Chief minister Edappadi K Palaniswami launched the free laptop scheme for the current academic year for 15.18 lakh students on February 27.

The project, started in 2011-12, would cost the exchequer Rs 1,340.44 crore.

The government took a policy decision to give laptops to 5.12 lakh students of Class XI in government and government-aided schools from this year.

At least 37.88 lakh students have benefited from the government’s pet project till now.

Chief minister Edappadi K Palaniswami announced a high-level committee to study the demand to categorize six sub-sects of Scheduled Castes as Devendrakula Vellalars on February 27.

The committee would look into the demand to categorize the Kudumban, Pannadi, Kaladi, Kadayan, Devendrakulathan and Pallan sects into one grouping.

The committee would be led by rural development secretary, Hans Raj Varma.

Adi Dravidar and Tribal Welfare secretary and law secretary will be members and Adi Dravidar Welfare director will be the member-secretary.
Chief minister Edappadi K Palaniswami - laid the foundation for 12 projects costing Rs 14,071 crore after MoUs were signed in the recent Global Investors Meet (GIM) providing employment to 12,294 people

- Projects inaugurated
- South Korean auto major Hyundai’s Rs 7,000 crore electric car unit and expansion of the company’s existing facility in Irungattukottai
- Expansion project of tyre manufacturer MRF in Perambalur at Rs 3,100 crore
- Sundaram Clayton Group’s Rs 1,200 crore two-wheeler and auto component expansion project in Hosur and Oragadam
- Auto component unit of Wheels India Limited at Rs 600 crore in SIPCOT industrial park in Thervoykandigai in Tiruvallur
- Auto component manufacturing unit from Mando Automotive India Limited in the Pillaiyakkam SIPCOT industrial park at a cost of Rs 844 crore
- Rs 500 crore expansion project of mobile charger unit of Salcomp Manufacturing India Private Limited in Nokia Telecom SEZ in Kancheepuram district
- Expansion of textile machinery capacity, Defence and aerospace component unit, solar power project and construction of warehouse at an estimated cost of Rs 600 crore of Lakshmi Machine Works Limited in Coimbatore
- Commercial production of prawn culture feed by Sheng Long Biotech India Private Limited
**STATES**

- Himachal Pradesh – declares monkeys as ‘Vermin species’ again - for next one year for eleven districts and 91 tehsils and sub-tehsils in Himachal Pradesh – as per the centre’s notification dated February 14, 2019

- Monkeys have been affecting the crops and causing harm to humans in the State
- Earlier on April 24, 2016, Monkeys were declared as vermin in 38 tehsils and sub-tehsils of 10 districts in Himachal Pradesh
- Later, the period of this notification was extended for one year on December 20, 2017
- Vermin are pests or nuisance animals that spread diseases or destroy crops or livestock.
- If an animal is declared ‘vermin’ under the Wild life (protection) act 1972, their killing will not be regulated by the Government

**NATIONAL**

- The Government – is planning to announce a subsidy of up to Rs 2.5 lakh for 60,000 electric cars and incentives of up to Rs 20,000 for 20,000 hybrid cars that are bought over the next 3 years
- An overwhelming majority of the funds would be allocated for electric two and three wheelers and buses used for public transport
- The move follows the initiative of the Government to promote green fuel in the country through a Rs 10,000 package
- The cabinet is likely to take up this proposal as part of the second phase of Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of (Hybrid & Electric Vehicles) India (FAME) scheme on February 28
- The subsidy calculation will be linked to the battery capacity of the respective vehicle — Rs 10,000 per KWh for all vehicles and Rs 20,000 per KWh for buses
- The cost of batteries is about 50% of the vehicle price in case of electric ones
- The scheme will come to effect from April 2019
Prime Minister, Narendra Modi – launched the ‘Khelo India’ Mobile App in New Delhi at the Vigyan Bhawan during the Youth Parliament Festival

Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore and other dignitaries were present at the launch.

Developed by Sports Authority of India (SAI) as part of its Khelo India Scheme, it is a first-of-its-kind mobile application that aims to create awareness about sports and fitness in the country.

The bi-lingual application (in English and Hindi) has 3 unique sections that will help youngsters to take up sport –
- Section 1 - How to play – contains information about the basic rules and regulations of 18 sports disciplines.
- Section 2 – Where to play - includes an exhaustive repository of data of all sporting facilities across the country
- Section 3 – Get fit - has 8 tests that can be used to ascertain the level of fitness and to determine which sport can be taken for a child

Indian Railways – announces a new zone ‘South Coast Railway (SCoR)’ in Andhra Pradesh with headquarters in Vishakapatnam

SCoR will comprise of existing Guntakal, Guntur and Vijayawada divisions
- Additionally, the Waltair division (which is a part of East Coast Railway zone) would be bifurcated and one part of it will be incorporated in the new zone by merging it with the neighbouring Vijaywada division
- Remaining portion of Waltair division shall be converted into a new division with headquarter at Rayagada under East Coast Railway (ECoR)
- South Central Railway will comprise of Hyderabad, Secunderabad and Nanded divisions after the formation of new zones
- As per item 8 of Schedule 13 (Infrastructure) of the Andhra Pradesh Reorganization Act, 2014, Indian Railways was required to examine establishing a new railway zone in the successor State of Andhra Pradesh
The Railways – launched a new feature on the IRCTC website on February 27 – to book seats even after the reservation chart is prepared.

- As per the new feature, travellers can book tickets after the second reservation chart is out just 30 minutes before the departure of trains.
- The new web-based interface available on desktop and cellphone will give graphical representation of the coaches and berthwise reservation status, even at the ‘last’ minute.

Union Tribal Affairs Minister, Jual Oram - launched the ‘Minimum Support Price’ (MSP) for Minor Forest Produces and the Value Addition component of Van Dhan scheme on February 28 at a TRIFED-sponsored workshop in New Delhi.

The Van Dhan Scheme was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Bijapur District of Chhattisgarh in April 2018.

- The Ministry now covers around 50 minor forest produces with the MSP and has also raised the MSP from 30% to 40% for the commodities.
- The Minor Forest Produces will be procured in Haat Bazaars, where tribals will bring their produce from their villages.
- It is also proposed to set up around 6000 Van Dan Vikas Kendras in the country comprising 300 tribal gatherers in each.
- The Ministry will tie-up with the Ministry of Food Processing Industries to set up two minor forest produce processing units at Jagdalpur in Chhattisgarh and Raigarh in Maharashtra at the cost of almost approximately Rs 11 Crores.
- Heritage Mahua, a traditional tribal drink, will be produced and marketed all over the country through these units.
- Besides this, the Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED) has also launched the “Friends of Tribes” Scheme for sourcing of CSR funds from Public Sector Organisations.
NITI Aayog’s Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) - signed an agreement with ‘Adobe’ – to develop creative skills and spreading digital literacy across all Atal Tinkering Labs in India

- Adobe will be adopting 100 schools under Atal Tinkering Labs (ATL) initiative
- It will implement its Digital Disha Program in ATLs under which free licenses of Adobe Spark premium shall be offered to ATLs

- Launched in 2018, the Adobe Digital Disha Programme is aimed at creative thinking and technology-based learning

- Dharmendra Pradhan, Union Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas & Skill development and Entrepreneurship – hands over the 100th Letter of Intent (LoI) to the Compressed Bio-Gas (CBG) Entrepreneur under the SATAT scheme

- SATAT - Sustainable Alternative Towards Affordable Transportation
- It is a developmental scheme, which would benefit vehicle-users as well as farmers and entrepreneurs.
- SATAT was launched in October 2018 with a four-pronged agenda of utilising more than 62 million metric tonnes of waste generated every year in India, cutting down import dependence, supplementing job creation in the country and reducing vehicular emissions and pollution from burning of agricultural / organic waste
SUPREME COURT VERDICT

- The Supreme Court - accepted the recommendation of the court-appointed committee on road safety - to increase the minimum compensation for death in a hit-and-run case from the existing Rs 25,000 to Rs 2 lakh
- A bench of Justices S A Bobde, Deepak Gupta and Vineet Saran asked all stakeholders, including the Centre, to hold consultations for framing a scheme of payment.
- As per the committee’s report, a minimum compensation of Rs 50,000 should be paid to grievously injured in a hit-and-run case
- The compensation under hit-and-run cases is made from a Solatium Fund which is contributed by general insurance industry under an agreed formula.
- The apex court had on April 22, 2014, constituted the committee on road safety headed by Justice K S Radhakrishnan

CONFERENCES & SUMMITS

- Suresh Prabhu, Union Minister of Commerce, Industry and Civil Aviation - inaugurated the ‘Aviation Conclave 2019’ on February 27
- Theme - “Flying for All”
- Organised by – Ministry of Civil Aviation
- Objective - The conclave is about the future of Indian aviation, bringing together industry leaders, government and regulators for setting the tone and propelling the country to realize the Vision-2040 of the nation
- Over 30 industry leaders participated in 5-key sessions -
  - Drone-Ecosystem Policy Roadmap
  - Roadmap for Manufacturing Aircraft
  - The Project Rupee Raftaar- Aircraft Financing from India
  - The National Air Cargo Policy
  - The Mission to transform Indian Airports into Next-Gen Aviation Hubs
Anupriya Patel, Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare - inaugurated the ‘International Digital Health Symposium’ in New Delhi.

- The Digital Health Symposium follows the two-day Global Digital Health Partnership (GDHP) summit.
- The Symposium provided a forum to learn from key global leaders in the field of digital health and innovation.
- Approximately 700 delegates including high level delegates from the government and various stakeholders participated in the symposium.

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

- National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) - has launched a new mission to forecast the weather system around the Earth from International Space Station (ISS).
✓ Titled ‘Atmospheric Waves Experiment’ (AWE), it is expected to cost around $42 million and will be launched in August 2022 under NASA's Heliophysics Explorers Program

✓ The experiment will focus on colourful bands of light in Earth’s atmosphere, called Airglow, to determine what combination of forces drive space weather in the upper atmosphere

✓ NASA has also selected another experiment, called the Sun Radio Interferometer Space Experiment (SunRISE) for a seven-month extended formulation study at a proposed cost of $100,000

✓ It will investigate how giant space weather storms from the Sun, called Solar particle storms, are accelerated and released into planetary space – using an array of 6 CubeSats operating like one large radio telescope

✓ Since the 1958 launch of NASA's first satellite Explorer 1 that discovered Earth's radiation belts, the Explorers Program has undertaken over 90 missions

✓ The Uhuru and Cosmic Background Explorer (COBE) missions obtained Nobel prizes to their respective investigators

AWARDS

➢ The first "P V Narasimha Rao National leadership and lifetime achievement award" – was conferred to Dr Manmohan Singh by Former president Pranab Mukherjee - at Teen Murti Bhawan in New Delhi

✓ Dr Manmohan Singh held the portfolio of Finance Minister in Rao’s cabinet and was crucial in the liberalisation of the Indian economy during the early 1990s
SPORTS

- Saurabh Chaudhary and Manu Bhaker – won the 10m air pistol mixed event in the ISSF World Shooting Championships on the last day in New Delhi.

- The Indian pair had qualified for the final after shooting a senior World Record equalling score of 778, and a new junior record.

- Saurabh has already won a gold and an Olympic quota in the men’s 10m air pistol event.

- India and Hungary topped the medals tally with 3 golds each in the Championships.

- Out of 14 quota places available in the event for 2020 Olympics, Saurabh bagged the lone quota place for India.

- Dharun Ayyasamy of Tiruppur, Tamil Nadu – wins gold in the 400m hurdles event with a timing of 49.94 seconds at the Indian Grand Prix in New Delhi.
✓ Tamil Nadu’s M Ramachandran ended a close third at 50.83 seconds
✓ Coimbatore’s S Mithravarun won the men’s discus throw with a distance of 52.62m.
✓ Tamil Nadu’s SN Mohammed Salahuddin clinched the men’s triple jump with 15.80m
✓ Delhi-based sprinter Nisar Ahmad bagged Gold in the 200m event of the second leg of the Indian Grand Prix
✓ However, he failed the age-verification test last week and was subsequently barred by the Athletics Federation of India (AFI) from competing in age group competitions for two years.
✓ This event is a build-up to the Federation Cup, which will be held in Patiala from March 15 to 18