Tamil Nadu Government – rolls out a massive Tree planting programme in the state – on the eve of former chief minister J Jayalalithaa’s birth anniversary celebrations.
The programme has been entrusted to the rural development and panchayat raj department from this year onwards

Chief minister Edappadi K Palaniswami launched the programme at Kamarajar Salai by planting a magizham sapling near Bharathidasan statue on February 24, 2019

Under this programme, 71 lakh saplings will be planted in the state at a cost of Rs 191.85 crore

The planting work will be completed by December 2019

Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami - announced that the Tamil Nadu Music and Fine Arts University in Chennai will be named after the late Chief Minister, J. Jayalalithaa as a tribute to her

This exclusive university for music and fine arts was launched to preserve, foster, popularis and promote the traditional system of Indian music, performing arts and fine arts practised in Tamil Nadu

STATES

Odisha government - launched the ‘Boat ambulance’ service on February 23

The service, inaugurated at a cost of Rs 5.40 crore, will help patients reach hospitals in remote areas cut off by rivers

The first boat ambulance was launched at Batighar in the Kendrapara district.

Six boat ambulances will add to the road fleet and will be part of the 108 ambulance service
The operational cost for these six ambulances is estimated to be around Rs 90 lakh per annum

- Bihar – becomes the first state in the country to launch ‘dog squads’ to check liquor smuggling

- 20 liquor-tracker dogs were trained rigorously for 9 months at Hyderabad-based Integrated Intelligence Training Academy
- The state had imposed total ban on liquor on April 2016

- Uttarkhand Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat – launches ‘1905’ helpline for quick redressal of public complaints – in Dehradun on February 23, 2019

- Citizens can contact any department under this helpline to ensure speedy functioning of the government departments
Prime Minister Narendra Modi - dedicated the National War Memorial to the nation on February 25, 2019

The National War Memorial is located near the India Gate in New Delhi.

It is developed as a fitting tribute to the soldiers who laid down their lives in Peace Keeping Missions and Counter Insurgency Operations, defending the nation, post-independence.

The memorial has 4 concentric circles namely,

- Amar Chakra or Circle of Immortality
- Veerta Chakra or Circle of Bravery
- Tyag Chakra or Circle of Sacrifice
- Rakshak Chakra or Circle of Protection

The memorial also houses the busts of the 21 awardees of Param Veer Chakra, including 3 living awardees - Subedar Major (Hony Capt) Bana Singh (Retd), Subedar Major Yogendra Singh Yadav and Subedar Sanjay Kumar.

The memorial has the names of 25,942 martyrs etched in stone.

The GST Council has decided that in metro areas, the eligibility for affordable housing would be properties worth Rs 45 lakh and 60 sq metre carpet area, whereas in non-metro areas, it would be Rs 45 lakh and 90 sq metre.

The decision was based on recommendations of a Ministerial Panel headed by Gujarat Deputy Chief Minister Nitin Patel.

The GST Council undertook the decisions to boost the government's vision of 'Housing for all by 2022'.

The Centre - is planning to roll out a new drug combination therapy for the patients with latent tuberculosis infection (LTBI)

In keeping with its objective of eliminating TB by 2025, the Government has allowed drug major Sanofi to import Rifapentine into the country, through its National TB Control Programme.

Rifapentine, a once-a-week drug regimen for three months to treat LTBI, is on the World Health Organisation’s Essential List and is approved in US and other countries.

In India, at least 40% of people are estimated to be latently infected.

The government-monitored Revised National Tuberculosis Control Programme (RNTCP) distributes TB drugs through its designated centres.

At present, many with LTBI do not complete the treatment using drug Isoniazid as the duration is too long — six to nine months of daily pills.

To overcome this problem, shorter drug regimens such as 3HP, which includes Isoniazid (H) and Rifapentine (P), given once a week for three months were tried in clinical trials.

The Government – hikes ‘Risk and hardship allowance’ (RHA) of central paramilitary forces by 78%

The Home ministry had reclassified 10 districts of J&K — Anantnag, Kulgam, Shopian, Pulwama, Badgam, Ganderbal, Baramulla, Kuwara, Bandipora and Srinagar — in the higher grade for payment of hardship allowance.

Around 55,000 CRPF personnel and jawans of central paramilitary forces posted in these districts will now get Rs 17,300 per month instead of Rs 9,700 earlier, for personnel up to the rank of inspector.

Officers above the rank of inspectors will get Rs 25,000 compared to Rs 16,900 earlier.

Union minister Ashwini Kumar Choubey - launched ‘National Action Plan - Viral Hepatitis’ in Mumbai.
It is a national programme aimed at eliminating viral hepatitis, recognized as an important public health problem.

Amitabh Bachchan, the goodwill ambassador for Hepatitis, WHO South-East Asia Region was also present during the launch.

The programme is in line with the country’s commitment towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3.3 to eliminate Hepatitis C by 2030.

INTERNATIONAL

Polaris, the world’s first icebreaker to run on liquefied natural gas (LNG) – arrives in Tornio, Finland.

LNG is the cleanest known fuel and a lower-carbon alternative to the diesel fuel which powers most large ships.

The 128 million euro ($145 million) vessel weighs at 10,000 tonnes.

Until now, Polaris has been running on low-sulphur diesel oil, or filling up with natural gas brought in by lorry.

Liquefied natural gas is a fossil fuel and therefore generally considered non-renewable.

It is widely seen as more environmentally friendly than coal or oil because it burns more efficiently and emits less carbon, apart from being cheaper than diesel.

In exceptionally tough conditions, Polaris can switch its engines to diesel.

Built in 2016 by Arctech Helsinki Shipyard, it is also equipped with pumps, filters and inflatable booms in the event of an oil spill in icy conditions.

Finland is the only nation in the world where all of its ports regularly freeze in winter, meaning icebreakers are necessary to keeping trade flowing.
INDIA AND OTHER COUNTRIES

The first consignment of Afghan exports to India through Chabahar port – was flagged off by Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani on February 24 - at a ceremony held at Zaranj in Afghanistan’s Nimroz Province.

The ceremony was attended by the ambassadors of India, Iran, Turkey and diplomats of Indonesia and Kazakhstan.

The export consignment, loaded in 23 trucks consisted of Afghan carpets, dry fruits, cotton, talc, stones and other items weighing 570 tonnes.

India had sent consignment of 1.1 lakh tonnes of wheat, pulses and other assistance in over 4,800 containers to Afghanistan through Chabahar port since 2017.

In December 2018, the Indian company India Ports Global Limited had taken over operations at the Shaheed Behesti port at Chabahar.

CONFERENCES & SUMMITS

Union Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad - inaugurated ‘VIVID 2019’

“VIVID-Vision Insight and Voices as India goes Digital” is a District Informatics Officer (DIO) meet

Organised by - National Informatics Centre (NIC)

Duration - 21st and 22nd February, 2019

VIVID is an initiative to interact with the DIO’s to share their experiences as digital change-makers at the grass-root level in the States

During the occasion, the minister also released the Digital India Compendium and launched Digidhan Mitra Chatbot and Technology incubation and development of entrepreneurs (TIDE 2.0) scheme.
Ram Nath Kovind, President of India – inaugurated the 3-day ‘International Conference and Exhibition on Energy and Environment' in New Delhi on February 20

Organised by - Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)

The conference aims to identify the research and development needs of new innovations, technologies and applications for clean, safe, sustainable development of society, environment, energy and industries in years following 2020

14th Agricultural Science Congress – held at New Delhi

Organised by - National Academy of Agricultural Sciences (NAAS) in collaboration with the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and Indian Agricultural Research Institute at National Agricultural Science Complex (NASC)

Duration - 20th to 23rd February 2019

Theme - “Innovations for Agricultural Transformation”
44th Global Summit of International Advertising Association - held in Kochi from 20th – 22nd February 2019

- It involved sessions from a wide variety of speakers-ranging from a spiritual guru, industrial leaders to technology experts
- The highlight of the event was a robot trying to answer theme-based question- “Brand Dharma, What’s coming next?”

Festival of India – begins in Kathmandu, Nepal on February 19, 2019

- Inaugurated by - Minister for Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation Rabindra Adhikari and Indian Ambassador to Nepal Manjeev Singh Puri
- Organised by - Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre, Embassy of India
- The festival aims at making the youth aware about the similarities between Nepal and India

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT
Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) – to launch a PSLV mission in March where it will release different payloads in 3 different orbits

- For the first time in the country’s space history, ISRO will launch PSLV-C45 mission in the last week of March
- Soon after takeoff from Sriharikota, the rocket will first launch an electronic intelligence satellite, Emisat of DRDO, at an orbit of 763 km
- Soon after launching the DRDO payload, PS-4 stage (last stage of rocket) will make two orbital manoeuvres (will be restarted twice) to reach an orbit of 504km where it will release 28 foreign satellites
- Thereafter, the PS-4 will again make two orbital manoeuvres to reach the 485 km orbit where it will be released and double up as an experimental platform for space experiments, carrying a 5-10 kg small payload of Kerala-based Indian Institute of Space Science and Technology (IIST), Asia’s first space university
- PSLV-C45 will be a totally new rocket, which uses solar panels to keep it active for at least six months
- On January 24, PSLV-C44 rocket had carried a student satellite ‘Kalamsat’ that was attached to PS-4, for doing space experiments
- ISRO is planning to launch the Chandrayaan-2 mission in April end

Sir Richard Branson’s Virgin Galactic spaceplane – successfully takes its first human passenger into space on February 22, 2019

- The spaceplane, called the VSS Unity, had 3 people onboard - 2 pilots and 1 passenger (for the first time)
- This is the 5th flight of VSS Unity with all its previous flights containing only the two pilots
- VSS Unity flew to space with chief pilot Dave Mackay, co-pilot Michael Masucci and the passenger, Beth Moses, who is the chief astronaut instructor at Virgin Galactic and one of the pilots from the VSS Unity’s first flight into space in December 2018
- Since December, it has touched the edge of space for the second time now, recording an altitude of 90 km above the Earth’s surface with its world record-holding hybrid rocket motor propelling the spaceship at Mach 3.04 (3 times the speed of sound) to an apogee of 295,007 ft.
- Virgin Galactic has yet to announce when its flights will be available for commercial passengers.
**DEFENCE**

- Cobra Gold, annual military exercise – held in Thailand

- Thailand and the United States hosted one of the world’s largest multinational military exercise in the Asia-Pacific region with 29 nations taking part as participants or observers.
- Apart from Thailand and US, 7 countries who participated in the exercise were India, Singapore, Japan, China, Indonesia, Malaysia and South Korea.
- The Indian Army participated in the military training exercise with a 14-member contingent.
- Cobra Gold is held annually in Thailand since 1982.
- India participated in this exercise for the first time in the ‘Observer Plus’ category in 2016 alongside China.

**APPOINTMENTS**

- Saudi Arabia - appointed a ‘Princess’ as its new ambassador to the United States - the first time the kingdom has named a woman to such a post.

- Princess Reema bint Bandar bin Sultan, appointed by a royal decree, replaces Prince Khalid bin Salman, a son of King Salman and a younger brother of the crown prince, who took the post in 2017.
- Prince Khalid was named Deputy defence minister under the Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, who heads the ministry.
AWARDS

- Indian co-production, “Period. End of Sentence” - won the Oscar’s 91st Academy Award in the Best Documentary (Short Subject) category on February 24, 2019

The Netflix documentary explores the lives of the women of Hapur (Uttar Pradesh) fighting stigma around menstruation and also focusses on India’s Pad Man, Arunachalam Muruganantham's work.

In the documentary, a group of rural women learn to use a machine that produces low-cost biodegradable sanitary pads, which they sell to other women under the brand name FLY.

It was co-produced by Guneet Monga’s Sikhya Entertainment, directed by Iranian-American filmmaker Rayka Zehtabchi and created by The Pad Project.

The film was produced as a part of The Pad Project, started by students at the Oakwood School in Los Angeles and their teacher, Melissa Berton in a rural village outside of Delhi, India.

Period. End of Sentence features the real Pad Man Arunachalam Muruganantham, on whom, Akshay Kumar and Twinkle Khanna made ‘PadMan’ in 2018.

Indian film producer Guneet Monga is also the producer of acclaimed movies like Masaan and Lunchbox.

India's moment at the Oscars comes exactly a decade after A R Rahman and sound engineer Resul Pookutty won the Academy awards for "Slumdog Millionaire" in 2009.
SPORTS

- ISSF Shooting World Cup 2019, New Delhi

- 16-year old Saurabh Chaudhary - won the gold with a world record and won a quota place for the Tokyo Olympics in the process in the men’s 10m air pistol event
- Saurabh shot 245 in the final to break Ukrainian shooter Oleh Omelchuk’s record of 243.6 - in his debut World Cup as ‘Senior’ player
- Saurabh has been owning the junior world record (245.5) for almost a year
- Saurabh has shot in 11 international tournaments in the last 3 years, made it to 10 finals and has won 8 gold and 1 silver, including Asian Games, Commonwealth Games, Youth Olympic Games, Junior World Cups and Junior World Championships

PM-KISAN - LAUNCH

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi – launched the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) scheme at national level from Gorakhpur town in Uttar Pradesh on February 24
✓ The main function was linked on-line with six states - Tamil Nadu, Assam, Jharkhand, Himachal Pradesh and Gujarat, where the PM directly transferred the benefit of the first installment of Rs 2,000 in the accounts of identified beneficiaries from each state.

✓ On the launching day at National Level, the Prime Minister transferred an amount of Rs 2.21 crores in the accounts of the about 1.1 lakh beneficiaries.

✓ The scheme was announced in the centre's interim budget 2019-20.

✓ The PM-KISAN is completely funded by the central government and became effective on December 1, 2018.

✓ It was started from the Fertilizer Corporation of India by making an electronic transfer of the first instalment to selected farmers.

✓ All the farmers who have land holdings upto 2 hectare are eligible to get the benefit of the Rs 75,000 crore scheme.

✓ Direct Benefit Transfer at Rs 6000 per annum per eligible family shall be made in three equal installments of Rs 2000 each.

✓ The first instalment of Rs 2,000 will be transferred to bank accounts of farmers by March 31, 2019.

✓ During the occasion, PM Modi said he has also donated the amount of Rs 1.30 crore received as Seoul Peace Prize to 'Namami Gange' Mission.

✓ The Prime Minister also addressed at the 'Swachh Kumbh, Swachh Aabhaar' programme in Prayagraj, hailing the service and washing the feet of sanitation workers and felicitating them at Kumbh.