Prime Minister Narendra Modi – is likely to inaugurate the ‘Tejas Express’ on February 27

- The Railway Board has approved the Southern Railway to run the train from Chennai to Madurai, with stops at Trichy and Kodai Road, within 6 hours and 30 minutes
- Tejas Express has onboard wifi, a CCTV system, modular toilets and better seating facilities
- It will be the first premier train linking Chennai Egmore with southern districts

The last leg of 45 km Phase-I of the Metro Rail line – all set to be open for public from February 10

- It will be between Washermenpet to AG-DMS
- Most stations on the line will be accessible at Rs 40, including a trip between any 2 major transit hubs of Chennai Central, Airport or Koyambedu
- The longest distance from Washermenpet to Airport covering 22 km costs Rs 60
Discoms owned by Maharashtra, West Bengal and Telangana have not imported any coal due to the availability of coal from mines in their states.

Tamil Nadu is dependent on thermal power for most part of the year, except from May to September when wind power is available.

The state needs about 26 million tonnes of coal for full capacity generation of power by North Chennai, Mettur, Ennore and Tuticorin thermal units.

Out of this, 20.445 million tonnes is met by indigenous coal and the balance 5.50 million tonnes is imported.

At present, the power demand in the state is 14,500 MW which will peak more in summer.

**STATES**

Uttar Pradesh Government – proposes a new scheme, “Kanya Sumangala Yojana” at a cost of Rs 1,200 crore, in its annual budget announced on February 7

- It is aimed to raise health and educational standard of girls, brighten their future and bring in a positive change in the thinking towards women.
- The budget had set aside Rs 612 crore for stray cows -- Rs 247 crore was allocated for new cowsheds, Rs 200 crore for Kanha gaushalas and stray animal homes in urban areas and Rs 165 crore for unproductive and abandoned cows.
✓ It had also allocated a big amount for religious tourism, vedic schools and cow protection

**NATIONAL**

♦ A dedicated web portal has been launched – for the beneficiaries of PM-KISAN

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**Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN)**

Direct income support of ₹6,000 p.a for farmers, effective 01.12.2018

To benefit 12 cr small and marginal farmer families having cultivable land upto 2 ha

Direct transfer into the bank accounts in three equal instalments

First installment upto 31.03.2019, to be paid this year itself

₹75,000 cr in outlay for 2019-20 and ₹20,000 cr in RE 2018-19
The Centre had launched the portal ‘http://pmkisan.nic.in’ - for the purpose of getting the list of beneficiaries from the states by February 25
It had recently released detailed operational guidelines specifying exclusion of certain categories of non-eligible landholder farmer families
The ambitious programme of the government will benefit around 12 crore small and marginal farmers, who have cultivable land up to 2 hectares
The Rs 75000 crore, fully centrally funded scheme, PM-KISAN, was announced by the Government in its interim budget for 2019-20 on February 1
Under the scheme, the beneficiary will get Rs 6,000 per annum in 3 equal installments every four months in a financial year
The Government has made the scheme operational with effect from December 1, 2018
The first installment of Rs 2,000 will be transferred to the bank accounts of the beneficiaries by March 31, 2019

**India’s own ‘Air Force One’ for President and Prime Minister’s long-haul flights – is getting ready**

Two new Boeing 777s are being retrofitted with advanced security measures including missile warning and counter-measure dispensing systems along with encrypted satellite communication facilities
The soon-to-be-named ‘Air India One’ or ‘Indian Air Force One’ will be close to American president’s ‘Air Force One’, the iconic ‘flying Oval office’ in terms of security
The B777s were purchased from America at the cost of Rs 190 million in January 2018
The B777 is equipped with ‘large aircraft infrared counter-measures’ (LAIRCM) self protection suites (SPS), which automatically detects and jams the missile threats
They will replace the 26-year old B747 jumbo, currently used by the Prime Minister and the President for long international flights
The B747 jumbo have the disadvantage of more fuel consumption, no advanced self-protection suites and needs a stopover in Europe for fuelling for the long air travels to the United States
India Meteorological Department officials – said that an ‘El Nino’, which has a negative influence on Indian monsoon – may never form in the next few months before monsoon in the equatorial Pacific Ocean

- Currently, neutral ENSO conditions, which are neither El Nino nor La Nina, are prevailing in the Pacific Ocean

Smriti Irani, Union Minister of Textiles - launched the India Size project in Mumbai on February 6, 2019

- It is a first-of-its-kind project that aims to arrive at a standard Indian Size for the ready-to-wear clothing industry, on the lines of the standardised sizes available in countries such as the USA and the UK.

UNESCO - joining hands with Sahapedia – to organize the 2nd India Heritage Walk Festival (IHWF) across 37 cities

- The festival is being held from February 2-28, with a focus on heritage education and walks for people with special needs
- It is also supported by the National Mineral Development Corporation
- A primary objective of the festival, which will conclude with simultaneous walks in multiple cities, is to widen access to various aspects of India's tangible and intangible heritage
- The IHWF had received the PATA Gold Award 2018 for its maiden pan-India event last year
- It will kick-start with a heritage walk in Ahmedabad on February 2, focusing on the religious history and co-existence of multiple faiths in that city
- Sahapedia is an open online resource on the arts, cultures and heritage of India
Indian Coast Guard – signs MoU with Airports Authority of India - to coordinate the aeronautical and maritime Search And Rescue (SAR) operations – as per the International Aeronautical Maritime Search And Rescue (IAMSAR) standards

- The MoU seeks to enhance Rescue Coordination Centre (RCC), Kolkata and Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC), Port Blair

COURT VERDICT

- The Supreme Court - has upheld the section 139AA of the Income Tax Act and said that linking of PAN with Aadhaar is mandatory for the filing of Income Tax returns
  - Section 139AA of the Income-Tax Act 1961 was introduced by the Finance Act, 2017
  - The section makes it mandatory to quote Aadhaar / Enrolment ID of Aadhaar application form, for the filing of income returns as well as in the application form to enroll for PAN
  - It also specifies that the PAN numbers must mandatorily be linked with Aadhaar, failing which the PAN number becomes invalid

- The Kerala High Court - has said banks cannot be absolved of liability for unauthorised withdrawals from their customers' accounts.
  - Justice P B Suresh Kumar, while dismissing an appeal of SBI to compensate a customer who lost Rs 2.4 lakh through fraudsters in Brazil, made it clear that banks are liable for unauthorised withdrawals even if customers did not respond to SMS alerts.
  - SMS alerts cannot be the basis to determine the liability of a customer, for there would be account holders who may not be in the habit of checking SMS alerts regularly, the court said.
  - It also said it is the banks' obligation to create a safe electronic banking environment to combat all forms of malicious conduct resulting in losses to their customers.
INTERNATIONAL

◆ Macedonia - joins NATO to become its 30th member

✔ The Macedonia-NATO accord follows a deal with Greece ending a 27-year-old dispute over Macedonia's name
✔ Macedonia has recently changed its name to ‘Republic of North Macedonia’ in January 2019
✔ To acquire full membership, all 29 current members must ratify the accession protocol, even though Russia is against the move
✔ North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) is a military and political alliance established through the Washington Treaty

◆ Thailand - has approved to name ‘Siamese fighting fish’ as the National Aquatic Animal – in a move which is expected to boost its conservation efforts as well as the commercial breeding
✔ The Siamese fighting fish was chosen as it’s a unique native species found in Thailand waters apart from being an important animal for Thailand’s economy

✔ It is native to the Mekong basin of Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam and mostly found at Chao Phraya river in Thailand
✔ The Siamese fighting fish was registered as intangible cultural heritage by the Cultural Ministry in 2013
CONFERENCES & SUMMITS

- **2nd National Conference of Micro Missions of National Police Mission – held in New Delhi on February 7**
  - It was organized by the Bureau of Police Research and Development
  - The two day Conference will discuss the issues of Skills and Competence at the grass-root level, attitudinal changes in police, gender sensitisation, harnessing technology and community policing
  - National Police Mission Awards will be given to 9 officers for their contribution in Micro Missions
  - The National Police Mission Division of BPRD strives to transform the Police Forces of the country into an effective medium for the maintenance of Internal Security.

PERSONALITIES

- **US President, Donald Trump - has nominated senior Treasury official, David Malpass as the next chief of the World Bank**
  - He would replace Jim Yong Kim as the president if voted by the Directors of the World Bank Group.
  - In his current capacity as the Under Secretary of the Treasury for International Affairs, 62-year-old Malpass oversees the working of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank

ECONOMY

- **The 6-member RBI Monetary policy committee, headed by its Governor Shaktikanta Das – announced its 6th bi-monthly monetary policy on February 7**
  - Key policy decisions

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<td>Bank Rate</td>
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✅ Headline inflation estimates revised down to 2.8% in March quarter, 3.2-3.4% in first half of next fiscal and 3.9% in Q3 of FY’20
✅ Projects GDP growth to accelerate to 7.4% next fiscal, from 7.2% in 2018-19
✅ To revise definition of bulk deposits as single rupee deposits of Rs 2 crore and above from Rs 1 crore currently
✅ Hikes limit of collateral-free agricultural loans to Rs 1.6 lakh from Rs 1 lakh, to help small and marginal farmers
✅ Next meeting of the MPC will take place from April 2-4
✅ The implication of the RBI reducing the repo rate is that the EMIs are likely to become cheaper
✅ The MPC also said that it is changing its policy stance from ‘calibrated tightening’ to ‘neutral’
✅ As per the committee, the decisions taken are to keep consumer price index (CPI) Inflation of 4% within +/- 2%
✅ Repo rate is the interest rate at which it lends money to banks
✅ Reverse repo rate is the interest rate at which banks lend money to the RBI

AWARDS

◆ Father Francois Laborde, a 92-year-old priest, was conferred with the Legion d’Honneur, the highest civilian award of France

He was awarded in recognition of his work for specially-abled children in Howrah.
Father Francois Laborde, French-origin with indian citizenship, is the third person from the state to be entitled with the Legion of Honor - after film maestro Satyajit Ray and actor Soumitra Chatterjee
SPORTS

◆ Vidharbha – becomes 2018-19 Ranji Champions for the second consecutive year – and becomes the sixth team to defend the Ranji title successfully

                   Champions

◆ They had defeated Saurashtra by 78 runs to win the final in Nagpur
◆ Saurashtra have now lost all the three Ranji Trophy finals they have been a part of, twice by Mumbai (2012-13 and 2015-16) and now by Vidharbha
◆ Aditya Sarvate of Vidharbha was adjudged the Man of the Match
◆ Milind Kumar (Sikkim) scored the most runs (1331 runs) in the series, while Ashutosh Aman (Bihar) took the most wickets (68 wickets)
◆ Mumbai, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Rajasthan and Delhi are the other teams who have managed to win consecutive titles

◆ S Mirabhai Chanu, World Champion wrestler of India – won the Gold medal at the EGAT cup in Thailand

◆ Chanu won the 48 kg category gold in the event, which is one of the qualifying competition for 2020 Tokyo Olympics
◆ She was battling lower back injury for the last 9 months, which had kept her out of action for the most part of 2018
RANKINGS

Child Marriages – Report released by the National Family Health Survey-4 (NFHS-4) conducted in 2015-16

- West Bengal tops the entire country with the highest incidence of girls, aged between 15 and 19 years, getting married
- All other states showed a steady decline in the rate of child marriages, except a marginal increase in 2 states – Himachal Pradesh and Manipur
- The national average now stands at 11.9%, with an incidence of 14.1% in rural areas and 6.9% in urban areas
- In the district level, Murshidabad in West Bengal showed the highest percentage of 39.9% child marriages followed by Gandhinagar in Gujarat (with 39.3%) and Bhilwara in Rajasthan (with 36.4%)
- Bihar has the maximum districts (20) with high prevalence followed by Bengal (14) and Jharkhand (11)
- When the NFHS-3 was conducted in 2005-06, Bihar topped the entire country at 47.8% with Jharkhand at second position with 44.7% and Rajasthan at third position with 40.4% followed by West Bengal at fourth with 34%