1. Plastic Ban

Tamil Nadu Government’s order banning manufacturing, trade and use of 14 kinds of plastic products – kicks off on January 1 in the state.
The state will decide on the penalty for the users who violate the ban after studying the models of other states, including Karnataka. In Karnataka, a fine of Rs 2 lakh is imposed for the first-time violators followed by Rs 5 lakh for subsequent offences. Similarly, Maharashtra, Haryana, Punjab, and Uttar Pradesh also have provisions for violations. The banned 14 items constitute only 5% of the total plastic manufactured in the state. The Union environment ministry had earlier notified the Plastic Waste Management (Amendment) Rules, 2018 – which mandates the phasing out of manufacture and use of non-recyclable multi-layered plastic within 2 years.

**Airports Authority of India** - has banned the single-use plastic items at its 129 airports across the country:

- It had also declared 16 airports as ‘Single-Use Plastic Free’ based on the third-party inspection carried out by Quality Council of India.
- Airports Authority of India was created under the Airports Authority of India Act, 1994 and came into being on 1st April 1995.
- Single-use plastic is non-biodegradable and non-recyclable, often releasing toxic chemicals upon degradation.

**Puducherry** – to ban the production, sale and use of ‘single-use’ plastic products from March 1.

- Earlier, neighboring Tamil Nadu government had announced in June 2018 that it would ban the use of plastic items including non-biodegradable carry bags from January 1, 2019.

**2. Butterfly Census**

- Tamil Nadu – carries out a ‘Butterfly’ census for the first time in Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve.
- It was carried out by the Erode district forest department along with Tamil Nadu Butterflies Society (TNBS).
- The team had spotted 150 varieties of butterflies along with 241 varieties of birds in the forest during the census.
3. Thuthukkudi (Tuticorin) Airport

- Tamil Nadu Government – to develop Thuthukkudi (Tuticorin) Airport as the fifth international airport in the state within a period of 4 years.
- As the first step, night landing facilities will commence from Thuthukudi by May 2018.
- International flights are already being operated from 4 airports of the state including Chennai, Coimbatore, Madurai and Trichy.

4. Sustainable development goals report

- Tamil Nadu – ranked 2nd in the areas of Health and well-being – as per the sustainable development goals report released by NITI Aayog in December 2018
- While Kerala topped the charts with 92 points, Tamil Nadu had 77 points compared to the national average of 52
- Telangana stood third with 73 points followed by Punjab with 71 points
- The maternal mortality ratio (MMR) of the state was 66 per 1 lakh births compared to the national average of 130.
- Kerala has a maternal mortality ratio of 46 and Maharashtra has 61
- The three states have achieved the country’s target of reducing the ratio to 70 by 2030

5. Pongal Gift

- Tamil Nadu Government – announces a Pongal gift of Rs 1000 to every family in the state with a Ration card
- Nearly 2 crore ration card holders in the state will benefit from the government’s announcement
- It will be offered in all the districts except Thiruvarur, where the model code of conduct is in force for January 28 by-elections

6. Yoga and naturopathy center

- Minister of Health, C Vijayabaskar – inaugurates a new yoga and naturopathy center – at the Omandurar Government Multi-Specialty Hospital, Chennai
- The new center is aimed at treating ailments like blood pressure, joint pain, insomnia, diabetes, sinusitis and asthma through natural methods such as yoga and naturopathy
7. LED streetlights

- Greater Chennai Corporation – to replace all streetlights in Chennai to LEDs by the end of January 2019
- The project is being carried out at a cost of Rs 140 crore covering most of the core city areas and some of the added areas
- The move had already reduced the electricity charges every month to Rs 4.5 crore from around Rs 6.58 crore in 2015

8. Biodiversity Monitoring Committees

- Tamil Nadu Government – forms 1,049 Biodiversity Monitoring Committees (BMCs) in the state
- They have been formed at both the block and urban body levels
- The committees monitor and record the natural resources in the state in a register called ‘People’s Biodiversity Register’
- The State Biodiversity board has also prepared and released a list of TN Biodiversity heritage sites

9. AIIMS in Madurai

- Prime Minister, Narendra Modi – to lay foundation stone for the construction of AIIMS (All India Institute of Medical Sciences) in Madurai on January 27
- The approval for the construction of AIIMS in Thoppur in Madurai was granted in December by the Union Cabinet
- It will be constructed at a cost of Rs 1,264 crore under the Prathan Manthri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana within a period of 2 years
- The initial announcement for a 200-acre AIIMS facility in Tamil Nadu at a budget of Rs 2000 crore was made in the Union Budget 2015-16
- The 750-bed hospital will have upto 20 super speciality departments.

10. Search panels

Tamil Nadu Government – constitutes ‘Search panels’ to shortlist vice chancellor to TN Open University and TN Teachers Education University in Chennai, Manonmaniam Sundaranar University in Tirunelveli and Thiruvalluvar University in Vellore.
11. International Thirukkural Conference

- A 920-kg Thiruvallur statue – was sent to Malaysia – where it will feature in the International Thirukkural conference in February 2019
- The statue, made at a cost of Rs 2 lakh, was sponsored by Thanjavur’s Tamilthai Arakattalai
- The second of Tamil month of Thai (January 16) is considered as Thiruvalluvar day

13. Kallakurichi – to be the 33rd District

- Kallakurichi – becomes Tamil Nadu’s 33rd district from January 8, 2019
- It was created from the State’s largest district, Villupuram, which has 1,099 village panchayats
- The last district created in the state was on February 22, 2009 when Tiruppur was created out of Coimbatore and Erode districts
- Villupuram was created on September 30, 1993 out of South Arcot district, along with Cuddalore, which was the overall headquarters of the composite South Arcot district
- The Villupuram district has an area of 7,217 sqkm with the population of 34.58 lakh, next only to Vellore district
- The 5 assembly segments of Ulundurpet, Tirukollur, Rishivandiyam, Sankarapuram and Kallakurichi are likely to form part of the new district with Kallakurichi as the headquarters

14. Kindergarten classes – TN government schools

- Tamil Nadu Government – to start Kindergarten classes in Government schools from January 21
- The Government had earlier announced that LKG and UKG classes would start in 2300 Government middle schools with Anganwadi centres located on the school premises
- The students will be put in Montessori-education based KG classes in English medium
- A budget of Rs 7 crore has been released for the scheme by the State Government

15. Online Police Verification Service

- Tamil Nadu State Police – launches ‘Online Police Verification Service’ on January 9, 2019
Aim of the Service - To check the identity of an applicant, to confirm the present address, and to see whether the applicant was involved in any criminal case as per records available with Tamil Nadu Police.

Online Portal - www.eservices.tnpolice.gov.in

Charges – Rs 500 for individuals and Rs 1,000 for private companies or institutions

In Chennai, City Police Commissioner A.K. Viswanathan formally launched the online service in the presence of State Crime Records Bureau chief and ADGP, Seema Agarwal and other police officers

16. Integrated Financial and Human Resources Management System

- Tamil Nadu Government – digitizes ‘Financial’ operations in 14 districts, including Coimbatore, Erode and Tirupur
- Chief minister, Edappadi K Palaniswami - launched the ‘Integrated Financial and Human Resources Management System’ (IFHRMS) software through video conferencing
- The move aims to provide hassle-free and quick service from the treasuries and accounts department to more than 32,000 government employees and 45,000 pensioners from the districts
- The state government has digitized their service records and automated the entire transaction procedure
- The software is expected to be launched in the remaining districts by January 21

17. Gaja Cyclone

- Tamil Nadu Government – implements extends 100 days of compulsory work to 150 days - under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in the districts affected by the Gaja Cyclone
- The extension approved by the Centre for the FY 2018-19 will benefit 133 village unions in 12 districts
- A Government order to this effect was released on January 5, following which the scheme was implemented first in Thanjavur district on January 9

18. Renaming of names

- Chennai Corporation – to rename 18 places in the city in Tamil from their current English names
• The list includes Ayanavaram, Egmore, T Nagar, Triplicane, Chindatripet, Jalladianpet, Saidapet and Tondiarpet
• The suffix of the last four places ending with ‘pet’ would be changed to ‘pettai’

19. Jeevan Gaurav Puraskar – Lifetime Achievement award - Dr G Viswanathan

• Dr G Viswanathan, Founder and chancellor of Vellore Institute of Technology – has been bestowed with the JeevanGauravPuraskar – Lifetime Achievement award – for teaching, research and institution building
• The award ceremony took place at the 3rd Global National Teachers’ Congress – held at MIT World Peace University, Pune
• The event was supported by the Government of Maharashtra, AICTE and UNESCO chair for Human rights
• National Teachers’ Congress was instituted in 2016 to inspire teaching community across various streams
• The Theme of the event this year – ‘Leap-Frogging to Future Ready Higher Education’

20. ‘Namma Chennai’ App

• Greater Chennai corporation – launches the ‘online’ property tax payment facility by the Chennai residents through ‘Namma Chennai’ App
The app allows users to procure birth and death certificates and view the status of property, professional tax and trade licences

- It also allows the submission of complaints
- The app is available on both Android and iOS platforms

21. 10th World Tamil Conference

- 10th World Tamil Conference (WTC) – to be held on July 4-7 in Chicago, USA
- The International Association of Tamil Research organises the conference and conducted in US for the first time
- The 10th conference will be jointly hosted by Federation of Tamil Sangams in North America and Chicago Tamil Sangam
- Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Edappadi K Palaniswami will inaugurate the conference. Over 6,000 delegates, including research scholars, were expected to attend the conference
- The last WTC was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in 2015
- 3 WTC’s were held in Tamil Nadu in the years 1968, 1981 and 1995 during the regimes of late Chief Ministers CN Annadurai, MG Ramachandran and J Jayalalithaa
- The inaugural WTC was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in 1966, arranged by Thani Nayagam Adigalar
- The Conference attended by tamil scholars around the world discusses the social growth of Tamil language apart from promoting its heritage

22. Judge C. Raghavan Committee

- Madurai bench of Madras High Court – constitutes a 24-member committee – to oversee the conduct of Avaniapuramjallikuttu on January 15
- The panel will be headed by retired District and Sessions Judge C. Raghavan
- Apart from retired judge Raghavan, advocates B. Saravanan, N. Dilip Kumar and Anand Chandrasekar were announced as organising committee members of the committee

23. TamizharThirunaal – Pongal in Isha Yoga Centre

- Tamil Nadu tourism department is collaborating with Isha Yoga Centre to celebrate TamizharThirunaal - Pongal this year
• Pongal will be celebrated on the centre's premises in Coimbatore from 3pm to 6pm on January 16
• On the occasion of Mattu Pongal, 15 varieties of native cattle breeds like Kankarej, KANGAYAM, Sahiwal, Gir and others will be exhibited to represent the importance of cattle in Tamil culture
• Apart from this, cultural programmes from Thappatam team, Dharapuram, Isha Home School, IshaSamskriti and Sounds of Isha will also be held

24. Compulsory insurance scheme for bull tamers
• Madurai district administration - announced a compulsory insurance scheme for bull tamers while participating in jallikattu events this year
• The participants have been instructed to mandatorily apply for insurance under the Pradhan Mantri SurakshaBima Yojana scheme for which a premium of Rs 12 would be charged
• The risk coverage is Rs 2 lakh for accidental death
• Registration of bulls for the Avaniyapuram jallikattu, scheduled for January 15, and Palamedu jallikattu, scheduled for January 16 is held on January 13, 2019
• A total of 691 bulls were registered for the Avaniyapuram jallikattu

25. Golden Jubilee Celebrations of the state’s renaming of Tamil Nadu
• Golden Jubilee Celebrations of the state’s renaming of Tamil Nadu - completes on January 14, 2019
• The State was renamed Tamil Nadu on January 14, 1969 from the erstwhile “Madras State” by the then DMK government led by C. N. Annadurai
• A resolution to this effect was earlier passed on July 18, 1967 in the State assembly and on November 23, 1968 in the Parliament
• Thyagi Sankaralinganar, who fasted unto death, had made an appeal to the then Congress government for renaming Madras State as Tamil Nadu in 1956.

26. ‘Chennai Unified Metropolitan Transport Authority’ (Cumta)
• Tamil Nadu Government - notifies setting up of ‘Chennai Unified Metropolitan Transport Authority’ (Cumta) in the State
• The Act setting up Cumta was notified by the Government to ensure better planning of urban transport
• The 18-member authority would be headed by the Transport Minister
• Greater Chennai Corporation, CMDA, Southern Railway, MTC, Metro rail, Police and other departments like highways, transport will be part of Cumta

27. Tamilnadu Defence Industrial Corridor

• A new Defence Industrial corridor – to be launched in the State on January 20
• It will connect the cities of Chennai, Hosur, Coimbatore, Salem and Trichy with major investments to be announced in the sector
• The country’s 2nd proposed defence corridor of the Central Government was expected to surpass the Rs 3,732 crore target set earlier for the investments
• A new defence innovation hub will also be set up at Coimbatore as part of the activities
• The first defence corridor was set up in Uttar Pradesh in August 2018

28. Rodeo - Robo Cop

• Rodeo, a Robo Cop – was inaugurated by the Chennai city police commissioner, A K Viswanathan in the road safety gallery at the Chennai city traffic police office at the Police commissionerate in Vepery
• A team comprising of 23 students from SP Robotic works have designed the robot
• The robot can perform multiple tasks like rotating to face the visitors and deliver road safety related messages among other activities
• It was operated with the help of an App through Wi-Fi

STATES

1. Rajasthan – to install free sanitary napkin vending machines
• In all its 189 Government colleges from the next academic year starting July 2019.
• If it goes as per the plan, the state will become the first in the country to provide free sanitary napkins to college students.
• A budget allocation of Rs 2.5 crore has been allotted for the purpose by the state’s department of higher education.

2. Uttar Pradesh - Gaukalyan cess
• Uttar Pradesh government – to levy a new ‘gaukalyan’ or cow welfare cess, a 0.5% additional levy on excise items
• It will be imposed on items such as alcohol apart from toll tax, buildings and bridges
• It will be used to fund construction and maintenance of cow shelters across the state

3. Uttar Pradesh – to levy Spot fines for Open defecation in Kanpur
• Kanpur municipal corporation (KMC) has fixed spot fines for two types of ‘offences’
  o a fine of Rs 200 if a person is caught urinating in public
  o a fine of Rs 500 for defecating in the open
• The district was declared open defecation free by President Ram Nath Kovind on October 1, 2017

4. West Bengal - KrishiBandhu Scheme
• For the farmers in the state
• It has two sub-schemes – KrishakBandhu 1 and KrishakBandhu 2
  • KrishakBandhu 1
    o The government pays a life insurance cover of Rs 2,00,000 in case of death, irrespective of the cause, of a farmer aged between 18 and 60 years
  • KrishakBandhu 2
    o The government will give a yearly financial assistance of Rs 5,000 per acre in 2 installments – one during kharif and another during rabi – for a single crop
• The registration of farmers under this scheme will start February onwards while the benefits will accrue from January 1, 2019
• Both the schemes will be implemented by the Agriculture department of the state
• It will help about 72 lakh farmers in the state
• The scheme is similar to the Telangana government’s flagship ‘RythuBandhu’ in providing financial assistance to farmers
5. Andhra Pradesh – Central Board of Irrigation and Power (CBIP) award

- Andhra Pradesh – bags the Central Board of Irrigation and Power (CBIP) award - for speedy execution of Polavaram Multipurpose Irrigation project on the Godavari river
- The award was given to the state in the category of "Best Implementation of Water Resources Project" for better planning, implementation and monitoring of the project

Polavaram Project - Factfile

- The Polavaram project, considered as the lifeline of Andhra Pradesh, is expected to be completed by June 2019
- As per the project, a dam is constructed across the Godavari River in West Godavari District and East Godavari District of Andhra Pradesh
- Designed to withstand massive floods, the Polavaram spillway is expected to have one of the highest discharge capacities in the world at 50 lakh cusecs
- The total storage capacity of the water reservoir is 120,000 million cubic feet (TMC)
- The project is expected to generate 960 MW of power by end of 2020
- The project had entered the Guinness Book of World Records by pouring 32,000 cubic metres of concrete in 24 hours during the work of dam construction between January 6 and 7, 2019
- The record was previously held by Abdul Wahed Bin Shabib, RALS Contracting LLC and Alfa Eng. Consultant in Dubai, where they had poured 21,580 cubic meters of concrete in aspan of two days
- The project was taken over by Navayuga Engineering Co Ltd
- So far, a budget of around Rs 15,380.97 crore has been spent on the project

6. Atal Solar Krishi Pump Yojana – Maharashtra

- Maharashtra –has launched the Atal Solar Krishi Pump Yojana (ASKP) for farmers - with a subsidy of up to 95% on solar pumpsets
- Moreover, to encourage farmers to use solar pumps, the Government has decided to give two LED bulbs, a DC fan and a mobile charging socket as freebies
- The State plans to install one lakh solar pumps
- The Maharashtra State Electricity Distribution Co Ltd is the implementing agency of the scheme
7. Mandal Dam Project - Jharkhand

- Prime Minister, Narendra Modi – lays foundation stone for Mandal Dam Project on the North Koel River (Jharkhand) on January 5
- The dam will improve irrigation facilities of Palamu and Garhwa districts in Jharkhand
- Overall, it is expected to irrigate 1.11 lakh hectares of land, with around 91,000 hectares of land in Bihar and 20,000 hectares of land in Jharkhand
- It was started in 1972 but stopped mid-way in 1993 due to the concerns of the State’s Forest department regarding Palamau Tiger Reserve and Betla National Park
- The Rs 2,391 crore project was again approved for completion in August 2017 by the Union Cabinet
- The Prime Minister would also lay foundation of another project - SujalamSufalam - for rejuvenation of 5,000 ponds across the state

8. Telangana – first Guinness World Record achievement in the field of medicine

- Telangana – enters into its first Guinness World Record achievement in the field of medicine
- The state-run MNJ Institute of Oncology and Regional Cancer Centre here has entered the Guinness Book of World Records for organising the largest men's health awareness programme on prostate cancer on a single day
- Overall, 487 men participated in the awareness programme
- Besides the Guinness World Record, the hospital also received recognition from 'High Range Book of World Records’

9. India’s longest single-lane steel cable suspension bridge- Arunachal Pradesh

- Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister, PemaKhandu - inaugurates India’s longest single-lane steel cable suspension bridge over Siang River in Upper Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh
- The 300-metre long bridge has been named as ‘Byorung bridge’
- The Tsangpo river entering India through Arunachal Pradesh is called ‘Siang’ river
- River Siang is considered as the lifeline of Arunachal Pradesh
10. Universal Basic Income - Sikkim

- Sikkim – plans to introduce ‘Universal Basic Income’ for the first time in the country by 2022
- Universal Basic Income (UBI) refers to a scheme in which the people are provided with a fixed amount of money irrespective of their income, resource or employment status
- Sikkim plans to fund the scheme by selling its surplus power and by subsuming its other subsidies and allowances
- The concept of UBI has been mooted by the 2017 Economic Survey as an alternative to social welfare programmes to alleviate poverty levels
- The pilot programmes for the UBI has been successfully implemented earlier in the states of Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh

11. Ayushman Bharat- Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana – West Bengal

- West Bengal - has decided to exit from the Centre’s flagship scheme ‘Ayushman Bharat- Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana’
- The reasons cited by the State for the exit were –
  - The Central Government sending the letter to the beneficiaries with PM’s picture and a lotus symbol on top, without the knowledge of State Government
  - The Central Government changing the name of state’s established health scheme ‘Swasthyasathi’ into Ayushman Bharat- Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana
  - Even though the state is bearing 40% of the cost in the scheme, the Union Government was projecting it as a ‘Central Scheme’
  - With the exit, West Bengal joins the other states of Telangana, Kerala, Odisha, and Delhi in opting out from the scheme

12. 111 foot-tall Shivalingam,Kerala - Indian record books

- A 111 foot-tall Shivalingam in the Maheswaram Sivaparvathi Temple at Chenkal, Neyyattinkara, Kerala district – enters into the Indian record books as the tallest Shivalingam in the country
- The temple, situated near Kanyakumari in Tamil Nadu, had started the construction of the Shivalingam on May 3, 2012
- Inside the cylindrical structure are eight floors with six of them representing the six chakras or energy centres in the human body
• The halls representing the six chakras Muladhara, Swadhishthana, Manipura, Anahatha, Vishuddha and Ajna were coloured red, orange, yellow, green, blue and indigo respectively.
• The base floor houses 108 different Shivalingams made from the Krishna stone from Mahabalipuram.
• The Shivalingam is expected to be open to the public by February 2019.


• The 5000 MW Ladakh project will be located at Hanle-Khaldo in Nyoma block, about 250 km from Leh and 200 km from Kargil.
• The plant will assist in lighting up the plains apart from keeping the glaciers cool by saving 12,750 tonne a year of carbon emission.
• It will be promoted by the Solar Energy Corporation of India under the Ministry of Renewable Energy.
• The plant is expected to be completed by 2023 at an estimated budget of Rs 45,000 crore.
• Similarly, another solar plant with a capacity of 2,500 MW is expected to come up in Kargil.
• It will be developed at Suru in Zanskar, about 250 km from the Ladakh project.

14. **One family one job scheme – Sikkim**

• One family one job scheme – launched by Sikkim – to provide employment to its youth.
• The scheme, announced by the Chief Minister Pawan Kumar Chamling, entitles one government job for every family in the state.
• Thus, Sikkim becomes the 1st state in the country to implement such a scheme.
• Only members of those families which do not have a government job at present are eligible for government employment under the scheme.
• Sikkim sets aside 70% of its revenues towards salaries for state government employees.
1. National War Memorial

- Narendra Modi, Prime Minister – to inaugurate the newly built, National War Memorial in New Delhi by January 25
- It is established adjoining the India Gate complex on the majestic Rajpath
- It was first proposed around 60 years ago to honour over 22,600 soldiers who had laid down their lives in wars and operations since Independence
- India Gate itself was constructed by the British to honour the 84,000 soldiers killed fighting for the British empire in World War I and Afghan campaign
- Amar Jawan Jyoti was built later under the arch of India Gate to honour the 3,843 soldiers who died in the Bangladesh liberation war of 1971
- The National War memorial was built at the cost of Rs 176 crore after approved by the Government in October 2015
- The memorial has the names of martyrs and busts of 21 ParamVir Chakra awardees inscribed in it
- It was initially slated for inauguration on August 15, 2018 but could not be completed fully by that time.

2. Port Blair Airport - Immigration check post

- Ministry of Home Affairs – designates Port Blair Airport – as an authorized immigration check post
- The move pays way for the direct entry and exit of foreign tourists to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands

3. Prayagraj

- Union Government - approved the proposal to rename ‘Allahabad’ as ‘Prayagraj’ by the Uttar Pradesh Government
- The name of Allahabad traces its origin to ‘Illahabad’ (Abode of God), as named by the 16th century Mughal Emperor, Akbar
- His grandson Shah Jahan renamed the entire city as ‘Allahabad’
- Before the renaming, the city was known as ‘Prayag’
- Abul Fazl, the Court historian of Akbar called the city as ‘Piyag’ in his literary texts
- The UP government had earlier changed the name of Allahabad to Prayagraj by its order dated October 18, 2018
- It had also renamed Mughalsarai railway station as ‘Pandit DeenDayal Upadhyay’ Junction recently
4. VanithaMathil - Women’s wall

- VanithaMathil, a Women’s wall – was formed in Kerala by around 35 lakh women standing shoulder to shoulder across the length of the state.
- The wall stretched from Kasaragod in the north to Thiruvananthapuram in the south for about 620 Kms.
- Kerala Health Minister, KK Shailaja became the first block of the chain in Kasaragod while CPI(M) Politburo member, Brinda Karat formed the final block in Thiruvananthapuram.
- With close to 35 lakh women attending the event, it is believed to be the largest women's gathering in the world.
- The event was organised by the Government of Kerala with the support of several other groups.
- During the event, participants took a pledge to protect the values of Kerala’s renaissance and uphold gender equality.
- A parallel ‘Solidarity Wall’ was formed by men in Kozhikode.

5. Samvad with Students - ISRO

- ISRO – has launched an outreach programme called ‘Samvad with Students’.
- As part of the programme, ISRO’s chairman, K Sivan interacted with 40 students and 10 teachers from select schools on January 1, 2019 – discussing about wide range of topics like rockets, satellites, Chandrayaan and Gaganyaan.
- The outreach programme was aimed at motivating young India to tap their scientific potential.

Other ISRO efforts for Students

- ISRO will organise guided tours thrice in a year, especially during summer and Christmas holidays for students of class 11 and class 12.
- It plans to take the students to its facilities in Thiruvananthapuram and Bengaluru and the launch centre at Sriharikota.
- Students would also be taken to space laboratories and allowed to make small satellites there.

6. Andhra Pradesh and Telangana to have separate High Courts from January 1, 2019
• Andhra Pradesh and Telangana had a common high court at Hyderabad, the capital city of Telangana, since the bifurcation of the state on June 2, 2014
• 16 judges have been allocated to Andhra Pradesh High Court and 10 to Telangana High Court
• Justice T B N Radhakrishnan was sworn in as the first Chief Justice of the Telangana High Court at Hyderabad
• Earlier, he was appointed as the Chief Justice of the High Court of Judicature at Hyderabad for both the states of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh in July 2018
• A new High Court of Andhra Pradesh has been created from January 1 to function at Amaravati, the capital city of Andhra Pradesh
• With the creation of this new high court, the country now has 25 high courts
• Justice Ramesh Ranganathan, who is at present the Chief Justice of Uttarakhand High Court, will head the new Andhra Pradesh high court

7. 100 days of Ayushman Bharat

• Union Government – announced that 6.85 lakh patients have been provided hospital treatment and an average 5,000 claims are being settled every day – as the launch of Ayushman Bharat crosses 100 days
• The scheme was rolled out on September 23, 2018 in Ranchi, Jharkhand
• It aims to provide an annual health cover of Rs 5 lakh per family to around 50 crore beneficiaries from nearly 10.74 crore deprived families
• Currently, over 16,000 public and private hospitals are empanelled under the scheme.

8. Parivesh

• Parivesh, a web-based single window system – to be rolled out in all the states by January 15 – to provide ‘quick and fast’ environmental clearances for industries
• Parivesh - Pro-Active and Responsive facilitation by Interactive, Virtuous and Environmental Single-window Hub
• It is an automated system for submission, clearance and monitoring of the proposals for seeking Environment, Forest, Wildlife and CRZ Clearances from various authorities
• This integrated environmental management system has already been implemented at the Central level
• It has been launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in August 2018 on World Biofuel Day.
9. ‘National Health Authority’

- Union Government – restructures ‘National Health Agency’ as ‘National Health Authority’ – for the effective implementation of Pradhan Mantri – Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY)
- The Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana, launched by PM Narendra Modi from Jharkhand on September 23, 2018, provides free coverage of up to Rs 5 lakh per family per year for pre and post-hospitalisation expenses
- The scheme is available for 10.74 crore deprived families and about 50 crore beneficiaries
- The new authority will speed up the decision making process and make it simple and efficient
- The Authority would be chaired by Union Health Minister and have representation from the Government and domain experts
- Pradhan Mantri – Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY) is a scheme of the government under the flagship scheme ‘Ayushman Bharat’

10. Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (Amendment) Bill, 2018

- Parliament – passes the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (Amendment) Bill, 2018 on January 3, 2019
- It seeks to ‘detain’ the students in any class, if they fail in their exams – scrapping the ‘no-detention’ policy in schools
- The existing policy under the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, prohibits schools from detaining students till they complete elementary education
- Now, states can choose to hold a regular examination either at the end of Classes 5 or 8, or both or continue the no-detention policy till Class 8
- Students who fail this test can appear for a re-examination within two months of the declaration of the result
- If the students still do not pass the exam, the state government may decide to detain them.
- The proposed amendment to the bill was introduced in August 2017 and passed by the Lok Sabha in July 2018
- Union minister for Human Resources Development Prakash Javadekar’s motion to amend the name of the bill to reflect that it was passed in 2019 was also accepted
The Parliament - had also passed the National Council for Teacher Education (Amendment) Bill on January 3, 2019

- It seeks to retrospectively grant recognition to certain institutions running teacher education courses without the approval of NCTE till 2017-18 - as well as grant retrospective permission to them for starting new courses
- The Bill amends the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) Act, 1993
- The Bill was introduced by the Union Minister of Human Resource Development, Prakash Javadekar in Lok Sabha on December 18, 2017 and it was passed by the Lok Sabha on July 23, 2018
- It has to be noted that for the last 3 years, no permissions have given by the Central Government for starting new B.Ed colleges
- The NCTE Act, 1993 came into force on 1 July 1995
- It is applicable throughout the country, except the State of Jammu and Kashmir
- The Act establishes the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE)

11. Green-Ag project

- Union Government - launches ‘Green-Ag’ project in collaboration with Global Environment Facility (GEF)
- The project titled “‘Green – Ag: Transforming Indian Agriculture for global environmental benefits and the conservation of critical biodiversity and forest landscapes” will also have the assistance of UN’s Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)
- It will be implemented in 5 states having high-conservation-value landscapes -
  o Madhya Pradesh - Chambal Landscape
  o Mizoram - Dampa Landscape
  o Odisha - Similipal Landscape
  o Rajasthan - Desert National Park Landscape
  o Uttarakhand – Corbett-Rajaji Landscape
- The Green-Ag project seeks to transform India’s agricultural and environmental sector to achieve biodiversity and conserve critical landscapes

12. Indian Science Congress

- 106th edition of Indian Science Congress - inaugurated by the PM, Narendra Modi at Jalandhar, Punjab
• Theme - ‘Future India: Science and Technology’
• During the occasion, the PM proclaimed a new slogan ‘Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan, Jai Vigyan and Jai Anusandhan’ adding to the former prime minister Lal Bahadur Shastri’s famous slogan of Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan and Atal Bihari Vajpayee’s Jai Vigyan
• Indian Science Congress is organised by the Indian Science Congress Association every year in the first week of January
• The last edition of the congress was held at Manipur University in Imphal

13. Rail Kumbh Seva Mobile App
• Rail Kumbh Seva Mobile App – was launched by North Central Railway - to provide information to the devotees arriving for the KumbhMela in Prayag Raj (Allahabad)
• The new app is designed to help the tourists getting information regarding the special trains, city navigation and passenger amenities

KumbhMela – Factfile (January 15 to March 4, 2019)

  o Ardh (Half) KumbhMela - held every 6 years - at Haridwar and Allahabad (Prayag)
  o Purna (Complete) Kumbhmela – held every 12 years – at Prayag (Allahabad), Haridwar, Ujjain, and Nashik
  o MahaKumbhMela – held in Prayag after 144 years (i.e. after 12 ‘Purna KumbhMelas’)
• Currently, 2019 marks the celebration of ‘Ardh’ Kumbh, which is halfway point between the two KumbhMelas
• The city of Haridwar is located in the state of Uttarakhand, Nashik in Maharashtra, Ujjain in Madhya Pradesh and Prayag in Uttar Pradesh

14. Cyclone Pabuk
• Crosses Andaman Islands and weakens as a deep depression on January 6
• It had originated over the Gulf of Thailand and travelled across many countries such as Philippines, Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia, Burma and now India
• Earlier this same system was named ‘Usman’ when it majorly affected the Philippines region

15. New Delhi International Arbitration Centre Bill 2018’
• Lok Sabha - passes the Bill on January 4, 2019
• It replaces the International Centre for Alternative Dispute Resolution, created in 1995 under the Societies Registration Act
• The proposed centre will be a statutory body, consisting of a Chairperson, two eminent persons having substantial knowledge in international and domestic arbitration, one representative of a recognized body of commerce, Secretary to the Ministry of Law & Justice, Finance Advisor and a Chief Executive Officer
• The Chairperson should have been a judge of the Supreme Court or High Court - appointed by the Central Government in consultation with the Chief Justice of India.
• It is being set up as per the recommendation of the Justice B N Srikrishna committee formed to explore the ways for the development of institutional arbitration in India.

16. Companies (Amendment) Bill, 2018

• Lok Sabha - passes the Companies (Amendment) Bill, 2018 on January 4, 2019
• It seeks to amend the Companies Act, 2013 and replaces the ordinance promulgated on November 2, 2018
• The new bill seeks to improve ease of doing business, declog the Special Courts and National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) and prescribe strong action against non-compliant companies.
• The bill was passed with amendments moved by the Minister of State for Corporate Affairs, P P Chaudhary
• The Ministry of Corporate Affairs is implementing the Act

Highlights of the Bill

• About 16 types of corporate offences have been shifted from special courts to in-house adjudication, increasing the scope of in-house assessment from 18 to 34 Sections of the Act
• It seeks to institute a transparent and technology-driven in-house ‘online’ adjudication mechanism along with the publication of the orders on the website
• It removes the clause of imprisonment for officers for defaulting the rule, which prohibits issuing shares at a discount, and imposes a penalty instead
Union Government – re-promulgates Companies (Amendment) Ordinance, 2019 to amend the Companies Act, 2013

- The Ordinance seeks to amend the companies’ law to further improve the ease of doing business and to ensure better corporate compliance
- The Lok Sabha has passed the Bill on 4th January and is currently pending in Rajya Sabha
- The ordinance was first issued in November 2018 and would have ceased to be operational from January 21, 2019 and hence the re-promulgation has been done now

17. Personal Laws (Amendment Bill), 2018

- Lok Sabha - passes the Personal Laws (Amendment Bill), 2018 - that seeks to remove leprosy as a ground for divorce on January 7, 2019
- The Bill seeks to amend five personal laws to remove leprosy as a ground for divorce namely -- Hindu Marriage Act 1955, Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act 1939, Divorce Act (for Christians) 1869, Special Marriage Act 1954 and the Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act 1956
- Leprosy is being removed as a ground for divorce as it is now a curable disease
- The Bill was introduced earlier in Lok sabha in August 2018 and will now be tabled in Rajya Sabha
- Leprosy, also known as Hansen's disease, is a chronic, progressive infection caused by the bacterium, Mycobacterium leprae

18. Constitution (124th Amendment) Bill

- Union Government – to provide 10% reservation in jobs and higher education - for economically backward sections under the General Category (apart from OBCs, SC/STs)
- It seeks to introduce a new ‘Constitution (124th Amendment) Bill’ for the purpose
- Break-up of Current Reservation Quota of 49.5%
  - 27% - Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (including widows and orphans of any caste)
  - 7.5% - Scheduled Tribes
  - 15% - Scheduled Castes
Challenges for the bill

- The Supreme Court had earlier held that such a proposal is constitutionally invalid stating that economic/educational backwardness cannot be the criterion of backwardness for reservation purpose—following the similar proposal of P V Narasimha Rao’s Government in 1991 for 10% extra reservation for the poor in forward castes
- In the famous 1992 Indra Sawhney & others vs Union of India case, the SC had ruled that the reservation should not exceed 50% as per Article 16 (Clause 4)

Gujarat - became the first state in the country to implement the 10% reservation for economically weaker sections (EWS) of the General category from January 14 — MakarSankranti Day

- The Constitution (124th Amendment) Bill, 2019, was passed in the Lok Sabha on January 8 and in the Rajya Sabha a day later for the 10% quota for EWS in government jobs and higher education
President Ram Nath Kovind gave his assent to the constitutional provision guaranteeing the quota on January 13

The 10% quota for the economically weaker classes from the general category will be over and above the existing 49% quota for SC/ST/SEBC

The Act amended Articles 15 and 16 of the Constitution, by adding a clause that allows state governments to make “special provision for the advancement of any economically weaker sections of citizens”

Telangana – to become the 2nd state in the country to implement 10% reservation

- For economically weaker sections in General category - in central government educational institutions and jobs in the state

Ministry of HRD – announces that all Government colleges, universities and technical institutions to increase seats by 25%

- To accommodate 10% reservation for economically weaker section students of the General category
- The 10% EWS quota will be implemented in the 2019-20 academic year itself without impacting the other existing quotas for OBCs, SCs, STs and general seats

19. Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019

- ‘Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019’ - passed in the Lok Sabha on January 8, 2019
- It seeks to provide Indian citizenship to non-Muslims from Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Pakistan
- The minimum residency period for citizenship is being reduced to 7 years now from the earlier 12 years
- The bill was first introduced in Parliament in 2016 and was examined later by the Joint Parliamentary Committee
- The bill seeks to amend the Citizenship Act, 1955 to grant Indian nationality to people from minority communities
- It also nullifies the 1985 Assam Accord - under which any foreign national, irrespective of religion, who had entered the state after March
20. National Policy on Domestic Workers

- Ministry of Labour and Employment - has notified the draft of India’s first ‘National Policy on Domestic Workers’
- The draft policy will assist about 40 lakh domestic workers by providing recognition and benefits to them
- The Centre is already implementing Unorganised Workers’ Social Security Act, 2008, to provide social security benefits to domestic workers

Highlights of the Draft policy

- Right to form their own associations/unions
- Right to minimum wages and access to social security measures
- Right to enhance their skills
- Protection of domestic workers from abuse and exploitation
- Providing them access to courts, tribunals for grievance redressal
- Establishment of a mechanism to regulate private placement agencies
- Establishment of a grievance redressal system

21. India – allows Iranian private bank ‘Pasargad’ to open a branch in Mumbai

- The new branch will handle transactions related to India’s oil purchases in view of American sanctions on Iran and is expected to begin operations in March
- UCO Bank of India and Bank Pasargod are the payment partners in the India-Iran relations from both the countries
- India will pay for crude imports in rupees to UCO Bank and Iran will use the funds for importing Indian goods
- Chabahar port, on Iran’s southern coast along the Gulf of Oman, is being developed by India as a transportation corridor for landlocked Afghanistan and West Asia bypassing Pakistan

22. DNA Technology (Use and Application) Regulation Bill, 2019

- Lok Sabha - passed the DNA Technology (Use and Application) Regulation Bill, 2019 on January 8, 2019
- The bill aims to regulate the use and application of DNA technology for the purpose of establishing the identity of certain category of persons including the victims, offenders, suspects, under trials, missing persons and others
• It also seeks to establish a National DNA Data Bank and Regional DNA Data Banks
• It provides for mandatory accreditation and regulation of DNA laboratories

23. Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notification, 2018

• Union Government – approves the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notification, 2018
• It seeks to replace the existing CRZ Notification of 2011
• The move encourages construction of buildings and launch tourism activities in areas that are closer to the high tide line (HTL)
• Recommendations for changes were earlier made by the ShaileshNayak Committee

Highlights

• Relaxation of FSI (Floor space index) norms for CRZ-II (Urban) areas – to enable redevelopment of these areas to meet the emerging needs. For CRZ-III (Rural) areas, two separate categories -- CRZ-III A&CRZ-III B, have now been stipulated
• CRZ-III A refers to densely populated rural area, in which a No Development Zone (NDZ) of 50 meters from the HTL was stipulated as against the earlier 200 meters
• CRZ-III B refers to less populated rural area, for which the NDZ lies at 200 metres from the HTL
• Temporary tourism facilities such as shacks, toilet blocks, change rooms, drinking water facilities etc. have now been permitted in beaches.
• Such temporary tourism facilities are also now permissible in the "No Development Zone" (NDZ) of the CRZ-III areas
• The procedure for CRZ clearances has also been streamlined
• No Development Zone (NDZ) of 20 meters has been stipulated for all Islands

24. Web- Wonder Women Campaign

• Ministry of Women and Child Development - has launched an online campaign ‘Web- Wonder Women’
• The campaign aims to celebrate the exceptional achievements of women providing social change through social media
• It will receive nominations from meritorious women in the areas of Health, Media, Literature, Art, Sports, Environmental protection and fashion
• The nominations are then shortlisted and the final winners will be selected by a panel of judges

25. 32nd Meeting of the GST Council – January 10

Key decisions

• The threshold limit for the tax relaxation has been doubled to Rs 40 lakh from Rs 20 lakh
• The tax exemption limit for small states has also been increased to Rs 20 lakh from Rs 10 lakh
• The GST council also raised the turnover limit under composition scheme from current Rs 1 crore to Rs 1.5 crore with effect from April 1, 2019
• Service providers who render mixed supplies of goods and services with a turnover up to Rs 50 lakh in the informal sector will be entitled to the ‘Composition scheme’ under the GST regime and pay a tax of 6%

• The GST Council decided to allow Kerala to levy a 1% cess on intra-state sales for a period of 2 years - to deal with the natural calamities faced in 2018
• A seven-member Group of Ministers (GoM) has been created to look into the GST on real estate
• Another GoM with representation from lottery developing and selling states will be formed for uniformity of taxation on lottery or other issues arising out of lottery
• Goods and Services Tax Network (GSTN) to make available free of cost accounting and billing software to small taxpayers
• Rationalising the 28% tax slab, the council had reduced the GST rates on 6 items to 18% slab and 1 item to 5% slab
• The exemption limit is the maximum annual turnover above which companies have to mandatorily pay GST
• A dual threshold system is under practice with a lower cap for North-eastern and hilly states designated under special category and a higher one for the rest of India
• The move to raise the threshold for GST registration is considered as a big boost and relief to micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs)

26. Campaign Silence Period

• A Panel set up by the Election Commission under Umesh Sinha, Deputy election commissioner – suggested imposing the ‘Campaign Silence Period’ on print, electronic media and others – at 48 hours before voting and latest within 3 hours of the EC issuing any such direction
• During this ‘silence period’, the star campaigners should avoid addressing press conferences or giving interviews on election issues
• For imposing such restriction, the panel suggested the amending of Section 126 (clause 1) of the Representation of People Act
• The panel had also suggested changes in the model code of conduct to ensure that parties release their manifesto at least 72 hours before the start of polling
• To monitor and take quick action in case of violation, the EC was advised to appoint an officer to liaise with the intermediaries apart from opening a special grievance redressel channel with a dedicated team during the election period

27. National Clean Air Programme

• Union Environment Minister, Harsh Vardhan – launched ‘National Clean Air Programme’ that aims to tackle the challenge of pollution in the country
- It is a 5-year action plan with a tentative target of 20-30% reduction in concentrations of PM10 and PM2.5 by 2024, with 2017 as the base year
- The plan seeks to target 102 worst-affected cities across 23 states and Union territories
- The centre plans to upgrade the air quality monitoring network across India under the programme

**28. Right to Disconnect Bill**

- Right to Disconnect Bill - was introduced in the Lok Sabha by MP, Supriya Sule

### RIGHT TO DISCONNECT BILL, 2018

**Key Takeaways**

1. Employees have the right to not answer calls/e-mails beyond work hours
2. Employees cannot face disciplinary action
3. Employers can negotiate out-of-work hours with employees
4. Employees to be entitled to overtime for out-of-work hours
5. Minimum penalty of 1% of employee’s total remuneration

- The bill seeks to empower employees to disconnect work-related calls or emails after office hours
- It also seeks to establish an “Employees' Welfare Authority" to confer the right on every employee to go ‘offline’ on holidays and after office hours
- The Authority proposed is expected to consist of -
  - Ex-officio Chairperson - Minister of State, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology
  - Ex-officio Vice-chairman - Minister of State, Ministry of Communication and Ministry of Labour and Employment
- The bill applies to companies with more than 10 employees and necessitates similar ‘Employees' Welfare Authority’ in workplaces to guide the workers on the provisions
- Presently, France in the only country in the world to have a legal provision allowing employees to refuse official activities after working hours, with the law enacted in 2017
• Similar provisions were also followed in Spain and by German automobile major, Daimler which has software provisions to delete emails while on vacation since 2014 itself

29. National Youth Parliament Festival 2019

• Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports, Col Rajyavardhan Rathore - launched the National Youth Parliament Festival 2019 in New Delhi
• Themes – ‘Be the Voice of New India’ and ‘Find solutions and contribute to policy’
• The festival will be held at 3 levels -- District, State and National level to select the best speakers in the age group of 18 to 25 - discuss and debate about how to make a New India
• The process was initiated on January 12, 2019 and will continue upto February 24, 2019
• Methodology
  o A maximum of 50 best speakers from the digital screening and 50 best speakers from walk in process will be shortlisted by the screening committee to participate in the District Youth Parliament
  o The best 3 speakers selected from the district will participate at the State Youth Parliament
  o The 2 best speakers selected from each State Youth Parliament will participate at National Youth Parliament
  o The best 3 speakers at the National Youth Parliament will be awarded a prize of Rs 2 lakh as first prize, Rs 1.5 lakh as the second and Rs 1 lakh as the third prize
• The idea for Youth Parliaments was mooted by the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi in his ‘Mann Ki Baat’ programme on December 31, 2017
• He reiterated the idea while addressing the youth in the 22nd National Youth festival on January 12, 2018

30. Government – re-promulgates Triple Talaq Ordinance

• The ordinance was earlier approved by the Cabinet on January 10
• The practice of giving instant triple talaq (talaq-e-biddat) will become unlawful and void under the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Ordinance, 2019
• Anyone indulging in it will face a jail term of three years
A bill to convert the earlier ordinance, issued in September 2018, was cleared by Lok Sabha in December 2018 and is currently pending in Rajya Sabha.

An ordinance is valid for a period of 6 months unless repromulgated.

However, the ordinance has to be replaced by a bill which should be cleared by Parliament within 42 days (6 weeks) of the start of the session, otherwise it lapses.

31. “HunarHaat” exhibitions

- Finance Minister Arun Jaitley and Minority Affairs Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi - inaugurated “HunarHaat” exhibitions in New Delhi.
- The exhibition provides a glimpse of indigenous exquisite pieces of handicraft and handloom work and also encouraging master artisans and craftsmen across the country.
- Earlier, ‘HunarHaat’ had been organised at Allahabad, Pragati Maidan and Baba Kharak Singh Marg in New Delhi, Puducherry and Mumbai.
- HunarHaat exhibitions are organised by the Ministry of Minority affairs under its USTAAD (Upgrading the Skills & Training in Traditional Arts/Crafts for Development) scheme.

32. The Women of India Organic Festival

- The festival promotes women farmers and entrepreneurs in the organic sector from various places in India.
- The festival is being held annually since 2015 and is held in Chandigarh for the first time.

33. Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar

- Central Government – to revamp the national awards for children as ‘Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar’.
- The awards, to be given by the President on January 22, will also include the bravery awards category.
- The 26 awardees were short-listed by the Ministry of Women and Child Development.
• Till last year, the awards were organized by the Indian Council for Child Welfare, a NGO which was recently questioned by the Delhi High Court over the issue of ‘financial integrity’
• Except for bravery, children in other categories like innovation, sports, arts, culture and social service were earlier given National Awards on Children’s Day on November 14
1. Merger of Banks

- Union Cabinet - approves the merger of Bank of Baroda, Vijaya Bank and Dena Bank on January 2, 2019
- The amalgamated entity will come into effect from April 1, 2019
- It will be the country’s 2nd largest Public Sector Bank and India’s 3rd largest bank (after SBI and ICICI) - with a total business of more than Rs 14.82 lakh crore
- Vijaya Bank and Dena Bank are the Transferor Banks (transfers the asset) and the Bank of Baroda is the Transferee Bank (receives the assets)
- The merger has been proposed earlier by the Union Finance Ministry on September 17, 2018.
- Post this merger, the number of PSU banks will be 19 in the country
- The amalgamation would be carried out under Alternative Mechanism
- The Alternative Mechanism is headed by Arun Jaitley, Finance Minister with 2 other members Piyush Goyal, Railway Minister and Nirmala Sitharaman, Defence Minister

2. Fugitive Economic Offender – Vijay Mallya

- Vijay Mallya – becomes the 1st person to be officially declared as India’s ‘Fugitive Economic Offender’ - by a special judge MS Azmi of ‘Special Prevention of Money Laundering’ (SPML) court in Mumbai
- The declaration, under Section 12 of the Fugitive Economic Offenders Act, 2018, is based on the request by Enforcement Directorate in July 2018
- This means now the government can confiscate his assets of over Rs. 12,500 crore
- Under the new law, a fugitive economic offender is any individual against whom an arrest warrant is issued for involvement in economic offences involving amounts of Rs 100 crore or more and has left India to avoid criminal prosecution
- Mallya, accused of loan repayment defaults and money laundering, had left India in March 2016
- The embattled liquor baron owes around Rs 9,000 crore to a consortium of 13 banks
- In December, the Westminster Magistrates’ Court in London had ordered the extradition of Mallya to India
- The Fugitive Economic Offenders Bill, 2018 was passed by both the houses of Parliament in July 2018 and came into force in August
INTERNATIONAL

1. Nomophobia – Cambridge Dictionary’s Word of 2018

- It means ‘a fear or worry at the idea of being without your mobile phone or unable to use it’
- It is derived from the root word ‘No mobile phone phobia’ as No-mophobia
- The word, which is not a scientific term and referred as ‘Smartphone separation anxiety’, was selected in a public vote from a list of 4 shortlisted words – ecocide, no-platforming, Gender gap and Nomophobia

2. ‘Panda Bonds’

- Pakistan - has decided to launch ‘Panda Bonds’ in Chinese Yuan currency - to raise loans from Chinese capital markets
- Thus, the country intends to give the Chinese currency a status ‘at par with’ that of the US dollar
- The strategy is mainly to bridge the foreign financing needs and build foreign exchange reserves in the country
- From these bonds, it expects to raise $500 million to $1 billion in different tranches
- The size, tenure and pricing would be determined on the basis of market response at the time of issuance
- In recent years, China has become Pakistan’s largest trading partner and also the country with which it has the highest trade deficit
- The first two Panda bonds were issued in October 2005 - by the International Finance Corporation and the Asian Development Bank
- Philippines issued its inaugural Panda bonds in 2018, thereby becoming the first ASEAN member to do so.

3. Asia Reassurance Initiative Act 2018 (ARIA)

- Donald Trump, President of United States – signs Asia Reassurance Initiative Act 2018 (ARIA)
- The act will authorize $1.5 billion in spending for a range of U.S. programs in East and Southeast Asia
- It aims to counter the growing influence of China in the region and lays platform for US leadership in Asia
• It draws attention to U.S. relations with China, India, the 10 member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and Northeast Asian allies - Japan and South Korea
• The ARIA devotes considerable energy to reasserting U.S. support for Taiwan and also addresses U.S. policy toward North Korea

4. PanjTirath - National heritage

• Pakistan – declares ‘PanjTirath’ hindu religious site as a ‘National heritage’
• The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) provincial government of Pakistan has announced the ancient hindu religious site in Peshawar of North Western Pakistan under the KP Antiquities Act 2016
• PanjTirath means five pools of water
• As per the hindu epic, Mahabharat, King Pandu belonged to this place and Hindus will visit these water pools for bathing during the month of Karteek and worship the deity here under a tree in a separate temple for 2 days

5. Chabahar port

• India – takes over the complete operation of a part of Chabahar port in Iran
• This is the first time that India will be operating a port outside its territories.
• The commercial operations began at the India Ports Global Chabahar Free Zone (IPGCFZ) with the arrival of a Cyprus-registered vessel ‘MV Macheras’
• India started talks with Iran on Chabahar Port in 2003
• Both the countries signed a MoU for the development of the port in May 2015
• The first phase of the Chabahar port was inaugurated in December 2017 by Iranian president Hassan Rouhani
• The port was partially built by India in the 1990s to provide access to Afghanistan and Central Asia, bypassing Pakistan under the Ashgabat Agreement

6. India-Central Asia Dialogue

• 1st India-Central Asia Dialogue - to be held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan on January 12 and 13, 2019
• Co-Chaired by - External Affairs Minister, Sushma Swaraj and the Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan, AbdulazizKamilov
• Participants - Foreign Ministers of Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan & Afghanistan (as a special invitee)
• The dialogue has its origin with the visit of Prime Minister, Narendra Modi to all the five Central Asian nations – Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan in 2015.

7. Currency swap arrangement between India and Japan

• Union Cabinet - approves a proposal for $75-billion Currency swap arrangement between India and Japan
• A currency swap agreement is a foreign exchange agreement between two parties to exchange one currency for another and giving back the original amount swapped after a specified period of time
• The agreement addresses the country’s liquidity conditions apart from avoiding multiple currency transactions
• The deal for the proposal was concluded in October 2018 during the summit level meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Japan’s Prime Minister Shinzo Abe at Yamanashi, Japan

SUPREME COURT VERDICT

1. CBI Director – Alok Varma issue

• Supreme Court - reinstates Alok Verma as the Director of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on January 8, 2019
• A 3-member bench comprising of Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi, Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul and Justice K.M. Joseph – had set aside the Centre’s decision to send him on leave on October 24, 2018
• The court had asked the high-powered committee, which selects and appoints the CBI Director to take any further decision about him, based on the report of CVC Enquiry for corruption charges against Verma
• The high-powered committee consists of the Prime minister, the Chief justice and the Leader of the Opposition
• Supreme Court cited the landmark verdict in the case of Vineet Narain vs Union of India, 1997 (also known as Jain hawala case) where the Supreme Court had emphasized that the tenure of the CBI director had been fixed to two years after the Delhi Special Police Establishment (DSPE) Act
• Verma, a former Delhi Police Commissioner, was appointed as CBI director on February 1, 2017
• He is due to retire on January 31, 2019
M Nageshwar Rao, a CBI joint director, took interim charge in the absence of Verma

Alok Verma, Former Director of CBI – resigns from service refusing to assume charge of Director General (DG) of Fire Services on January 11

- Earlier, he was sacked as CBI Director by a high-powered committee on charges of corruption and dereliction of duty with a 2-1 verdict on January 10
- The committee was headed by the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi and consists of Leader of Opposition, Mallikarjun Kharge and Justice A K Sikri, nominee of Chief Justice of India (CJI) Ranjan Gogoi
- There were 8 counts of charges against him in the CVC report presented before the Committee
- This makes him the first chief in the history of CBI to be ousted from the post
- Based on the recommendation of panel, the PM-headed Appointments Committee of the Cabinet immediately issued transfer orders to Verma as Director General-Fire services
- M Nageswara Rao was again appointed as the Interim Director of the agency

The 3-member selection panel – to decide on the new chief of CBI on January 24

- The panel would be headed by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi and comprises CJI, Ranjan Gogoi and leader of opposition in Lok Sabha, Mallikarjun Kharge
- M Nageswara Rao, IPS officer was heading the agency as interim director for the past three months

COMMITTEES

1. B V R Mohan Reddy Committee Recommendations to All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE)

- To stop setting up new colleges from 2020 and review the new capacity every year.
- No additional seats should be approved in traditional engineering areas such as mechanical, electrical, civil and electronics.
- To encourage institutes to convert current capacity in traditional disciplines to emerging new technologies.
To introduce undergraduate engineering programs exclusively for artificial intelligence, the block chain, robotics, quantum computing, data sciences etc.

Regarding additional seats in existing institutions, the approvals should be based on the capacity utilization of concerned institute

Background

As per an earlier survey, 51% of the seats were falling vacant every year - out of the 15.5 lakh B.E/B.Tech seats in 3,291 engineering colleges across the country

The investigation found that these vacant seats were due to the college’s poor infrastructure, labs, faculty along with poor linkages with the industry and the absence of a technological ecosystem

For improving the situation, a committee was constituted to come up with solutions to expand the engineering education under B V R Mohan Reddy

B V R Mohan Reddy, former NASSCOM chairperson and industrialist, is the current Chairman of IIT Hyderabad

2. U.K. Sinha Committee – MSME

RBI - constitutes an 8-member expert Committee on Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) - under the chairmanship of U.K. Sinha, former Chairman of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)

The committee is mandated to propose long term solutions - for the economic and financial sustainability of the MSME sector - by the end of June 2019

3. M.P. Bezbaruah Committee – Assam Accord

Union Government - has set up a 9-member committee headed by M.P. Bezbaruah, former Union tourism secretary – to review the implementation of clause 6 of the Assam Accord

The setting up of the committee was earlier approved by the Union Cabinet on January 2, 2019

The Committee has been asked to submit its report within six months

The Assam Accord was signed on August, 15, 1985

The clause 6 of the Assam Accord seeks to protect, preserve and promote the heritage of Assam’s indigenous communities

Bezbaruah was a member of the North Eastern Council
• He served as the Union Tourism Secretary under former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee
• He is also the permanent honorary representative of UN World Tourism Organisation.

M P Bezbaruah, former Union Tourism secretary – opts out as the Chairman of the 9-member committee set up by the Government

• Bezbaruah is the fifth member nominated by the Union Home ministry to abandon the committee

4. Nandan Nilekani Committee – Digital Payments

• Reserve Bank of India – constitutes a panel under NandanNilekani to promote digital payments
• The new norms issued by RBI allows third-party service providers like Google Pay and Apple Pay to store payment card data and allow customers to make cardless payments in shops using their phones
• An earlier panel appointed by the Government headed by RatanWattal had recommended Aadhaar for eKYC and extensive use of Aadhaar-enabled payment system
• Besides Nilekani, the panel consists of H R Khan, former RBI deputy governor, Kishore Sansi, former Vijay Bank CEO, Aruna Sharma, former IT ministry secretary and Sanjay Jain, chief innovation officer at IIM-Ahmedabad’s centre for innovation, incubation and entrepreneurship
• Nilekani was considered as the brain behind the development of Aadhaar

5. Cherukuri Raghavendra Babu Committee

• Madras High Court – constitutes an expert committee to weed out ‘Invasive species’ in Western Ghats
• The ‘invasive species’ are considered as the second major cause for biodiversity loss besides causing agriculture, forestry and aquatic ecosystem degradation
• The commercial cultivation of ‘Eucalyptus’, Plants like ‘Lantana’ which causes reduction of hydrological species-water table are the various ‘invasive species’ mentioned in the petition seeking the restraint
• The committee shall be headed by CherukuriRaghavendraBabu, Chairman, Expert Committee on Invasive Species, National Biodiversity Authority, Chennai
PERSONALITIES & AWARDS

1. Justice AK Sikri

- Appointed as Executive Chairman of National Legal Services Authority (NALSA)
- He replaces Justice Madan B Lokur, who retired recently on December 14, 2018
- NALSA
- It was constituted under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987
- It provides free legal services to the weaker sections of the society
- It also organises Lok Adalats for amicable settlement of disputes
- The Chief Justice of India is its Patron-in-Chief
- The senior-most judge in the SC traditionally takes over as the Executive Chairman of the Authority

2. Arunima Sinha

- Arunima Sinha, the Indian mountaineer - becomes the World’s first woman amputee to climb Mount Vinson, highest peak of Antarctica
- Earlier she became the world’s first woman amputee to climb Mount Everest in 2013
- Arunima of Uttar Pradesh had lost one of her legs in a horrific incident, when she was thrown off the moving Padmawati Express train for resisting a chain-snatching attempt by hooligans in 2011
- Apart from Everest, Arunima has also scaled Mount Kilimanjaro in Africa, Elbrus in Europe, Kosciuszko in Australia and Aconcagua in Argentina before this - as part of her mission to scale 6 highest peaks in 6 continents
• In 2015, Arunima was conferred the Padma Shri, the fourth highest civilian honour in India
• In the same year she also received the Tenzing Norgay National adventure award

3. Gita Gopinath

• Joins the International Monetary Fund as its first Female Chief Economist
• Mysore-born Gita Gopinath, thus becomes the second India-born economist to hold the position after former Reserve Bank of India Governor, Raghuram Rajan
• She also serves as the financial adviser to the chief minister of Kerala
• She succeeds Maurice Obstfeld, who had retired in December 2018
• Gopinath is the current John Zwaanstra Professor of International Studies and Economics at Harvard University (US)
• Christine Lagarde is the current Managing Director of IMF

4. Pranav R Mehta

• Pranav R Mehta, President of the National Solar Energy Federation of India - has become appointed the next president of the ‘Global Solar Council’
• With the appointment, he becomes the first Indian to head the Council
• The Global Solar Council is an International Coalition of more than 30 nations with its headquarters in Washington DC, USA
• It was established following the United Nations Climate Change Conference (UN COP 21)

5. Justice S Vimala

• Justice S Vimala of the Madras high court retired from service on January 10
• Justice Vimala was the first woman to be appointed as the judge of Chennai Mahila Court in 2002
• She was the first woman appointed as Director of a state judicial academy in 2006
• She has written a book titled “Whether Winning a Case Means Success in Life?” which was published by the Tamil Nadu State Commission for Women.
• With her retirement, the total number of judges in the high court has come down to 60 as against the sanctioned strength of 75.

6. Justice Dinesh Maheswari & Justice Sanjiv Khanna

• Union Government – accepts the Supreme Court collegium’s decision to appoint Karnataka high court chief Justice Dinesh Maheswari and Delhi HC’s Justice Sanjiv Khanna – as new Supreme Court Judges.
• The collegiums was headed by the CJI, Ranjan Gogoi and comprising Justices A K Sikri, S A Bobde, N V Ramana and Arun Mishra.
• With these appointments, the number of judges in Supreme court remains at 28 now against the sanctioned strength of 31, including the CJI.

7. Dhanya Sanal

• Dhanya Sanal – becomes the 1st woman to scale Kerala’s Men-Only Peak, Agasthiyarkoodam peak, for the very first time – along with 99 male co-trekkers.
• The 1868m tall peak is the second highest peak in kerala.
• Sanal is an Indian Information Service (IIS) officer working with the Ministry of Defence.
• Like Sabarimala, there was an earlier ban on women to trek the peak for ‘breach of rituals’.
• On November 30, 2018, the High Court had allowed women to be a part of the annual trekking programme organised by Agasthyarkodam Kshetra Kannikar Trust.
• The trekking starts on Makaravilakku day at Sabarimala Temple and ends on Sivarathri.

8. Colonel John Pennycuick

• A Bust statue of Colonel John Pennycuick – was unveiled at St Peter’s Church in Frimley, UK – where he was buried.
• The white marble bust was gifted to the descendants of Pennycuick by the Chennai city police commissioner, A K Viswanathan.
• John Pennycuick was the British Army Engineer who was instrumental in the construction of the Mullaperiyar dam.
• The words ‘Great Achievement is usually born of great sacrifice and is never the result of selfishness – Napolean Hill’ have been engraved on the marble
• Pennycuick died of bone cancer and was in poor state during his last days

CONFERENCES & SUMMITS

1. Global Aviation Summit 2019

• To be held in Mumbai - on January 15-16, 2019
• Organised by - the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) in collaboration with FICCI
• Theme – ‘Flying for all’
• The event will witness the participation of over 1000 delegates from global aviation fraternity
• The Minister of State for Civil Aviation, Jayant Sinha had earlier launched the official mobile App for GAS 2019 on December 19, 2018
1. Chandrayaan-2:

ISRO – confirms that it would not launch Chandrayaan-2 on January 3 as announced earlier

- The reschedule is due to the soft-landing of Chinese space probe, Chang’e 4 on December 31 on the far, unexplored side of the moon for the very first time
- The final launch date is yet to be decided by the space agency
- Chandrayaan-2 had earlier missed 2 planned launch windows in 2017 and 2018
- The mission, unlike Chandrayaan-1, involves a soft-landing on the Moon and the unloading of a rover to study and take measurements from lunar surface
- The orbiter will remain in a trajectory around the Moon

2. ISRO – to launch 32 missions in the year 2019

- 14 rockets or launch vehicles, 17 satellites and one tech demo mission.
- These rockets will include GSLV MK III for Chandrayaan-2, which will be the 25th mission from the second launch pad at Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota
- ISRO also plans to celebrate the centenary birth anniversary of Vikram A Sarabhai, the founding father of Indian Space Programme from August 12, 2019
3. NASA’s New Horizons spacecraft

- NASA’s New Horizons spacecraft – completes a historic flyby of Ultima Thule, the most distant object ever visited by a spacecraft – on January 1, 2019
- Ultima Thule (officially designated 2014 MU69) lies at a distance of 4 billion miles (6 billion kilometers) from Earth in the Kuiper belt of our solar system, beyond the part inhabited by planets
- The spacecraft zoomed within a mere 2,200 miles (3,500 km) of Ultima – more than three times closer than New Horizons got to Pluto, which also lies in the Kuiper belt in July 2015
- The approximate size of MU69 is about 35 x 15 kilometres
- Kuiper belt is a band of dwarf planets, space rocks and icy debris left over from the formation of the solar system 4.6 billion years ago.
- The Spacecraft New Horizons was launched from Earth in 2006
- An Indian scientist, ShyamBhaskaran of Nasa’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory is playing a key role in navigating the spacecraft
- On December 31, NASA’s OSIRIS-REx spacecraft successfully moved into orbit around the smallest space body yet, a near-Earth asteroid called Bennu

4. Agricultural Drought Monitoring and Early Warning system

- Scientists from Indian agricultural Research Institute – have developed an ‘Agricultural Drought Monitoring and Early Warning system’ – in association with University of Nebraska, United States
- The system will assess a region based on various indicators using Satellite images and models to classify them as extreme, severe, moderate and normal

5. Forest Tree Diseases App

- A new android app, titled ‘Forest Tree Diseases’- was released at the Silviculture conference held in Bangalore in December 2018
- It focused mainly on 16 major nursery and plantation diseases affecting forest trees
- The app also allows people to upload a picture of the diseased portion of the tree for more information on how to treat it
• The app was developed by the scientists from Chennai-based Institute of Forest Genetics and Tree Breeding
• Forest tree diseases are usually caused by fungi, bacteria and viruses

6. HD 21749b

• NASA’s (USA) TESS probe - has discovered a new planet, HD 21749b
• It is the 3rd new planet discovered by the Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS) probe
• Its earlier discoveries were - Pi Mensae b and LHS 3844b having an orbit of 6.3 days and just 11 hours respectively
• HD 21749b is present outside the solar system and has an orbit of 36 days around a bright, dwarf star in the Reticulum constellation
• It has a surface temperature of around 300 degrees fahrenheit

7. Space fuel

• Researchers from IIT, Madras - have developed Space fuel in lab conditions
• They have developed Clathrate hydrates in vacuum, 1000 billion times below the atmospheric pressure called ultra-high vacuum (UHV) and temperature close to -263oC(10 Kelvin), the conditions which exist in deep space
• Clathrate hydrates are molecules like methane, carbon dioxide, etc., trapped in well-defined cages of water molecules forming crystalline solids
• They are formed at high pressures and low temperatures at places such as the ocean floor below the sea level
• They are considered as the future source of fuel with many countries including India started exploring hydrates in the ocean bed
• The work was performed by Jyotirmoy Ghosh with his colleagues under the guidance of Prof. ThalappilPradeep and Dr. Rajnish Kumar of IIT Madras
• The research paper was published in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America (PNAS)

8. Space Galleries

• ISRO – is planning to set up Space Galleries in various locations in the country
- The Space Galleries are expected to spread the knowledge about space science and technology amongst the people of the country
- Initially, Space Galleries are planned to be established at Birla Science Centre at Hyderabad, Nehru Science Centre at Mumbai and National Science Centre at PragatiMaidan in New Delhi

9. Ganganyaan mission

- ISRO – names R Hutton from Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre, Thiruvananthapuram, who was in-charge of the PSLV light lift-vehicle programme – as the Project director of Ganganyaan mission to send 3 Indians to space by December 2021
- A new Human Space Flight Centre and a dedicated team of 800-900 scientists for the mission was unveiled by the Director of ISRO, K Sivan
- It had also selected Unnikrishnan Nair, senior space scientist from Vikram sarabhai space centre to be the Director of human spaceflight centre (HSC)
- Dr. Nair has already been involved in this work as the Director, Human Space Flight Project
- ISRO is currently planning to launch the HSC in Bengaluru, although the land is yet to be finalized
- The HSC would also be responsible for setting up India’s future ‘Astronaut training facility’, which was likely to be located near Kempegowda International airport on the outskirts of Bengaluru city
- The facility is likely to be named ‘Astronaut Training and Biomedical Engineering Centre’ built at around 40-50 acres, resembling the similar one in Russia
- The nodal Human Space Programme Office set up six months back under V.R. Lalithambika would continue to coordinate mission affairs from its Bengaluru headquarters
- ISRO’s own Indian Institute of Space Science and Technology, Thiruvananthapuram, which produces around 100 space engineers each year, will be a primary source of talent of the mission
- The Director of ISRO, K Sivan – had also announced that the launch of Chanrayaan-2 will not take place before April-end

SPORTS

1. ICC Women’s Cricketer - Smriti Mandhana
   - Smriti Mandhana, India’s T20I vice-captain – was voted as the ICC Women’s Cricketer of the Year 2018
• She was also named ODI Cricketer of the Year for accumulating 669 runs off 12 one day internationals
• She also scored 622 runs in 25 T20 matches this year
• Mandhana, 22, is only 2nd Indian woman to win an International Cricket Council award after fast bowler, Jhulan Goswami, who was named the Women’s player of the year in 2007
• Australia’s wicketkeeper-batter ‘Alyssa Healy’ was voted T20 player of the year
• India’s Harmanpreet Kaur – was named the captain of the ICC Women’s T20I Team of the year, which featured 2 of her compatriots Smriti Mandhana and Poonam Yadav
• Smriti Mandhana and Poonam Yadav also featured in the ICC Women’s ODI Team of the year

2. Dhruv Manoj

• Dhruv Manoj, a 12-year-old Indian-origin student from Singapore - has bagged two gold medals at the World Memory Championship held in Hong Kong (Dec 20-22)
• He won the title in the 'names and faces' and 'random words' categories, beating 56 other contestants in the 'kid's category' at the event
• Dhruv, who has just finished primary school, memorised more than seven decks of shuffled cards in an hour, 1,155 binary numbers in 30 minutes and 87 names and faces in 15 minutes
• He has mastered the Roman memory technique of creating ‘memory palaces’, which associates the objects to be memorised with scenes at familiar locations, such as one’s house.

3. Kalaivani

• Tamil Nadu's Kalaivani – won Silver medal in the 48 kg class final in women's National Boxing Championships at Vijayanagara
• In the final, she lost to Manju Rani of Punjab with a 4-1 split verdict

4. Indian Cricket team - won their first ever Test series in Australia

• Indian Cricket team - won their first ever Test series in Australia - after winning the first Test in Adelaide and the third Test in Melbourne
• India have toured Australia since 1947 but never before managed to win a series in the country
• India had already secured the Border-Gavaskar Trophy with their win in Melbourne
• Win the win, Indian team becomes the first from Asia to win a series on Australian soil.
• The player of the series award was handed to CheteshwarPujara, who scored three centuries and averaged 74.42

5. World’s largest Cricket stadium – coming up in Ahmedabad, Gujarat

• The Motera Stadium in Ahmedabad is currently being revamped to be bigger than the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG), which is the current largest cricket stadium in the world with a seating capacity of 90,000
• The Motera stadium was first constructed in the year 1982 with a seating capacity of 49,000 and hosted 23 One day internationals till 2011
• The new stadium is being constructed at an area of 63 acres with a budget of Rs 700 crores
• The stadium witnessed several historic events like Sunil Gavaskar scoring his 10,000th run and Sachin Tendulkar scored first test match double hundred
• The current largest cricket stadium in the country is Eden gardens, with a capacity of 68,000 spectators
• The new stadium will bear the name of Sardar Vallabhaipatel, Iron Man of India

6. MC Mary Kom - World No 1 Boxer

• MC Mary Kom - became the World No 1 Boxer in 45-48 kg category with 1700 points - as per the latest International Boxing Association’s (AIBA) world rankings released on January 10
• She also won gold medals at the 2018 Commonwealth Games in Gold Coast and the Silesian Open Boxing Tournament in Poland
• Mary Kom remains the only Indian female boxer to have won an Olympic medal, a bronze at the 2012 London Games
• In 2010, she had the honour of bearing the Queen's Baton in its opening ceremony run at the 2010 Commonwealth Games of Delhi
• Her autobiography, Unbreakable, co-authored by Dina Serto, was published in 2013
• In April 2016, she was nominated by the Indian President as a member of the Rajya Sabha
• In March 2017, the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports appointed Mary Kom along with Akhil Kumar as national observers for boxing
• Mary was awarded with the Padma Bhushan in 2013
• She was also conferred with the Padma Shri (2006), Arjuna Award (2003) and the Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna award (2009)

7. Khelo India Youth games 2019

- Khelo India Youth games 2019 – inaugurated at Shree shiv chhatrapati sports complex in Pune, Maharashtra on January 9 by Youth affairs and sports minister, Rajyavardhan Rathore and Maharashtra Chief Minister, Devendra Fadnavis
- As part of the Khelo India movement, Sports minister Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore launched the '5MinuteAur' challenge
- In the Challenge, he asked India's leading athletes and actors to share their childhood stories to play for extra 5 minutes before proceeding to their homework – in order to motivate students to play
- Badminton player, Saina Nehwal was the first to accept the challenge.
- In the current edition of Khelo India, 1,000 players will be selected from the various competitions and they will be given Rs 5 lakh each per annum for the next 8 years
- The 12-day, Khelo India Youth Games were earlier called as Khelo India School Games
- They are held annually in January or February in 2 categories- under-17 school students and under-21 college students
- Kelo India Youth games are part of Khelo India programme that aims to develop the sports culture at grass roots level
- The athletes will compete in 18 different disciplines, of which 6 are team sports
- At the Khelo India School Games 2018, Haryana topped with 38 gold medals followed by Maharashtra with 36 golds

Tamil Nadu’s Balakumar Nithin – clinched the 100m Gold at the Khelo India Youth Games in Balewadi, Pune

- He became the fastest U-21 athlete in the country by clocking 10.76 seconds to top the podium
- Delhi’s Nisar Ahmed clocked 10.96 seconds to win the U-17 boys 100m dash
8. M.S. Dhoni

- Mahendra Singh Dhoni - became the fifth Indian batsman to score 10,000 ODI runs for India

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Cricketers with 10,000 ODI runs for India</th>
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<tr>
<td>Player</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sachin Tendulkar</td>
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<td>Sourav Ganguly</td>
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<td>Rahul Dravid</td>
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<td>Virat Kohli</td>
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<td>MS Dhoni</td>
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- He reached the milestone during his knock in the 1st one day international (ODI) between India and Australia in Sydney
- The former India captain is 12th on the list of all-time leading run scorers in the ODI format
- Among full-time wicket-keepers, he is second on the list of scorers, behind Sri Lanka's Kumar Sangakkara

9. D Gukesh of Tamil Nadu – becomes the youngest-ever Indian Grandmaster

- D Gukesh of Tamil Nadu – becomes the youngest-ever Indian Grandmaster at 12 years, 7 months and 17 days on January 15
- Gukesh was crowned as the 60th Indian Grandmaster (GM) at the Delhi International chess meet
- He was also the 2nd youngest in the world after Russia’s Sergey Karjakin, who became GM at 12 years and 7 months
• During the event, Tamil Nadu’s N R Visakh got his 3rd and final GM norm to become the country’s 59th GM
• Earlier, Chennai-born R Praggnanandhaa was the second youngest Grandmaster in the world at 12 years, 10 months and 13 days

**RANKINGS**

**1. Ease of Doing Business Rankings 2018**

- Ease of Doing Business Rankings 2018 for Indian states – released by Asia competitiveness institute (ACI) of University of Singapore
  - 1st place – Andhra Pradesh
  - 2nd place – Maharashtra
  - 3rd place - Delhi
  - Andhra Pradesh was ranked at 5th place in 2016

**2. Democracy Index 2019**

- Democracy Index 2019 – Released by ‘The Economist Intelligence Unit’
- The index ranks 167 countries by 60 indicators across five broad categories -- electoral process and pluralism, the functioning of government, political participation, democratic political culture and civil liberties
- The index classifies each country into various categories such as - full democracy, flawed democracy, hybrid regime or authoritarian
- Norway has again topped the list, followed by Iceland and Sweden (similar to last year rankings) under ‘Full democracy’ categories
- India is ranked at 41st position and classified as a ‘flawed democracy’ according to the index
- India achieved a score of 7.23 on the index
- This is the lowest ever score attributed to India in the index ever since its publication
- Last year, India was ranked at 42nd with the same score of 7.23
- Only 4.5% of the world’s people live in a full democracy
- Australia (9) and New Zealand (4) are the only "full democracies" in the entire Asia-Pacific region
- The annual index has been produced by the London-headquartered newspaper ‘The Economist’ since 2006
INTERNATIONAL DAY

1. World Hindi Day – January 10

- The day marks the anniversary of first World Hindi Conference which was held in 1975 inaugurated by the then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi
- World Hindi Day aims to promote the language at the global stage
- It was first commenced on January 10, 2006 by former Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh
- National Hindi Diwas is celebrated on September 14, marking the day in 1949, when the constituent assembly adopted Hindi, written in Devanagari script, as the official language of the Union
- The first conference had Mauritius prime minister Seewoosagur Ramgoolam as the chief guest
- Hindi is the fourth most spoken language of the world, with around 258 million people having it as their mother tongue
- In Fiji islands, Hindi has been given the official language status


- The day marks the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda
- The Government of India declared the observance of the day in 1984 and it is celebrated across the nation since 1985
- On 12 January 2013, Former Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh inaugurated the four-year-long celebrations of Swami Vivekananda's 150th birth anniversary
- Swami Vivekananda, born in 1863 as Narendranath Datta in Calcutta, was one of the greatest Indian philosopher
- He was a chief disciple of Ramakrishna Paramahamsa
- He was a major force in the revival of Hinduism in India and contributed to the concept of nationalism in colonial India
- He founded the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission
- He is best known for his speech which began with the words - "Sisters and brothers of America ...‖ in which he introduced Hinduism at the Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago in 1893

TAMIL NADU

Global Investors Meet (GIM) 2019
First GIM 2015

- The Global Investors Meet was the pet project of former Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa
- During the first edition of the event in 2015, the State managed to attract investments to the tune of Rs 2.42 lakh crore across 98 projects for the employment of 4.7 lakh people

Second GIM 2019

- The Tamil Nadu Government has organised Global Investors Meet 2019 on January 23rd and 24th, 2019 at Chennai Trade Centre, Chennai
- It has been organised in line with the state’s ‘Vision 2023’ to achieve the leading position in Industrial growth
- The 2nd edition of the GIM was aimed to promote industrial activity in the State with a view to provide a focused platform to the business leaders, investors, corporations, policy and opinion makers of India and abroad
- The government has allocated Rs 75 crore to conduct the event, where over 250 stalls will be setup by investors and partner countries to showcase their products and services
- This year’s GIM focussed more on micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) with the state Government setting up a single-window portal for MSMEs to ensure time-bound processing of applications and issue of clearances by various departments
- It saw the participation of representatives from 10 countries including Australia, Canada, the U.K., Korea, Taiwan, Japan, and France

Objectives of GIM 2019

- Position “Tamil Nadu” as the “Investors’ Choice”
- Showcase Tamil Nadu’s potential business opportunities and sector specific investible projects to investors
• Showcase the Ease of Doing Business initiatives undertaken by the State Government
• Converge National and International experts to share sector specific global best practices.
• Showcase the State’s rich culture and heritage

12 Focus sectors

• Aerospace & Defence
• Agro & Food Processing
• Automobiles & Auto Components
• Chemicals & Petrochemicals
• Electronics & Hardware
• Heavy Engineering
• IT/ ITeS
• Infrastructure
• Pharmaceuticals & Biotechnology
• Renewable Energy
• Skill Development
• Textiles & Apparels

Inauguration (23rd January)

• Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami - Chief guest
• Union Minister of Defence, Nirmala Sitharaman and Deputy Chief Minister O Panneerselvam- Guests of honour
• During the inauguration, Nirmala Sitharaman- released the Tamilnadu Aerospace and Defence Industrial Policy 2019

Highlights

• Target Investment – Rs 2 lakh crore

• Overall, the state has signed 304 MoUs in the investors meet with an investment of Rs 3,00,431 crores - to provide job opportunities for 10.50 lakh persons.
During the event, Tangedco announced the starting of Floating solar plants on 3 dam reservoirs in the state – 100MW capacity in Mettur dam, 100MW in Bhavanisagar dam and 50 MW in Vaigai dam (At present, there is one floating solar power project at Rihand dam in Uttar Pradesh with 50MW capacity).

The next GIM is scheduled to take place in 2021.

**Valediction (24th January)**

Vice President, M Venkaiah Naidu - Chief guest

Union Minister of State for Finance and Shipping PonRadhakrishnan, Palaniswami and Panneerselvam- Guests of honour

**Birth centenary of former chief minister M G Ramachandran**

- Tamil Nadu Government - releases commemorative coins in the denomination of Rs 5 and Rs 100 to mark the birth centenary of former chief minister and AIADMK founder, M G Ramachandran

**Greenfield corridor**
Union road transport ministry - has proposed a second greenfield corridor connecting Chennai and Trichy under the ambitious Bharatmala Pariyojana phase II scheme

Subsequently, the corridor will link Pillaiyarpatti and Tuticorin

The proposed Chennai-Salem corridor was the first Greenfield corridor planned in the state

Tamil Nadu Agricultural University – releases a list of 14 new crop varieties for this Pongal

• It includes Short duration paddy crops, year-long flowering Star Jasmine and a wilt-resistant banana apart from other varieties of rice, millet, castor, garlic and groundnut

• Rice

Of the 14 crops, two are rice varieties
  o Rice ADT 53
  o It is a short duration variety, producing yield in 105 days
  o Rice VGD 1
  o It is semi-dwarf with 130 days duration.

• Horticultural crops
  o The banana varieties – Kaveri Kalki, Kaveri Saba and Kaveri Suganatham – were from the National Banana Research Centre, Trichy

Chennai - ‘The SaaS capital of India’

• Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Edapaadi K Palaniswami – announces Chennai as the ‘the SaaS capital of India’

• He announced the various Government measures to give an impetus to this sector to make TN a global SaaS destination - ahead of the Global Investors Meet starting on January 23

• The city is home to two unicorns (Freshworks and Zoho) both having SaaS as their business backbone
What is SAAS?

SAAS means Software as a Service (SaaS) is a model of distribution, where users access software over the internet, as opposed to erstwhile techniques of getting them installed in the systems using a CD or DVD. The SaaS provider typically hosts the application at its data center and customers purchase it on a subscription basis via a web browser or cloud.

Tamil Nadu Defence Industrial Corridor

- Defence minister Nirmala Sitharaman - inaugurated the Tamil Nadu Defence Industrial Corridor on January 20
- The corridor aims to take forward the Centre's initiative to boost indigenous production of defence equipment through MSMEs
- A range of defence public sector undertakings (DPSU) and private defence products manufacturers have pledged investments worth Rs 3,100 crore in the five nodal cities of Chennai, Trichy, Salem, Coimbatore, and Hosur chosen for the corridor in the state
- On August 11, 2018, the Uttar Pradesh Defence Industrial Corridor was launched at Aligarh at an investment of Rs 3,732 crore
- Earlier, the defence minister also inaugurated the country's first defence incubation centre named CODISSIA Defence innovation and incubation centre in Coimbatore.

TN Startup policy

- Tamil Nadu Government - unveils 'Startup policy' on January 18 with a proposal to set up a 'Tamil Nadu Startup fund' with a corpus of Rs 250 crore
- The 2018-2023 policy aims to provide a Global innovative ecosystem in the state

The mission aims to create –

- At least 1 lakh high-skilled jobs in the startup ecosystem
- 500 technology startups of which at least 10 are startups in the social impact sector
- The core objectives are to support infrastructure in areas like Internet of Things (IoT), artificial intelligence & machine learning (AI/ML), and software-as-a-service (SaaS)
• The state is also planning to set up startup hubs in Chennai, Coimbatore, Salem-Erode, Madurai, Trichy-Thanjavur and Tirunelveli

**Funds**

The state will also set up two funds to back up the startups –

a. Tamil Nadu Startup Fund –

• It is registered as an Alternative Investment Fund (AIF) for investment in startups and MSMEs
• It will be managed by Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI)
• This fund has a corpus of Rs 250 crore
• The government’s investment will be up to Rs 75 crore, the first portion of Rs 25 crore will be allotted in FY19-20

b. Tamil Nadu Startup Seed Grant Fund

• Grants under this fund will be allotted to financial institutions and universities to back early-stage fund needs of startups
• It has a corpus of Rs 50 crore, with an allotment of Rs 5 crore in the first year.
• Tamil Nadu Startup and innovaTN Mission (TANSIM) will manage this fund, which will be governed by a professional ‘Scientific Startup Seed Fund Board’

**Nodal Agencies**

• The Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India (EDII) will be the nodal agency to promote startups, while Tamil Nadu Startups and innovaTN Mission (TANSIM) will advocate and oversee policy

The conditions for recognizing an entity as a startup

• Registration under the TANSIM
• Date of incorporation below 7 years, and below 10 years for biotech and AI/ML startups
• Turnover of below Rs 25 crore
**Education tour – TN government school students**

- 50 Government school students and 2 Teachers – undertake ‘Education tour’ for the first time to Finland and Sweden from January 21-30
- During the trip, these students will visit schools, colleges, universities and research labs and museums.
- A journey by ship has also been arranged for them
- Of the 50 students, 36 are boys and 14 girls, studying in various classes between Standard 8 to 12
- They were selected on the basis of their science projects and participation in national level science competitions

**World record – Jallikattu**

- Viralimalai Jallikattu in Pudukottai district – sets a new World record for the largest Jallikattu gathering with a record 1353 bulls and 700 tamers
- It was conducted over a period of 9.5 hours continuously
- Chief Minister, Edappadi K Palaniswami inaugurated the event
- The event made a Guinness record by beating the earlier record of 647 bulls’ participation in Madurai Jallikkattu
- Tiruchi district’s Muruganandam tamed the maximum number of 21 bulls and won the first prize.

**Student police cadet (SPC) programme**

- 6072 Students in Class VIII and Class IX from government and aided schools in Chennai –join the student police cadet (SPC) programme sponsored nationally by the Union home ministry
- The Centre is providing Rs 50,000 to each school chosen to buy the children’s uniforms and training material
- The student volunteers will get a khaki uniform, cap, belt and shoes and once a week will stay back after school for the training, which will be imparted by a sub-inspector and constable from the nearest police station, besides two designated teachers
- The project aims to inculcate in children respect for the law, discipline and civic sense, and empathy for vulnerable sections of society.
• It is intended to strengthen students’ commitment towards family, community, and the environment

‘Tamil Nadu Coastal Regulation Zone’ notification

• The Union ministry of environment - has approved the draft ‘Tamil Nadu Coastal Regulation Zone’ notification - allowing construction up to 50m of the sea, and temporary structures 10m from it
• The draft notification prepared by the state environment department was vetted by the National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management and sent to the ministry last July
• Buildings along the coast which were considered unauthorized until now will be regularized under the new rule

TN Padma shri awardees

• Nine from Tamil Nadu get prestigious Padma shri award this year
• The awardees are –
  o Bangaru Adigalar, Melmaruvathur-based spiritual sect founder
  o Sharath Kamal, Table tennis player
  o Nartaki Natraj, Transgender Bharatanatyam dancer
  o Madurai Chinna Pillai, Social worker and micro finance pioneer
  o Dr R V Ramani, Ophthalmologist
  o Anandan Sivamani, Drummer
  o Dr Rama Swami Venkataswami, Plastic surgeon expert
  o Prabhu Deva, Actor
  o Shankar Mahadevan, Singer

• No one from the state has been awarded Padma Vibhushan or Padma Bhushan this year

Dhruv helicopters

• Indian Coast Guard – is planning to deploy Long-range ‘Dhruv helicopters’ at the Chennai Coast Guard Air station
• At present, the Chennai station has Chetak helicopters and Dornier aircrafts
• The latest Dhruv Mk III can cover almost the entire areas of Chennai city and most of the maritime area where its ICG ships operate on the south-eastern seaboard
• Range capabilities
  o Dhruv – 600 km
  o Chetak – 200 km to 290 km and can be operated from ships
• Earlier in March 2017, HAL signed the contract with the Coast Guard to supply Advanced Light Helicopters (ALH) like Dhruv to boost low intensity maritime operations and coastal security capabilities
• The first Green helicopter was earlier successfully tested in June 2018
• The first Dhruv squadron of the ICG was commissioned in March 2002 and ICG Air Enclave, Goa

Proton Cancer therapy Centre

• Chennai’s Apollo Hospitals – to get South East Asia’s first Proton Cancer therapy Centre

Republic day medals

• Tamil Nadu’s 2 Police officers – named for the President’s police medal for ‘Distinguished’ Service on this year’s Republic day
  o B Govindasamy, Deputy superintendent of police, Special investigation unit, Trichy
  o E Sorimuthu, Inspector of police, special task force, Erode

Anna Award for Gallantry

• G Ranjithkumar from Bodinaikanur
• N Surya Kumar from Thirumanagalam,
• R Sridhar of Thanjavur – who rescued 6 women and children from drowning in a lake

Gandhi Adigal Police medal
• 5 Police officers – have also received Gandhi Adigal Police medal – for their contribution in curtailing the illicit liquor sale
• The Chief Minister also gave a special award to S Xavier, a farmer from Pudukottai district – for getting the highest yield in paddy cultivation using the Rice intensification method

Republic day parade

• Ministry of Information and Broadcasting – won the first prize in the Republic day parade held in Chennai.

National Girl Child Day Awards

• Tamil Nadu – gets 2 awards, one for the State and another for its district Thiruvannamalai, in the National Girl Child Day celebrations on January 24, 2019
• The State won praise for bringing out a guide book on BBBP in Tamil
• Nandhini Nagaraji, a 13-year old girl from Thiruvannamalai and who was the face of ‘No to Child marriage’ campaign in the district, had received praise when she shared her journey at the award function

8th Annual Pulicat Day

• Pulicat Day – will be observed on February 2

AIIMS, Madurai

• Prime Minister, Narendra Modi – lays the foundation stone for the new AIIMS to come up at Thoppur, Madurai on January 27. It will be developed at a cost of more than Rs 1,200 crore under the “Prime Minister Swasthya Suraksha Yojana”
• After laying the foundation stone, he also inaugurated, via video conference, three super-specialty hospitals in Madurai, Tirunelveli and Thanjavur, which have been established at a cost of Rs 150 crore each.

MSME trade and investment promotion bureau (M-TIB)

• Tamil Nadu Government – to establish ‘MSME trade and investment promotion bureau (M-TIB)’
• It will be an autonomous body facilitating single window clearance for MSMEs
• The MSMEs or small businesses provide employment opportunities to more than 113 lakh persons with a total investment of Rs 1,93,704 crore in Tamil Nadu as on March 2018
• The Secretary of MSME, Dharmendra Pratap Yadav would be the chairperson of M-TIB
• The bureau would be led by an IAS officer with representatives from Tamil Nadu small and tiny industries, association, federation of Indian export organization and Engineering export promotion council of India and other similar organizations

Project Utkrisht

• A rake in Pearl City Express (Chennai-Tuticorin) – was upgraded under the Railway Ministry’s ‘Project Utkrisht’
• The project was designed to improve the condition of coaches running in mail/express trains
• It becomes the first rake to be upgraded under the project in Madurai division in the state

Swasth Bharat Yatra’ (SBY) programme

• Tamil Nadu – won the ‘Best State –Overall’ award under ‘Swasth Bharat Yatra’ (SBY) programme of the FSSAI
• SBY is the 100-day consumer outreach programme of the Food Safety and Standards authority of India
• It is a pan-India cyclothon, launched in October 2018 – as part of FSSAI’s Eat Right India initiative Madurai and Sivakasi have been adjudged the best cities in Tamil Nadu under the programme

Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Urban Livelihoods Mission

• Tamil Nadu - is ranked 18th in implementing self employment programme under the Centre’s Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Urban Livelihoods Mission
• Based on the latest Systematic Progressive Analytical Real Time Ranking (Spark), Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat occupy the top two places among the 27 states

Sahitya Akademy’s ‘Premchand fellowship’

• Sri Lankan Tamil Writer, Ayathurai Santhan – was conferred with Sahitya Akademy’s ‘Premchand fellowship’ for the year 2017
• His recent works in English include "The Whirlwind" (2009) and "Rails Run Parallel" (2015).

STATES

Yuva Swabhiman Yojana

• Madhya Pradesh – announced ‘Yuva Swabhiman Yojana’ scheme
• It aims to provide 100 days of employment for the unemployed youth from the economically weaker sections of the society in urban areas

2nd Tulip garden

• Uttarakhand – to develop the country’s 2nd Tulip garden in Pithoragarh
• The site was selected under the 13 districts -13 new destinations’ scheme of the state Government to attract more tourists
• The country’s first tulip garden is located in Srinagar of Jammu and Kashmir

Atal Setu

• ‘Atal Setu’, a new cable bridge across river Mandovi in Panaji

Jiban Sampark

• Odisha – has launched ‘Jiban Sampark’ project in association with UNICEF India
• The projects intends to spread awareness about the development and welfare initiatives of state government among the particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PVTGs) of the state
• The highest numbers of PVTGs are found in Odisha
• They are identified by the Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs based on the recommendations from the state governments or Union territories

Pravasi Dividend Pension Scheme

• Kerala Government – launched ‘Pravasi Dividend Pension Scheme’ – for the welfare of NRI Malayalis
• Under the scheme, a regular pension would be provided to Non-Resident Keralites on a one-time payment of Rs 5 lakh

Maharashtra - special scheme to curb infant deaths

• The government started distributing baby-care kits to the children born in primary health centres and government hospitals, as part of its efforts to reduce the infant mortality rate.
A similar scheme was introduced earlier in Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Tamil Nadu with success

NATIONAL

KumbhMela - Introduction

Kumbh 2019, world’s largest religious and cultural human gathering, began at Prayagraj (erstwhile Allahabad), Uttar Pradesh on January 15, 2019 and will go on till March 4, 2019

This 7-week event began with the holy dip at Sangam, the confluence of three rivers - Ganga, Yamuna and mythical Saraswati

Over 12 crores devotees and tourists are expected to visit Prayagraj during the Kumbh

The Kumbh 2019 is spread over an area of 3,200 hectares of land

Rail KumbhSeva Mobile App - has been launched by the North Central Railway (NCR) to help the devotees arriving in Allahabad for the KumbhMela

Ram Naik, the Governor of Uttar Pradesh, has officially launched the new multi-coloured logo for the Allahabad KumbhMela 2019 in Lucknow on December 12, 2017

Naik has also launched the Kumbh’s tagline “ChaloKumbhChalo-Chalo, KumbhChalo”, Uttar Pradesh Tourism’s slogan “UP NahinDekha to India NahinDekha” and a one-stop travel solution portal

Background
KumbhMela is held every 4 years by rotation at 4 places –

- Haridwar on the Ganges in Uttarakhand.
- Ujjain on the Shipra in Madhya Pradesh.
- Nashik on the Godavari in Maharashtra.
- Prayagraj at the confluence of the Ganges, the Yamuna, and the mythical Sarasvati in Uttar Pradesh.

Types of KumbhMela

- KumbhaMela - Held at all four places, every 3 years
- ArdhaKumbhaMela - Held at Haridwar and Prayag, every 6 years
- PurnaKumbhaMela - Held only at Prayag every 12 years
- MahaKumbhaMela - Held only at Prayag, every 144 years

The previous MahaKumbhaMela was held in 2001.

During the festival, devotees bath or take a dip in a sacred river.

Followers believe that by bathing in the river, one is freed from sins and is liberated from the cycle of birth and death

The Mela was included in the list of “Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity” by UNESCO on December 7, 2017.
• The University Grants Commission (UGC) – is planning to introduce an academic credit bank soon
• It will be similar to that in some foreign countries like South Korea, where students can accumulate points and graduate with a degree before the stipulated time
• The credit bank system will also enable students from non-science courses like arts and commerce to take up science degrees after completing a bridge programme

10% quota in Central government jobs

• Department of personnel and training – issues a formal memorandum to kick start the 10% quota in Central government jobs notified on or after February 1 - for the economically weaker sections (EWS) in the general category
• As per the office memorandum of January 19, persons who are not covered under the existing scheme of reservations for the Scheduled Castes, Schedules Tribes and the Socially and Educationally Backward and whose family has gross annual income below Rs 8 lakh are to be identified as EWS for the benefit of reservation
• As per the DoPT memorandum, income and assets of families of persons seeking to avail 10% EWS quota would have to be certified by an officer not below the rank of tahsildar in the states/UTs
• Central government-funded educational institutions, including elite ones such as IITs, IIMs and NITs – to increase up to 3 lakh seats in two phases over 2019-20 and 2020-21 – to provide for the new 10% quota for the economically weak sections in ‘General’ category

‘Digi-Yatra’ - e-boarding process

• Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) - has notified norms for the launch of the new e-boarding process termed as ‘Digi-Yatra’
• The project ‘Digi-yatra’ aims to make ticket booking, airport entry and boarding pass security check-in, totally digital However, this facility will only be available for domestic flights at smart airports which have a biometric-based verification system
This facility is not available for international travellers
Bangalore and Hyderabad airports - will start the facility first using biometrics (facial recognition) based verification system
Other airports like Vijayawada, Pune, Kolkata and Varanasi will follow suit within three months.

Pravasi Teerth Darshan Yojana’

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi - launched the ‘Pravasi Teerth Darshan Yojana’ on January 22, 2019
- It is a new scheme under which a group of Indian diaspora will be taken on a government-sponsored tour of religious places in India twice a year

Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose museum

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi - inaugurated the Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose museum at the iconic Red Fort in Delhi to mark the leader’s 122nd birth anniversary
- The PM also unveiled two more new museums inside the Red Fort compound – Yaad-e-Jallian Museum (museum on the Jallianwala Bagh and World War I)

Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas

- 15th Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas
- The Prime Minister, Narendra Modi - inaugurated the 15th Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas on January 22, 2019 in his parliamentary constituency, Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh
- Theme 2018 – ‘Role of Indian Diaspora in building New India'
- For the first time, the convention is being organised from January 21 to 23 instead of January 9 to 11 to allow the NRIs to visit the Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj and attend the Republic Day parade in New Delhi
- The Chief Guest of the event was Mauritian Prime Minister, Pravind Jugnauth
Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar 2019

- MadhavLavakare, Eiha Dixit, ShivangiPathak, NishantDhankhar and Nikhil Jituri are among those children who received the Bal Shakti Puraskar
- The Ministry of Women and Child Development has introduced a revamped National award for Children 2018 scheme in 2 categories under the name of “Pradhan Mantri National Children Awards” (Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar)
- Bal Shakti Puraskar (formerly known as National Child Award)
- Bal Kalyan Puraskar (formerly known as National Child Welfare Award)

National Women’s Party

- The National Women’s Party (NWP) - was launched in Mumbai, Maharashtra on January 21, 2019
- The party was formed, with the motto of women empowerment, by Dr. SwethaShetty, a medical practitioner-cum-activist from Hyderabad, who would also serve as its President
- The key objective behind the formation of the party is to remove gender disparity in politics and guarantee equal representation in Parliament

Shehri Samridhi Utsav

- It will focus on urban livelihoods and extending the outreach of National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NULM) to the poorest of the poor and the most vulnerable, and facilitate access of SHG members to the other government schemes

Defence plan

- India – has finalized Rs 5,750 crore defence plan in Andaman and Nicobar Islands. It is an exclusive infrastructure development plan spread over 10 years for the 572-Island A&N archipelago.
- The plan will allow stationing of additional warships, aircraft, drones, missile batteries and infantry soldiers against the backdrop of China’s rapidly increasing presence in the Indian Ocean region (IOR)
A&N Command is the country’s only theatre command with assets and manpower of the army, Navy, IAF and Coast Guard under one operational commander.

INS Kohassa

- Navy Chief Admiral, Sunil Lanba -commissioned the new Naval Air Base “INS Kohassa” at Diglipur in Andaman and Nicobar Islands
- The INS Kohassa will be used to handle operations of helicopters and small aircraft like the Dornier
- The new base would further strengthen the defence capabilities of the country in the Indian Ocean region

Vande Bharat Express

- India’s fastest and first engineless train, Train 18 – to be named ‘Vande Bharat Express’
- The 16-coach train will run between Delhi and Varanasi at a maximum speed of 160 kmph
- The train was manufactured in just 18 months at a budget of Rs 97 crore by Integral Coach Factory, Chennai.
- It was rolled out on October 29, 2018 by Railway Board Chairman Ashwani Lohani at the Chennai’s Integral Coach Factory (ICF).
- It is considered as a replacement for Shatabdi Express, introduced in 1988.

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (Amendment) Act, 2019

- President of India – gives his assent to ‘The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (Amendment) Act, 2019’ on January 10, 2019
- The bill, notified in the Gazette of India, seeks to abolish the no-detention policy in schools
- The Lok Sabha had already passed the bill in July 2018
- It amends “The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009” to all children aged 6-14 years
- According to the Union HRD Minister, over 25 states favour abolishing the nodetention policy.

Key Provisions of the bill

- As per the bill, it would be left to the states to decide whether to continue the no detention policy.
- The bill provides for regular examination in classes V and VIII
- If a child fails in these exams, the amendment bill seeks to provide him or her additional opportunity to take a re-examination within two months after undergoing the remedial teaching
- If the students still do not pass the exam, the state government may decide to detain them.

**PISA 2021**

- Ministry of HRD - signs MoU with Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) - for India’s Participation in Programme for International Student Assessment- PISA 2021
- The schools run by Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS), Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti (NVS) and schools in the UT of Chandigarh would be participating in PISA 2021

**Hindi Word of the Year 2018**

- The word ‘Nari shakti’ (Female Power) - is announced as the ‘Hindi Word of the Year 2018’ by the Oxford dictionaries in the Jaipur Literary Festival

**Samantha Express**

- Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) - to launch a new train ‘Samantha Express’ on February 14 from Nagpur
- The Samantha Express will cover prominent places associated with Gautam Buddha and Dr B R Ambedkar, Chief architect of the Constitution
- The train will cover Chaityabhoomi (Mumbai), Mhow (Indore), Bodhgaya (Gaya), Sarnath (Varanasi), Lumbini (Nautanwa), Kushinagar (Gorakhpur) and Deekshabhoomi (Nagpur)

**World's second-largest steel producing country - India**

- India - replaces Japan as the world's second-largest steel producing country, after China
- As per the latest report of World Steel Association, India's crude steel production in 2018 was at 106.5 MT (million tonne) which is up by 4.9% from 101.5 MT in 2017
- Steel contributes 2% of India's national income.

**GI store**
• Civil Aviation minister, Suresh Prabhu - launched the country’s first Geographical Indication (GI) store at Dabolim International Airport in Goa
• The new store will promote local products made by the artisans and handicrafts at the airport

PM Modi's visit to Andamans: Three islands in Andaman and Nicobar renamed after Netaji Subash Chandra Bose

Renaming of islands

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Island</th>
<th>New Name</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ross Island</td>
<td>Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Island</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neil Island</td>
<td>Shaheed Dweep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Havelock Island</td>
<td>Swaraj Dweep</td>
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Bose had hoisted the flag at Port Blair on December 30, 1943, as he believed that Port Blair was the first territory to be freed from British rule. This was done after the Japanese captured that area during the time of the Second World War.

Five-year national action plan to address issue of drug abuse

The Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has drafted a five-year action plan for addressing the problem of drug and substance abuse in the country, dumping a long-pending draft policy on the matter.

The National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction (NAPDDR), 2018 to 2023, aims to employ a multi-pronged strategy to address the issue of drug abuse. It involves education, de-addiction and rehabilitation of affected individuals and their families.

The key objective of the action plan is to create awareness and educate people about the ill-effects of drugs abuse on the individual, family, workplace and the society at large in order to integrate them back into the society.

Key Highlights

• The action plan mainly focuses on preventive education, awareness generation, counselling, treatment and rehabilitation of drug-
dependent people, besides training and capacity-building of service providers through the collaborative efforts of the Centre, state and NGOs.

- Under it, the Ministry has planned several measures, including coordination with implementing agencies for controlling the sale of sedatives, painkillers and muscle relaxant drugs and checking the online sale of drugs through stringent monitoring by a cyber cell.

- The plan also includes awareness generation through social, print, digital and online media and engagement of celebrities, besides strengthening the national toll-free helpline for drug prevention.

- It also includes holding awareness generation programmes at schools, colleges, universities, workplaces and for police functionaries, paramilitary forces, law enforcement agencies, judicial officers and Bar council among others.

- It also calls for persuading principals, directors, vice chancellors of educational institutions to ensure that no drugs are sold within or anywhere nearby the campus.

- Besides this, increasing community participation and public cooperation in the reduction of demand by involving Panchayati Raj institutions, Urban Local Bodies, Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan and other local groups like Mahila Mandal and self-help groups is also being planned under the plan.

- The plan also includes identification of vulnerable areas based on survey, skill development, vocational training and livelihood support of ex-drug addicts through National Backward Classes Finance and other Development Corporations and continuous research on drug use pattern.

- As a part of the plan, a module for re-treatment, ongoing treatment and post-treatment of addicts of different categories and age groups will be developed and database on substance use will be maintained.

- The ministry, in collaboration with the National Drug Dependence Treatment Centre (NDDTC) under the AIIMS, is also conducting a national survey on the extent and pattern of substance abuse.
Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana (Saubhagya)

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched Rs 16320-Crore ‘Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana’- Saubhagya on September 25, 2017 to mark the birth anniversary of Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya.
- The scheme aims to achieve the goal of universal household electrification in the country by March 31, 2019.
- The East Siang District of Arunachal Pradesh achieved 100 percent electrification under the Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana (Saubhagya Scheme).

Citizenship Amendment Bill, 2016

The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016 was introduced in Lok Sabha on July 19, 2016 to amend the Citizenship Act, 1955. It seeks to make illegal migrants belonging to the same six religions and three countries eligible for citizenship.

Following are three main provisions of the bill:

- The Bill amends the Citizenship Act, 1955 to make illegal migrants from communities such as Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan who entered India before December 31, eligible for Indian citizenship.
- Under the Act, one of the requirements for citizenship by naturalisation is that the applicant must have resided in India during the last 12 months, and for 11 of the previous 14 years. The Bill relaxes this 11-year requirement to six years for persons belonging to the same six religions and three countries.
- The Bill provides that the registration of Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) cardholders may be cancelled if they violate any law.

Key Issues and Analysis

- The Bill makes illegal migrants eligible for citizenship on the basis of religion. This may violate Article 14 of the Constitution which guarantees right to equality.
• The Bill allows cancellation of OCI registration for violation of any law. This is a wide ground that may cover a range of violations, including minor offences (eg. parking in a no parking zone).

‘Womaniya on Government e Marketplace’ initiative

The Union Government on January 14, 2019 launched the ‘Womaniya on Government e Marketplace (GeM)’, an initiative to enable women entrepreneurs and Women Self-Help Groups (WSHGs) to sell handicrafts, handloom, accessories, and other products directly to Government departments and institutions.

The Womaniya on GeM initiative aims to develop women entrepreneurship on the margins of society to achieve gender-inclusive economic growth.

PM Narendra Modi conferred with first-ever Philip Kotler Presidential Award

• The Award focuses on the triple bottom-line of ‘People, Profit and Planet’. The award will be offered annually to the leader of a Nation.
• As per the award citation, the Prime Minister has been selected for his outstanding leadership for the nation. It is under his leadership that India is now identified as the Centre for Innovation and Value Added Manufacturing (through Make in India initiative).

INTERNATIONAL

World Capital of Architecture for 2020

• UNESCO - has named the Brazilian city of Rio de Janeiro as the World Capital of Architecture for 2020
• Rio will be the first city to receive the title under a programme launched together by UNESCO and the International Union of Architects (UIA) in November 2018

First Hindu woman civil judge in Pakistan
• Suman Kumari - has become the first Hindu woman civil judge in Pakistan. Suman, who hails from Qambar-Shahdadkot in Sindh province, will serve in her native district.

• The first Hindu judge was Justice Rana Bhagwandas, who served as the acting chief justice of Pakistan for brief periods between 2005 and 2007.

• Hindu woman, Mahesh Kumar Malani became the first non-Muslim to be elected on a general seat in the National Assembly.

**International Year of the Periodic table of Chemical Elements - 2019**

• UNESCO - has declared 2019 as the ‘International Year of the Periodic table of Chemical Elements’ - to commemorate the 150th birthday of the periodic table of Chemical Elements on January 29, 2019 at its headquarters in Paris.

• Russian scientist Dmitry Mendeleev first published the Periodic table of 65 Chemical elements in the year 1869.

• Today, the Modern Periodic table consists of 118 known elements, with significant contributions from notable scientists like Lord Rayleigh and Antoine-Laurent de Lavoisier.

**COMMITTEES**

**Lokpal Search Committee**

• The Lokpal Search Committee headed by former Supreme Court judge, Ranjana Prakash Desai - held its first meeting to discuss the modalities related to the appointments of the chief and members of Lokpal.

• The Supreme Court has set a February-end deadline for the search committee to send a panel of names who could be considered for the appointment as chairman and members of Lokpal by Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led selection committee.

• Upon the recommendation of the selection committee, President has nominated Mukul Rohatgi, former Attorney General of India as ‘eminent jurist’ member of the panel against the vacancy arising following the death of senior advocate, P P Rao.

• The Lokpal Act - envisages establishment of the anti-graft body Lokpal at the Centre and Lokayuktas in states to look into cases of corruption against certain categories of public servants.

• It was passed in 2013.
Lokpal members Selection committee

- Prime Minister – Head
- Speaker of Lok Sabha
- Leader of opposition in Lok Sabha
- Chief Justice of India or a sitting Supreme Court judge nominated by CJI
- An Eminent jurist to be nominated by President of India on basis of recommendations of the first four members of the selection committee through consensus

Sushil Modi committee - GST revenue shortfall faced by states

CONFERENCES & SUMMITS

World Economic Forum

- World Economic Forum (WEF) 2019 - begins in Davos, Switzerland on January 22, 2019
- Theme 2019 - 'Globalisation 4.0: Shaping a Global Architecture in the Age of the Fourth Industrial Revolution'

2nd World Orange Festival - Nagpur

South India MSME Summit-2019 - Bengaluru

DEFENCE

Sea Vigil

- The Indian Navy - commenced its largest-ever coastal defence exercise - 'Sea Vigil' - off the Indian coast on January 22, 2019
- It aims to activate the coastal security mechanism across all states and union territories
- The exercise is a build-up towards the major theatre level tri-service exercise ‘TROPEX’ (Theatre-level Readiness Operational Exercise) which Indian Navy conducts once every two years
Phalcon AWACS aircraft

- India - to buy 2 more “Phalcon” airborne warning and control system (AWACS) aircraft from Israel
- Apart from this, the armed forces are also looking to induct additional “Heron” surveillance and armed drones as well as “Harop” killer unmanned aerial vehicles, which act as cruise missiles by exploding into enemy radars and other targets

**SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT**

Humanoid – robot

- Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) - to use a humanoid — robot resembling a human — for conducting experiments in space twice - before actually sending humans by 2022

Space technology incubation centre at NIT, Trichy

- Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) - is likely to establish a space technology incubation centre at the National Institute of Technology (NIT), Trichy
- Once established, NIT-T will be one of the six institutions in the country to have such facility
- ISRO plans to institute 6 ISRO Research Chairs, one each in the six geographically distributed zones of India — North, South, East, West, Central India and North East regions of the country
- On January 17, a Space Technology Incubation Centre was launched at NIT, Jalandhar
- Earlier, the incubation centres were inaugurated at NIT, Agartala and at Jammu and Kashmir in 2018

ISRO launches UNNATI

- Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) - launches UNNATI, a capacity-building programme on nanosatellite development, in Bengaluru on January 17, 2019
- UNNATI is an acronym for Unispace Nano satellite Assembly and Training programme
- It was launched by ISRO as part of initiative by United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs
• The UNNATI scheme was first announced by ISRO chairman K Sivan in Vienna on June 18, 2018, at a symposium to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the first United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE+50)
• The first batch of this 2-month training programme was launched with 30 participants from 17 countries
• The UNNATI programme will be conducted for three years by the U.R. Rao Satellite Centre of ISRO

**PSLV C-44**

• Kalamsat - to become the first satellite that will be “powered” by a PSLV rocket for various tests
• It is the world’s smallest satellite built by a student start-up
• ISRO Plans to launch PSLV C44 rocket from Sriharikota on January 24
• After the launch, ISRO will become the first space agency in the world whose rocket will not only act as a satellite launcher but also provides a platform for space experiments
• PSLVC44 is a new variant of PSLV whose last stage PS-4, which usually becomes dead after releasing the primary satellite, will remain active for 6 months
• This rocket will carry Kalamsat and Microsat-R (Imaging satellite) belonging to defence research and development organization (DRDO)
• This will be the 46th flight of PSLV
• The 45th flight of PSLV-C43 had successfully launched 31 satellites from Sriharikota in November 2018
PERSONALITIES

Satyarup Siddhanta

- Indian mountaineer, Satyarup Siddhanta - became the world’s youngest mountaineer to climb the seven highest peaks and volcanic summits across all continents

AWARDS

Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar 2019

- 8th Battalion of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), located at Ghaziabad, was selected for the inaugural ‘Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar’ for the year 2019 - for its commendable work in Disaster Management.
- The Government - had earlier instituted an annual award titled ‘Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar’ to mark the 122nd birth anniversary of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose.
- The award scheme will recognise the efforts of organisations or individuals who work to alleviate suffering of the affected population in the aftermath of any disaster

SPORTS

KHELO INDIA GAMES

- The second edition of the Khelo India Youth Games concluded in Pune on January 20
- The games are considered as the biggest platform for talent identification among age-group athletes in the country, featuring U-17 and U-21 categories of sportsperson
- Maharashtra won the Overall winners’ trophy with 228 medals

ViratKohli - three ICC Awards

- ViratKohli became the first player to win all three ICC Awards - the Sir Garfield Sobers Trophy for ICC Cricketer of the Year, the ICC Men's Test Player of the Year and the ICC ODI Player of the Year - for his performances in 2018
In addition, the India captain was also named the captain of the ICC Test Team and the ODI Team of 2018
Kohli had also bagged the ODI player of the year award in 2012 and 2017

**Smriti Mandhana - ICC Women’s Cricketer of the Year**

India’s left-handed opener Smriti Mandhana has won the Rachael Heyhoe Flint Award for the ICC Women’s Cricketer of the Year. Mandhana was also adjudged as the ICC Women’s ODI Player of the Year.

Smriti Mandhana has become the second Indian woman player to win an ICC award after fast bowler Jhulan Goswami, who was named the ICC Women’s Player of the Year in 2007.

**Australian Open Tennis Championships**

- Novak Djokovic, World No 1 (Serbia) – wins a record 7th Australian Open Tennis Championships
- In the final played in Melbourne, he defeated World No 2, Rafael Nadal (Spain) in straight sets to win his 3rd slam title in a row Djokovic now has 15 Grand slam wins, just behind Nadal (17) and Roger Federer (20)
- He has more Australia open titles than any male player now, ahead of Federer and Roy Emerson (6)

**India’s Saina Nehwal – wins the Indonesia Masters Badminton Championships**

- She won her 1st BWF title in 2 years after injured opponent, Carolina Marin conceded the final

**G Sathiyan**

- G Sathiyan (from Chennai, Tamil Nadu) – reaches career best ranking of 28 and becomes the highest-ranked Indian men’s table tennis player of all time.
INTERNATIONAL DAY

National Voters Day – January 25

- The day is observed in the country to encourage more young voters taking part in the electoral process
- The observance of the day has been started from January 25, 2011 to mark the Election Commission's foundation day in 1950
- Theme 2019 – ‘No voter to be left behind’

National Girl Child Day – January 24

- Theme 2019 – ‘Empowering Girls for a Brighter Tomorrow’
- The day was established by the Women and Child Development Ministry in 2008

Martyrs Day (Shaheed Diwas or Sarvodaya Day) – January 30

- The observance of the day aims to honour the brave martyrs of India who have sacrificed their lives for the country

World Leprosy Day – January 30

- Leprosy, also known as Hansen’s disease is a highly contagious infection caused by the bacterium, Mycobacterium leprae
- Theme 2019 - ‘Ending discrimination, stigma, and prejudice’

RANKINGS

Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI)

- Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) for 2018 – released by Transparency International, anti-graft watchdog
- India improved its ranking and moved up by 3 places to 78th position with 41 points (below average category) in the list of 180 countries in the world
- India’s neighbouring countries, China is ranked at 87 and Pakistan at 117
• The top countries on the list are Denmark and New Zealand, with scores of 88 and 87 respectively
• Somalia, Syria and South Sudan are at the bottom of the list, with scores of 10, 13 and 13 respectively