N Thenmukilan, a 12-year old student from Palani in Dindigul district – became the only student from the state whose drawing featured in the NASA Calendar for the year 2019. The selected work of Thenmukilan, ‘Space food’, was a theme urging astronauts to grow vegetables to add nutrition to their diet and also to give the feeling of being on earth. The drawing was selected for the month of November in the upcoming year’s calendar. The calendar featured unique and original artwork by children aged between 4 and 12 years from 194 countries across the world. The calendar would be transmitted to astronauts in space station. Another artwork of a student from Maharashtra was selected for the month of October. Last year also, the drawing of 2 students from the same school of Thenmukilan, Pushpathur Sri Vidya mandir – featured in the NASA’s calendar.
Schemes

- Odisha – announces a new scheme ‘KALIA’

KALIA
KRUSHAK ASSISTANCE FOR LIVELIHOOD AND INCOME AUGMENTATION

**Budget**

**SUPPORT FOR CULTIVATION**

- ₹10,000 per family in Rabi & Kharif seasons, covering 30 lakh small & marginal farmer families benefitting 92% of all cultivators in the state.

**SUPPORT FOR LIVELIHOOD**

- ₹2,500 to 10 lakh landless agriculture households for livelihood activities

**FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**

- ₹10,000 per annum to 10 lakh vulnerable agriculture households & landless labourers

**LIFE INSURANCE COVER**

- Life insurance cover of ₹2 lakhs and additional Personal Accident Cover of ₹2 lakhs to 57 lakh households of cultivators and landless agri labourers

**INTEREST FREE CROP LOANS**

- All loans up to ₹50,000 now interest free

- KALIA - Krushak Assistance for Livelihood and Income Augmentation
- The Rs 10,000 crore new scheme aims to empower small, marginal & landless farmers as well as landless labourers
- According to the scheme an amount of Rs 10,000 per family, at the rate of Rs 5,000 each for Kharif and Rabi seasons, shall be provided as financial assistance for taking up cultivation
- The amount would be transferred through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) mode, covering over 30 lakh of cultivators and landless labourers (92%)
- This assistance is for five crop seasons spanning three years from 2018-19 to 2021-22
- It is not linked to the extent of land owned, thereby benefiting even the small farmers

- Jharkhand – announces a new scheme ‘Mukhya Mantri Krishi Yojana’
The Rs 2250 crore new scheme will help around 22.76 lakh medium and small farmers to double their income by 2022, to realize the goal of the Central Government.

The scheme, scheduled to start from FY 2019-20, will help farmers to procure seeds, fertilisers and other requirements for agricultural purposes.

Under the scheme, the state government will give Rs 5000 for 1 acre or less (up to a maximum of 5 acre) to the farmers.

**NATIONAL**

- **Union Government** – slashes GST rate on 23 items on December 22 – after the 31st meeting of GST Council under the chairmanship of Arun Jaitley, Union Finance Minister – held in Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi.
The various items which will have reduced rate now includes Movie tickets, third party motor insurance, smaller TV sets, power banks, branded frozen vegetables and flights for Haj & Mansarovar yatra

Since the introduction of GST on July 1, 2017, the government has reduced rates of nearly 360 items so far

Now, only 28 products such as cement, auto parts and air-conditioners are in the top slab of 28% (against 226 products during the introduction) along with some other luxury and sin items which are predominantly used by upper income groups

The Government had collected a monthly average of Rs 89,000 crore in 2017-18 against the target of Rs 1.04 lakh crore

The new GST rates will be applicable from January 1, 2019

New return filing system will be started on trial basis from April 1 which will be implemented mandatorily by July 1

The GST Council also approved the proposal to form a 7-member Group of Ministers to study the revenue trend

The newly constructed ‘International Training Centre for Operational Oceanography’ (ITCOocean) Complex – was inaugurated in the INCOIS campus at Hyderabad, Telangana
It was inaugurated by Dr. Harsh Vardhan, Union Minister for Science & Technology, Earth Sciences, Environment and Forests & Climate Change.

He dedicated the new complex to Former Prime Minister, Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee and named the academic building as ‘Atal Bhavan’ and the Guest House as ‘Atal Atithi Griha’.

This UNESCO category 2 centre was established by the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES), Govt. of India earlier in 2013 – and now it was upgraded to assist UNESCO and its Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC).

It has to be recalled that UNESCO had earlier approved the setting up of ITCOcean as a UNESCO Category 2 Centre in November 2017.

INTERNATIONAL

A newly-discovered ‘Blind amphibian’ from Panama - is to be named after Donald Trump - in recognition of the U.S. President’s stance on climate change.
EnviroBuild, a U.K.-based sustainable building materials company - announced that it would be naming the amphibian as ‘Dermophis donaldtrumpi’

The new creature has no legs, blind and has the ability to bury its head in the ground

Mr. Aidan Bell, the boss of the firm, said that these features of the amphibian match the U.S. leader’s opinion on climate change

Mr. Trump withdrew U.S. from the Paris climate change agreement, which commits countries in keeping a 2 degree-limit on rising global temperatures, in June last year

A colourful artwork in South Korea – has been named by ‘Guinness World Records’ as the Largest Outdoor Mural

The painting depicts a young boy’s journey into adulthood, on the outside of giant storage containers in the port city of Incheon, occupying a massive 23,688 sq m

The mural was commissioned by the city’s government and port authority

22 artists used more than 850,000 litres of paint to tell the story which reflects the seasons and resembles 16 individual book covers, at a cost of 550 million won

COMMITTEES

Government – constitutes a Logistics Development Committee under Dr Bibek Debroy, Chairman, EAC-PM
It was constituted by EAC-PM, the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister.
The committee would be working on challenges in logistics development and suggest policy reforms for the ease of doing trade in the country.

CONFERENCES & SUMMITS

- **1st Meeting of India-China High level Mechanism on Cultural and People-to-People exchanges** – was held in New Delhi.

  - It was co-chaired by Sushma Swaraj, Minister of External Affairs and Chinese State Counselor & FM, Wang Yi
  - The meeting acknowledged the Wuhan Summit and identified 10 areas or pillars for boosting people-to-people cooperation.
3-day Annual conference of DGPs and IGPs – concluded on December 22 at Kevadia in Narmada district of Gujarat

- It was held in the presence of Union Home Minister, Rajnath Singh
- Earlier, the Prime Minister Narendra Modi released a commemorative stamp on the National Police Memorial and launched a portal of cyber coordination center

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

- China – launches its 1st broadband satellite as part of its ‘Hongyun’ project
It was launched from a Long March 11 carrier rocket from the Jiuquan satellite launch center
It was also the first in the Hongyun project planned by China Aerospace Science and Industry Corp (CASIC)
The project, started in September 2016, intends to launch communication satellites to provide broadband internet services worldwide
CASIC plans to send four mass-production Hongyun satellites before the end of 2020

DEFENCE


This was the 7th edition of the counter-terrorism military exercise, which did not take place last year due to doklam stand-off
The previous edition of the exercise was held in Pune in 2016

ECONOMY

India – overtakes Germany as the World’s 7th largest Stock market for the first time in the last seven years
India is projected to grow at 7.5% in 2018 and 7.3% in 2019 whereas Germany managed to achieve a growth rate of only 1.6% in 2018.

After the exit of United Kingdom from European Union, now European Union has only ‘France’ now in the top seven economies of the world.

**SPORTS**

- FIFA Football Rankings for the year 2018 – Top 10

![FIFA/Coca-Cola Men’s World Ranking](image)

The teams of Argentina, Germany and Italy bagged the 11th, 16th and 18th rank respectively.
- 2018 – Best Mover team – France
- 2018 – Biggest Climber team – Kosovo (climbed 46 places to reach 131th rank this year)
- FIFA (International Federation of Association Football) was founded in 1904 with its Headquarters in Zurich.