minister Edapadi K Palaniswami - inaugurated 5 new revenue circles in the state on February 19, 2019**
  - The new revenue circles are --
    - Tiruvattar, Killiyur in Kanyakumari district
    - Vatthirairupu in Virudhunagar district
    - Gujuliamparai in Dindigul district
    - R K Pettai in Tiruvallur district

- He had also inaugurated the newly-built Puratchi Thalaivar Bharat Ratna Dr MGR Centenary Library, built at a cost of Rs 2.3 crore on the premises of the International Institute of Tamil Studies, Taramani

- **President Ram Nath Kovind - unveiled a statue of Mahatma Gandhi at the Dakshina Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha in Chennai on February 21, 2019**
  - The Dakshina Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha, founded by Mahatma Gandhi, completed 100 years
  - It has worked for the promotion of Hindi in the southern states
During the same occasion on February 21, Prime Minister Narendra Modi unveiled the bust of Mahatma Gandhi in premier Yonsei University in South Korea, marking the 150th birth anniversary of Gandhi.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is on a two-day visit to South Korea, where he is expected to receive the 14th Seoul Peace Prize for 2018.

The event was graced by South Korea President Moon Jae-in, and former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

Chennai Metro Rail Limited – to launch a dedicated Mobile app to stream free songs, movies, TV serials on trains – by March end or early April 2019.

A mobile-based entertainment system, to be launched by CMRL will make it the first metro rail service in the country to have such facility.

However, the internet connectivity that comes with the app cannot be used to browse internet.

For this purpose, the CMRL is installing servers at all the stations, trains and depot.

Commuters, upon downloading the app, can connect to the server through Wi-Fi and start viewing the content.
NATIONAL

- Prime Minister, Narendra Modi – to transfer Rs 25,000 crore onto the bank accounts of around 12 crore farmers across the country – under the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi scheme
  - The scheme will be launched at the national farmers’ convention in Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh on February 24
  - The scheme was announced in the 2019 budget with an allocation of Rs 75,000 crore
  - According to the scheme, Rs 6000 will be paid annually to 12 crore marginal farmers in the country

- The Prime Minister is also scheduled to launch a multi-crore project for manufacture of Kalashnikov assault rifles under Indo-Russian Collaboration in Amethi during his visit to Uttar Pradesh

- Employees provident fund organization (EPFO) – to increase the interest rate to 8.65% in the current financial year, compared to last year’s 8.55%
  - The announcement is expected to improve the returns of six crore subscribers for the current year with a higher interest

- Government – announces free air travel for paramilitary personnel posted in Jammu and Kashmir – to either join duty or go on leave
  - The announcement is aimed at reducing the number of troops travelling in convoys in Jammu and Kashmir
  - The free travel will be allowed on the Delhi-Srinagar, Jammu-Srinagar sectors along with the return travel routes
The UGC – restrains the deemed universities from fixing their own fees

- The University Grants Commission (Institutions Deemed to be Universities) Regulations, 2019 were released on February 20
- According to the new regulations, no deemed university can prescribe more than the fee prescribed by the UGC-mandated fee fixation committee
- This is applicable to all the deemed universities, including those offering engineering and medical courses
- The latest regulation reiterates the ban on capitation fee under any name
- The new rules also ban universities from retaining original certificates of candidates

Vice President, M Venkaiah Naidu – flagged off a new Mainline Electric Multiple Unit (MEMU) express train between Nellore and Chennai (176 km) on February 21 at Nellore

- The new train announced by South Central Railway will run from Monday to Friday, leaving Nellore at 5.45 am and reach Chennai suburban terminal at 9.05 am
- The Vice-President laid foundation for the redevelopment of Nellore station with Rs 147 crore, which is among 10 stations across the country proposed for converting as smart railway stations, under PPP model
- During the first phase, Nellore and Tirupati stations would be taken up for improving amenities and Vijayawada and Visakhapatnam would be taken up in the next phase
- Minister for Railways Piyush Goyal was also present on the occasion
INTERNATIONAL

- The Pakistan government - banned Hafiz Saeed-led Jamat-ut-Dawa (JuD) and its charity arm, the Falah-i-Insaniyat Foundation (FIF) on February 21

- The decision was taken in the National Security Committee (NSC) meeting chaired by Prime Minister Imran Khan to review the National Action Plan in detail
- Hafiz Saeed is the mastermind of the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks
- He formed Jamat-ut-Dawa after Lashkar-e-Taiba was banned by the Pakistan government
- Pakistan's decision to ban JuD has come a day before the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) plenary meeting is scheduled to take place
- Pakistan was put on the FATF grey list in June 2018 and was put on notice to be blacklisted by October 2019 if it didn't curb money laundering and terror financing

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

- Hayabusa 2, Japanese space probe named after a falcon - has touched down the asteroid Ryugu, more than 300 million km from Earth – on February 21
- The spacecraft's landing on the asteroid Ryugu, just 900 metres in diameter, came after an initial attempt in October was delayed because it was difficult to pick a landing spot on the asteroid's rocky surface
- Hayabusa 2 fired a small projectile into the surface of Ryugu to collect particles back to Earth for analysis regarding origin of life
• It is the second Japanese spacecraft to land on an asteroid after Hayabusa touched down on a near-Earth asteroid named Itokawa in 2005, making it the first spacecraft to bring asteroid dust back to Earth.
• Hayabusa 2 was launched in December 2014 and is scheduled to return to Earth at the end of 2020.

AWARDS

• **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** received the prestigious Seoul Peace Prize 2018 on February 22, 2019.
• The award was given to the Prime Minister for his contribution to international cooperation, global peace and harmony apart from fostering global economic growth, crediting 'Modinomics' for reducing social and economic disparity between the rich and the poor.
The award was presented to him by Kwon E-hyock, the Chairman of the Seoul Peace Prize Cultural Foundation at a grand ceremony in Seoul, South Korea.

PM Modi is the 14th recipient of the Seoul Peace Prize.

Past recipients of the award include distinguished global personalities like former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and international relief organizations like Doctors Without Borders and Oxfam.

The Seoul Peace Prize was established in 1990 to commemorate the success of the 24th Olympic Games held in Seoul, Korea in 1988.

Swaroop Rawal, former 1979 Miss India winner and wife of Bollywood actor Paresh Rawal - has been selected among the Top 10 finalists for the Global Teacher Prize 2019 as per the list released by the Varkey Foundation Global Teacher Prize.

It is for the first time that the organization has announced the US$1 million award, the largest prize of its kind.

Shortlisted by the Global Teacher Prize Committee from a worldwide top 50, she will now be competing with teachers from the Netherlands, UK, US, Georgia, Brazil, Argentina, Australia, Japan and Kenya.

She stood victorious over 10,000 nominations and applications across 179 countries for the annual prize, to be announced next month in Dubai.

Swaroop Rawal is a Life Skills and Drama teacher at Lavad Primary School, Gujarat.

She has been teaching children from different backgrounds in India, traveling, and conducting workshops.

Earlier, then Gujarat CM Narendra Modi selected her for an educational program for children.
SPORTS

West Indies star batsman, Chris Gayle - surpassed Pakistan's Shahid Afridi to top the list of most international sixes

He achieved the feat during the 1st ODI between West Indies and England at the Kensington Oval in Bridgetown, Barbados on February 20
Gayle now has 488 international sixes, one more than Afridi
Third on that list is former New Zealand wicket-keeper-batsman, Brendon McCullum, who has hit 398 international sixes
Former Sri Lanka opener, Sanath Jayasuriya is fourth with international sixes 352
India's batsman Rohit Sharma completes the top five chart with 349 sixes
Gayle has the most centuries by a West Indian in ODI, with 23, as well as the highest score of 215
He is the second most capped West Indies player with 284 matches and is also the second highest run-scorer with 9,727 runs, behind only West Indies legend Brian Lara - who has 10,405 runs from 299 matches
Gayle has earlier announced that he will retire at the end of 2019 ICC Cricket World Cup in England & Wales.
The Supreme Court – appointed its former judge D K Jain as BCCI Ombudsman to resolve disputes

- The move follows the recent differences of opinion between the Chairman, Vinod Rai and member Diana Edulji of the SC-appointed Committee of Administrators (CoA) – to administer BCCI
- It had also appointed Indian Army’s former Master General Ordnance Lt Gen Ravi Thodge – as the third member of the CoA to assist decision making in BCCI
- Lt Gen Ravi Thodge is a Param Vishist Seva Medal awardee, involved in counter-insurgency operations in Punjab, North East and Jammu & Kashmir
- He was commissioned into 1st Gorkha Rifles in 1977 and commanded the regiment’s 5th battalion during the kargil war