Tamil Nadu

Integral coach factory, Chennai – rolls out the country’s first ever ‘Self propelled Inspection Car’ (SPIC)

- Usually a separate locomotive is employed for carrying out inspection works, which is expensive and time-consuming
- SPIC is self-propelled - which means that it is powered by diesel-electric power pack, placed in the under-slung of the car - effectively eliminating a separate locomotive coach for inspection
- The SPIC prototype has been manufactured at an approximate cost of Rs 4.5 crore
Features of SPIC

* Stainless steel body coach with aerodynamically designed driving cars in the end.
* Coaches are fully air-conditioned including the driving cars
* Has a seating capacity for 32 persons
* CCTV cameras and LED display on the driver’s car
* Onboard Wi-fi
* Vacuum-assisted bio-toilet
* LED lightings
* GPS based passenger information system
* 340 HP underslung diesel-electric power pack for propulsion
* 40 KVA underslung DA set for air conditioning and for powering the light and fans

- **Indian Oil Corporation Limited** – to start ‘Fuel at Doorstep’ Services in Chennai from December 20
  - The proposed service will deliver the fuel through mobile dispensers
  - It will be launched at an IndianOil petrol pump on 200 feet Inner Ring Road, Retteri Junction in Chennai

- **Southern Naval Command Headquarters** – had signed a MoU with Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham in Coimbatore at the college campus
  - The MoU will strengthen collaboration between both in the areas of academic and research facilities
  - It would encompass fields of Mechanical engineering, electronics and communication, computer science and cybersecurity

- **Thalappil Pradeep**, a faculty in IIT, Madras and nanotechnologist – has been elected to 2 prestigious global academies
He is one of the 7 fellows globally to be elected in the field of Chemistry to the Fellowship of The World Academy of Sciences, based in Trieste, Italy.

He was also elected to American Association for the Advancement of Science, based in Washington DC, US.

- Officer’s Training Academy, Chennai – is training Women officers of the Afghan National Army – for the second successive year.

- The first batch of 20 women officers were trained in 2017.
- They were engaged in various form of combats, which included tactical training, leadership, IT and English language training – over a period of 4 weeks.
- The cadets are employed in the Afghan Air Force, army, special forces and police department.
- The Afghan squad is led by Lieutenant Monika Alamyar, who has served in the ANA for 5 years and has trained 400 women officers already.
- Officers from countries such as Bhutan, Maldives and Uganda were already trained in OTA’s exclusive women’s training centre in Chennai.

- Government – to issue Birth certificates for the newborn at the Government hospitals on the day of Discharge – from January 1, 2019.
- It will be issued along with the discharge summary.
- In case of Private hospitals, the birth certificates can be downloaded from the Government website within 21 days after the birth of child.
- Since July 2009, all primary health centres in the state hands out birth certificates free-of-cost during discharge and health inspectors of the areas were posted as ‘Birth registrars’.
- Since September 2018, the facility was extended to all state-run Maternity hospitals, non-taluk hospitals, taluk and district headquarters hospitals, medical college hospitals and ESI hospitals – as per the orders of Supreme Court.
- The names of the children can be added later within one year of birth.

- Train 18 – the country’s first Engineless Train – to be flagged off by the Prime Minister on December 29 between Delhi-Varanasi route.
It was manufactured by ICF Chennai at a cost of Rs 100 crore within a record 18 months.
It recently became India’s fastest train by hitting speeds of over 180 kmph during the trials on Delhi-Rajdhani route.
It will replace Shatabdi trains, which were introduced in 1988.
Train 18 will be operated at a maximum speed of 160 kmph – the only other train to run at such speed being the Gatimaan Express.
This is the second high-profile, made-in-India, super-fast train after Mahamana Express, which was flagged off in January 2016 between Delhi and Varanasi.
Train 18 has been codenamed after the year it has been manufactured.
ICF can manufacture 2 more Train 18 sets in the current financial year and has the capability to making 8 more in 2019-20.

STATES

Andhra Pradesh – is planning to construct ‘high wall’ along vulnerable places in coastal regions – to prevent damage from cyclones.
The move aimed as part of Cyclone mitigation programme, if materialises, will make the state ‘first’ in the country to get the ‘Great Indian Wall’ along the Bay of Bengal.
To begin with, the AP government will build a wall to a length of 150 km covering the most vulnerable 40-km sea stretch of Narsapuram.
AP has a coastline extending up to 970 km.
NATIONAL

- Lok Sabha – passed the ‘Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill 2016 on December 19, 2018

- The bill aims at banning commercial surrogacy to protect exploitation of women
- It was earlier approved by the cabinet in August 2016 and introduced in Lok Sabha on November 21, 2016
- It was then referred to a parliamentary standing committee on Health and family welfare in January 2017
- Highlights of the bill
  - As per the bill, the couple seeking surrogacy, should have legally married for atleast five years and possess a certificate from a doctor stating that they are medically unfit to give birth to a child
  - The surrogate mother has to be a ‘close relative’ of the intending couple.
  - Women within the age group of 23 to 50 years and men between 26 to 55 years are eligible to go in for surrogacy
  - A woman can be a surrogate only once in her lifetime
  - The bill is applicable to all the states of India except Jammu and Kashmir
  - The bill intends to set up a National Surrogacy board and State Surrogacy board for the regulation of surrogacy process
  - It prohibits commercial surrogacy and makes it a punishable offence with imprisonment for 10 years and a fine of up to Rs 10 lakh.
- All about Surrogacy
Surrogacy is defined as "a practice whereby one woman carries the child for another with the agreement that the child should be handed over after birth"

There are two forms of Surrogacy – Altruistic and Commercial

Altruistic surrogacy involves an arrangement where the couple does not pay the surrogate mother any compensation other than the medical expenses

Commercial surrogacy includes compensation in cash paid to the surrogate mother

India@75 Vision Document – key proposals of NITI Aayog

NITI Aayog – has proposed to reduce upper age limit to 27 years for General category candidates in a phased manner - to join the Civil services by 2022-23

Presently, the age cap is at 30 years for the general category candidates

It has also proposed to have one integrated exam for all civil services

Currently there are more than 60 separate civil services at central and state levels

It had also proposed setting up of an All-India Judicial Service for recruitment of judges by the UPSC and creating a cadre-based service in the subordinate judiciary - to address huge pendency of cases

It had also proposed a performance index for judges and a separate state-wise index for ease of getting justice, besides introducing an administrative cadre in the judicial system to streamline processes

It had also suggested higher taxes on tobacco, alcohol and unhealthy foods such as soda and sugar-sweetened beverages

The report calls for the inclusion of fuel and electricity within the ambit of goods and services tax (GST)
- **President’s rule** – imposed in Jammu & Kashmir from December 20 – after the completion of six-month Governor rule on December 19, 2018

  - Hereafter, all the policy decisions related to the state will be taken by the Union Cabinet
  - President's rule was first imposed in the state in 1977, whereas the previous instance of President rule was in 1996
  - The state was placed under President’s rule for 7 times so far (1977, 1986, 1990, 2002, 2008, 2015, 2016)
  - Under Article 92 of the Jammu and Kashmir Constitution, six months of governor’s rule is mandatory during which time all legislative powers rest with the governor
  - The governor on November 21 dissolved the 87-member state assembly - after the fall of Mehbooba Mufti-led coalition Government - citing horse trading and lack of stability to form a government as the reasons
  - President's Rule is the imposition of Article 356 of the India Constitution on a state which gets incapable of running the constitutional machinery

- **Ministry of Rural development** – signs MoU with Maruti Suzuki – to train rural youth for skill development - under the flagship scheme ‘Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana’ (DDU-GKY)

  - Maruti Suzuki will provide training to atleast 5000 rural youths in two years with assured placement
  - The ‘Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana’ (DDU-GKY) was launched by the Union government on September 25, 2014 - during the 98th birth anniversary of Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay
  - It aims at training 1 million rural youths for jobs
  - It was earlier known as ‘Aajeevika Skills Development Programme’
  - The minimum age for entry under the Yojana is 15 years compared to 18 years under the Aajeevika Skills Programme
Indian Railways – to introduce first ‘AC Local train’ in North India in 2019
✔ The proposed MEMU (Mainline Electric Multiple Unit) train will cater to the Uttar Pradesh cities within 200-300 km from Delhi
✔ The train, having eight stainless-steel coaches, can run at a speed of 130 kmph
✔ It has been manufactured at a cost of Rs 26 crore

Bihar’s ‘Silao Khaja’, a traditional sweet - gets GI tag

✔ The sweet delicacy of Nalanda district of Bihar, Silao Khaja, is popular among the tourists visiting Buddhist sites of Rajgir and Nalanda
✔ The GI tag is granted by Geographical Indications Registry based at Chennai.

COURT VERDICT

Madras High Court – imposed a blanket ban on ‘Political Hoardings’ on the arterial roads in the state – on December 19, 2018
✔ A division bench comprising of Judges M Sathyanarayanan and P Rajamanickam ruled that No political parties shall erect hoardings on roads distracting the attention of road users and obstructing pedestrians

INTERNATIONAL

Elon Musk – unveils the testing of his first underground transportation tunnel – to beat the traffic jam in Los Angeles
- The cars would be lowered by lifts onto the tunnel and slotted into tracks
- They were then propelled along with speeds up to 240 kmph
- The cost for using the tunnel ranges between $200-$300 for a car

Vanuatu – becomes the first country in the world to deliver drone-assisted Vaccines to babies – as per United Nations

- A one-month old baby in Vanuatu was immunized using vaccines delivered by a drone
- The drone flew for 25 minutes across 40 km of mountainous terrain, which would take hours to reach by sea or by foot
- Vaccines are difficult to transport as they have to be maintained at specific temperature
- During the drone flight, they were kept in Styrofoam boxes with ice-packs and a temperature sensor
- Out of 1000 babies born in Vanuatu, 28 die before reaching 5 years of age, as per Unicef, while only one in five kids is fully immunized
- Vanuatu, previously known as the New Hebrides Islands - is an archipelago nation consisting of 83 islands in the southwest Pacific Ocean, north of New Zealand and east of Australia

USA – pulls out of Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty - signed between Russia and the USA in 1987
- It had earlier announced the withdrawal decision in October 2018
- The treaty was signed between US President Ronald Reagan and USSR President Mikhail Gorbachev
- The treaty ended the cold war between both the countries after banning all the nuclear missiles in the range of 500-5000 km

New Zealand – to phase out single-use Plastic bags from July 1, 2019
- The country has recently become a signatory to the ‘New Plastics Economy Global Commitment’- a global pledge to address the root causes of plastic pollution
COMMITTES

- Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) – constituted a new 12-member committee - chaired by S K Dash - for a fresh cadre review and restructuring of the Income Tax Department
- The new committee has to submit its report to the government by 28th February 2019

PERSONALITIES

- Charles Michel – resigns as the Prime Minister of Belgium – over the coalition differences regarding his support of UN Global compact of migration

- Michel, 42, became the PM of Belgium in October 2014 - after forming a right-wing coalition
- He was the country's youngest prime minister at 38
- Recently, 164 countries formally signed the UN migration deal in Marrakech on 10th December 2018
- Earlier, in July 2018, all the 193 members agreed to the UN pact on migration except the United States
- Belgium holds the modern European record for going the longest time without a government, a massive 541 days in 2010-2011
ISRO – launches GSAT-7A onboard GSLV-F11 rocket on December 19, 2018

- GSAT-7A will boost the capabilities of Indian air force – by providing real-time communication between fighter jets and ground stations
- GSAT-7A is the 35th communication satellite built by ISRO and third communication satellite launched by it in this year
- It has several new technologies including a Gregorian antenna
- The satellite is also the heaviest one launched by GSLV
- GSLV-F11
- GSLV-F11 is the 13th flight of GSLV Mk-II and 7th with the indigenous cryogenic stage
- It is ISRO’s fourth generation launch vehicle with three stages
- It had placed 2,250 kg GSAT-7A carrying 20 Ku-band transponders into a super synchronous orbit at 200 km higher than the geosynchronous transfer orbit (36,000 kms)
- ISRO’s feat
- With the launch, ISRO has launched 3 satellites within a space of 35 days from Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh (November 14 – GSAT-29 in GSLV Mk-III-D2 and November 29 – HySIS in PSLV-C43)
- ISRO has achieved 17 missions in 2018 and plans to undertake 32 missions next year

Farout (or 2018 VG18) – becomes the most-distant Solar system object ever discovered

- It was detected by the 3 scientists - Sheppard from Carnegie Institution for Science, David Tholen from University of Hawaii, and Chad Trujillo from Northern Arizona University in the US
- It was observed at a distance of more than 100 AU (Astronomical units) which almost 120AU or 11 billion miles from the sun
They had also discovered another extremely distant object known as “The Goblin” at a distance of 80 AU from the sun.
The second most distant observed solar system object is Eris at a distance of about 96 AU from the sun.
Pluto, a dwarf planet is currently at about 34 AU

- India – to launch the Indian Data Relay Satellite System (IDRSS) – as part of its proposed manned space mission
  - The two-satellite IDRSS will improve data relay and communication links with its remote sensing earth observation satellites
  - It will also communicate with Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle - Mark III (GSLV Mk- III) that would carry three Indian astronauts to space in 2022
  - The first one is expected to be launched in 2019
  - DRSS will be like a hub as it can receive the commands from the ground stations and in turn relay the same to other satellites
  - It can also monitor a rocket from the time it lifts off from the launch pad.

DEFENCE

- Indian Air Force (IAF) – flies country’s first Military flight on Blended bio-jet fuel - on an An-32 transport aircraft in Chandigarh

  - The project is a combined effort of IAF, DRDO, Directorate General-Aeronautical Quality Assurance (DGAQA) and CSIR-Indian Institute of Petroleum
  - The 10% bio-jet fuel is made from Jatropha oil sourced from Chattisgarh Biodiesel Development Authority (CBDA) and then processed at CSIR-IIP, Dehradun
  - Earlier, in August 2018, Spicejet flew country’s first ever bio-jet fuel-powered commercial airline flight between Dehradun and Delhi
**APPOINTMENTS**

- Harsh Vardhan Shringla – appointed as the next Ambassador of India to the United States
  - He succeeds Navtej Sarna
  - Shringla is currently serving as Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh
  - Senior diplomat, Riva Ganguly Das was appointed as new High Commissioner to Bangladesh

- Pranab Kumar Das - was appointed as the Chairman of CBIC (Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs)
  - He will succeed Chairman S Ramesh, who retires on December 31, 2018
  - CBIC is the apex indirect tax policy-making body under the Finance Ministry

**SPORTS**

- Anup Kumar, legendary Kabaddi player – announces retirement after a glorious 15 year career in the sport
  - He was a part of the national Kabaddi team that won gold medals in 2010 and 2014 Asian Games
He was appointed as the captain of the Indian National team in 2014

Under him, India won 2 gold medals at Asian Games in 2014 and the Kabaddi World Cup in 2016

He was felicitated with the Arjuna Award in 2012 for his excellent contribution to Kabaddi in the country

- Cricket Ireland – to offer Professional contracts to Women cricketers – for the first time ever

- The move comes following the early exit of Irish women’s cricket team from the ICC T20 world cup, held recently in West Indies

**RANKINGS**

- 1st ever ‘States Startup Ranking 2018’ – released by The Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP)

- Gujarat was adjudged the best performer among all the states
- Gujarat had allocated Rs 100 Crore budget for Startups and provided assistance to 200 projects
### States’ Startup Ranking 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Best Performer</td>
<td>Gujarat</td>
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<tr>
<td>Top Performers</td>
<td>Karnataka, Kerala, Odisha, and Rajasthan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaders</td>
<td>Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, and Telangana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aspiring Leaders</td>
<td>Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emerging States</td>
<td>Assam, Delhi, Goa, Jammu &amp; Kashmir, Maharashtra, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, and Uttarakhand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beginners</td>
<td>Chandigarh, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Puducherry, Sikkim, and Tripura</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Champions - 51 officers from States and Union Territories were identified as “Champions”, who have made significant contributions towards developing their State’s Start-up ecosystem.

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**INTERNATIONAL DAY**

- 57th Liberation Day of Goa – December 19

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![Goa Liberation Day Image]
The day marks the independence of Goa from the 450-years of Portugese rule on December 19, 1961

On this day, Operation Vijay was completed by the Indian Forces liberating Territories of Goa, Daman and Diu and the Anjadiv Island and from the Portugese rule

Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru ordered Operation Vijay on December 17

Vassalo da silva was the Portugese Governor during the operation

Major-General K. P. Candeth was appointed as the military governor of Goa and kept directly under the control of the President of India

The state was integrated into India as a ‘Union Territory’ in 1963- following the passing of 12th amendment act to the Constitution of India

Then, in 1967, for the first and only time in the country, a referendum known as ‘Goa Opinion Poll’ was conducted to choose whether Goa should remain as a UT or merge with Maharashtra – and the people opted to continue Goa as a Union Territory

On 30th May 1987, Goa was separated from Daman and Diu and became Indian Union’s 25th state

Diu and Daman still remain as the union territory in the country