SCHEMES

- 100% household electrification under ‘Saubhagya’ Scheme – Status as on November 29, 2018 – released by R K Singh, Union Minister of State for Power and Renewable Energy

- Totally 15 states in the country have achieved 100% electrification – West Bengal, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Telangana, Punjab, Jammu & Kashmir, Mizoram, Goa, Puducherry, Tripura and Sikkim

- As many as 2.1 crore connections have been released under Saubhagya scheme so far

- India is expected to achieve 100% household electrification in the country by December 31, 2018, going by the current rate

- The Government is committed to ensure 24x7 access to electricity for all by 31st March 2019.
✓ Saubhagya - ‘Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana’ was launched in September 26, 2017 by the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi to mark the birth anniversary of Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya
✓ Its main objective is to provide access to electricity to all the households in the country
✓ Total outlay – Rs 16,320 crore

NATIONAL

➢ 49th International Film festival of India – concludes in Panaji, Goa

✓ Focus country – Israel
✓ Focus state – Jharkhand (1st time a state was named as a Focus state)
✓ Theme – New India
✓ Organiser - Union Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Directorate of Film Festivals and Government of Goa
✓ Inaugural festival – 1952 – held annually in Goa
✓ Opening film – The Aspern Papers
✓ Concluding film – Sealed Lips (German)
✓ Highlights
✓ More than 220 movies from 67 countries were screened at this year’s festival
✓ The Lifetime Achievement Award was bestowed on Dan Wolman, Israeli Director
Best film (Golden Peacock) award - Donbass (Ukrainian movie) directed by Sergei Loznitsa

Award winners from India

Best Actor (Male) Award - Chemban Vinod for his role in ‘Ee.Ma.Yau’ (Malayalam)
Best director (Silver Peacock) award - Lijo Jose Pellissery (Malayalam film)
The ICFT –UNESCO Gandhi Medal - 'Walking with the Wind', directed by Praveen Morchhale

Story-screenplay-dialogue writer Salim Khan – was honoured with IFFI 2018 Special Award for his lifetime contribution to cinema

NPCC – National Projects Construction Corporation Limited (NPCC) – was conferred ‘Miniratna status : Category –I’ by the Government

The Miniratna status will help NPCC in taking speedy decisions by delegating the powers to the Board
NPCC has also been awarded with the ISO 9001:2015 Certification
The Government grants the status of Maharatna, Navratna, and Miniratna to Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) and Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) based upon the profit made by these institutions
The Maharatna category was created in 2009, while the other two were in progress since 1997
As on August 2018, there are 8 Maharatnas, 16 Navratnas and 60 Miniratna Category - I and 15 Miniratna Category - II Public Sector Enterprises (PSEs) in the country

NPCC
   Established – 1957
Ministry - Ministry of Water Resources
Objective - a premier construction company to create infrastructure for the country’s economic development

Government – launches ‘Bhasha Sangam’, a unique initiative to introduce school students to 22 Indian languages

It was launched under Ek Bharat Shreshttha Bharat on November 22 and will continue till December 21, 2018

It is a programme for educational institutions to provide multilingual exposure to students in Indian languages

University Grants Commission (UGC) – to set up ‘CARE’ (Consortium of Academic and Research Ethics) – to list out credible quality journals in the non-science disciplines

CARE will be headed by the UGC Vice Chairman
Reference List of Quality Journals’ will be maintained by the CARE and used for all academic purposes.

University Grants Commission (UGC) – announced that Doctoral degree holders from the top 500 foreign universities are now eligible for direct recruitment as assistant professor in Indian varsities

The top 500 ranking of the university shall be referred from any of the following famous world university ranking systems — Quacquarelli Symonds (QS), Times Higher Education rankings and the Academic Ranking of World Universities of the Shanghai Jiao Tong University

This direct recruitment is valid in the streams of Arts, Commerce, Humanities, Education, Law, Social Sciences, Sciences, Languages, Library Science, Physical Education and Journalism and Mass Communication
Earlier, the candidates are required to have a 55% minimum marks in their Master's degree in concerned subject from an Indian University or an equivalent degree from an accredited foreign university.

Moreover, they should clear any test among NET, SET or SLET conducted by the UGC or the CSIR.

With the new announcement, the minimum requirements related to Masters' programme have been waived off for international PhD holders.

SUPREME COURT VERDICT

SC upholds the Constitutional validity of Death penalty in a 2:1 verdict – on November 28, 2018

A 3-member bench comprising Justices Kurian Joseph, Deepak Gupta and Hemant Gupta pronounced the verdict with different views in reducing the death sentence of Chhannu Lal Verma, who murdered 3 persons including 2 women.

Justice Kurian Joseph, who superannuated on November 29, 2018, referred to the 262nd report of the Law Commission and said that the provision of capital punishment has failed to become a deterrent.

Justices Deepak Gupta and Hemant Gupta said that since the 5-judge Constitution Bench in Bachan Singh vs. State of Punjab case has already upheld capital punishment, there is no need to re-examine the same.

India is one of the 78 countries which have retained death penalty only on a rarest of rare cases.

According to Amnesty International ‘Death Sentences and Executions’ report released in April 2018, the Indian courts gave away 109 death sentences in 2017 but no executions were carried out.

Recent death executions:

Afzal Guru – February 9, 2013 – for his conspiracy in connection with 2001 Indian parliament attack - at Delhi's Tihar Central Jail

INDIA AND NEIGHBOURS

- India & China – signs agreement on hygiene and inspection requirements for the export of fish meal and fish oil from India to China

- China had so far not allowed these exports from India
- This is the second Indian product to get clearance from China in the last six months after Indian Rice
- The main Indian export items to China include ores, slag and ash, iron and steel, plastics, organic chemicals and cotton
- China is the second biggest market for Indian cotton after Bangladesh
- Iron ore constitutes about 53% of the total Indian exports to China

CONFERENCES & SUMMITS

Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi is expected to meet World leaders on the sidelines of the summit, including a trilateral meeting with US President, Donald Trump and Japanese Premier, Shinzo Abe.

This is the first time the summit is held in South America.

President Mauricio Macri of Argentina assumed the presidency of G20 on November 30, 2017 for a period of one year.

**G20 or the Group of Twenty**
- Established - 1999
- Members – 19 countries and European Union
- The first G20 Summit was held in Berlin in December 1999 and was hosted by the finance ministers of Germany and Canada.
- The 19 member countries of the forum - Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, United Kingdom and the United States.
- The European Union - is represented by the European Commission and by the European Central Bank.
- G20 has no permanent staff of its own.
- Its chairmanship rotates annually between various member nations divided into regional groupings.

**SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT**

NASA’s ‘Insight’ Mars Explorer – lands safely in Mars on November 26, 2018 on the flat Elysium Planitia region.

This is the eighth time in human history and the first in six years that NASA has successfully landed on the Red planet.

The explorer, built jointly by United States, France and Germany, will now study the Deep interior (crust, mantle, and core) of the planet till November 24, 2020.

Two small, first-of-its-kind, experimental ‘Mars Cube One’ (MarCO) CubeSats were also launched on the same rocket as InSight.
✓ Insight also has a seismometer to detect Martian tremors
✓ **InSight**
  ✓ Expansion - Interior Exploration using Seismic Investigations, Geodesy and Heat Transport
  ✓ Launch - Vandenberg Air Force Base in California on May 5, 2018
  ✓ Makers of Insight - Lockheed Martin Space Systems
  ✓ Makers of MarCO CubeSats - Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL)
  ✓ InSight will be the first mission to use a robotic arm to place instruments on the surface of Mars
✓ **Indian Connection in Insight**
✓ It has to be mentioned that Ravi Prakash, an Indian systems engineer working with NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory – was closely monitoring the post-landing operations
✓ In a first of its kind, Insight carried a tiny silicon wafer microchip on the top hull of the lander, which contained the etched names of people who had responded to a call from NASA to participate in the flight
✓ They were provided online boarding passes by the space agency
✓ As per NASA, 24,29,807 names were received - 6,76,773 Americans, 2,62,752 Chinese and 1,38,899 Indians were the Top three countries registered their names ‘Online’ to reach Mars

[Image: Introduction to the World’s first GST Calculator]

- **Casio – launches the World’s first GST Calculator in India**

- The Japanese electronics company had launched 2 variants, MJ-120GST and MJ-12GST – to simplify the GST calculations for the taxpayers in India
- These calculators have built-in tabs for all the 5 slabs - 0%, 5%, 12%, 18% and 28%. 
ECONOMY

- European Union (EU) – unveils its strategies to become the World’s first Carbon neutral bloc by 2050
  - The EU urged its 28 member countries to reduce the fossil fuel usage by 80% in 2050, ahead of the COP24 Climate Summit to be held in Poland
  - This will reduce greenhouse emissions by 40% before 2030 in line with the 2015 Paris climate accord

- Microsoft – has emerged as the World’s most valuable firm surpassing Apple
  - Its market value touched $828.1 billion as on November 27, 2018
  - The share price of Microsoft has gone up from $38 to $109 under Satya Nadella in the last four years
  - The last time Microsoft’s pipped Apple to the post in market capitalization was in 2010

APPOINTMENTS

- Anil Manibhai Naik – was appointed as Chairman of National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC)

- He is currently the Group Chairman of engineering conglomerate, Larsen and Toubro (L&T)
- He was the proud recipient of the country’s 3rd highest civilian award, Padma Bhushan in 2009
- NSDC – is the Public Private Partnership (PPP) – under the aegis of Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE)
- Established – 2009
- Current Goal - to train 150 million people by 2022
Arvind Saxena – was appointed as Chairman of Union Public Service Commission (UPSC)

- He is the acting Chairman of UPSC since June 20, 2018
- He had joined UPSC as member in May 8, 2015
- Prior to joining the UPSC, he was working as the Director of the Aviation Research Centre (ARC)
- He will have tenure till August 7, 2020
- He was a proud recipient of awards for meritorious services (2005) and distinguished services (2012) from the Prime Minister
- UPSC – conducts the prestigious civil services examination to select bureaucrats, diplomats and police officers
- It was established under Article 315 of the Constitution
- It consists of a Chairman and ten Members, who hold the office for a period of six years

SPORTS

- Magnus Carlsen (Norway) – retains World Chess title by defeating Fabiano Caruana (USA) in rapid fire tie-breaker by 3-0
The tiebreakers were played with 25 minutes for each player per game
Both the players finished the Classical games with a record breaking 12 consecutive draws
This was the first time that a world championship tiebreak had been resolved within just three games
It was Carlsen’s fourth consecutive World title after beating V Anand (2013, 2014) and Sergey Karjakin (2016)
Carlsen is the current World No 1 in all the three formats - classical, rapid and blitz

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) – announced a two year ban on all age fraud cricketers
Earlier, a ban for a period of one year was in practice for age fraud cases
Recently, the BCCI had banned a Meghalaya-bound Delhi player, Jaskirat Singh Sachdeva, for producing a fake birth certificate to play in an Under-19 tournament in September 2018
In India, it is a continuing issue in junior cricket or the Under-19 team