RMS Queen Mary 2, the largest transatlantic ocean cruise liner – comes to the Chennai port from Langkawi in Malaysia

- The ship is 345 metres long and 48.7 metres wide with a gross tonnage of 148,528 GT
- It can reach a maximum speed of just over 30 knots (56 kmph) and a cruising speed of 26 knots, much faster than a contemporary cruise ship
- The ship is more like a floating city with 15 restaurant with bars, 5 swimming pools, a casino, a
- It is also the only cruise with a planetarium
- It had 1,255 crew members and 2,528 passengers on board, mostly from US, UK, Australia, Germany, Canada and New Zealand
- The ship will sail to Kochi from Chennai
- Chennai-based National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT) – to develop the country’s first manned submersible by 2022
It will help to study unexplored life forms and look for precious minerals and metals in fissures at tectonically active regions of the Indian Ocean.

To develop the submersible, NIOT researchers are tying up with ISRO scientists and also take inputs from countries like Russia, UK, France, Japan and China, which already have developed manned underwater vehicles.

It will be developed as part of the ambitious Deep Ocean Mission.

ISRO will help design and build the crew module for the submersible.

Scientists have chosen Titanium for building the submersible as it has high strength, tough, low density and good corrosion resistance properties.

IIT, Madras – ties up with Trimble, a US based company – to set up state-of-the-art Trimble Technology Lab for architecture, engineering and construction.

Trimble is known for developing GPS receivers and specialized in various fields like transportation, telecommunication and construction.

The proposed lab will undertake training and research in 3D building design, digital fabrication and sustainable built environment.

It will facilitate various applications including scanning of historic buildings for preservation, design and 3D printing of architectural building models, digital fabrication of custom-lab equipment to monitoring coastal erosion and implementing construction cost estimating and scheduling to improve productivity and reduce costs.

NATIONAL

Lokpal – to have two former HC chief justices, Justices Abilasha Kumari and Dilip Babasaheb Bhosale – as judicial members.

The anti-graft ombudsman will be headed by Justice Pinaki Chandra Ghose.

It will also have 3 non-judicial members, which includes Archana Ramasundaram and DK Jain, former Chief Secretary of Maharashtra.

Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) – launched its new Podcast platform, CBSE-Shiksha Vani on March 18.
The podcast will provide easy access to schools, teachers and students about the latest information on educational tools and initiatives to enhance learning.

It also has another tab with the latest audio announcement clips in chronological order.

However, confidential information will have restricted access, requiring the sharing of one-time password in the registered mobile number with the nodal officer.

The Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) in Guwahati and Mandi - to collaborate with the Indian Institute of Science in Bengaluru – for developing a ‘Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment for the Indian Himalayan Region Using a Common Framework’

The assessment exercise is being undertaken to cover all the 12 Indian Himalayan region (IHR) states using a common framework.

The various research projects under the framework aim to address the vulnerable, hazard and extreme events in the Indian Himalayan Region.

The 12 states to be covered under the framework include Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, the hilly districts of West Bengal, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Jammu and Kashmir.

INTERNATIONAL

Cyclone Idai - devastated Mozambique after it made its landfall on March 14

Over 1000 people are feared to be dead due to the worst weather-related disaster to hit the southern hemisphere

More than 150,000 people are affected by the deadliest cyclone

The port city of Beira in central Mozambique was the center of the Cyclone Idai

In the neighbouring country, Zimbabwe, Cyclone Idai left 98 dead and at least 217 are still missing
It had also affected the adjoining country of Malawi, where 56 people have died. India has diverted three Indian naval ships to the port city of Beira in Mozambique to provide humanitarian assistance to the affected people.

In 2017, India had provided 10 million dollars to Mozambique for food grains after the country suffered food shortage due to natural calamities.

**INDIA AND NEIGHBOURS**

- India and Maldives signed three agreements – during the visit of Indian External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj to Maldives on March 17-18, 2019.

- The agreements for diplomatic and official passport holders, development cooperation and renewable energy were signed by the Indian Minister after extensive talks with Foreign Minister of Maldives, Abdulla Shahid.
CONFERENCES & SUMMITS

- 3rd Indo-Japan Workshop on Disaster Risk Reduction - was held in New Delhi

- The workshop was attended by about 140 delegates from Japan and India including experts from both the governments
- India and Japan had signed a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) in the field of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) in September 2017
- The first and second Indo-Japan Workshops on DRR were held respectively in New Delhi and Tokyo

PERSONALITIES

- Priyanka Chopra Jonas, Indian Actress - named in the list of "50 Most Powerful Women in Entertainment" of the USA Today
In the list, she joins illustrious international celebrities, which includes Oprah Winfrey, Meryl Streep, Beyonce, Ellen Degeneres, Jennifer Lawrence, Jennifer Lopez, Tina Fey, Nicole Kidman and Reese Witherspoon among many others.

Priyanka became a global icon through her lead role of Alex Parrish in the American TV drama thriller series "Quantico".


The actress married American singer Nick Jonas in November 2018.

DEFENCE

INS Khanderi, the second of the 6 Scorpene Class Submarines - will be inducted into the Indian Navy by May 2019.

It was launched at the Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL) in Mumbai on January 12, 2017 and since then it has been undergoing trials and tests.

The INS Khanderi is a part of Project 75 of Indian Navy.

India purchased 6 submarines for $3 billion under Project 75 in 2005.

It has several advanced features, which includes superior stealth operation, precision guided weapons, anti-submarine warfare, anti-surface warfare, mine laying, intelligence gathering, area surveillance attacks, attacks with torpedoes and tube-launched anti-ship missiles.

The Scorpene Class Submarines are designed by French naval defence company ‘DCNS’ and being manufactured by Mazagon Dock Limited in Mumbai.

They are considered as a replacement to the older Sindhughosh and Shishumar class submarines.

INS Kalvari, the first of the Scorpene-class submarines, was commissioned by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on December 14, 2017.

The third Scorpene-class submarine, INS Karanj was launched by the Indian Navy on January 31, 2018 and is in the advanced stage of trials.

The fourth submarine ‘INS Vela’ is also ready to be launched for trials in 2019 itself.

The remaining submarines ‘INS Vagir’ and ‘INS Vagsheer’ are in advanced stages of manufacturing.
APPOINTMENTS

➢ Pramod Sawant – succeeds Manohar Parrikar as Goa’s Chief Minister

✓ He was administered the oath of office and secrecy by Goa Governor Mridula Sinha
✓ Along with the Chief Minister, Ramkrishna Dhavlikar of Maharakshtrawadi Gomantak Party (MGP) and Vijai Sardesai of Goa Forward Party were sworn in as Deputy Chief Ministers
✓ Pramod Sawant is a two-time MLA from the Sanquelim constituency of Goa
✓ He is the only BJP MLA in Goa from the RSS cadre
✓ He was the party spokesperson and speaker of the state legislative assembly
✓ He was also the youngest speaker in the entire country among all state assemblies at the time
✓ He had graduated in Ayurveda medicine and done post-graduation in social work and also studied ‘medico-legal’ system
✓ A state youth awardee for his skills in youth movement in Goa, he has been the national vice president and the current state president of Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha

➢ Maharashtra – appoints a transgender person as Poll ambassador for the first time

✓ Gauri Sawant, a transgender activist was appointed as election ambassador to create awareness voters and to improve the voting percentage in the state
✓ She was named as one among the 12 ‘state icons’ for the general elections
Ritu Beri, acclaimed Indian fashion designer – appointed as the Cultural and Tourism Ambassador of Uzbekistan in India by the Ministry of Tourism of Uzbekistan

- She is the first Indian to be appointed to this position
- The appointment recognizes her contribution towards bringing the two countries together by way of fusing cultures in her clothes line

SPORTS

- Hima Das – wins Gold in the 400m event in the 23rd Federation Cup in Patiala

- The Assamese runner clocked 52.88 seconds, but missed the Asian Championship qualifying standard of 52.75 seconds
- Hima is the current junior world champion in the 400m event
- In the Men’s 400m event, Arokia Rajiv won Gold and qualified for the Asian championships by beating the national record holder Mohammad Anas, who bagged Silver but missed the qualifying standard
- In 3000m men’s steeplechase, Avinash Sable smashed the national record and secured a spot in the Asian Championship to be held in Doha in September-October 2019
- **India - wins 50 gold, 63 silver and 75 bronze medals at the Special Olympics World Games in Abu Dhabi, till now**
  - Indian table tennis players created history by winning 4 Golds and 1 silver medal in the event
  - India’s Anu Chennekota and Sabita Yadav won the Gold in women’s event, while Karnataka’s Sandesh Krishna and Maharashtra’s Akash Tukuram clinched gold in men’s singles events
  - India is ahead of the hosts UAE, which has bagged a total of 126 medals with 41 gold, 37 silver and 48 bronze so far
  - In the 2017 edition of the Games held in Austria, the Indian special athletes had won a total of 73 medals
  - The Special Olympics World Games is an international sporting competition for athletes with intellectual disabilities, which is organised by Special Olympics
  - The first-ever International Special Olympics Summer Games were held in Chicago, US, in 1968 and the Winter Games in February 1977 in Steamboat Springs, US.
  - Sweden will host the next Special World Winter Games in 2021, for the very first time

- **Asian Youth Athletics Championships - concludes in Hong Kong**
  - Indian youth team finish second in the overall medals tally with a total of 26 medals including eight gold, nine silver and nine bronze medals
  - China topped the overall medals tally with 31 medals that included 12 gold, 11 silver and eight bronze medals
  - Japan finished third with 20 medals that included 6 Gold, 8 Silver and 6 bronze.

**INTERNATIONAL DAY**

- **2nd Global Recycling Day - March 18**

- The day helps to recognise and celebrate the importance of recycling in preserving the precious primary resources
✓ Theme 2019 - ‘Recycling into the Future’
✓ The Day is organised by the Global Recycling Foundation, that was established in October 2018
✓ The UN’s Paris climate agreement, COP24, seeks to promote greater international cooperation, which is a key pillar of the Global Recycling Day campaign.