Tamil Nadu

Tamil Nadu Government – announces ‘Kalaimamani’ awards to 201 artists for years 2011-2018 - on February 28

- Each winning artist will receive a 3 sovereign gold shield and a certificate
- 2018
- Actors: Srikanth, Santhanam, producer A M Rathnam, cinematographer Ravivarman and playback singer Unni Menon, Bharatanatyam dancers Binesh Mahadevan, Latha Rajendran, P. Muralidharan and Niveditha Parthasarathy

Apart from the Kalaimamani awards, the government also announced Bharati award in the field of literature, Bala Saraswathi award in dance and MS Subbulakshmi award in the field of music
Kalaimamani awards are given away by the Tamil Nadu Iyal Isai Nataka Mandram (literature, music and theatre) for excellence in the field of art and literature.

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami - laid the foundation stone to Athikadavu-Avinashi drinking water supply-cum-irrigation scheme at Avinashi on February 28

The project aims to divert the surplus water of Bhavani river to the lakes, ponds and other water bodies in the drought-prone regions of Coimbatore, Tiruppur and Erode districts as a boost to their ground water tables.

The project would be implemented at an estimated cost of Rs 1,652 crores.

A pumping facility will be established at Kalingarayan Anicut to pump around 1.5 tmc of surplus water, as per the project.

In order to avoid flooding and wastage of water due to dams reaching full capacity, the Athikadavu-Avinashi project was proposed in 1957 by the then MLA of the region Marappa Gounder.

Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami has also laid the foundation stone for AMRUT water supply scheme and Smart City works at a cost of Rs 1,875.47 crores in Tirupur on February 28.

Tamil Nadu’s largest state-run blood bank attached to the Rajiv Gandhi government general hospital - goes ‘digital’ with barcode attached forms and test results

Tamil Nadu AIDS Control Society decided to pilot the 3-month study project after the Sattur incident of a pregnant woman transfused with infected blood.

This blood bank collects 35,000 units of blood each year, which is three times the capacity of the second largest bank in Madurai.

Tamil Nadu Government – to provide a seed money of Rs 5 lakh for Start-ups in the state

The state plans to promote 5,000 start-ups along with 10 global start-ups, as per P Benjamin, minister for rural industries, including cottage and small industries.
CII TN State Council has elected S Chandramohan, president & group CFO, TAFE Ltd, as Chairman of for the year 2019-20

✓ K Hari Thiagarajan, executive director, Thiagarajar Mills Pvt Ltd, Madurai has been elected as the vice chairman of CII TN State Council for the year 2019-20

Prime Minister Narendra Modi – flagged off the Tejas Express through videoconferencing in Kanyakumari on March 1, 2019

✓ Tamil Nadu CM Edappadi K Palaniswami and Governor BanwarilalPurohit were present on the occasion
✓ During the occasion, the Prime Minister unveiled several projects for the state worth more than Rs 2,000 crore

Chennai’s 14-year old ‘Mohamed Mikail’ – to race for Honda in the upcoming Thai Talent Cup (NSF250R)

✓ With the selection, he becomes the youngest Indian to compete in an international bike-racing event
✓ Japanese automobile giant Honda has a comprehensive programme for the junior riders and Mikail, who along with KritikHabib, was selected during the talent hunt for the international events

Chennai Metro Rail Ltd (CMRL) - has bagged Kalam Innovation in Governance Award (KIGA) during the third edition of ‘Dr A P J Abdul Kalam Memorial Summit on Innovation in Governance 2019’ conducted by Kalam Centre in New Delhi

✓ The award was presented by NITI Aayog Vice Chairman Rajiv Kumar to CMRL Managing Director Pankaj Kumar Bansal, and CGM Underground Vijay Kumar Singh
✓ Overall, the award recognised CMRL’s initiatives and governance practices that have ability to adapt to future challenges and transform the urban infrastructure
✓ Last year, CMRL received an award from Indian Green Building Council (IGBC) for Egmore underground metro station, which got platinum ratings for adopting green building concept
The headquarters and the maintenance depot of CMRL was also awarded gold rating under Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) and CMRL bagged the SKOCH Order of Merit for its efforts in developing a mass transit system on a par with international standards.

**Prime Minister Narendra Modi** - announced that Chennai Central railway station would be named after AIADMK founder Dr M G Ramachandran on March 6 at a official function in Chennai

- The state cabinet resolved in September last year to recommend that the Centre rename the station after ‘PuratchiThalaivarDr M G Ramachandran’ to mark his birth centenary
- Earlier, the Prime Minister unveiled a statue of MGR at Dr MGR Janaki arts and science college for women through video conferencing
- He also said that the government is considering making it mandatory on flights to make announcements in Tamil

**Erode ‘Manjal’ (Turmeric)** - granted GI tag by the Geographical Indication Registry of India on March 6

- The traditional cultivation methods and the peculiar agro-climatic conditions in Erode and bordering areas of the district make it unique
- The certification has been granted under spices category which falls under Class 30 of the GI classification.
- The Planting season of the turmeric in the districts is June-July and harvesting season is January to March.
- Erode farmers raise only Chinna Nadan variety of the turmeric, while the other variety is PerumNadan
- Erode Turmeric Traders and Godown Owners Association filed the GI tag application 10 years ago

**Tamil Nadu government** - unveiled a new integrated textile policy on March 6

- It seeks to achieve higher and sustainable growth in the textile value chain, from fibre to fashion, with emphasis on balanced regional development.
Major thrust has been given to handloom, power loom, spinning, processing to produce cost effective and high-quality yarn, textiles and apparel to meet the requirements of domestic and export sectors.

As per the policy, the state will offer 10% credit-linked capital investment subsidy for the processing sector, and assistance of 15% capital subsidy will be provided for setting up treatment plants with zero liquid discharge, subject to a maximum of Rs 5 crore.

Processing clusters will be promoted in Ramanathapuram district with financial assistance under the Integrated Processing Development scheme.

The state will also encourage setting up of silk parks in prominent silk clusters Kancheepuram, Salem, Arni and Thirubuvanam.

9% of project cost, subject to a maximum ceiling of Rs 9 crore will be provided as state grant for setting up technical textile parks.

The state also offers additional 10% capital investment subsidy to garmenting units for benchmarked eligible machinery.

The state offers 2% interest subvention for investments on technological upgradation and modernization in existing spinning mills with a vintage period of minimum 15 years on installed machinery.

The Textile industry is the largest economic activity after agriculture in the state, giving direct employment to around 31 lakh people and more than Rs 50,000 crore exports.

Chief minister Edappadi K Palaniswami - launched Amma community radio on March 6 - to propagate government welfare schemes for members of women self-help groups.

The project implemented by TN women’s development corporation focuses on poverty eradication programmes, health and nutrition schemes, which are propagated through self-help group members to the community.

Pugalur - has been named as the 7th taluk in Karur district – with its headquarters at Velayuthampalayam.

Chief minister Edappadi K Palaniswami announced this on March 6.

The new taluk, with 27 revenue villages, has been created merging Thennalai, K Paramathi and Pugalur revenue sub divisions.
Initially, when Karur district was carved out of Trichy district, there were only Kulithalai and Karur taluks.

Chennai Corporation Commissioner and Special Officer Prakash Govindasami – presented the Chennai Corporation’s annual budget on March 4

The Greater Chennai Corporation has pegged a total expenditure of Rs 5,744 crore for the financial year 2019-2020

The Rs 46-crore deficit budget focuses on improving civic infrastructure like stormwater drainage, flyover expansion, remote monitoring systems of street lights, solid waste management and procuring engineering equipment for carrying out these works

Last year, the deficit was estimated at Rs 29 crore against revised income receipts of Rs 5,530 crore and expenditure of Rs 5,706 crore, but the actual deficit turned out to be Rs 176 crore

The Corporation, which currently has around 600 parks in the city, has proposed to add an additional 200 parks at a cost of Rs 53 crore under the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation, Swadesh Darshan scheme and Chennai Rivers Restoration Trust

The civic body has recently got Rs 500 crore from the State government under the Chennai Mega City Development mission and Rs 100 crore under Tamilnadu Road Infrastructure programme, to compensate the Rs 46 crore revenue deficit

Defence Minister Nirmala Seetharaman – launched the Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Mandhan pension scheme in Tamil Nadu on March 5

State Labour Minister Nilofer Kafeel, Fisheries Minister D Jayakumar, Rural Industries Minister P Benjamin, AIADMK MP S R Vijayakumar and State BJP President Tamilisai Soundararajan were present on the occasion

It is a pension scheme for workers in the unorganized sector who include street vendors, rickshaw pullers, construction, domestic, agricultural, beedi, leather and handloom workers, rag pickers, and those engaged in other 150 occupations and whose monthly income is less than Rs 15,000
M S JafferSait – has been appointed as the new Chief of Crime Branch Criminal Investigation Division (CB-CID)

✔ The CB-CID police chief’s post has been upgraded as DGP while the director of TNPA in Oonamancherry has been downgraded to ADGP

Dr N Kalaiselvi, a scientist from Tamil Nadu - has become the first woman director of CSIR-CECRI (Central Electrochemical Research Institute) at Karaikudi

✔ She joined the institute as an entry-level scientist in the advanced batteries division and rose through the ranks

Vellore Institute of Technology’s (VIT) 3 streams – were included in the prestigious Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings by Subject 2019

✔ Computer science and information system, electrical and electronic engineering and chemistry were ranked within the top 550 universities of the world.
✔ While the two engineering subjects were ranked within the top 500 list, chemistry emerged in the top 550

Indian Institute of Technology-Madras – to represent the country in SpaceX this July - through its innovative design ‘Hyperloop pod’

✔ IIT-M becomes the only team to represent India in the finals at the International Hyperloop Pod Competition organised by SpaceX in Los Angeles, US
✔ Hyperloop system, a concept promoted by Elon Musk of SpaceX, uses magnetic levitation to float above a track in a low-pressure tube
✔ Globally, research is under way to achieve a supersonic speed of more than 1,200kmph.
✔ The country’s first hyperloop project — where passenger pods moving at 600kmph can reach Pune from Mumbai in a matter of 20 minutes — is under construction in Maharashtra
• **VIT vice-president, G V Selvam** – appointed as one of the member of the advisory board of ‘Tamil Nadu Sports Development Authority’

• **Chennai City’s Police constable, A Purushothaman** – bagged silver medal at the All-India police duty meet held in Rajasthan
  
  ✓ The Chennai city police team bagged the overall championship in the meet
  ✓ Purushothaman was posted at the Adyar traffic enforcement wing, after he won the Mr Tamil Nadu title in 2018

• **Lokayukta Search panel, headed by retired Madras high court judge K Venkataraman** – submits list of members and chairpersons to Government on March 5
  
  ✓ Now the selection committee, comprising of the Chief Minister, speaker of the assembly and the leader of opposition, has to finalise the composition of anti-corruption watchdog in the state
  ✓ A total of 15 names in the ratio of 1:3 for 5 positions have been recommended in the list
  ✓ 3 former judges have been suggested for the post of chairperson

• **Senior Anna University professor S. Thamarai Selvi** – has been appointed Vice Chancellor of the Vellore-based Thiruvalluvar University by Governor Banwarilal Purohit
  
  ✓ She will be in charge for a period of 3 years

• **Newly –extended Antyodaya Express** – flagged off from Nagercoil on March 5 - by Pon Radhakrishnan, Union Minister of state for finance and shipping
  
  ✓ Train Number 16191 / 16192 Tambaram – Tirunelveli – Tambaram Antyodaya Express, with 16 coaches of general second class, has been extended to Nagercoil with effect from March 5
  ✓ Antyodaya Express is a fully unreserved train service operated on routes with dense traffic.
  ✓ It covers important places such as Mayiladuthurai, Thanjavur, Tiruchi, Dindigul and Madurai.
Seven teams from SSN Institutions, Chennai – won at the national-level ‘Smart India Hackathon 2019’, a digital product building contest – held in 48 centres across the country on March 2 and 3

✓ A team named ‘Wonder Bees’ led by T Malavika from Computer science department in SSN won the top prize for an application developed to convert text into speech for Indian regional languages
✓ Over 2 lakh technical students participated in the event

Tamil Nadu Medical counseling – to go ‘online’ from the 2019-20 academic year

✓ The ‘online’ facility will be available for the counselling to the postgraduate and undergraduate medical courses, including choice selection and seat allotment
✓ Online counselling is being offered by the Directorate General of Health Services in Delhi for allotment of seats in government colleges across the country under the all India quota and for central and deemed universities

New textbooks for state board students of four Classes -II, VII, X and XII - will be available from April 2019

✓ The State Council for Educational Research and Technology (SCERT) is the nodal agency responsible for preparing new textbooks based on the revised syllabus

Tamil Nadu – to unveil its ‘Electric vehicle policy’ soon

✓ The new policy is expected to bring in a change in the development regulations of installing charging points in buildings and public charging stations (PCS)
✓ Hyundai, a private automobile manufacturer, is planning to launch their electric vehicle in the state soon
✓ The Government is holding talks with a UK delegation to explore potential areas of partnership (including fleet transition programmes, vehicle to grid system, pilots and charging infrastructure development in three cities) with Tamil Nadu on e-mobility.
✓ The Government plans to buy 2,000 new electric buses with German assistance.
✓ In the first phase, 500 of them will be operated in Chennai, Coimbatore and Madurai.
✓ Government has already signed a ‘Clean Bus Declaration’ with C40 Cities, a climate leadership group for the e-buses

♦ IIT, Madras – enters into agreement with Teertha, a private technology firm – to produce ‘drinking’ water from air

♦ Chennai-based developer ArunExcello - has bagged the ‘National Winner PMAY – Empowering India Awards 2019’

✓ The award recognizes their contribution towards developing affordable housing for the economically weaker section and low income group
✓ Union minister of state for housing and urban affairs Hardeep Singh Puri presented the award to the MD of the company, P Suresh, in Delhi recently

♦ Chennai – may get its 2nd airport in Mamandur, 80km south of city soon

✓ The developer Gigi George, who is a realtor in KGS Developers, said the Airports Authority of India (AAI) has cleared the site in Mamandur after inspection
✓ The Greenfield airport is set to come up on 3,500 acres at an investment of Rs 4,500 crore

♦ Metropolitan Transport Corporation (MTC) – rolls out new rules to boost operational safety

✓ As per the new guidelines, the maximum speed limit for MTC buses is capped at 55 km/hr
✓ The MTC drivers are instructed not to overtake same category of buses
✓ The orders dated February 25 and issued by the State’s transport secretary, Thiru J Radhakrishnan, recommends transfer of drivers involved in fatal accidents
The new action plan also suggests to form teams at 3 levels – branch, regional and corporation – to increase revenues and reduce the spending.

**Chennai-based National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT) – develops new ‘technology’ to use coolant water discharge from thermal power plants to produce fresh water**

- It is planning to implement the project at Thoothukudi Thermal Power Station (TTPC) at a cost of Rs 40 crore.
- Before this, an experimental plant generating 2-3 lakh litres per day was demonstrated at North Chennai Thermal Plant.

**Greater Chennai Corporation - to replicate the ‘TN mega streets programme’ to make its streets smarter**

- The programme aims to redesign 500km of roads across ten corporations (Coimbatore, Thanjavur, Trichy, Madurai, Tirupur, Salem, Vellore, Erode, Thoothukudi and Tirunelveli) in the state.

**The Higher Education Department - to convert 14 of the 41 constituent colleges of State-run universities into government arts and science colleges**

- The move was based on the announcement made by Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami in the Assembly under Rule 110 at an estimated cost of Rs 152.20 crore in June 2018.
- The 14 colleges include four of Bharathidasan University, two each of Madurai Kamaraj University, Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Bharathiar University, and Tiruvalluvar University, and one college each of Tiruvalluvar University and Mother Teresa Women’s University.

**Tamil Nadu – to get 4 new Kendriya Vidyalayas – after a gap of 4 years**

- Overall, there are 42 KVs in the state with more than 64,000 students on the rolls.
- Chennai has 14 KVs and does not feature in the new list.
Tamil Nadu Health Department – issues order on the recommendations of the 7-member committee set up on the directive of Madras High Court

✓ As per the new order, doctors in government service will be given up to 30% above their NEET scores as incentive for admission to postgraduate medical courses each year
✓ The doctors are divided into four categories based on their workplace viz Hilly regions, difficult areas in the plains, remote and rural areas

‘Mother Sago’ – A new scheme through which Sago (Javvarasi in Tamil) will be distributed by the Government through the Public distribution system (PDS) outlets soon

✓ The scheme will be implemented through 30,000 ration shops in the state, benefitting around 2.01 crore card holders

The Tamil Nadu Government – has declared that its employees can receive up to Rs 25,000 as gifts, with prior permission from higher officials

✓ The earlier limit for the gifts was Rs 5,000
✓ The Government has also clarified that the total of such gifts should not exceed Rs 10 lakhs or 6 months gross emoluments of the official
✓ The Government has also announced that employees can also avail an interest-free loan of up to Rs 5 lakh from their friends or relatives for constructing or buying houses

14 Underground metro stations in Chennai – awarded Indian Green Building Council (IGBC) Platinum rating

✓ With this, all 32 metro stations of phase-I have been awarded the IGBC platinum rating
✓ The platinum rating is a certification awarded for adopting green and user-friendly measures in a public facility
Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami – laid the foundation stone for a new barrage across the Kollidam river on March 5

- It will be constructed across the river connecting Kumaramangalam village in Nagapattinam district and Athanur village in Cuddalore district
- The proposal to construct the barrage was announced by the Late chief minister J Jayalalithaa under rule 110 in the assembly on August 4, 2014
- The Rs 428-crore barrage will be helpful to supply water to irrigate 37,000 acres of ayacuts of Thanjavur, Nagapattinam and Cuddalore districts
- The construction of the barrage is expected to be completed within two years

Union Minister Nitin Gadkari – launched the ‘Special Purpose vehicle’ (SPV) for establishing the Integrated Container transshipment terminal (ICTT) at Kanyakumari on March 4

- The project, estimated at Rs 21,757 crore, will develop the port between Kovalam and KeelaManakudi village near Kanyakumari in three phases

Engineering and construction major, Larsen and Toubro (L&T) – to execute the Athikadavu-Avinashi drinking water supply and ground water recharge scheme

- It is scheduled to be completed within 34 months
- The Rs 1,652 crore scheme will be the first lift-irrigation project in the state
- The scheme will be beneficial to the farmers in drought-prone areas of Coimbatore, Tirupur and Erode districts
✓ The scheme will benefit 9,902 hectares of farm lands, besides recharging the ground water in the region

.writeObject

✓ Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami – launched civil registration website ‘www.crstn.org’ – to download birth/death certificates ‘free-of-cost’ online within 21 days

✓ With the launch, Tamil Nadu becomes the first state to launch the facility on March 4

.writeObject

✓ Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami – launched the enhancement of the ‘Muthulakshmi Reddy Maternal benefit’ scheme to boost blood haemoglobin levels in pregnant women and get rid of anaemia

✓ A basket containing protein shakes, iron and zinc syrups, dates and ghee will be given to pregnant women living below the poverty line at the end of the first trimester

✓ In February 2017, the Chief Minister had enhanced the monetary benefit under the scheme from Rs 12,000 to Rs 18,000

.writeObject

✓ Metrowater – to set up greywater recycling plants in Perungudi and Nesappakkam within a year – to improve the water quality before releasing it back to the water bodies

✓ It is also planning to set up treatment plants near Retteri, Perumbakkam and Ayanambakkam lakes

✓ Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami laid the foundation stone for these projects on March 10

.writeObject

✓ Tamil Nadu – recorded the maximum decline in road deaths in 2018

✓ The state had 3,941 fatalities lesser in 2018 than 2017, recording about 25% decline
✓ It had recorded 15,563 deaths in 2013, which dropped to 12,216 last year

◆ Chola-era ‘Thirubuvanam Silk’ sarees – granted GI tag

◆ Tamil Nadu – is ranked at 5th place among various states in attracting FDI (foreign direct investment) inflows into the country, as per the data released by DIPP (Department for promotion of industry and internal trade)

✓ The New Delhi region, comprising of the national capital and parts of Uttar Pradesh and Haryana, is ranked at 1st position during the first 9 months of FY 2018-19 (April to December)
✓ Maharashtra along with Diu & Daman, Haveli is ranked at 2nd position followed by Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh
✓ Gujarat is ranked at 6th position

◆ Valparai – to get a botanical garden and a boathouse soon

✓ Municipal administration minister S P Velumani recently laid the foundation stone for the two projects at an event in Valparai on March 3
✓ The botanical garden would come up at a cost of Rs 5 crore on a 4.25 acre site and the boathouse at a cost of Rs 2 crore in the ChinnakkallarNirar Dam

◆ Registration department of Tamil Nadu Government – earns a record Rs 10,000 crore within 11 months, the highest revenue generated ever through registration of land across the state

✓ Chennai zone contributed 42% of the total revenue, mostly due to the regularization of unapproved plots scheme of the Government
✓ As per the Government records, property registrations recorded a revenue of Rs 9,907 crore between April 2018 and February 2019 through the registration of around 23.10 lakh documents
✓ While the number of documents registered was up by 15% compared to the previous 11-month period, April 2017 and February 2018, the revenue jumped by nearly 22%
✓ The Government had earned Rs 9,121 crore in the last fiscal year due to property registrations
STAR 2.0 (Simplified and Transparent administration of registration), an information technology-enabled service was launched last year for the online registration of all property transactions.

Tamil Nadu State Information Commission (TNSIC) – has issued recommendations to the Government to ensure greater transparency in the functioning of Government.

According to the report, the state should implement a system where Right to Information (RTI) petitions can be filed online, similar to the process adopted by the Central Government and few other states. Currently, the state implements a ‘manual’ process where one has to get a court fee stamp or demand draft and mail the hard copy to the Government agency, whereas the RTI’s with the central government agencies can be filed through ‘rtionline.gov.in’ website, along with the ‘online’ payment of the fee. The commission has also noted that the state government has not yet framed rules for the RTI act.

It had asked the government to nominate a nodal officer in every department to update information on its website under section 4(1)(b) of the RTI Act. It had directed the TNPSC to publish all the policies and norms in place for publishing exam results under section 4(1)(b)(v) of the RTI Act. Universities and colleges were directed to publish details about the grants received from UGC under section 4(1)(b) of the Act on their website. It had also recommended that students have a fundamental right to access their answer books under the RTI. The commission had also recommended displaying the prescribed period of retention of records by each government department on their website.

Chennai Metro Rail Limited – has launched a ‘Monthly pass’ scheme for passengers to take multiple rides in a day.

Passengers will have to pay Rs 2,500 with an additional refundable fee of Rs 50 purchase the ‘tourist card’ for a month.
At present, CMRL offers a tourist card of Rs 100+Rs 50 as refundable fee that allows unlimited rides only for a single day
Currently, metro service has an average ridership of 90,000 per day

Planys Technologies, an IIT madras incubated startup – develops ‘Mikros’, an underwater Remotely operated vehicle (ROV) for Oil & Gas industries

The indigenous ROV can navigate through narrow areas like pipelines under extreme sea conditions that are difficult for commercial divers to reach
It will be useful for scanning shipwrecks and underwater inspections for the process industries like desal plants, nuclear plants, petrochemical refineries without shutting down the plant
The vehicle was developed under the Bharat Petroleum corporation Ltd’s startup scheme project ‘Ankur’
Built on a sturdy aluminium frame, the 39 kg weighing Mikros can perform specific tasks under rough sea conditions
This is the third underwater vehicle developed by the IIT-M startup, with one of its earlier versions used in the rescue operations at the mining accident in Meghalaya last year
The new ROV can travel nearly one kilometer distance from the ship it is deployed and up to a depth of 120 m.

Chennai’s 13-year old, AR Rahman-mentored musical prodigy ‘Lydian Nadhaswaram’ – wins $1 million CBS American reality show ‘The World's Best’

The show, hosted by James Corden, had Faith Hill, RuPaul Charles and Drew Barrymore as the frontline judges and 50 other judges to help them decide the winner
Nadhaswaram played two piano medleys in the finals and scored 84 points
The runners-up were South Korea’s Kukkiwon group, better known as the Flying Taekwondo Masters, who scored 63 points.
Earlier on the show, Nadhaswaram had stunned everyone by playing Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov’s ‘The Flight of the Bumblebee’ at unimaginably high speeds.
The young prodigy also made his debut on ‘The Ellen DeGeneres Show’, where Lydian stuns the audience by playing the piano blindfolded with his rendition of Mozart’s ‘Turkish March’.

During his chat with DeGenerers, the host of the show, Nadhaswaram said he could play two pianos at the same time – and different tunes at that.

Lydian is also a student of the Chennai-based KM Music Conservatory, run by AR Rahman.

**Tamil Nadu Government – orders the Police department to create a ‘special unit’ to tackle crime against Women and Children**

- The special unit will act as an ‘umbrella’ in law enforcement, bringing several units under one roof for effective crackdown.
- The unit will be led by an additional director general of police (ADGP).
- It will work in coordination with all women police stations, anti-human trafficking units, investigative units of crime against women (IUCAW), special juvenile police units, child welfare police unit and anti-child trafficking units.
- The unit will also focus on developing a database of organized criminal gangs, including human traffickers, and liaison with other police units dealing with the specific crime type.
- Crime against children including child-lifting, child abuse, child labour and issues relating to juvenile delinquents, rehabilitation of destitute and missing children will also come under the purview of the team.
- The unit was set up as per the direction issued by the Supreme Court in 2018.
- It will have a senior officer in the rank of director general of police or equivalent rank constitute a special task force (STF) to investigate and track the cases booked under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (Pocso) Act.
- Following the SC orders, the Madras high court had ordered that a STF be formed in each district of the state, headed by an additional superintendent of police (Addl SP).

**The VO Chidambaranar (VOC) Port in Tuticorin – sets a new record of container traffic handled during the current financial year 2018-19**
It had handled 7.03 lakh TEUs (twenty-foot equivalent unit) with a growth of 6.46% over the previous FY’s container traffic of 6.97 lakh TEUs
With the new record, the port will reach third position in container handling among the 12 major ports in the country

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

It is also the only cruise with a planetarium
It had 1,255 crew members and 2,528 passengers on board, mostly from US, UK, Australia, Germany, Canada and New Zealand
The ship will sail to Kochi from Chennai

Chennai-based National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT) – to develop the country’s first manned submersible by 2022

It will be developed as part of the ambitious Deep Ocean Mission
ISRO will help design and build the crew module for the submersible
Scientists have chosen Titanium for building the submersible as it has high strength, tough, low density and good corrosion resistance properties

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

Chinese smartphone maker, Xiaomi – launches its new manufacturing plant in Tamil Nadu in partnership with Flex Ltd

This plant has been opened in Sriperumbudur, which is home to many automotive manufacturing facilities and as well as Nokia’s now-defunct smartphone manufacturing unit.
It is the company’s 7th plant in the country, spread across 4 campuses in partnership with Foxconn, Flex and Hipad
With the new plant, Xiaomi now has a combined manufacturing capacity of up to 3 smartphones per second during operating hours
Tamil Nadu Government – had instructed government-funded schools to begin the admission process from April 1 for the next academic year

✔ Usually, the admissions for the government schools begin only on June 1 and by then, the private schools would have finished their admission process
✔ To overcome this discrepancy, the revised admission procedure is notified to all district-level officials
✔ The state had recently launched Montessori-based Kindergarten classes in 2,381 government middle schools with Anganwadi centres

Tamil Nadu Government – declares 17 districts and 38 blocks in 7 other districts – as drought hit

✔ These districts have recorded a rainfall between 19% and 59% last year
✔ The 17 affected districts are Chennai, Karur, Salem, Vellore, Trichy, Perambalur, Tiruvallur, Namakkal, Virudhunagar, Kancheepuram, Madurai, Dindigul, Erode, Pudukottai and Sivaganga
✔ 38 blocks in 7 other districts, including Thanjavur, Villupuram, Tiruvannamalai, Ariyalur, Nagapattinam, Cuddalore and Ramanathapuram had an annual rainfall deficiency, even though the north east monsoon was normal last year
✔ Dharmapuri tops the list in water shortage followed by Krishnagiri and Chennai
✔ The declaration of drought is a pre-requisite for Central and state governments to provide relief for the affected including waiver of crop loan in cooperative banks
✔ Chief Minister had sanctioned Rs 158 crore to Metro Water and Twad to tackle the summer water crisis in January

IIT, Madras – sets up country’s first solar-powered desalination plant near Vivekananda Memorial at Kanyakumari

✔ It has a capacity to generate 10,000 litres of freshwater per day
✔ The Ministry of earth sciences has funded the Rs 1.22 crore experimental project
✔ The surface sea water is pumped in and converted into heat by a collector, trapping sun’s radiation
This is used to heat sea water to around 37 degree Celsius to 70 degree Celsius and above.

The hot water is pushed into a flash chamber under vacuum and around 1% turned into vapour.

The vapour is sent to a condenser and cooled with sea surface water to generate fresh water.

The sun’s energy is used to heat water and generate power through photovoltaic panels to operate the plant.

The plant needs about 15kv power a day to function.

Since it is completely solar powered, it can be operated only during the day between 9am to 4pm.

The freshwater generated has only 2ppm of dissolved salts. However, for drinking, WHO recommends water with 500ppm. Hence, this water is mixed with local municipal water for consumption.

**Tamil Nadu Government - puts on hold the Rs 2000 ‘special cash assistance’ scheme for 60 lakh poor families due to the kicking in of Model code of conduct in the state**

The Government had earlier announced on February 13 that a one-time financial assistance would be given to poor households in both rural and urban areas, including agricultural workers and families of poor laborers of various trades.

**Tamil Nadu Government - had relaxed norms on minimum ‘Open Space Reservation’ (OSR) land to be handed over to local authorities to obtain approvals for layouts and building plans**

OSR land is reserved for developing parks, playgrounds or recreational facilities for public use.

The new rules under ‘TN Combined Building Rules 2019’ were notified through a Government order by the state Municipal Administration and Water Supply department in February.

**Chennai Port - handles record number of containers – 10 days ahead in the current financial year ending March 31**
It had surpassed its own record in container handling by crossing 1,566,346 twenty-foot equivalent (TEUs) on March 21 against 1,565,130 TEUs handled from April 1, 2015 to March 31, 2016.

Tamil Nadu – to launch its first 24 x 7 educational TV channel from the next academic year

The channel will telecast 17 types of programmes highlights achievements of government schools, regular classes by teachers on the new syllabus and NEET training.

The channel will have its head office on the Anna Centenary Library premises in Kotturpuram, built at a cost of Rs 1 crore.

The first programme to be broadcast at 5am is likely to be ‘Kuralin Kural’, in which experts will take 1-2 Thirukural couplets every day and explain the meaning in detail with stories.

Ashok Leyland’s corporate office in Chennai - has received the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design rating system (LEED v4.1) award, instituted by the US Green Building Council.

With the prestigious honour, it becomes the first in the country and fourth in the world to receive a platinum certification award.

For the first time in Chennai, two pedestrian subways - to get CCTV camera surveillance

The subways, one near the US Consulate General office and the other close to Thousand Lights, are each getting a makeover at ₹1.2 crore budget.

Two cameras will be installed at the entry and exit points of the subways.

The state highways department maintains 13 pedestrian subways in Chennai and CCTV cameras will be expanded to all of them soon.

Bharathidasan University – received a funding of Rs 8.5 crore for tracing the history of Poompuhar.

The fund was provided by the department of science and technology (DST).
The university’s Department of remote sensing will be the lead agency to carry out the inter-disciplinary research to trace out the life history of the ancient port city.

The study will be done in association with other universities including AMET University, National Institute of Ocean Technology, Chennai and Gandhigram Rural University, Dindigul.

The port city, also known as Kaveripoompattinam, was established by the Chola dynasty at the mouth of river Cauvery during the Tamil Sangam era (300 BC – AD 300)

It had trade links with Asian, Arabian and Mediterranean countries

The city had elaborate narrations in Sangam and post-Sangam literature like Silappathigaram and Manimegalai

It became suddenly defunct during AD 1100

**Election Commission - has appointed 40 general observers for 39 Lok Sabha constituencies in Tamil Nadu, with 2 observers for Tuticorin segment**

It had also appointed 79 Expenditure observers for 39 constituencies, at 2 per constituency for 38 assembly segments and 3 especially for Chennai Central constituency

Retired IRS officer, MadhuMahajan has been appointed as the special observer for expenditure

**Tamil Nadu Police - to set up an exclusive ‘Investigation wing’ in all the 1,500 police stations across the state**

The specially formed wing will replace the existing ‘Crime’ wing

As per the Tamil Nadu Police (Reforms) Act, 2013, the ‘investigation wing’ will be responsible for investigation and prosecution of all cases registered in the station, including cases detected by Law and order wing

The Delhi Police has initiated such a pilot project to bifurcate investigation and law and order in January this year and now it has been extended to all the states

The department also proposed to assign a Police head constable in all the police stations as ‘Missing persons liaison officer’ to coordinate efforts for tracing missing people in their jurisdiction
Anna University – created a new world record for hovering an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) for the longest duration of six hours, seven minutes and 45 seconds

 ✓ The record was declared by Federation Aéronautique International (FAI), the body governing air sports’ across the world
 ✓ The attempt was made in last July by a UAV developed by the Centre for Aerospace Research at Madras Institute of Technology functioning under Anna University

R Jai Jaswanth, a 10-year-old boy from Theni district - swam across the Palk Strait from Talaimannar in Sri Lanka to Arichalmunai near Dhanushkodi, covering the distance of 32 km in just 10.5 hours

 ✓ With the feat, Jaswanth becomes the youngest to swim across the Palk Strait in the Under-11 year category in the shortest time
 ✓ Indian coast guard officials monitored him once he reached the International Maritime Boundary Line
 ✓ The boy received a a rousing welcome from relatives and officials, including DGP, railway police, Sylendra Babu, when he completed the journey
 ✓ Jaswanth, studying in Class IV, took to swimming only in 2016
 ✓ Recently, Jaswanth won gold at the national open water competition, organised by Swimming Federation of India, in Karnataka in February
 ✓ Kutraleeswaran, who was 12 then, had swam across the Palk Strait in April 1994 in 16 hours

A total of 845 candidates - are contesting in the election for the 39 Lok Sabha constituencies in Tamil Nadu

 ✓ Of them, 779 are men and 65 are women and one is a transgender who is contesting from South Chennai constituency
 ✓ Significantly, during the 2014 Lok Sabha elections too, exactly 845 candidates were in the fray
 ✓ 269 candidates will be in the contest in the by-polls for the 18 Assembly constituencies in the state

Chennai collector A Shanmuga Sundram - appoints 8 ‘Rent authority officers’ in the rank of deputy collectors for the 16 taluks in the city
(each handling 2 taluks) - to hear disputes between landlords and tenants over domestic and commercial properties

✔ After the mandatory registration of rental or lease agreements, the parties can upload copies of the documents on the online portal set up under the Tamil Nadu Regulations of Rights and Responsibilities of Landlords and Tenants Act 2017
✔ The act came into force on February 22 when the state government notified the rule
✔ The Tamil Nadu Regulations of Rights and Responsibilities of Landlords and Tenants Act, 2019, has replaced the Tamil Nadu Buildings (Lease and Rent Control) Act, 1960, which was popularly known as the Rent Control Act

🔹 State-owned BSNL - launched 4G services in the rural pockets of Kancheepuram, about 80 km south of Chennai on March 30
✔ The move follows almost seven years after private telecom service providers launched 4G services in the country

🔹 Integral Coach Factory (ICF), the rail coach manufacturing factory at Chennai - has become the single largest rail coach manufacturer in the world surpassing top Chinese manufacturers

✔ ICF has set a target to manufacture **3,200** coaches in this financial year **2019**
✔ It had crossed 300 coaches per month mark twice in the last fiscal and stayed bigger than the remaining five coach factory’s of India put together.
✔ The ultra-modern, engine-less ‘**Train 18**’ (renamed as Vande Bharat Express) with self-propelled coaches like metro was indigenously developed at Integral Coach Factory (ICF), Chennai
✔ Indian Railways has placed an order for 44 more Vande Bharat Express train sets with ICF within the next three production years in phases
✔ Integral Coach Factory in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, was established in **1952** and is owned and operated by the Indian Railways.
**STATE**

- Madhya Pradesh - announced a 27% quota for OBCs – taking the total quotas in the state to above 70%
  - The state had also announced the implementation of the 10% reservation for economically backward sections in the general category
  - Currently the state has only 14% reservation for OBCs

- Kerala’s Marayoor jaggery, the traditional and handmade product from Idukki district - has received the Geographical Indication (GI) tag from central government
  - Produced in Marayoor, this jaggery is made from sugarcane and no chemicals are added during the manufacturing process
  - Workers from Onakkallur, a village in Udumalpet in Tamil Nadu, are engaged in the production of the Marayoor jaggery.

- Mizoram – to bring back Prohibition in the state after four years
  - The state cabinet approved the ‘Mizoram Liquor Prohibition Bill, 2019’ to be tabled in the upcoming assembly session

- Government of Karnataka - is planning for cloud seeding project to influence the upcoming monsoon and get maximum rains in the state
  - The government of Karnataka has called the tenders for cloud seeding operations to enhance rainfall during the monsoons of 2019 and 2020
  - The cost is expected to be Rs 50 crores per year
  - Cloud Seeding is a process of spraying ‘chemical agents’ like iodides of silver or potassium, dry ice (solid carbon dioxide), or liquid propane using planes, to induce precipitation rain or snow from clouds
  - Rain occurs when moisture in the air reaches levels at which it can no longer be held
  - Karnataka had undertaken a similar exercise through ‘Project Varshadhare’ in 2017, which was a success as the rainfall increased by 27.9% that year
Karnataka - has launched the water conservation scheme, Jalamrutha

✓ The scheme focuses on drought-proofing measures, including protection and rejuvenation of water bodies
✓ It will be implemented by the Ministry of Rural Development and Panchayat Raj of Karnataka

Assam Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Mukesh Sahu - launched the ‘Enajori’ initiative in Guwahati – to help out Persons with Disability (PwD) voters in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls

✓ It is a joint initiative of CEO Assam and the state’s Social Welfare Department

Telangana government - has launched a digital business networking portal for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises MSMEs – Telangana StateGlobalLinker (ts-msme.globallinker.com)

✓ It will also allow MSMEs to create a digital profile for their business and connect with other global MSMEs

Nizamabad district in Telangana - to vote through Ballot Papers in the Lok Sabha elections 2019

✓ There are 185 candidates in contention at this Lok Sabha seat

For the first time in the country, Uttar Pradesh - is taking a census of Otters in its protected areas

✓ The census has begun in the Pilibhit Tiger Reserve (PTR).
✓ Otters live on fish and spend much of its time in or close to water bodies
✓ A growing or healthy population of otters means the water bodies are pollution-free
✓ India is home to 3 of the 13 species of otters found worldwide, namely Eurasian Otter (Lutra lutra), Smooth-coated Otter (Lutra perspicillata) and Small-clawed Otter (Aonyx cinereus)
West Bengal - has the maximum number of first-time voters, around 20.1 lakh, in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, as per the Election Commission

✓ WB is followed by Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, with around 16.7 lakh and 13.6 lakh first-time voters, respectively.

NATIONAL

The Government – bans Jammu & Kashmir-based Jamaat-e-Islami (JeI) outfit – for its Pro-Pakistan stance

✓ The Centre had declared the outfit as an ‘unlawful association’ under provisions of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 on February 28
✓ The ban will be valid for a period of 5 years
✓ The outfit was earlier banned twice, once in 1975 during emergency and again in 1990 by the V P Singh Government
✓ The ban was lifted in 1993 during the P V Narasimha Rao Government, ever since the outfit was functioning freely

Vande Bharat Express (Train 18) – All related facts

✓ Indian Railways has decided to shift the manufacturing of Train-18 coaches from ICF in Chennai to Modern Coach Factory in Rae Bareli, Uttar Pradesh
✓ Modern Coach Factory came into existence in 2012
✓ The Vande Bharat Express (Train 18) will soon run on 3 routes identified by the Railway Ministry namely, Bengaluru-Mangaluru route, Mangaluru-Hyderabad route and Mangaluru-Chennai route
✓ The high speed train has been manufactured in a record time of 18 months by the Integral Coach Factory (ICF), Chennai under the government's 'Make in India' programme.

The Union Cabinet - recommended an ordinance to allow voluntarily use of Aadhaar for completing eKYC formalities to get a mobile connection or open a bank account
AYUSH Ministe, ShripadYessoNaik - laid the foundation stone for National Institute of Unani Medicine at Ghaziabad in Uttar Pradesh

- The institute, one of the largest in North India, would be developed with an approximate cost of 300 crore rupees on 10 acres of land
- It would cater to the needs of the masses and would have facilities for quality research and education at postgraduate and PhD levels with a 200 bedded hospital

The Union Cabinet - approved the proposal for setting up of ‘Centre for Disability Sports’ at Gwalior in Madhya Pradesh

- It will be set up at an estimated cost of Rs 170.99 crore, spread over a period of 5 year, under Societies Registration Act, 1860
- The proposed centre will ensure effective participation of persons with disabilities in sports activities at national and international levels.

The Government – announces subsidy benefit details for electric vehicles under FAME II scheme

- It had allocated a total of Rs 10,000 crore for subsidies with around Rs 8.596 crore (roughly 80%) to be used exclusively as subsidy to push electric vehicles and the balance amount of Rs 1,300 crore set aside for the charging stations
- Subsidy details for Electric vehicles
  - The biggest chunk of subsidy of Rs 3,545 crore has been earmarked for running of 7,090 electric buses by government transport understandings
  - Shared transport including three-wheelers are allocated Rs 2,500 crore subsidy
  - For 10 lakh two-wheelers, the total subsidy has been fixed at Rs 2,000 crore.
  - Another Rs 525 crore has been kept for four-wheelers “mainly” for cabs, excluding Private electric four-wheelers
  - Rs 26 crore subsidy has been allocated for hybrid cars to pacify the Japanese automobile manufacturers, who have been opposing sops for electric vehicles
- Charging station details
Around nine cities with more than four million population each will get 1,000 charging stations.
Another 44 million-plus cities will get 1,000 and the smart and hilly cities would get another 500 charging stations.
Another 200 charging stations would be set up along the major roads connecting two cities such as Delhi-Gurgaon, Hyderabad-Secunderabad and Mumbai-Navi Mumbai.

The Government - has inaugurated the National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC)

Bihar BJP leader Bhagwan Lal Sahni has been named the chairman of the NCBC.
Kaushalendra Singh Patel (UP), Sudha Yadav (MP) and Achary Talloju (Telangana), all linked to the BJP, would be the members of the commission.
The Constitution (123rd Amendment) Bill to grant the commission ‘constitutional status’ was introduced in Parliament in April 2017 and approved in August 2018 – after repealing the National Commission for Backward Classes Act, 1993.
The new commission is enshrined in the Constitution at par with the panels for SCs and STs, with power to hear grievances.
The earlier commission had a limited mandate of inclusion and exclusion of castes in the national list of OBCs.
The term of the last NCBC chairperson, Justice V Eswaraiah (retd) got over in September 2016, while that of its last member expired by February 2017.

The central government’s Ayushman Bharat scheme - has tied up with app-based cab aggregator Uber - to facilitate free healthcare for its driver and delivery partners

This is the first ever partnership of Ayushman Bharat – Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) with a private firm.
As per the MoU, Common Service Centres (CSCs) will be set up at Partners Seva Kendras across India to facilitate free healthcare for tens of thousands of driver and delivery partners of Uber.
CSC’s Village Level Entrepreneurs (VLEs) at these centres will help verify eligibility and issue e-cards to driver and delivery partners for the Ayushman Bharat Scheme.
Eligible driver and delivery partners will pay only Rs 30 to obtain an Ayushman Bharat card to provide access to the services under the scheme.

The scheme provides Rs 500,000 of healthcare benefits for free secondary and tertiary treatment to each eligible family per year in government and empanelled private hospitals.

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi - approved the ‘Pradhan Mantri JaivIndhan-VatavaranAnukoolfasalawaheshNivaran (JI-VAN) Yojana‘ for providing financial support to the Integrated Bioethanol Projects.

The scheme aims to incentivise2G Ethanol sector for setting up commercial projects and increasing Research & Development in this area.

The Pradhan Mantri JI-VAN Yojana was allocated a financial outlay of Rs 1969.50 crore for the period 2018-19 to 2023-24.

The Centre for High Technology (CHT), a technical body under the aegis of the Union Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, will be the implementation Agency for the scheme.

At present, the EBP is being implemented in 21 States and 4 UTs of the country.

The Union Government - signs $926 million loan agreement with Asian Development Bank (ADB) - to operationalise two lines (of about 58 km) of the Mumbai Metro Rail System.

The approved loan is the single largest infrastructure loan in ADB history approved by its Board.

The project will be implemented by the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) and expected to be completed by the end of 2022.


National Policy on Software Products 2019
The National Policy on Software Products 2019 aims to develop India as the global software product hub through innovation, improved commercialisation, sustainable Intellectual Property (IP), promoting technology startups and specialised skill sets.

It intends to create Indian software products Industry of $70-80 billion with direct and indirect employment of 3.5 million by 2025.

Initially, an outlay of Rs 1500 crore is allocated as Software Product Development Fund (SPDF) and Research & Innovation fund, for a period of 7 years.

National Mineral Policy 2019


Benefits:
- The New National Mineral Policy will ensure more effective regulation. It will lead to sustainable mining sector development in future while addressing the issues of project affected persons especially those residing in tribal areas.

Objective:
- The aim of National Mineral Policy 2019 is to have a more effective, meaningful and implementable policy that brings in further transparency, better regulation and enforcement, balanced social and economic growth as well as sustainable mining practices.

Details:
- The National Mineral Policy 2019 includes provisions which will give boost to mining sector such as
  - introduction of Right of First Refusal for RP/PL holders,
  - encouraging the private sector to take up exploration,
The policy aims to regulate and ensure sustainable mining sector development and practices in the country.

It replaces the National Mineral Policy 2008.

It intends to attract private investment through incentives apart from making efforts to create and maintain a database of mineral resources in the country.

It proposes a long term export import policy for the mineral sector.

It also introduces the concept of Inter-Generational Equity to support the future generations.

It also intends to constitute an inter-ministerial body to institutionalize the mechanism for ensuring sustainable development in mining.

**Indian Railways – to rename ‘Arasalu railway station’ as ‘Malgudi Station’**

The famed railway station, where legendary director-actor Shankar Nag filmed Malgudi Days after the highly popular television series, is located 34 km from Shivamogga town in Karnataka.

The series were based on short stories written by celebrated novelist R K Narayanan.
✓ The Railways is also planning to develop the railway station at an estimated cost of Rs 1.3 crore
✓ Only one train halts at the station nowadays, even though 5 trains pass through it
✓ The station falls under the HG 3 category of railway stations with a daily income of Rs 81,000

♦ The Prayagraj Mela Authority (PMA), the organizer of KumbhMela – bestowed with 3 Guinness World Records during the ongoing KumbhMela event

✓ World Record 1 – ‘Most people sweeping multiple venues at 5 locations’ – More than 10000 Swachhta warriors, with brooms in their hands, swept and cleaned the area around KumbhMela within 3 minutes on March 2
✓ The earlier record was set in Dhaka in April 2018 when 7,021 people swept a single road
✓ World Record 2 – ‘Handprint painting record’ – Around 7,600 people created a ‘handprint painting’ on the theme of ‘Jai Gange’ within 8 hours at the KumbhMela on March 1
✓ Record 3 – ‘Parading largest number of buses in the world’ – Around 503 buses were running across a stretch of 3.2 km on NH 10 during the KumbhMela on February 28
✓ The KumbhMela, which began on January 15 at the Sangam, will conclude on Mahashivratri on March 4
✓ Yogi Adityanath, Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, will officially declare the world’s biggest religious congregation’s conclusion on March 5

♦ India and Brunei – signs agreement for the Exchange of Information and Assistance in Collection with respect to Taxes (TIEA) in New Delhi

✓ The agreement enables exchange of information, including banking and ownership information between the two countries for tax purposes
✓ The agreement was signed by Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) Chairman Pramod Chandra Mody, and High Commissioner of Brunei Darussalam to India Dato Paduka Haji Sidek Ali.
The Union Government – issues the guidelines for development and regulation of retirement homes on March 6

✓ The new guidelines, shared by Union housing and urban affairs minister Hardeep Singh Puri, aims to make the life of senior citizens living in such facilities easier
✓ Mandatory facilities required
  ✓ Lifts with audio visual signage and signalling system
  ✓ 24X7 on-site ambulances with oxygen facility
  ✓ Mandatory medical facility and emergency medical room
  ✓ Tie-up with nearest hospital
  ✓ Gas leak detection mechanism
  ✓ Wash basins with grab rails
  ✓ Outward opening door
  ✓ Anti-skid tiles in bathroom and walking tracks
  ✓ Facility to raise alarm
  ✓ Safe design furniture that are lightweight without sharp edges
  ✓ Wider staircase with handrails on both sides
  ✓ Illuminated or radium strips in staircase
  ✓ Free intercom facility
  ✓ Single digit dialling facility for emergency
✓ The average size recommended for such units is 40 to 60 sq meter in plains for a 1 BHK and 50 to 80 sq meter for a 2 BHK

The government - had doubled the income tax exemption limit for gratuity to Rs 20 lakh - under section 10(10)(iii) of the Income Tax Act

✓ The move will benefit salaried employees, who are retiring, and those who retired in last 12 months
✓ It will benefit all PSU employees and other employees not covered by Payment of Gratuity Act
✓ The Gratuity Act applies to employees working in an organisations that employs 10 or more employees in a year

Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) – notifies modified norms for start-ups - to be effective retrospectively from February 19

✓ As per the new norms, start-ups can seek ‘angel tax’ exemption for investments of up to Rs 25 crore
Earlier, the investment limit for a start-up to seek exemption under Section 56(2) (viib) of Income Tax Act, 1961, was Rs 10 crore and they were permitted to avail the benefits only for 7 years.

Prime Minister – had donated Rs 21 Lakhs of his personal savings - to the corpus of Safaikarmachari (sanitation staff) welfare

Earlier, on receiving the Seoul Peace Prize, he had donated the prize money of Rs 1.3 crore to the NamamiGange project to help clean the Ganga

The Union Cabinet – approves 30 decisions, including several projects on March 7

The cabinet had extended the ‘Ex-servicemen Contributory Health scheme’ (ECHS) to cover around 43,000 World War II veterans, providing cashless health treatment facility

War widows will be exempted to the one-time mandatory contribution to join ECHS

The cabinet also approved the promulgation of ‘The Central Educational Institutions (Reservation in Teachers’ cadre) Ordinance, 2019’ - to treat

The union cabinet has also approved setting up of 50 new Kendriya Vidyalaya sunder Civil and Defense sectors all over the country (including 4 in Tamil Nadu)

Currently, there are over 12,000 KVs across the country and three abroad

Driving licenses and vehicle registration certificates – to have the same look, colour and security features starting October 1, 2019

The Union government - released the ‘India Cooling Action Plan’ (ICAP) on March 8

The Government – clarifies that ‘promotional schemes’ will be eligible for input tax credit in the GST pay outs

Hinduja group flagship, Ashok Leyland - has bagged an order for 1,290 buses from Gujarat State Roadways Transport Corporation
✓ The company has recently got order of 2,580 buses from various state transport undertakings
✓ Ashok Leyland is currently the 4th largest manufacturer of buses in the world and the largest one in India.

The National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA), under the Union Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers - reduces the prices of 390 Anti-Cancer Non-Scheduled Medicines up to 87%

✓ This move is expected to benefit 22 lakh cancer patients in the country and would result in annual savings of around Rs. 800 crores to the consumers

India - dropped to the position of second largest importer of Arms behind Saudi Arabia - as per the latest data on international arms transfer, released by a global think-tank, Sipri (Stockholm international peace research institute)

✓ The country had remained at the top for almost a decade
✓ The continuance of the country at the top of the rankings reinforces the persistent failure to build a strong indigenous defence industrial base, even though the Government is actively pushing the ‘Make in India’ policy in the defence sector
2019 LOK SABHA ELECTIONS

Election Commission of India – announces the Lok Sabha election 2019 schedule on March 10, 2019

✓ Chief Election Commissioner Sunil Arora announced the dates of the national elections and also the assembly elections in four states
✓ With the announcement of date, Model Code of Conduct also came into force across the country
✓ 7 Phases of Polling
✓ Miscellaneous facts
  ✓ The ceiling on election expenditure by a candidate has been fixed at Rs 70 lakh, except for three states, Arunachal Pradesh, Goa and Sikkim, where it is Rs 54 lakh
  ✓ For the first time, the poll panel will introduce candidates’ photos on the voting machines, in addition to the party name and symbol
  ✓ The poll panel has issued a list of 11 documents that would be considered for verification of a voter’s identity — passport, driving licence, service identity cards issued by government, passbook with photograph, PAN card, smart card issued by Registrar General of India, MNREGA job card, health insurance smart card, pension document, identity cards issued to elected representatives and Aadhaar card.
  ✓ While VVPATs have been used in Assembly elections and bypolls, this will be the first time they are used in the general elections
  ✓ Election commission has set up a 3-member committee to avoid inconvenience to the public during seizures made by flying squads and surveillance teams.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi – launched ‘One Nation One Card’ for all modes of travel in Ahmedabad on March 4

✓ ‘National Common Mobility Card’ feature has been incorporated in all new credit and debit cards issued by banks - to enable people use them either in PoS machines deployed at ticket counters or just use them like Metro Rail smart cards to enter the platform
Delhi Metro has started a pilot run of an indigenously designed automatic fare collection counters that can read these cards for seamless entry and exit at stations.

State Bank of India (SBI) – has launched priced ‘doorstep banking’ for senior citizens over 70 years of age – within 5 km radius of select bank branches.

The facility is also extended to differently-abled and infirm customers, including those who are visually impaired.

The services are available against payment of a fee of Rs 100 for financial transactions and Rs 60 for non-financial transactions.

The customers will have to register at their home branch for the service.


Areca nut, known as supari or betel nut – gets its first GI tag for ‘SirsiSupari’.

The Chennai-based Registrar of ‘Geographical Indications’ has decided to grant the GI tag to 'SirsiSupari' areca nuts grown in Sirsi, Yellapur and Siddapura taluks of the Uttara Kannada district.

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) - ordered to ground the Boeing 737 Max 8 aircraft fleet in India with immediate effect on March 12, 2019 midnight, following the Ethiopian Airlines crash.

Vistara Airlines – gets the approval of Government to commence foreign trips.

The Tata group-Singapore airlines JV has become the first private airline to be allowed to fly abroad under recently amended rules.

The Government had changed the 5/20 rule in 2016, which required an airline to complete five years of operations and have 20 planes in its fleet, to 0/20.

At present, Vistara joins Air India, AI Express, Jet, IndiGo, SpiceJet and GoAir to operate foreign services.
Go Air launched these flights only last October
Vistara airlines started flying on January 9, 2015

**India and the United States - to build six American nuclear power plants in India**

- The two nations made the announcement through a joint statement issued at the conclusion of the 9th round of India-US Strategic Security Dialogue, held in Washington DC on March 13, 2019
- The dialogue was co-chaired by Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale, who had led the Indian delegation and Andrea Thompson, the US undersecretary of state for arms control and international security
- India and the US had signed a historic agreement to cooperate in the civil nuclear energy sector in October 2008

**Election Commission - launched a new mobile application “Observer App”, that will help poll observers to submit reports timely**

- It will help them get their deployment status, download their ID card and update their profile
- They will be closely involved in real-time disposal of Model Code of Conduct and expenditure violation cases received through another mobile application “cVIGIL”

**IIT Kharagpur - has signed an MoU with Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC) to set up a 1.3 Petaflop high-performance computing facility and Data center, funded under the National Supercomputing Mission**

- The new supercomputing system will deal in domains such as cryptography, chemistry, molecular dynamics, drug discovery, artificial intelligence and data sciences
- PetaFlop is the measurement of computing power based on the frequency of mathematical calculations that can be done per second
- National Supercomputing Mission was initiated in 2015 at an estimated cost of Rs.4500 crore over a period of seven years
- It is steered jointly by the Department of Science and Technology (DST) and Department of Electronics and Information Technology (DeitY)
The mission aims to install a supercomputing grid in the country with more than 70 high-performance computing facilities

The Union Cabinet headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi - has approved the setting up of ‘National Mission on Transformative Mobility and Battery Storage’

NitiAayog CEO Amitabh Kant will be the head of its steering committee

The mission will recommend the strategies for Phased Manufacturing programmes for electric vehicles and its components and batteries

Facebook - has launched ‘Facebook Hubs’ to encourage innovation and offer support for budding entrepreneurs

Facebook Hubs will provide support for start-up community by hosting mentor hours and conducting trainings, workshops, discussions across 20 locations in Delhi, Gurugram, Noida, Bengaluru, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Pune, Navi Mumbai and in Goa

Facebook has collaborated with 91springboard, an office space rental firm, for a year-long programme to help start-ups

Ministry of HRD – signs MoU with Afghanistan Government at IIT, Madras on several IIT-developed digital education initiatives

The agreement will facilitate use of massive open online courses (MOOCs) available on SWAYAM platform by students and faculties of educational institutions in Afghanistan

Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds (SWAYAM), developed by the Government of India, was launched in 2017

Geographical Indications Registry - granted the Geographical Indication (GI) Tag to Coorg Arabica Coffee, Wayanad Robusta Coffee, Chikmagalur Arabica Coffee, Araku Valley Arabica Coffee and Bababudangiris Arabica Coffee

The Coorg Arabica Coffee is grown exclusively in Kodagu district of Karnataka
✓ The Wayanad Robusta Coffee is characteristic of the Western Ghats and the plantation crop is grown in the cool climate of Wayanad, Kerala
✓ Chikmagalur Arabica Coffee and Bababudangiris Arabica Coffee are grown in Chikmagalur district of Karnataka
✓ The Chikmagalur district is generally referred as the birthplace of coffee in the country
✓ Araku Valley Arabica Coffee is grown around the Visakhapatnam district of Andhra Pradesh and in the Koraput district of Odisha
✓ A Geographical Indication (GI) tag is a name or sign used on products that have a specific geographical origin and possess qualities or a reputation of that origin

♦ Vastradan Campaign - has set the Guinness World Record for the largest collection of clothes for donation

✓ Through the Vastradan Campaign initiated by the erstwhile royal family of Udaipur, over 3,29,250 pieces of clothing from over 76,000 donors were collected and distributed to the poor
✓ The certificate for the Guinness World Record was handed over to Lakshyarat Singh Mewar, a descendant of Rajput ruler Maharana Pratap

♦ Consumer product companies in India - are phasing out the controversial anti-bacterial ‘Triclosan’ from soap and toothpaste products

✓ The US FDA had banned ‘triclosan’ from consumer anti-bacterial soaps and body washes few years ago
✓ Leading dental care company, Colgate-Palmolive (India) has removed ‘triclosan’ from its ‘New Colgate Total’ toothpaste following a global move by the parent company and replaced triclosan with Zinc and arginine
✓ Similarly leading soap maker, Hindustan Unilever has already removed tridlosan from both its soaps/handwashes and toothpaste products
✓ In the 90s, triclosan was the main point for a marketing battle between Colgate and Pepsodent
✓ Now, both the parties have included triclosan with Colgate using it in the mid-priced Colgate Dental Cream just like Pepsodent
Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) – to soon release draft ‘labelling’ regulations for packaged food items

✓ Under the regulations, large ‘red’ labels will be carried if the food is high on fats, sugar or salt or if they fail to meet the specified standards
✓ FSSAI has recently released advertising and packaging regulations.
✓ Advertising regulations will come into effect on July 1 and the packaging norms were already implemented recently

Election commission – revises the model code of conduct on March 16

✓ It restrains the political parties from releasing their manifestos during 48 hours prior to conclusion of polling, called as ‘prohibitory period’
✓ The poll panel has added a new para 4 to the model code with two sub-paras, dealing with the ‘prohibitory period’ in single phase and multi-phase elections

The Central Government – allows the state Governments to put ‘enemy properties’ into public use

✓ For the purpose, it had amended the guidelines for disposal of the ‘Enemy Property Order, 2018’
✓ Enemy properties are the properties of the people who migrated to Pakistan during partition and also to China after the Sino-India war in 1962
✓ It is estimated that there are 9,280 such properties which were left behind by people who went to Pakistan and 126 such properties were left by the Chinese nationals
✓ Out of 9,280 properties left behind by Pakistani nationals, 4,991 are located in Uttar Pradesh, the highest in the country and West Bengal has 2,735 such estates followed by Delhi with 487
✓ Out of 126 properties left behind by Chinese nationals, 57 properties are located in Meghalaya, highest in the country and West Bengal has 29 such properties followed by Assam with seven
✓ The estimated value of all enemy properties is approximately Rs 1 lakh crore
✓ The government had enacted the Enemy Property Act in 1968
✓ It was further amended through the Enemy Property (Amendment and Validation) Act, 2017, wherein successors of those who migrated to Pakistan and China during partition will have no claim over the properties left behind in India

Ministry of Power - has announced that two more electrical appliances, ‘microwave ovens and washing machines’ will now be assigned star ratings based on their energy efficiency metrics

✓ The programme of star rating of Microwave Ovens and Washing Machines will be implemented on a voluntary basis and will be valid up to December 31, 2020
✓ The rating of appliances in India is undertaken by the Bureau of Energy Efficiency, a statutory body set up under the Energy Conservation Act, 2001

Union Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Hardeep Puri - launched the ‘e-Dharti’ app and ‘e-Dharti’ GeoPortal

✓ They will help the general public and the government to manage its properties effectively
✓ Under the e-Dharti app, all the three modules- Conversion, Substitution and Mutation related to properties have been made online
✓ e-DhartiGeoPortal enables the lessee of the property to see the basic details of property along with the map showing its location
✓ The portal will also benefit the government by letting it know the actual status of its vacant properties, whether there is any encroachment on the property

Prime Minister Narendra Modi - has unveiled the new series of visually impaired friendly coins in the denominations of Rs. 1, Rs. 2, Rs. 5, Rs. 10 and Rs.20

✓ Rs 20 coin, the first-ever coin offering in Rs 20 denomination, has been created in the shape of a 12-edged polygon with a design of grains to denote farm dominance in the country
✓ Other than Rs 20 coins others are in round shape
The coins designed by the National Institute of Design has been produced by Security Printing and Minting Corporation of India Limited and the Finance Ministry.

National Green Tribunal - has directed the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) to prepare a noise pollution map along with a remedial action plan within 3 months to solve the issue.

The green bench headed by National Green Tribunal Chairperson Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel directed the CPCB to identify noise pollution hotspots and categorize cities with specified hotspots.

The pollution control board has already established noise monitoring mechanisms in seven cities, where the noise level is beyond the permissible limits.

The green tribunal also stated that the police departments of all the states and union territories may obtain noise monitoring devices within a period of 3 months and train its personnel to handle them.

It had also wanted to develop a public address system along with these devices to alert the public, when the noise level exceeds the permissible limits.

The Prime Minister's Science, Technology and Innovation Council (PM-STIAC) - has identified 9 national missions - to solve complex issues for the country's sustainable development.

The 9 Missions
1. Natural Language Translation
2. Quantum Frontier
3. Artificial Intelligence
4. National Biodiversity Mission
5. Electric Vehicles
7. Waste To Wealth
8. Deep Ocean Exploration
9. Agnii

World Bank - to provide a $250-million loan for the National Rural Economic Transformation Project (NRETP)
India piloted 2 resolutions - at the fourth session of United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA), held in Nairobi from March 11-15, 2019

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

✔ The anti-graft ombudsman will be headed by Justice Pinaki Chandra Ghose
✔ It will also have 3 non-judicial members, which includes Archana Ramasundaram and DK Jain, former Chief Secretary of Maharashtra

Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) – launched its new Podcast platform, CBSE-Shiksha Vani on March 18

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

✔ The assessment exercise is being undertaken to cover all the 12 Indian Himalayan region (IHR) states using a common framework.
✔ The 12 states to be covered under the framework include Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, the hilly districts of West Bengal, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Jammu and Kashmir

34th Meeting of GST Council – held on March 19, 2019

✔ The council has reduced the GST rates for all projects, where construction begins from April
✔ As per the new notification, a lower levy of 1% will be applicable for under-construction affordable housing projects and 5% for other projects
✔ The Input Tax Credit (ITC) means that at the time of paying tax on output, you can reduce the tax you have already paid on inputs and pay the balance amount
Indian budget Airlines, SpiceJet – becomes member of global airlines’ grouping ‘International Air Transport Association’ (IATA)

- SpiceJet is the first Indian low-budget carrier to join the IATA, which has over 290 airlines as members including Air India, Jet Airways and Vistara
- IATA is Geneva-based trade association of the world’s airlines formed to support aviation activity
- IATA represents 290 airlines in 120 countries, carrying 82% of the world’s air traffic
- It was founded in Havana, Cuba, in April 1945

LOKPAL CONSTITUTION

Former Supreme Court judge, Justice Pinaki Chandra Ghose - was appointed as the country’s first Lokpal, the anti-graft ombudsman, on March 19

- Justice Ghose retired as Supreme Court judge in May 2017
- He is a member of the National Human Rights Commission since June 29, 2017
- He was appointed as a Judge of the Calcutta High Court in 1997.
- He served as the Chief Justice of Andhra Pradesh High Court before his elevation to the Supreme Court in 2013

Judicial members

- Justice Dilip B Bhosale, former Chief Justice
- Justice Pradip Kumar Mohanty, former Chief Justice
- Justice Abhilasha Kumari, former Chief Justice
- Justice Ajay Kumar Tripathi, sitting Chief Justice of Chhattisgarh

Non-Judicial members

- Archana Ramasundaram, first woman chief of SashatraSeema Bal chief
- Dinesh Kumar Jain, former chief secretary of Maharashtra Government
- Mahender Singh, former IRS Officer
- Indrajeet Prasad Gautam, former IAS Officer
These appointments were recommended by the Prime Minister-led selection committee and approved by the President.

The other members of the selection panel included the Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi, Lok Sabha Speaker Sumitra Mahajan, eminent jurist Mukul Rohatgi and Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Mallikarjun Kharge.

However, Kharge did not attend the meeting as a protest against being invited as a “special invitee” to the committee meetings.

The Lokpal and Lokayukta Act was passed in 2013, to set up Lokpal at the centre and Lokayuktas in the States.

It was created to probe corruption complaints against top functionaries and public servants, including the Prime Minister and the Chief Ministers.

Social media platforms including Facebook, Google and Twitter – agreed to remove ‘illegal’ poll content within 3 hours.

The Election commission has notified a 48-hour pre-poll ‘silence period’ during the current Lok Sabha election.

A ‘voluntary code of ethics for general elections 2019’ was signed by Election Commission, Internet and Mobile Association of India along with the social media platforms including Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Google, ShareChat, Tiktok etc.,

As per the code of ethics, any content in violation of Section 126 of Representation of the People Act will be removed within 3 hours, while the other violations will be dealt ‘expeditiously’ based on their nature.

Ministry of Defence – approves capital procurements for the armed forces worth Rs 2,355 crore

The purchases includes a Rs 530 crore project to manufacture 10 lakh ‘multi-mode’ hand grenades for the army by a private company, Economic Explosives Ltd of Nagpur.

The Defence acquisition council had also cleared the procurement of the latest fire control systems for the ‘Teg’ and ‘Talwar’ class stealth frigates and Sarayu class of patrol vessels.

India – likely to boycott China’s second Belt and Road Forum (BRF) for a second time.
It had boycotted the first BRF in 2017 after protesting over the ‘China-Pakistan Economic Corridor’ (CPEC) laid through the Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir.

CPEC is a $60 billion project, which aims to connect China’s Xinjiang province with Pakistan’s Gwadar port, with a host of road, rail, gas and oil pipelines.

Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change - has finalised the first draft of the comprehensive amendments to the Indian Forest Act, 1927

The amendments provide definitions to important terms that were missing from the law.

The amendment introduces a new category of forests namely production forests, which will be forests with specific objectives for production of timber, pulp, pulpwood, firewood, non-timber forest produce, medicinal plants or any forest species to increase their production.

The amendments have been proposed based on the inputs of a core committee Inspector General of Forests (Forest Policy) Noyal Thomas.

The Union government - banned the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) led by Yasin Malik on March 22

The ban under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act is enforced for its extremist orientation and violence against the Hindu minority in the Vale.

Thus, it becomes the second organisation to be banned under UAPA in the past one month after Jamaat-e-Islami, linked to HizbulMujahideen.

The data released by Employees Provident Fund Organization (EPFO) - shows a 17-month high in new Enrolments during January 2019.

It shows the total number of subscribers in 3 major schemes, namely the Employees’ Provident Fund (EPF) scheme, the Employees’ State Insurance (ESI) Scheme and the National Pension Scheme (NPS).

The total new enrolments since September 2017 is nearly 77 lakh.
During January 2019, the highest number of 2.44 lakh jobs was created in the 22-25 years age group, followed by 2.24 lakh in the 18-21 years age bracket.

Tata Power Strategic Engineering Division (SED) - has bagged a Rs 1,200 crore contract from the defence ministry - for supply of 23 shipborne 3D air surveillance radars to the Indian Navy over the next 10 years.

‘AzaadikeDiwane’ museum - was inaugurated at the Red Fort premises

- It was dedicated to the unsung heroes of the country’s freedom struggle, whose name does not figure in popular culture
- The museum is built by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and is part of KrantiMandir Series to inspire the younger generation

Other Museums part of KrantiMandi Series
- Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Museum
- Yaad-e-Jallian Museum
- Museum on 1857 - India’s first war of Independence, recently inaugurated by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the eve of Republic Day

Geological Survey of India (GSI) - has launched 22 permanent global positioning system (GPS) stations across India

- They will help to identify seismically hazardous zones and encourage mapping activities
- These 22 stations are part of the 35 stations planned by GSI

India – signs the ‘New Delhi Declaration on Asian Rhinos 2019’

- The declaration calls for the conservation and protection of the species at the Second Asian Rhino Range Countries Meet
- The meet was organised by the Environment, Forest and Climate Change Ministry in collaboration with IUCN Asian Rhino Specialist Group, WWF- India and Aaranyak
Rajnath Singh, Union home minister – inaugurated the ‘BOLD-QIT Surveillance’ along Dhubri district in Assam on the India Bangladesh border

✓ BOLD-QIT stands for Border electronically dominated quick response team interception technique
✓ BOLD-QIT, part of the Integrated Border Management System (CIBMS), will help the Border Security Force (BSF) in curbing all types of cross border crimes
✓ Dhubri Sector is a critically important region as river Brahmaputra enters into Bangladesh here
✓ This region comprises of vast char lands and innumerable river channels

PSBloansin59minutes.com - has emerged as the country’s largest online lending platform

✓ The portal, which was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2018, has loan sanctions exceeding over Rs 35,000 crore
✓ The portal provides credit up to Rs 1 crore to micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in just 59 minutes or less than an hour

Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) - created a new Guinness World Record for the longest single moving line bicycle parade at the Yamuna Expressway

✓ The world record was attempted to commemorate the 50 years of the paramilitary force, CISF
✓ For creating the World Record the personnel of the central force rode 1,327 bicycles non-stop with a uniform distance between bicycles in a single line, covering 3.2 km distance
✓ The CISF broke the earlier record of Hubballi bicycle club of India which had 1,235 bicycles in a single chain

India - to observe ‘April 2019-March 2020’ as Construction-Technology year

✓ This was declared by the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi at the Construction Technology India-2019 Expo-cum-conference in New Delhi
Centre for Disability Sports – to come up at Gwalior in Madhya Pradesh

- It will be set up at an estimated cost of Rs 170.99 crore
- The centre would create an improved sports infrastructure to ensure effective participation of persons with disabilities in sports activities
- It would be registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860
- A governing body consisting of not exceeding 12 members would be set up for overall supervision of the centre
- The announcement for setting up of Centre for Disability Sports was made in the Budget of 2014-15

Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities - has set a new world record of carrying out Modern Artificial Limbs (Legs) implantation in record 8 hours in Gujarat’s Bharuch

- This was the seventh world record set by the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment

Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) - has added 3 new ‘skill’ subjects, Artificial Intelligence (AI), Early Childhood Care Education (ECCE), and Yoga in the school curriculum for academic session 2019-20

- AI will be introduced as an optional sixth subject for Class IX whereas ECCE and Yoga are being introduced as elective subjects at senior secondary level

All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) – approves MBA programme in Innovation to be offered from the 2019-20 academic year– for individuals who aspire to launch Start-ups

- The course may cost Rs 85,000 to Rs 1,00,000 every semester

Election Commission - has launched a new mobile application “PWD” across Maharashtra, for over two lakhs ‘Persons with Disability’ voters
Prime Narendra Modi - announced that India has become world's 4th largest space super power in his address to the nation on March 27, 2019

- The Prime Minister announced the success of ‘Mission Shakti’, in which Indian scientists successfully targeted and shot down a live satellite on a Low Earth Orbit with an anti-satellite missile (A-SAT) within a matter of just three minutes
- The test was carried out from the Dr A.P.J Abdul Kalam Island launch complex off the coast of Odisha
- He stated that the feat is historic, as till now, only three countries in the world – United States of America, Russia and China have achieved this.
- A Low Earth Orbit (LEO) is an Earth-centered orbit with an altitude of 2,000 km or less

First Indian Army Mountaineering Expedition - to Mt Makalu (8485m) was flagged off on March 26, 2019.

- Expedition team comprises five Officers, two JCOs and eleven other officers
- The mission is part of the objective of summiting all challenging peaks above 8000m by the Indian Army
- Mt Makalu is considered amongst the most dangerous peaks due to inclement weather conditions and freezing temperatures.
- It is the fifth highest mountain in the world, located in the Mahalangur Himalayas 19 km southeast of Mount Everest
- The first climb on Makalu was made by an American team led by Riley Keegan in 1954.
- A team of six Indian Army mountaineers led by Lieutenant Colonel Ranveer Jamwal successfully climbed at the top of Mount Everest (8848 metres) on May 19, 2016

University Grants Commission - has prohibited imparting distance degree programmes in Agriculture from 2019 academic session

- As per UGC Open and Distance Learning Regulations, 2017, professional programmes such as medicine, engineering, and architecture, are not permitted to be offered in distance mode
✓ The Indian Council of Agriculture Research (ICAR) will be assisting those who have already enrolled in the distance mode course in Agriculture

♦ Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi - develops an Artificial Intelligence (AI) based electronic hardware system - to detect malaria, tuberculosis, intestinal parasite, and cervical cancer in milliseconds

✓ The team headed by Manan Suri, principal investigator at the Neuromorphic and NVM research group has used nanotechnology to develop a diagnostic support system which can read raw data from blood samples, patterns of a patient etc and can extract information

♦ Facebook - has launched two new India-specific tools, “Candidate Connect” and “Share You Voted” - to boost people engagement during the 2019 Lok Sabha Elections

✓ These new tools are available in 12 local languages across India.

♦ The Union Cabinet - approved the continuation of the ‘Biomedical Research Career Programme’ for another five year term from 2019-20 to 2023-24

✓ The programme is run by the Department of Biotechnology and UK-based biomedical research charity, Wellcome Trust
✓ The programme was initially commenced for a 10 year term from 2008-09 to 2018-19

♦ Election Commission (EC)- is likely to approve a Rural Development Ministry request to revise the wages under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) from April 1

✓ For Tamil Nadu, Rs 229 has been fixed as the wage per day to be given under the scheme

✓ New Wages for various States
The Mahendra Dev Committee, formed in 2014, had recommended that the MGNREGA wages be linked to the state’s minimum wage. Another committee formed under Nagesh Singh rejected the earlier recommendations of linking the MGNREGA wages to the state’s minimum wages, but suggested that the MGNREGA wages be linked to CPI-Rural instead of CPI-Agriculture labourer. Presently, the MGNREGA wage rates of 18 states are below the minimum wage rates. The Government in this year’s interim budget had proposed to allocate Rs 60,000 crore for rural employment scheme under MGNREGA for the year 2019-20 as against Rs 55,000 crore for 2018-19.

Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change - notified Island Protection Zone (IPZ) 2019 for Andaman and Nicobar

- It brings the norms for Andaman and Nicobar at par with Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) 2018 norms for other islands close to the mainland and backwater islands
- It allows for eco-tourism activities like mangrove walks, tree huts and nature trails in island coastal regulation zone (ICRZ)

Adani Port and Special Economic Zone (APSEZ), a part of GautamAdani-led Adani Group - becomes the first Indian port operator to achieve a new record of handle 200 million tonnes (MT) cargo movement in 2018-19
Adani Port and Special Economic Zone (APSEZ) has 10 ports and terminals, including the one at Ennore in Chennai. It has also set an aim to double growth up to 400 MT by 2025.

**The Centre – announced the draft amendment to the Indian Forest Act**

- The 123-page draft, proposes a ‘forest development cess’ that can be deposited in a “special fund”
- The proposed amended Act is intended to replace the British period IFA, 1927.

**The Coffee Board - is launching a blockchain-based e-market place ‘app’ for trading coffee**

- The objective is to bring transparency in the trade and ensure the farmers are fairly paid for the produce by cutting intermediaries
- Initially it will be a pilot project for two months, with about 20 farmers.
- Only two other countries, Ethiopia and France, have a coffee blockchain system in place.

**Tashigang, a small Himachal Pradesh village -has got the distinction of the highest polling station in the world**

- Tashigang is located at an altitude of 15,256 feet
- It falls in one of the 17 assembly segments of the Mandi Lok Sabha seat, which is the second largest constituency in India
- The polling station has 48 voters, of which 30 are men and 18 women
- Earlier the tiny settlement of Hikkim in Himachal Pradesh positioned at an altitude of about 14,400 ft, was the highest polling station in the country

**Power Finance Corporation(PFC) – becomes the country’s second largest Government-owned Financial Firm after SBI, based on market capitalization**
PFC has recently bought the 52.63% controlling stake in REC Ltd (formerly Rural Electrification Corporation Limited) through Rs 14,500 crore deal with Union government.

This acquisition has impacted union government beneficially, as it exceeded the disinvestment target of Rs 80,000 crore for the fiscal year 2018-19.

The Election Commission - told the Supreme Court that counting VVPAT slips of 50% of EVMs would delay declaration of results of the general elections by five days.

There are 10.35 lakh polling stations in the country with an average of 250 polling stations per assembly constituency.

The Election Commission – said that PM Modi’s address to the nation on the successful test-firing of an anti-satellite missile did not violate the model code of conduct.

The panel took the decision based on the report of a panel of senior officers which concluded that the speech did not violate the provisions in the code.

India shot down one of its satellites in space with an anti-satellite missile to demonstrate this complex capability on March 27, becoming fourth country to have used such a weapon.

The PM declared India has now established itself as a global space power after the success of ‘Mission Shakti’.

The missile hit a live satellite flying in a Low Earth Orbit after it traversed a distance of almost 300 km from earth within three minutes of its launch.

In a first-of-its-kind initiative, the All India Institutes of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) -launched ‘Mobile methadone’ vans to provide treatment to opioid addicts in inner-city neighborhoods in New Delhi.

As a pilot project, the National Drug Dependence Treatment Centre (NDDTC) of AIIMS has initiated the new service of delivering methadone through a mobile van in East Delhi.
The Union Government - constituted a ‘Multi-Disciplinary Terror Monitoring Group’ (MDTMG) on March 29, 2019

✓ It will focus on concerted action against terror financing and other terror related activities in the State of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K)
✓ The Additional Director General of Police (CID) of J&K Police will head the MDTMG
✓ The group will meet on a weekly basis and submit its action report regularly

Facebook - has banned praise, support and representation of ‘white nationalism, white supremacy and white separatism’ on its platforms

✓ White Supremacy and white nationalism are belief systems with tenets like “whites should have dominance over people of other backgrounds”
✓ White Separatism is a form of white supremacy which emphasizes that white people should exist separately from all inferior, non-white races

“Bhonga”, a hyper-local connectivity app - launched in Mumbai

✓ It was developed by a Mumbai-based Company, Linkus Infratech
✓ It will enable connecting users to their neighborhood people in the city even without an Internet connection
✓ “Bhonga” is a Marathi word which means megaphone or loudspeaker

Steel Authority of India Ltd (SAIL) - has launched smart garbage bins in the country

✓ These bins integrates technology for smart waste management, providing for better cleaning and lower human intervention

A shark-themed plane, an Embraer E190-E2 commercial jet - landed at the Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport for the first time

Google - unveiled its on-demand video-game streaming service ‘Stadia’ at the 2019 Game Developers Conference in San Francisco, California.
The service, built for Chrome, Android and TVs, will initially be launched this year in the US, Canada, the UK and Europe.

Indian Institute of Public Health, Gandhinagar, Gujarat – ties up with National Mental Health Program, Department of Health and Family Welfare, Government of Gujarat - for developing a mobile application called as ‘Conquer Exam, Be a Warrior’

The app aims to reduce the exam pressure for the student.

Microsoft – ties up with The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) - to launch ‘Project Sangam’ in the country

The initiative is developed to accelerate Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) in India.

SCHEMES

Union HRD Ministry - launches ‘SHREYAS’ Scheme on February 27- to provide apprenticeship opportunities to fresh graduates of 2019

SHREYAS - ‘Scheme for Higher Education Youth in Apprenticeship and Skills’
 The scheme is intended to skill non-technical students of BA, BSc. BCom courses
 It aims to boost the employment skills of Indian youth by providing them with ‘on the job work exposure’ through the National Apprenticeship Promotional Scheme (NAPS) and the National Career Service (NCS)
 As per the scheme, BA, BSc, and BCom (Professional) courses will be introduced in the higher educational institutions from the upcoming academic year 2019-20
 These professional courses would include 1000 hours of additional coursework out of which 250 will be dedicated to soft and ICT skilling (each) and rest 500 hours will be dedicated to specific skill courses
More than 40 higher educational institutions have already been **tied up** for taking up embedded apprenticeship courses

The scheme aims to cover 50 lakh students by 2022.

**Union HRD Ministry – launches ‘STARS’ scheme on February 28 on the eve of National Science Day – to fund Science projects**

- STARS – ‘Scheme for Translational and Advanced Research in Science’
- The ministry had set aside Rs 250 crore for funding around 500 science projects as part of the scheme
- The project will be coordinated by the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bangalore

**West Bengal – has unveiled a new scheme ‘Yuvashree Plan II or YuvashreeArpan’ to encourage entrepreneurship among youth**

- Under the scheme, Youths who have passed out of ITI or other polytechnic institutes will be eligible to get financial support of Rs One Lakh from the state MSME department to set up their own business initiatives
- Yuvashree I, launched by the state’s labour department, provided an unemployment allowance of Rs 1500 per month to 1,00,000 unemployed youth
- The Chief Minister of West Bengal has also laid the foundation stone for the state’s first Hindi University at Arupara, Howrah

**Uttarakhand – has launched the ‘Mukhyamantri Anchal Amrit Yojana’ to provide milk at the Anganwadi Centres**

- Under the scheme, the government would provide 100 ml milk twice a week for 2.5 lakh children (under age-6) at 20,000 Anganwadi Centres in the state
- The scheme aims to tackle the malnutrition and provide a healthy diet to the children
The Supreme Court - referred the 70-year-old Ayodhya litigation to a secret mediation process by a three-member panel, which will submit a report in eight weeks

On March 8, a five-judge bench headed by Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi along with Justices S A Bobde, D Y Chandrachud, Ashok Bhushan and S Abdul Nazeer said a panel led by former SC judge F M Ibrahim Kalifulla and comprising spiritual guru Sri Sri Ravi Shankar and well-known mediator Sriram Panchu could conduct a dialogue with the contending parties

Faizabad has been chosen as the venue for in-camera mediation to solve the dispute for ownership of the 2.77-acre land in Ayodhya

In its 2010 verdict, the Allahabad HC had allotted the two entities one-third each of the disputed land with the other third going to deity Ram Lalla

Supreme Court on March 13 - ruled that only officers who have a minimum of 6 months tenure left in police service should be considered for the post of Director General of Police (DGP)

A bench headed by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi said the recommendation for post of DGP by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) and preparation of the panel should be purely on the basis of merit.

Supreme Court - appointed senior advocate PS Narasimha as mediator for resolving various disputes related to cricket administration within BCCI on March 14, 2019

Narasimha is assisting the apex court as amicus curiae in the BCCI matter

He will hear the BCCI's stand and then make recommendations to Committee of Administrators (CoA)

PS Narasimha informed the bench of Justices SA Bobde and A M Spare that Justice (retd) D K Jain assumed charge as the Ombudsman of Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI)
✓ Justice DK Jain was the first court-appointed ombudsman for the BCCI in February 2019

✎ Madras High Court – directed the Government to constitute a monitoring committee – to supervise the attendance and assess the performance of Government doctors and maintenance of Government medical hospitals across the state

✓ Justice SM Subramaniam also directed the Government to recover adequate compensation from government doctors who violate terms of service, after completing post-graduation under government quota

✎ The Madurai bench of Madras High Court – issues ‘guidelines’ for transfer of Government school teachers

✓ The court criticized the state school education department for irregular transfer of teachers on administrative grounds
✓ As per the new guidelines issued by a division bench of Justice K K Sasidharan and Justice P D Audikesavalu, teachers who were not transferred during the general transfer counseling should not be given transfers on administrative ground during the concerned academic year
✓ The applicant must have worked for a minimum of one year in the present school to be eligible for general transfer
✓ However, no such norms were framed for the transfers on ‘administrative grounds’
✓ The annual transfers including the vacancies due to promotion/upgrading of schools must only be on the basis of general counseling, which must be intimated by a GO issued from the department well in advance
✓ In order to fill vacancies, there should be at least two counseling sessions, preferably one in August and another in September, after the general counseling in June

✎ Madhya Pradesh High Court – stays 27% quota for OBCs, announced by Chief Minister Kamal Nath on March 6

✓ The State Government had hiked OBC reservation in Government jobs and educational institutions by 13%, taking in to 27%
With this hike in quota, the overall reservation for SC/SC/OBCs in the state stands now at 63%, which was higher than the Supreme Court cap of 50%.

Madras high court - banned all political meetings and rallies near street corners, junctions, thoroughfares and residential neighborhoods in Tamil Nadu.

A division bench consisting of Justice N Kirubakaran and Justice S SSundar held that such events could only be allowed outside urban areas, to prevent the inconvenience caused to residents.

In this regard, the bench cited the Supreme Court judgment in the famous RamlilaMaidan case and cited the apex court ruling that Right to privacy of the citizens should be respected as a fundamental right, being an integral part of Article 21 of the Constitution.

The Supreme Court - directed the Tamil Nadu government to ensure that public places, including hilly areas, are not defaced by slogans and advertisements by political parties on March 25, 2019.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi and Justice Deepak Gupta directed the state government to ensure that there is no disfigurement of public places by pasting photographs of leaders and by writing slogans.

Punjab and Haryana High Court - has barred the mentioning of caste in the FIRs.

The division bench of Justices Rajiv Sharma and Kuldip Singh directed its judicial officers and the governments of Punjab, Haryana and the Union Territory of Chandigarh to stop mentioning caste or status separately in the criminal proceedings as it is a colonial legacy and requires to be discontinued forthwith.

The bench added division of society into sections cannot be determined by birth as all are born equal.
COMMITTEES

The Justice Ranjana Desai-led search committee - has finalized its recommendations for the chairperson and eight members of the anti-corruption ombudsman, Lokpal

- The committee has sent a list comprising 5 names for Lokpal Head and 24 names for members of the anti-graft body — 3 each for 8 positions — to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who heads the Lokpal selection committee
- The eight-member search panel, formed in September 2018, held its first meeting in January 2019
- It was set a deadline of February 28 by the Supreme Court to hand over the recommended names to the Government
- The search committee has former SBI chief Arundhati Bhattacharya, Isro chief A S Kiran Kumar, Former Gujarat police chief Shabbirhusein S Khandwawala, former Allahabad high court justice Sakha Ram Singh Yadav and PrasarBharati chairman A Surya Prakash as members
- The selection committee is headed by the PM and has Chief Justice of India Justice RanjanGogoi, Lok Sabha Speaker SumitraMahajan and former advocate general MukulRohatgi as members

The Ministry of Social Justice – forms an expert panel headed by retired GOI secretary B P Sharma - to study ‘creamy layer’ criteria and eligibility

- The norms for the creamy layer were laid down in 1993 based on the report of the Prasad committee

A Government panel formed to study E-cigarettes – submitted its report to the Government

- It had concluded that the ‘Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems’ (ENDS) can cause suicidal and accidental poisoning

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) - has constituted a panel under the former deputy governor UshaThorat - to examine issues related to offshore rupee markets
It will examine the effects of the offshore markets on the rupee exchange rate and market liquidity in the domestic market

Reserve Bank of India - has appointed a 5-member committee under the chairmanship of Nandan Nilekani – to strengthen digital payments

The decision regarding the formation of committee was taken during the first event of Financial Technology (Fintech) Conclave, which was organized by NITI Aayog in New Delhi

It will provide recommendations in 3 months.

Financial technology, popularly known as 'FinTech', is the new technology and innovation to make financial services more accessible for the common people.

Mobile banking, internet banking, digital payment are examples of Financial technologies.

Election Commission - appointed a committee of senior officers to look whether PM’s address to the nation violated the model code of conduct

The address was relayed first via Narendra Modi’s exclusive YouTube channel and not state-owned public broadcasters, Doordarshan or All India Radio, thus involving no cost to the exchequer and hence no violation of model code of conduct

The EC committee will be headed by deputy election commissioner in charge of model code of conduct matters, Sandeep Saxena

INTERNATIONAL

The United States and North Korea – fails to strike deal at Hanoi, Vietnam

The meeting between US President Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un ended with no agreement after US President Trump refused North Korean demand to lift all international sanctions.

No joint communiqué was issued after the meeting
The two-day meeting in Hanoi follows the historic first summit in Singapore in June 2018

**China - sets up 5G stations in Tibetan border adjoining India**

- 5G technology can support Internet of Things (IoT) more effectively, serving a wide range of military purposes, including monitoring of mountainous border and deployment of weapons
- The equipment has been supplied by Huawei Technologies, Chinese telecom giant
- Huawei was recently invited by the Indian Government to start 5G trials in India

**Pakistan - has formally banned Jamat-ud-Dawa and its charity wing Falah-e-Insaniat Foundation, which were led by 2008 Mumbai attack mastermind Hafiz Saeed**

- Pakistan had earlier announced the bans on February 21, but the two groups continued to be in the watch list since January 2017
- Pakistani authorities had also detained Jaish-e-Mohammed chief MasoodAzhar's son and brother apart from 42 other members of banned militant outfits
- The decision to ban these two groups (and kept along with the list of 70 banned organisations) was taken during a meeting of the National Security Committee (NSC) chaired by Prime Minister Imran Khan.
- The JuD is believed to be the front organisation for the LeT which is responsible for carrying out the 26/11 Mumbai terror attack that killed 166 people.
- It had been declared as a foreign terrorist organisation by the US in June 2014.
- The US Department of the Treasury has designated its chief Saeed as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist, and the US, since 2012, has offered a $10 million reward for information about his whereabouts

**European Union - included Pakistan in its new list of 23 “high risk third countries” with strategic deficiencies in their antimony laundering and counter-terrorist financing frameworks**

**Two Nobel Prizes for “Literature” – will be awarded this year, as per the Nobel Foundation statement**
✓ The Nobel Foundation blocked the Swedish academy from awarding the prize last year after sexual misconduct allegations

❖ Luxury electric vehicles brand, AutomobiliPininfarina, a part of the Mahindra group – unveils the fastest ever ‘e-super’ car ‘Battista’ in Geneva

❖ UK Parliament – had yet again rejected Prime Minister Theresa May’s Brexit deal on March 12, 2019

❖ United Nations - has again requested Sri Lanka to establish a hybrid court to probe war crime allegations during three-decade long LTTE war.

❖ Boeing – suspends the entire fleet of 737 MAX after US President announced the grounding of the aircraft

✓ It said that the grounding is out of an abundance of caution and in order to reassure the flying public of the aircraft safety
✓ India has already announced its decision not to fly Boeing 737 MAX over its airspace on March 13 with effect from 4pm on the said day
✓ SpiceJet was the country’s only carrier to use the plane in the country (12 flights), which had also decided to ground them following the Government’s decision
✓ Jet Airways’ five Max are already grounded for a long time due to non-payment of lease rentals
✓ 42 countries had already banned the flight following the crash of Ethiopian Airlines Flight 302, killing all 157 people on board on March 10
✓ In October 2018, a 737 Max 8 operated by Lion Air, an Indonesian carrier, crashed killing 189 people on board

❖ China – has blocked UN proposal to blacklist the Pakistan-based terrorist, MasoodAzhar for the fourth time

✓ The move to ban the Jaish-e-Mohammad chief followed the efforts of various countries, including France, US and UK
✓ China was the only country to block the proposal, apparently to protect its investments in Pakistan
Prime Minister Narendra Modi - inaugurated the Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya Institute of Archaeology at Greater Noida in Uttar Pradesh on March 9

✓ Prime Minister also unveiled the statue of Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya during the inauguration of the institute

United Kingdom – issues a new 50p commemorative ‘Black hole coin’ – to honour Professor Stephen Hawking, who passed away last year

✓ The coin features Hawking’s name in capital letters above a rippling drawing of concentric circles, intended to represent a black hole
✓ The coin was designed by British engraver and printmaker, Edwina Ellis
✓ The coin, released by UK’s Royal Mint is available in gold, silver, and a double thickness silver version called a ‘piedfort’

European Union - has expanded its tax haven blacklist by including 10 countries

✓ It has 15 countries now under the blacklist, with the newly added countries
✓ Seven countries Aruba, Belize, Bermuda, Fiji, Oman, Vanuatu and Dominica were moved from greylist to blacklist due to their inability towards reform commitments
✓ Three other countries added into the list are Barbados, the United Arab Emirates and the Marshall Islands
✓ The list was first drawn up by EU in 2017 to fight tax evasion by the rich

France - becomes the first country to freeze the assets of Jaish-e-Mohammed chief Masood Azhar and ban him in the country - in application of the Monetary and Financial code

✓ The country also said it would ask other 27 EU member countries to include Masood Azhar on the EU list of persons, groups and entities involved in terrorist acts, based on its decree

Malaysia – joins as the 124th country to the International Criminal Court (ICC) ratifying the Rome Statute
Even though Malaysia had helped to negotiate the Rome Statute, it has been long been reluctant to ratify it

International Criminal Court established by Rome Statute is a permanent international court with jurisdiction over the serious human rights crimes like genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and the crime of aggression

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

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

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

Hawaii – to become first US state to ban plastic at restaurants

The move aims to cut down on plastic waste that pollutes the ocean

It is also planning to prohibit fast-food and full-service restaurants from distributing and using plastic drink bottles, utensils, stirring sticks, bags and straws in the next phase

Hawaii follows California, which has became the first state to ban full-service restaurants from giving out plastic straws last year

Seattle, San Francisco and other cities have already banned some single-use plastics

Italy – becomes the first G-7 Nation to join China’s ambitious ‘Belt and Road Initiative’ despite US objections

Previously in 2018, the European governments had declined to sign a joint declaration on the "Belt and Road" at a forum held in Beijing

The initiative envisions overland and maritime routes connecting China with Europe

Pakistan – constitutes a 7-member Supreme Court bench to define the word ‘terrorism’ and the cases that fall within the category

The 7-member bench will be headed by the Chief justice of Supreme Court, AsifSaeedKhosa
British Prime Minister, Theresa May – asks European Union to postpone UK’s departure plan, Brexit until June 30

- As per the earlier date, UK was supposed to exit EU by March 29, 2019
- However, May could not get the Parliament’s approval for her twice-rejected Brexit deal

European Union – fines Google 1.49 billion Euros – for abusing its dominant role in Online advertising market

- In the latest ruling, Google and its parent company, Alphabet were found to have breached EU rules by imposing restrictive clauses in contracts with websites that used its AdSense advertising business, which has prevented the rivals of Google to place their ads on these sites

Kazakhstan – renames its capital ‘Astana’ to ‘Nursultan’ – to honour the outgoing President Nursultan Nazarbayev

- Nursultan Nazarbayev served nearly 30 years as leader of the nation
- He was the first president of Kazakhstan and led Kazakhstan since it emerged from the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s
- It was Nursultan Nazarbayev who moved Kazakhstan’s capital from the southern city of Almaty, near the Kyrgyz border, to northern Astana

India - abstained on a resolution against Israel at the UN Human Rights Council condemning Israel for violence in Gaza

- The resolution was passed with 23 countries voting for the resolution and eight countries against.
- It is a measure of the changing relations between India and Israel that India has abstained, instead of voting against Israel
- The other countries to abstain included UK, Japan, Italy, Denmark, Australia, Brazil, Iceland and Nepal.
United States - recognises Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights, which was seized by Israel from Syria in 1967

✓ The disputed area was captured by Israel in the 1967 Middle East war and annexed in 1981 in a move not recognized internationally
✓ Egypt, which made peace with Israel in 1979, said it still considers the Golan as occupied Syrian territory

Italy - becomes the first member of the Group of Seven nations (G7 nations) to join China’s OBOR initiative on March 23

✓ Italy endorsed China’s ambitious “Belt and Road” infrastructure plan to help revive the struggling Italian economy
✓ Chinese President Xi Jinping is on a three-day trip to Italy during which Italian firms signed deals with Chinese counterparts worth an initial 2.5 billion Euros ($2.8 billion)
✓ The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), also known as the One Belt, One Road initiative was incorporated into the ruling Communist Party constitution in 2017

Japan - has donated $69 million to the United Nations World Food Programme

✓ It provides vital aid to 28 countries in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia, with the biggest contribution being earmarked for Yemen and Iraq
✓ World Food Programme is a leading humanitarian organization delivering food assistance in emergencies saving lives
✓ World Food Programme was established in 1961 by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the United Nations General Assembly
✓ It strives to eradicate hunger and malnutrition and reach the goal of ‘Zero hunger’ in 2030

Sri Lankan Prime Minister, Ranil Wickremesinghe - has laid the foundation stone on a new $3.85bn oil refinery in Hambantota in the country’s Southern Province

✓ It is jointly funded by Oman and Singapore-registered Silver Park International, a company owned by India-based Accord Group
✓ The project is believed to be the single largest foreign investment in Sri Lankan history

♦ US-backed, Kurdish-led Syrian democratic forces - declare victory over Islamic State (IS) in Syria

✓ In December 2017 the Iraqi government declared victory over IS
✓ In December 2018, US president Donald Trump ordered the withdrawal of all 2,000 US troops in Syria, claiming they had defeated IS

♦ Donald Trump, United States President - ordered the withdrawal of additional large-scale sanctions on North Korea

✓ President Trump's move came after his second summit with Kim held in February 2019 in Hanoi, Vietnam

♦ Oman - signed an agreement with the United States on March 24, 2019, allowing American ships and warplanes to take advantage of its ports and airports

✓ The agreement will allow the US forces to take advantage of the facilities offered at some of Oman’s ports, particularly the Duqm port
✓ The Duqm port is located in southern Oman on the Arabian Sea and around 500 kilometres from the Strait of Hormuz
✓ The United States has a number of military bases across the Gulf with the largest in Qatar with about 10,000 troops.

♦ UAE - has launched the ‘Lose to Win’ Programme

✓ It aims to assist the overweight employees in shedding extra kilos and adopt a healthy lifestyle

♦ Oslo, the capital city of Norway - to become the world’s first city to install wireless, induction-based charging stations for its fleet of electric taxis

✓ Norway wants all new cars to be zero emission by 2025 whereas other nations, like Britain and France have similar goals for 2040
✓ With the new stations, it targets zero-emission cab system by 2023
The United States Department of Defense - has authorised $1 billion to build part of the Wall sought by President Donald Trump along the US-Mexico border.

- The 1000-mile US-Mexico Border Wall was on one of the key promises made by President Trump when he was campaigning to become president
- Mexico has categorically rejected paying for the wall

World’s largest e-waste recycling plant - has opened in Dubai Industrial Park, Dubai by ‘Enviroserve’ company with a total cost of $5 million

Pakistan – approves the proposal of opening SharadaPeeth Corridor for Hindu pilgrims - to visit SharadaPeeth

- The 5000 years old SharadaPeeth is an ancient Hindu temple and cultural site located in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (POK)
- This would be second religious corridor after Kartarpur Sahib that will connect the two neighbouring countries
- The temple is also regarded as a Shakti Peeth, a shrine built on places where body parts of Sati Devi had fallen while being carried by her husband Lord Shiva
- A famous pond near SharadaPeeth is known as “madomati”

European Union - to ban ‘Single-use’ plastic consumer items including plates, cutlery and straws as of 2021 to help clean up oceans

- The prohibition also applies to beverage cups, food containers and cotton bud sticks

Israeli cave explorers - announced that a salt cave with striking stalactites near the Dead Sea is the world's longest - beating the current record-holder in southern Iran's Qeshm island (over 6 km)

- The cave named Malharn, stretches over 10 kilometres (6.25 miles)
- It runs through Mount Sodom, Israel's largest mountain, and spills out to the southwest corner of the adjacent Dead Sea
Malham became known to researchers through the work of Amos Frumkin, founder and director of Hebrew University's Cave Research Centre, who in the 1980s mapped around 5 kilometres of it.

**Brunei – to make Gay sex or adultery – punishable with death by stoning from April 3, 2019**

- The new laws also prescribe amputation of hand or feet as a punishment for robbery.
- The penalty would be amputation of the right hand for first-time offenders, and the left foot for a second offence.
- Brunei, a small Southeast Asian nation, announced the enforcement of a strict ‘Sharia law’ in the country.
- Brunei had first announced its introduction in 2013, which was suspended later following vast international protest.
- With the move, Brunei becomes the first and only country in East Asia to introduce Sharia law into its penal code.
- The sovereign Islamic nation is ruled by Sultan HassanalBolkiah, whose wealth amounts to billions of dollars, courtesy Brunei’s oil riches.
- He gained power as the head of the state on January 1, 1984, when the nation gained its independence from the United Kingdom.

**XPRIZE - announces that it will offer a $1 million Moonshot Award**

- The award will be given in recognition of an XPRIZE team demonstrating the achievement of a “moonshot” technological feat.
- The first edition of the award will be given to Israel’s, SpaceIL, whose mission to become the first private, non-government entity to land on the surface of the Moon is underway, with an anticipated landing of spacecraft Beresheet on April 11, 2019.
- SpaceIL is a former Google Lunar XPRIZE team.

**UK lawmakers - rejected the Theresa May government’s exit agreement with the European Union for a third time on March 29**

- The House of Commons voted 286-344 against the withdrawal agreement struck between PM May and the EU.
Indonesian President Joko Widodo - inaugurated the country's first mass rapid transit (MRT) system on 24th March

- The aim is to ease the traffic congestion in the capital Jakarta
- Passengers can ride for free until the end of the month

China’s Shanghai - has become the world’s first district to start using both 5G coverage and broadband gigabit network

INDIA AND OTHER COUNTRIES

U.S. President Donald Trump – scraps preferential trade pact with India within 60 days of enforcement

- India is the world's largest beneficiary of the US’s Generalized System of Preferences (GSP), which dates from the 1970s

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Bangladesh counterpart Sheikh Hasina - jointly unveiled e-plaques for development projects in Bangladesh through video conferencing on March 11, 2019

- The projects include -- Supply of buses and trucks, Inauguration of 36 community clinics, Inauguration of 11 water treatment plants and Extension of National Knowledge Network to Bangladesh

India - launched its third IT corridor in China

- National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM) entered into a partnership with China’s Xuzhou city from Jiangsu Province in China to help develop the IT corridor
- The earlier two corridors are at Dalian and Guiyang cities

The new visa agreement between India and Maldives – comes into effect on March 11, 2019

- The new agreement provides a liberal visa policy for Maldivian citizens seeking medical treatment as well as education and business opportunities in India
- Under the agreement, Maldivian businessmen and tourists can stay in India for 90 days without a visa
✓ It also makes it easier for Indians to travel to the Maldives for business purposes
✓ India and Maldives had exchanged diplomatic notes for the implementation of the visa facilitation agreement in February 2019

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

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

♦ India - has extended a financial grant of 35.5 million Nepalese rupees for the construction of an educational campus in Nepal under the Development Partnership Programme

♦ US – plans to end the Generalized System of Preference (GSP) eligibility criteria for both India and Turkey

♦ Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited and Indian Oil Corporation Limited - were awarded the exploration rights for Abu Dhabi Onshore Block 1

✓ The Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) signed agreements awarding the exploration rights to the consortium of two Indian oil companies
✓ The approval regarding the same was accorded by Abu Dhabi’s Supreme Petroleum Council.

♦ India and Bangladesh - to start a cruise service from March 29, 2019 taking passengers through the Sunderbans to Dhaka

✓ The move aims to strengthen inland waterway routes between the two countries
✓ Using inland waterways, goods from India can go in the cheapest possible route up to Narayanganj and Dhaka in Bangladesh
**India and the African Union - signed a MoU to establish an India-Africa health sciences collaborative platform**

✓ The Ministry of External Affairs along with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) had jointly organized the first India-Africa Health Sciences Meet in 2016 in New Delhi
✓ It was founded on 26 May 2001 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and launched on 9 July 2002 in South Africa

**India and the United States - signed an Inter-Governmental Agreement for Exchange of Country-by-Country (CbC) Reports between the countries**

✓ The Agreement was signed by PC Mody, Chairman of the Central Board of Direct Taxes and Kenneth I Juster, Ambassador of the United States to India.

**India and the United States - signed the first amendment to the Statement of Guiding Principles (SGP) on triangular cooperation for global development on March 29, 2019**

✓ The SGP agreement was initially signed in November 2014
✓ It underscores the contribution of India-US partnership to meet the developmental aspirations of partner countries, particularly in Asia and Africa
✓ The first amendment to the SGP agreement extends its validity up to 2021

**India and Bolivia - signed eight Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) on March 29, 2019**

✓ The agreements were made in the fields of culture, Visa waiver arrangement for diplomats, the exchange between diplomatic academies, mining, space, traditional medicine, establishment of Centre of Excellence in IT and Bi-Oceanic Railway project
✓ President Ram Nath Kovind is on a three-day visit to the country
✓ During his visit, President Kovind was conferred with the highest State honour of Bolivia, “Condor de Los Andes en el Grado de Gran Collar” by the President of Bolivia, Evo Morales in Santa Cruz.
India offered $100 million Line of Credit to Bolivia for financing development projects
President Ram Nath Kovind is on a three-nation visit to Croatia, Bolivia and Chile from March 25 to April 4, 2019

CONFERENCES & SUMMITS

Pakistan, one of the founding members of Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) – boycotts the meeting of the Islamic grouping which began in Abu Dhabi on March 1, 2019

This was the first time in OIC’s 50-year history that the country’s foreign minister has stayed away from the meeting, even though its delegation participated in it
Incidentally, 50 years ago, the then Pakistan president Gen Yahya Khan had walked out of the 57-member country- OIC summit over the same issue — inclusion of India at the meet
Pakistan was protesting against the decision to invite Indian External Affairs Minister, Sushma Swaraj as guest of honour at the meeting

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

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

NITI Aayog - organised the FinTech Conclave in New Delhi on March 25, 2019

It was inaugurated by RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das and was attended by senior government officials and secretaries
It hosted more than 300 representatives from the leading Financial Institutions including HDFC Bank, IndusInd, ICICI Bank, SBI Card, Tata Capital and FinTechs
16th meeting of the U.S.-India Counter terrorism Joint Working Group and the Second session of the U.S.-India Designations Dialogue - held in Washington, DC, United States

✓ In this meet both the countries have decided to put efforts to address world’s most pressing counter-terrorism challenges, countering the financing and operations of terrorist organizations

**DEFENCE**

Air Marshal Raghunath Nambiar - appointed as the new chief of the IAF’s Western Air Command (WAC)

✓ He replaces Air Marshal C Hari Kumar, who retired after over 39 years in service
✓ WAC is the most important command out of the five regional commands of IAF
✓ It is spread from Ladakh to Bikaner, at an area of around 400,000 sq km with its headquarters in New Delhi
✓ It controls 18 important airbases like Srinagar, Leh, Thoise, Awantipur, Ambala, Amritsar, Halwara, Bikaner, Nal and Udhampur, among others
✓ Air Marshal Nambiar, an experimental test pilot who has flown 42 types of aircraft, has the distinction of having the most number of flying hours to his credit on Mirage-2000 fighters in the IAF
✓ Of his total 5,100 hours of flying experience, the senior officer has chalked over 2,300 hours on Mirage-2000s
✓ He was also the project test pilot for the indigenous Tejas Light Combat Aircraft.

India – signs a $3 billion deal with Russia - for leasing of a nuclear-powered attack submarine for the Indian Navy for a period of 10 years

✓ Under the pact, Russia will have to deliver the Akula class submarine, to be known as Chakra III, to the Indian Navy by 2025. It will be the third Russian submarine to be leased to the Indian Navy to strengthen its presence in the Indian Ocean region
Captain Anuradha Shukla and co-pilot Shirin Chandran - became the first women team to run a hovercraft

- The hovercraft H-197, with the two women officers, took off from the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) Mandapam station — off the Rameswaram coast — and reached Chennai on March 8, the International Women’s Day
- Anuradha Shukla, captain of the hovercraft, has been in service for nine years and is from Lucknow
- Her co-pilot was deputy commandant Shirin Chandran, who is from Kerala
- Apart from the two women officers, there were 10 male sailors on board

Indian Air Force - to set up the first ‘East coast Air surveillance base’ at the ‘unused’ World War-II airstrip at Sholavaram, around 26 kms from the Chennai city

- The move will help the forces to secure the 2,500 kilometre coastline covering Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha
- It would also support INS Rajali, the Indian Naval Station at Arakkonam, which carries out surveillance through Boeing P81, a long range maritime patrol aircraft

Defence Research and Defence Organisation (DRDO) - successfully test fired the Guided PINAKA from Pokhran ranges on March 11, 2019

DRDO - has successfully test-fired indigenously designed and developed ‘Man Portable Anti-Tank Guided Missile’ (MPATGM) in the deserts of Pokhran in Rajasthan

- This is the fourth such trial in the overall development of the MPATGM
- MPATGM is a third-generation anti-tank guided missile (ATGM), developed by DRDO in association with VEM Technologies Ltd
- MPATGM has a top attack capability, being fitted with high-explosive anti-tank warhead
- It has a maximum engagement range of about 2.5 kilometres
MPATGM are being developed to replace the French origin anti-tank guided missile ‘Milan’ and Soviet semi-automatic wire-guided missile ‘Konkur’ in service with the Indian army.

**AFINDEX-19, Africa-India Joint Field Training Exercise - between the Indian Army and 16 African nations will be conducted in Pune from March 18 to 27**

The exercise aims to train the participating contingents in Humanitarian Mine Assistance and Peace Keeping Operations under the United Nations Charter.

- Personnel of Maratha Light Infantry of the Indian Army will participate in the joint exercise along with 10 personnel each from the participating African nations.
- Contingents from Egypt, Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal, Sudan, South Africa, Tanzania, Namibia, Mozambique, Uganda, Niger & Zambia are part of the joint exercise together with officers from Rwanda, Democratic Republic of Congo and Madagascar as Observers.
- AFINDEX-19 is expected to greatly facilitate sharing of Indian Armed Forces experiences in United Nations Peace Keeping operations with countries in Africa.

**Al Nagah III, a bilateral joint exercise - is scheduled between India and Oman during March 12 to March 25 at Oman**

- The 14-day exercise, to be held at Jabel Al Akhdar Mountains in Oman, will enable both the armies to exchange expertise and experience in tactics, weapon handling and firing.
- The Indian Army contingent is to be represented by 10th Battalion of the Garhwal Rifles.
- Al Nagah I was held at Muscat, Oman in January 2015 and Al Nagah II at Himachal Pradesh, India in March 2017.

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

- It was launched at the Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL) in Mumbai on January 12, 2017 and since then it has been undergoing trials and tests.
- The INS Khanderi is a part of Project 75 of Indian Navy.
India purchased 6 submarines for $3 billion under Project 75 in 2005

India – to induct its first modern heavy-lift helicopter, the iconic American Chinook, next week

33rd edition of the India-Indonesia Coordinated Patrol (Ind-Indo Corpat) began on March 19, 2019

- The patrol will be held at Port Blair, Andaman & Nicobar Islands till April 4, 2019
- Under the coordinated patrol programme, the ships and aircrafts from both the countries would undertake patrolling on the respective sides of the 236 nautical-miles-long International Maritime Boundary line
- The patrolling would be conducted in three phases
- The closing ceremony will be hosted at Belawan, Indonesia
- Navies of both countries have been carrying out coordinated patrolling twice a year since 2002 in an effort to keep the Indian Ocean region (IOR) safe and secure for commercial shipping and international trade

‘Mitra Shakti-VI’, annual joint military exercise between India and Srilanka – to take place in Sri Lanka from March 26 to April 8, 2019 for the year 2018-19

- The Indian side will be represented by the troops from 1st battalion of the Bihar Regiment
- The key aim of the exercise is to build and promote close relations between armies of both the nations

Indian Air Force - to participate in Langkawi International Maritime Aero Expo, LIMA 2019 for the very first time

- The expo will take place in Langkawi, Malaysia from March 26-30, 2019.

Union Defence Ministry - has announced that permanent commission will be granted for Women in all the 10 branches of Indian Army
‘Red Flag 19’, Military drill exercise- was held in the US from March 3 to 16 at Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada

- It is an advanced aerial combat training exercise held several times a year by the United States Air Force
- The exercise offers realistic air-combat training for military pilots and other flight crew members from the U.S., NATO and other allied countries

Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Sunil Lanba – inaugurated Indian Navy's state of the art Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Training Facility on March 25, 2019 at INS Shivaji, Lonavala

'Mitra Shakti-VI' - annual joint exercise between the armies of India and Sri Lanka, begins at Diyatalawa in Sri Lanka on March 26, 2019.

- India has sent a 120 member strong contingent of army personnel including 11 officers to participate in the two-week long exercise.
- It is held in India and Sri Lanka alternatively
- The exercise will conclude on April 8, 2019

3rd edition of AUSINDEX 2019, a joint Naval exercise between India and Australia – to be held off the coast of Vishakhapatnam from April 2 to 16

- It will focus on anti-submarine warfare to ramp up bilateral naval cooperation in the strategic Indian Ocean region

INS Kadmatt, Anti-submarine warfare (ASW) corvette – to participate in the 15th edition of Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace Exhibition (LIMA-19)

- As an ASW Corvette, the ship carries on the legacy of her predecessor INS Kadmatt (P 78), which served the Indian Navy for 24 years from 23 December 1968 to 30 November 1992

Indian Army - inducted indigenously upgraded artillery gun ‘Dhanush’ on March 26, 2019 at the Gun Carriage Factory in Jabalpur
Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) had received the bulk production clearance for designing and manufacturing of 114 Guns in February 2018

Now, Gun Carriage Factory (GCF) Jabalpur has produced 6 Dhanush guns, which are ready for issuance to the Army

“Operation Sunrise”, a Military operation jointly coordinated by India and Myanmar armies - destroyed at least 10 camps belonging to an insurgent group in Myanmar

These groups have become a threat to India’s mega ‘Kaladan Project’ in the neighbouring country.
The Kaladan project connects Sittwe Port in Myanmar to the India-Myanmar border

The second ‘Joint logistics node’ of tri-services - has become operational at naval base in Mumbai, Maharashtra on March 29

INS Vijit - becomes the first Indian coast guard ship to visit the Indonesian port of Sabang

Commanded by Comdt T Ashish, the ship includes a team of 15 officers and 90 men
The visit aims to strengthen cooperation in the area of maritime security and safety between both the countries
'Vijit' meaning "Winner or Victorious" is the testimony of India's shipbuilding capabilities to safeguard country's maritime interests

Sary-Arka-Antiterror 2019, the first joint anti-terror military exercise of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) to be held at Sary Arka, Kazakhstan

This was announced at the during the 34th meeting of the RATS council held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan
SCO, a permanent intergovernmental international organization, was created in 1996 of which the China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Tajikistan were members
Later Uzbekistan was admitted to the grouping
In 2015 India and Pakistan were admitted to the grouping and they joined the it officially in 2017
Indian economy is expected to grow at 7.3% in calendar years 2019 and 2020, as per US-based rating agency, Moody’s forecast

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) - categorised the IDBI Bank Limited as a Private Sector Bank’ for regulatory purposes with effect from January 21, 2019

- The move follows the acquisition of the 51% of the total paid-up equity share capital of the IDBI bank by Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) in January 2019, following the approval of Union Cabinet on August 1, 2018
- The IDBI Bank was categorised in the sub-group ‘other public sector banks’ by the RBI in April 2005

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) also named the State Bank of India (SBI), the ICICI Bank and the HDFC Bank as Domestic Systemically Important Banks (D-SIBs)

- The D-SIBs category, announced since 2015, generally implies for banks that are too big to fail, means that they have to set aside more capital for their continued operation

SBI Yono App – to allow ‘Cardless’ and ‘Cashless’ withdrawals now

- To avoid the usage of plastic cards in payments and withdrawals, SBI has enabled cardless ATM withdrawals through its mobile App, Yono
- The bank is also facilitating payments at PoS (point of sale) terminals using the App
- Rajnish Kumar, SBI Chairman launched the YonoCash service in Mumbai on March 15
- The cardless withdrawal will currently available at 16,500 SBI ATMs in the country and would eventually be extended to all the 60,000 ATMs of the bank
- The service enables the user to generate dynamic code using the Yono app to withdraw money from any SBI ATM within 30 minutes of the code generation
✓ This facility can also be used by customers to send money
✓ Customers can start the cash withdrawal process on the YONO app and set a six-digit cash pin for the transaction

**Reserve Bank of India (RBI) - has eased business guidelines for ‘white label ATMs’ in the country to facilitate the increase in their revenue earnings**

✓ **New Guidelines**
  ✓ The White Label ATM Operators are now allowed to buy wholesale cash, above a threshold of 1 lakh pieces (and in multiples thereof) of any denomination, directly from the Reserve Bank or from any scheduled bank against full payment
  ✓ The White Label ATM Operators can also offer bill payment and Interoperable Cash Deposit services
  ✓ The White Label ATM Operators can also display advertisements pertaining to non-financial products or services anywhere within the WLA premises
  ✓ Banks can issue co-branded ATM cards in partnership with the authorised White Label ATM operators
  ✓ Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) set up, owned and operated by non-bank entities are called White Label ATMs
  ✓ These White Label ATM operators are entitled to receive a fee from the banks for the use of ATM resources by the bank’s customers
  ✓ They are not permitted to charge bank customer directly for the use of WLAs
  ✓ At present there are 8 White Label ATM operators in the country – AGS Transact Technologies Ltd, BTI Payments Pvt Ltd, Hitachi Payment Services Pvt Ltd, Muthoot Finance Ltd, RiddiSiddhi Bullions Ltd, SREI Infrastructure Finance Ltd, Tata Communications Payment Solutions Ltd, and Vakrangee Ltd

**Global Economic Outlook report of Fitch Ratings**

✓ India’s economic growth forecast for the next financial year 2019-20, starting from April 1 - was reduced to 6.8% from its previous estimate of 7%
✓ It had predicted Indian GDP growth at 6.8%, followed by 7.1% in 2021-22
Reserve Bank of India (RBI) - has fined Punjab National Bank (PNB) Rs 2 crore - for violation of compliance with regulatory directions regarding SWIFT operations

✓ Earlier in March 2019, RBI had imposed a total monetary fine of Rs 8 crore on three banks- Karnataka Bank, United Bank of India and Karur Vysya Bank for not complying with the directions on Swift messaging software

Bank of Baroda - develops an Agri-digital platform called ‘Baroda Kisan’

✓ It is designed to provide solutions for all major agricultural requirements with the use of technology

The Union Government - to infuse Rs 5042 crore into state-owned Bank of Baroda

✓ The merger of Dena Bank and Vijaya Bank with Bank of Baroda would be effective from April 1, 2019
✓ The government announced the merger in September 2018 - to create the third-largest lender after SBI and ICICI Bank

State Bank of India - has signed a pact with the Bank of China to boost business opportunities

✓ Through this pact, both SBI and BoC will be able to use the vast combined network to expand their businesses abroad.
✓ Both SBI and BoC will also gain direct access to their respective markets of operation

Exim Bank (Export-Import Bank of India) - signed a loan agreement of $83.11 million to Congo for financing three solar power projects at Congo

✓ It will support and finance three solar photovoltaic power projects with a total capacity of 35 megawatts in the three provinces — Karawa, Mbandaka, and Lusambo.
Reserve Bank of India (RBI) governor Shaktikanta Das called for ‘permanent status’ to Finance Commission

✓ RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das is also the member of the fifteenth finance commission
✓ The permanent status will also provide for continuity between the successive finance commissions

RANKINGS

QS World University rankings by subject 2019

✓ Quacquarelli Symonds, which is one of the academic ranking agencies, released the lists of the global ranking of university across 48 different subjects ranging from art and design to engineering disciplines
✓ The US institutions have topped the list in 28 disciplines, followed by UK institutions dominating on 13 disciplines
✓ Delhi University has secured 37th rank in the Development Studies subject while Jawaharlal Nehru University had been ranked in the 51-100 bracket in both sociology and history
✓ IIM Bengaluru is the only Indian institution which figures in the list of the top 100 places for business and management studies.

Swachh Survekshan 2019 Rankings

✓ The Swachh Survekshan awards 2019 were conferred by President Ram Nath Kovind at a ceremony in New Delhi.
✓ Indore has been awarded the cleanest city in the country for the third year in a row
✓ Bhopal has been declared as the cleanest capital
Ujjain has bagged the award for being the cleanest city in the population category of 3 lakh to 10 lakh.

Chhattisgarh has also emerged India’s top performer among states, followed by Jharkhand and Maharashtra.

Dewas in Madhya Pradesh has made the maximum progress among the municipal areas with more than one lakh population, by becoming the 10th cleanest municipal area in 2019 as compared to its last year’s rank of 68.

Rajkot has also made huge progress to become the ninth cleanest urban area as compared to its earlier rank of 35 in 2018.

The other big jump has been made by Ambikapur, which finished as the second cleanest municipal area this year as compared to its 11th rank in 2018.

Uttarakhand’s Gauchar has been adjudged as the “Best Ganga Town”

New Delhi Municipal Council area was given the 'Cleanest Small City' award

The 'Cleanest Big City' award has been bagged by Ahmedabad, while Raipur is the 'Fastest Moving Big City'.
ranking to 61 from 100 last year, and the city corporation got the Fastest Mover State Capital award

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>City name</th>
<th>Score out of 5,000</th>
<th>What brought about a change</th>
<th>HOW CHENNAI FARES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Tiruchirappalli</td>
<td>3,414.37</td>
<td>Door-to-door garbage collection</td>
<td>2019 score 2018 score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Coimbatore</td>
<td>3,411.64</td>
<td>Night conservancy along 11 arterial bus route roads</td>
<td>Service level progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>Chennai</td>
<td>3,118.03</td>
<td>Twin color-coded dustbins along 11 bus route roads and Marina Beach</td>
<td>Direct observation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>115</td>
<td>Dindigul</td>
<td>2,781.06</td>
<td>Decentralization using composting units and bio-methanation plants</td>
<td>Citizen feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120</td>
<td>Erode</td>
<td>2,755.47</td>
<td></td>
<td>Certification NIL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cities that improved ranking:
- Chennai, Dindigul, Nagroai

- Trichy and Coimbatore, which ranked 13th and 16th last year, had gone down to 39 and 40 this year
- Swachh Sarvekshan
- This is the fourth such annual ranking by the government, conducted by the housing and urban affairs ministry.
- Every year, cities and towns across India are awarded with the title of 'Swachh Cities' on the basis of their cleanliness and sanitation drive as a part of the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan that was launched in 2014
- The survey of 2019 involved 4237 cities and over 6.53 lakh survey locations in which 64 lakh people provided their feedback

**India, world’s largest consumer of gold - has the 11th largest gold reserve in the world**
As per the latest report of the World Gold Council, current gold holding in India is pegged at 607 tonnes.

**Mercer’s 2019 Quality of Living Ranking**

Vienna, capital of Austria – topped the ranking for the 10th year in a row, followed by Zurich at second spot.

Top five cities in the ranking were unchanged from last year’s edition, though Vancouver rose to joint third from fifth.

Indian cities of New Delhi (162), Kolkata (160), Mumbai (154), Chennai (151), Bengaluru (149), Pune (143) and Hyderabad (143) were ranked in the bottom section among the 231 cities ranked on liveability.
Globally, Iraq’s capital Baghdad is at the bottom of the list due to an economic, security and societal crisis.

Safest City
Luxembourg was the safest city in the world
In 105th place, Chennai ranks as the Asia-Pacific region’s safest city, while Karachi (226) is the least safe
The comprehensive survey is done with many factors being considered like housing, crime, political stability, personal safety, leisure, air pollution, infrastructure, health system, education and economy.

Climate Vulnerability Index for India

The study was undertaken in the 12 Himalayan states viz. Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, West Bengal, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Jammu and Kashmir
The vulnerability was measured on a scale 0-1 with 1 indicating the highest possible level of vulnerability
Rankings of states with their vulnerability scores
- Assam – 0.72 (Most vulnerable)
- Mizoram – 0.71
- Jammu & Kashmir - 0.62
- Manipur - 0.59
- Meghalaya and West Bengal -both 0.58
- Nagaland -0.57
- Himachal Pradesh and Tripura -both 0.51
- Arunachal Pradesh -0.47
- Uttarakhand -0.45
- Sikkim – 0.42 (Least vulnerable)

Department of Science and Technology has decided to commission a study to assess the climate risks faced by States in India, following the release of index
The vulnerability score was calculated based on 8 parameters such as percentage of area in districts under forests, yield variability of food grain, population density, female literacy rate, infant mortality rate, percentage of population below poverty line (BPL), average mandays under MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act), and the area under slope > 30%
For the first time in 30 years, 3 countries have tied for the World’s costliest city tag.
Singapore, topping the rankings for five years, is joined by Paris and Hongkong in the latest list

The annual index compares the prices of everyday items in 133 cities around the world, including education, recreation and utility bills

**World Happiness Report – released by UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network**

- Finland has been named the happiest country for the second consecutive year
- None of the world’s major economic powerhouses made it to the top 10
- India has witnessed a drop with a 140th place this year compared with the 133rd place in 2018
- India featured in the list of five countries that had the largest drop since 2005-2008 in the index, along with Yemen, Syria, Botswana and Venezuela
- The survey covered around 156 nations around the globe for the rankings
- The report ranks countries on six key variables that support well-being – income, freedom, trust, healthy life expectancy, social support and generosity

**World’s Top 100 Most Influential People in Climate Policy for 2019 – Released by Apolitical, a global network for Governments to solve the challenges**

- Union Ministers, Piyushgoyal and Dr Harsh Vardhan are among the eight Indians who have been named in the rankings
- Union Minister for environment, forest and climate change, Dr Harsh Vardhan has focussed on motivating scientists to develop new technologies to address social and environmental issues.
- Other Indians featured in the list –
  - MuktaTilak
  - JyotiKirit Parikh
  - SunitaNarain
  - Vandana Shiva
  - UpendraTripathy
  - VarshiniPrakash
Pune mayor, Mukta Tilak, who is the wife of freedom fighter Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak’s great grandson Shailesh Tilak.

Jyoti Kirit Parikh, executive director of Integrated Research and Action for Development, a research and policy analysis institute focusing on sustainable development

- In 2007, she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize as a member of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

Sunita Narain, a well-renowned environmentalist and political activist

Vandana Shiva, an environmental activist, who focuses on promoting fair and sustainable agriculture

Upendra Tripathy, the director general of the International Solar Alliance, a coalition of over 100 countries dedicated to increasing the use of solar power and reducing reliance on fossil fuels

Varshini Prakash, Co-founder and Executive Director, Sunrise Movement

**World Economic Forum’s Global Energy Transition index 2019**

- India has jumped two positions to be ranked 76th on the annual index
- Released by the Geneva-based forum on March 25, 2019, it ranks 115 economies on their ability to balance energy security and access with environmental sustainability and affordability
- Sweden retained its top spot on the list, followed by Switzerland and Norway in the second and third positions respectively.
- Among the major economies, the UK is ranked at the 7th position, Singapore at 13th, Germany at 17th, Japan at 18th and the United States at the 27th position

**‘Open Signal’s hottest city for 4G Availability’ – A Report**

- Top 5 Cities in the country in terms of highest 4G availability

**Mukesh Ambani - tops ‘Forbes List of World’s Richest Sports Team Owners’**

- He owns ‘Red Bull Toro Rosso Honda’, **Formula One** team ‘Red Bull Racing’ and MLS club ‘New York Red Bulls’
**APPOINTMENT**

- **Scientist Ajit Kumar Mohanty** - was appointed director of Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC), the country’s premier multi-disciplinary nuclear research facility on March 6.
  - He is at present director, physics group in BARC and director, Saha Institute of Nuclear Physics.
  - The appointment will be for a period of 3 years.

- **Government** - has appointed M R Kumar as Chairman of Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) for a period of 5 years.
  - He replaces V K Sharma, who retired in December 2018.
  - Kumar was earlier the zonal manager of the northern zone of LIC.

- **US Senate** – confirmed Indian-American ‘Neomi Rao’ as a judge on the DC Circuit Court of Appeals.
  - She replaces Brett Kavanaugh, who was elevated to the Supreme Court.
  - Rao currently heads up the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs at the Office of Management and Budget.
  - Rao is also the first Parsi Zoroastrian to be appointed to an appellate court.

- **The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)** - has appointed Indian-American television personality and food expert, Padma Lakshmi as its new Goodwill Ambassador.
  - In her new role, the award-winning author will help mobilise support for the Sustainable Development Goals with a focus on fighting inequality and discrimination in the world.
  - Padma Lakshmi is an Indian-American author, actress, model, television host, and executive producer.

- **Pankaj Kumar** – has been named as the new CEO of Sterlite Copper.
He replaces P Ramnath, who retired from the company and will now support the smelter and its affairs as a senior advisor.

Sterlite’s Tuticorin plant was shut down by the Tamil Nadu Government for its pollution-related activities in last May following the protests by locals, which left 13 people dead on May 22 in a police firing.

**Former finance secretary, Hasmukh Adhia - appointed as the chancellor of Gujarat Central University**

- He will hold the position for a period of 5 years
- Hasmukh Adhia was a Gujarat cadre IAS officer and was appointed as the secretary in the Department of Financial Services in 2014
- Central Universities were established in India by the Ministry of Human Resource and Development under the Central Universities Act 2009 to address regional imbalances in higher educational facilities in 12 states.
- The Act provided for the establishment of one new central university each in Bihar, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu.
- The act also sought to convert Guru Ghasidas Vishwavidyala in Chhattisgarh, Harisingh Gour Vishwavidyalaya in Sagar (Madhya Pradesh) and Hemwati Nandan Bahuguna Garhwal University in Uttarakhand into Central universities.
- Further, through the Central universities Amendment Act 2014 another central university was established at Bihar and another Central University was established in Andhra Pradesh in 2018.

**Justice Pinaki Chandra Ghose, retired Supreme Court Judge – to be named India’s first Lokpal ombudsman**

- Justice Ghose retired as the SC Judge on May 27, 2017
- He has been a member of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) since June 29, 2017.

**Former Police officer Archana Ramasundaram is also set to be named as one of the non-judicial member of the anti-graft body**
- India has nominated member of NitiAyog, Ramesh Chandra - to head Food and Agricultural Organisation

- P V Ramesh - appointed as the director-general of the National Archives of India (NAI)

- Pramod Sawant – succeeds Manohar Parrikar as Goa’s Chief Minister
  - He was administered the oath of office and secrecy by Goa Governor Mridula Sinha

- Maharashtra – appoints a transgender person as Poll ambassador for the first time
  - Gauri
  - Sawant, a transgender activist was appointed as election ambassador to create awareness voters and to improve the voting percentage in the state
  - She was named as one among the 12 ‘state icons’ for the general elections

- RituBeri, acclaimed Indian fashion designer – appointed as the Cultural and Tourism Ambassador of Uzbekistan in India by the Ministry of Tourism of Uzbekistan
  - She is the first Indian to be appointed to this position
  - The appointment recognizes her contribution towards bringing the two countries together by way of fusing cultures in her clothes line

- Neomi Jehangir Rao, a prominent Indian-American lawyer - has been sworn in as US circuit judge for the District of Columbia Circuit Court of Appeals
  - Thus, she becomes the second Indian-American after Sri Srinivasan to be a part of the powerful court considered next only to the US Supreme Court
  - She was sworn in by US Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas in the Roosevelt Room of the White House
  - US President, Trump had also participated in the swearing-in ceremony
Vice Admiral Karambir Singh, chief of Eastern Naval Command - to head the Navy after Admiral Sunil Lanba retires on May 31, 2019

- He will now be the Navy chief till November 2021
- Vice Admiral Singh will be the first helicopter pilot to become the Navy chief
- He had earlier served as the flag officer commanding Maharashtra and Gujarat Naval Area, director-general of Project Seabird, deputy chief and vice-chief of Naval staff.

Retired Justice DK Jain, ombudsman of the BCCI (Board of Control for Cricket in India) - has been appointed as BCCI’s ad-hoc Ethics Officer till the permanent appointment takes place

- He will look into all the conflict of interest cases

Sanjay Jayavarthanavelu, chairman and managing director, Lakshmi Machine Works, Coimbatore - has been elected chairman of CII Southern Region for the year 2019-20

- He was the deputy chairman of CII Southern Region in 2018-19.
- He was also the chairman of CII Tamil Nadu State Council during the year 2006-07
- Satish Reddy, chairman, Dr Reddy’s Laboratories Ltd, Hyderabad, has been elected deputy chairman for the year 2019-20
- He is a Member of CII National Council from 2014-19

Kenichi Ayukawa – reappointed as MD and CEO of Maruti Suzuki for a third three-year term

- He played a major role in expanding the company's market share beyond 50%

AWARDS

DRDO Chairman, G Satheesh Reddy and Arizona-based Raytheon Missile Systems’ Rondell J Wilson – to receive the 2019 Missile Systems Award
The awards were announced by the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA), the Virginia-based professional society of aerospace engineering.

President of India, Ram Nath Kovind - honoured 41 women achievers and three institutions - at the Nari Shakti Puraskar function on International Women’s day at Rashtrapati Bhawan in New Delhi.

Nari Shakti Puraskar 2018, the highest civilian honour for women, recognized the efforts of 44 awardees out of around 1,000 nominations received by the Women and Child Development Ministry.

Vice-President M Venkaiah Naidu - conferred an honorary doctorate by Costa Rica’s University of Peace on March 8.

The doctoral honour is for his contribution “to the rule of law, democracy and sustainable development in India.”

Naidu is the first Indian to receive an honorary doctorate from this University.

President of India, Ram Nath Kovind - conferred Gallantry and Distinguished Service awards to armed forces personnel at Rashtrapati Bhawan in New Delhi on March 14, 2018.

This year, the Gallantry awards included 3 Kirti Chakras and 15 Shaurya Chakras, among which two Kirti Chakras and one Shaurya Chakra was given posthumously.

The distinguished service awards included 15 ParamVishisht Seva Medals, one UttamYudh Seva Medals and 25 AtiVishisht Seva Medals.

President Ramnath Kovind - awarded ‘National Grassroots Innovators’ Awards at Grambharti near Gandhinagar in Gujarat.

The first prize in Veterinary, Herbal medication for coccidiosis was presented to Periyasami Ramasami of Salem, Tamil Nadu.

Prakash Singh Raghuvanshi from Uttar Pradesh was awarded lifetime achievement award for his innovations in new varieties of agriculture crops.
✓ The President also inaugurated the exhibition of the Festival of Innovation and Entrepreneurship (FINE), organised by the National Innovation Foundation in association with the department of science and technology - Government of India.

◆ **Ministry of Tourism, Government of India - has won the First Prize in the category of TV Cinema Spot at the prestigious international Golden City Gate**

✓ The promotional films/television commercials produced as part of its Incredible India 2.0 Campaign by the Ministry of Tourism have received the awards
✓ Golden City Gate Tourism Multi-media Awards are the annual awards for the various categories related to the Tourism and Hospitality sectors
✓ The patron of the award is the Federal Association of German Film and Av Producers e.V. in Wiesbaden
✓ Incredible India 2.0 Campaign is a campaign of the Ministry of Tourism to promote Indian Tourism
✓ It has thematic promotions including Commercials on Yoga, Wellness, Wildlife, Luxury and Cuisine

◆ **Raghuram Rajan, former governor of RBI - has been chosen for the ‘Yashwantrao Chavan National Award 2018’ for his contribution to economic development**

✓ He will be presented with the award at the 106th birth anniversary of Yashwantrao Chavan on March 12
✓ Raghuram Rajan is credited with steering Indian economy during turbulent times during the post-global financial crisis period
✓ He had also served as the chief economist of IMF and had famously predicted the 2008 financial crisis in 2005
✓ The award is instituted by Yashwantrao Chavan Pratishthan, to honour individuals and institutions for their outstanding contribution to national integration, and social and economic development
✓ Yashwantrao Chavan was the first Chief Minister of State of Maharashtra
✓ He has also served as Deputy Prime Minister of India in the cabinet of Prime Minister Charan Singh between 1979-1980
He had participated in the Non-cooperation movement and Quit India movement.

**Priyanka Dubey, Journalist - has been named for the ‘Chameli Devi Jain Award’ for an Outstanding Woman Journalist for the year 2018**

- The jury honoured Priyanka Dubey, a bilingual correspondent with the BBC, for her multi-faceted, investigative and interrogative reportage.
- The award is named after the freedom fighter, Chameli Devi Jain who held demonstrations against the foreign goods on the call of Gandhiji and got arrested.

**Japanese Architect, Arata Isozaki - wins the Pritzker Prize 2019**

- He is the 46th awardee and eighth architect from Japan to win the prestigious honour, which will be given in May in France.
- Pritzker Prize is an annual award to honour a living architect or architects whose structures demonstrates a combination of those qualities of talent, vision and commitment.
- It was constituted by Pritzker family of Chicago through their Hyatt Foundation in 1979 and is often referred to as “architecture’s Nobel”.
- Earlier awardees of the coveted prize include India’s Balkrishna Doshi.

**Karen Uhlenbeck - becomes the first woman to win Abel prize, the equivalent of Nobel Prize in Mathematic**

- On March 19, Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters awarded the top most prize in the field of Maths to Karen, an emeritus professor at the University of Texas at Austin.
- Uhlenbeck lives in Princeton, New Jersey and is a visiting associate at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton.
- Maryam Mirzakhani is the only woman to receive a Fields medal in 2014.
- The Abel prize was set up in 2003, named after the Norwegian mathematician Niels Hendrik Abel.
The sole Indian recipient of the Able Prize is Indian American mathematician S. R. SrinivasaVaradhan, for his contribution to probability theory.

TVS Motor Company - has bagged the international sustainability award ‘Green Era Award for Sustainability’ in Lisbon, Portugal.

Tata Motors also won the Quality and Business Excellence Award for the Product quality.

The Green Era Award for Sustainability was awarded at the Green Economy Forum held at Lisbon.

Indian Air Force Wing Commander, Abhinandan Varthaman - has been chosen for the first ‘Bhagwan Mahavir Ahimsa Puraskar’, constituted by the Akhil Bharatiya Digambar Jain Mahasamiti.

The award which carries a cash prize of Rs. 2.51 lakh, a memento and a citation will be presented on April 17 the Mahavir Jayanti.

Odisha State Disaster Management Authority - has bagged the SKOCH Award, 2018 for its remarkable achievements in the field of disaster management.

The award was presented at the 56th SKOCH Summit held at New Delhi.

It had received Order-of-merit in the Gold category for constructing 879 multipurpose cyclone and flood shelters which played a key role in saving human lives during Cyclone Phailin in 2013.

These awards are the recognition of Odisha becoming a model state in disaster management and risk mitigation since the 1999 Super Cyclone.

Brazilian physicist and astronomer, Marcelo Gleiser - has been awarded the 2019 Templeton Prize for his work blending science and spirituality.

Templeton Prize was established in 1972 by the late Sir John Templeton.

The Prize aims to honour outstanding individuals who has made an exceptional contribution to affirming life’s spiritual dimension whether through insight, discovery, or practical works.
Peter Tabichi, a rural teacher from Kenya - has won the prestigious Global Teacher Prize 2019 which honours the world’s best teacher

- Peter Tabichi is a maths and physics teacher at Keriko secondary school in Pwani Village in Kenya’s Rift valley
- He gives away 80% of his income to help the poorest students at the poorly-equipped and overcrowded school who could not afford uniforms and books
- His students have taken part in international science competitions and won an award from the Royal Society of Chemistry
- SwaroopRawal, an Indian teacher at Lavad Primary School, Gujarat and various other schools, was also there in contention for the award

President Ram Nath Kovind - was honoured with Croatia's highest civilian order, The Grand Order of the King of Tomislav, on March 26, 2019

- The President is currently embarking eight-day three-nation visit Croatia, Bolivia and Chile
- He had also participated in the India-Croatia Economic Forum meeting
- President Kovind is the first-ever Indian head of state to visit Croatia
- Croatia declared independence from Yugoslavia On 25 June 1991

Yoshua Bengio, Geoffrey Hinton and YannLeCun, Pioneers of Artificial Intelligence technology – rewarded with the 2018 ACM A.M.Turing Award, an honour that is the technology industry’s version of the Nobel Prize

- The winners will share $1mn prize funded entirely by Google
- Hinton is VP and Engineering Fellow of Google.
- He is also a faculty member in the University of Toronto and Brain researcher of Google.
- LeCun is VP and Chief AI Scientist at Facebook and a professor at New York University (NYU)
- Bengio is Scientific Director at Mila and has signed deals with IBM and Microsoft

Singapore’s Changi Airport - named as the world’s best aviation hub for the seventh time in a row
Tokyo International Airport was ranked at the second sport whereas Incheon International Airport ranked at the third spot.

Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport, New Delhi climbed 8 places to rank at 59th Position

Nobel Prize-winning economist Amartya Sen - has been honoured with the prestigious Bodley Medal, the highest honour bestowed by the University of Oxford’s world-famous Bodleian Libraries

The award recognizes his contribution in literature, culture, science, and communication.

In 1998, He was awarded the prestigious Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences for his work in welfare economics and social choice theory

The past winners of the Bodley Medal includes physicist Stephen Hawking, inventor of the World Wide Web Tim Berners-Lee and others

The Indian Green Building Council - awarded the Gold Rating to Vijayawada railway station, which is known as the busiest railway junctions in India for Green Measures

This Railway Station was ranked fourth in the Indian Railways for cleanliness among A-1 category stations

It has 100% LED lighting, five star rated fans, pumps, and motors and solar water heating systems.

With the help of the Environment Directorate of Indian Railways, the IGBC-CII developed the Green Railway Stations Rating System

Manu Gulati, a Delhi government school teacher - has been honoured with the ‘Martha Farrell award for Excellence in Women’s Empowerment 2019’

She was awarded a prize money of Rs 1,50,000 for promoting gender quality and women’s empowerment

She collaborates with America India Foundation’s “Market Aligned Skills Training Program”.

The Awards were first awarded in 2017 in the memory of Dr. Martha Farrell, a prominent activist for gender equality and women’s empowerment.

- He was awarded Padma Shri in 2004 apart from other awards, including Sahitya Akademi Award, Akashvani National Award and Uttarakhand Gaurav Samman.
- It was instituted in 1991 and given by the KK Birla Foundation, carrying a cash prize of Rs 4 lakhs.
- Jaguri was picked for the 28th Vyas Samman 2018 by a jury headed by eminent littérateur Vishwanath Prasad Tiwari.
- Apart from the Vyas Samman, the KK Birla Foundation every year presents the Saraswati Samman, which carries a prize of Rs 15 lakh.
- Saraswati Samman is given to an outstanding literary work by an Indian citizen in any of the languages mentioned in Schedule VIII of the Constitution.

Dr. Rajendra Kumar Joshi, the founder and chairman of the RUJ Group - has been conferred with the prestigious ‘Pravasi Bharatiya Samman’ Award

- He was awarded by the Embassy of India in Switzerland, on behalf of the President of India with a commendation letter and a medal.
- The award honours his magnificent achievements in the field of science, education and medicine.
- The award is the highest honour for the NRIs, given by the President of India, for their contributions in bringing glory to India.

Brazilian physicist and astronomer Marcelo Gleiser (60) - was awarded 2019 Templeton Prize for his work on blending science and spirituality

- It makes him first Latin American to win this award of $1.4 million prize money.
- Mother Teresa was the first winner of the award in 1973.
- Some of its other recipients include Dr Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1975), Dalai Lama (2012) etc.
- In 2018, it was awarded to King Abdullah II of Jordan.
- Templeton Prize is awarded annually on person for outstanding his/her contributions in affirming life's spiritual dimension, whether through insight, discovery, or practical works.
Indian Writer Raghu Karnad - has won the Windham-Campbell Prize $165,000 under the non-fiction category for his debut book, The Farthest Field: An Indian Story Of The Second World War

Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh – gave away the 2nd edition of BusinessLine Changemaker Awards, instituted by The Hindu ‘BusinessLine’, leading business daily in New Delhi

✓ The awards were instituted last year by BusinessLine to commemorate its 25th year of publication

PERSONALITIES

IAF’s Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman – crosses over via the Wagah-Attari border to India – 60 hours after taken captive in PoK after being shot down while chasing an intruding Pakistani F-16

✓ He was accompanied to the border by Group Captain Joy Thomas Kurien, India’s air attaché in Islamabad, and by a director of the Pakistan Foreign Office
✓ After entering the country, he was immediately taken to the airport and flown in an IAF Embraer jet to New Delhi.
✓ As per protocol, he will first undergo a thorough medical examination to ascertain the extent of his injuries due to the ejection and subsequent beating by a mob, when he bailed out from his MiG-21 and landed in PoK

Justice A K Sikri – retires as the Supreme Court Judge after a six-year tenure

✓ Justice Sikri delivered important judgments, including mandatory linking of Aadhaar with PAN and the litigation war between the Centre and AAP over controlling services in the National Capital Territory
✓ Justice Sikri intends to take up arbitration proceedings post-retirement
Krishna Kumari Kohli, Pakistan’s first female senator from the Hindu Dalit community – became the first Hindu woman to chair Pakistan’s senate session on the occasion of International Women’s Day on March 8

- Krishna, 40, was elected as senator in March 2018 after spending many years working for the rights of bonded labourers in Muslim-majority Pakistan.
- She is the first Thari Hindu woman to be elected to the Pakistan senate

A stray dog, Mera – becomes the first dog to scale a Himalayan peak

Mera, who appears to be a cross between a Tibetan mastiff and a Himalayan sheepdog, scaled Baruntse, a 7000-metre high peak in the Himalayas just south of Mount Everest.

- The dog crossed a glacier and befriended other climbers on a mountaineering expedition in Nepal led by the group’s leader Don Wargowsky
- Although the team was unable to fly the dog out of Nepal, it was adopted by the expedition’s base camp manager, Kaji Sherpa

Lawyer-Activist Sudha Bharadwaj – has been honoured in the 6th Harvard Law International Women’s Day portrait exhibition

- Along with her, Supreme Court lawyer ‘Menaka Guruswamy’, instrumental in the campaign for the decriminalization of homosexuality in India was also honoured
- The two Indian women feature in the list of 21 women recognized for ‘astounding contributions of women around the world to the areas of law and policy’

Kane Tanaka from Fukuoka, Japan - has been officially confirmed as the oldest person living at 116 years 66 days old as of 9 March 2019

- Kane was born prematurely on 2 January 1903, the same year the Wright brothers became the first to achieve powered flight!
India’s Soumya Swaminathan - was promoted from the position of Deputy Director-General to Chief Scientist in World Health Organisation (WHO)

✓ Swaminathan was one among the three Deputy Director-Generals supporting the Director-General in overseeing all programmes
✓ She was the first Indian to hold the coveted post

Young Global Leaders 2019 List – Released by The Forum of Young Global Leaders, the World Economic Forum’s foundation for remarkable leaders under 40

✓ Andhra Pradesh IT minister Nara Lokesh, BJP MP Poonam Mahajan, Xiaomi India head Manu Kumar Jain, Telangana government’s Chief Innovation Officer Phanindra Sama, Save Life Foundation’s Piyush Tewari and Kaleidofin’s co-Founder Sucharita Mukherjee featured from India in this year’s list
✓ Young Global Leaders participate in the Annual Meeting of the New Champions, established in 2007 and known informally as “Summer Davos”, alongside Global growth companies and other delegations to the World Economic Forum

Priyanka Chopra Jonas, Indian Actress - named in the list of "50 Most Powerful Women in Entertainment" of the USA Today

Indian-origin Jagmeet Singh - has created history in Canada by entering House of Commons for first time

✓ Jagmeet is the first non-white leader of a major opposition party in the country to enter the Canadian Parliament
✓ The 40-year-old was elected as the leader of the New Democratic Party in the federal by-elections held in February
✓ His first speech addressed the victims of horrific New Zealand shootings

Silver Medalist in Paralympic high jump, Girish Gowda - has been appointed as the ambassador of Karnataka Lok Sabha Elections 2019

✓ He secured Silver medal for India in men’s high jump F-42 category during 2012 Summer Paralympics games held in London
With that, he became the **first Indian** to win medal in this category

Leading London-based NRI industrial tycoons, the Hinduja family has topped the ‘Asian Rich List 2019’ for the sixth successive year with £25.2 billion (over Rs 2.3 lakh crore) wealth

- Steel magnates, Lakshmi Mittal and his son Aditya Mittal were ranked second with £11.2 billion (over Rs 1 lakh crore) wealth
- The List ranks 101 wealthiest Asians living in UK

**Former US president Jimmy Carter** – becomes the longest living chief executive and President in American history at 94 years and 172 days on March 22

- He was elected as the 39th President of the United States
- He overtakes the lifespan of former President George H.W. Bush, who died last November at the age of 94 years, 171 days.
- Mr. Carter has enjoyed the longest post-presidency in American history after leaving the White House in 1981.

### BOOKS AND AUTHORS

- **“Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas”**, a compilation of select speeches delivered by PM Narendra Modi
  - Released by - Union finance minister Arun Jaitley
  - Day - March 8, International Women’s Day

- **“Indian Fiscal Federalism”** authored by Dr. Y.V. Reddy and G.R. Reddy
  - **Released by - Shaktikanta Das**, Governor of Reserve Bank of India
  - Launch addressed by - **NK Singh**, Chairman of the 15th Finance Commission
  - Venue – New Delhi
  - Dr. Y.V. Reddy has served as the Governor of RBI during 2003-2008 and as the Chairman of the 14th Finance Commission of India.
  - Dr. G.R. Reddy is currently serving as the Advisor (Finance) to the Government of Telangana.
“Every Vote Counts” – authored by Navin Chawla

- Launch venue – New Delhi
- Launch by – Hamid Ansari, former Vice President of India
- Navin Chawla was the former Chief Election Commissioner of India

**SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT**

ISRO – ties up with France’s CNES - to develop a constellation of satellites and setting up a maritime surveillance centre in Indian ocean region by May 2019

- The development comes a year after French President Emmanuel Macron and Prime Minister Narendra Modi unveiled a 'Joint Vision for Space Cooperation' during the former's visit here in March 2018

NASA – to conduct first all-women spacewalk on March 29

- The spacewalk will be carried out by American astronauts Anne McClain and Christina Koch at the International Space Station
- The spacewalk titled ‘Expedition 59’ is being held to replace batteries that were installed last summer
- It is expected to last for about seven hours
- A total of 213 spacewalks have been performed at the International Space Station since December 1998

A “Dusseldorf patient” – becomes the 3rd ‘HIV’ infected person to be cured following a bone marrow transplantation

A new reading-tutor app ‘Bolo’ – was launched by SundaiPichai, the CEO of Google at a Municipal school in DN Nagar, Andheri, Mumbai on March 8

AstroSat, Indian multi-wavelength space observatory – observes a new population of ultraviolet stars in the globular cluster NGC 2808

NASA's Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter (LRO) spacecraft - has observed water molecules moving around the dayside of Moon
• It was identified by the **Lyman Alpha Mapping Project** (LAMP), an instrument aboard the LRO, tightly bound to the regolith until surface temperatures peak near lunar noon
• Lunar water can potentially be used by astronauts to make fuel or to use for radiation shielding or thermal management

**Emma HarukaIwao, an employee of Google** – entered into the Guinness Book of World Records for calculating the value of ‘Pi’ to the most number of digits

• On the eve of Pi day observed on March 14, Iwao computed the famous number to 31.4 trillion decimal places using Google’s cloud computing infrastructure
• Earlier the record was held with 9 trillion digits of the value of ‘Pi’
• Pi is the ratio of the circumference of a circle to its diameter
• It’s an irrational number, meaning there’s no end to how many digits can be calculated

**DRDO** - has developed a range of combat drugs that can extend the golden hour till the trooper is shifted to hospital

• This range of drugs can bring down the death toll during instances like the recent Pulwama Terrorist Attack
• The spectrum includes bleeding wound sealants, super absorptive dressings and glycerinated salines, ensuring soldiers do not suffer from unwanted blood loss while being taken to better healthcare from war zones
• Glycerated saline, a battlefield intravenous fluid that does not freeze till -18 degrees Celsius and is useful in handling trauma cases in high altitude areas

**China’s Long March Rocket Series** - has successfully completed its 300th launch

• The 300th launch was completed by putting a new communication satellite into orbit through Long March-3B Rocket
• The Long March-1 carrier rocket launched the country’s first satellite, Dongfanghong-1, into orbit on April 24, 1970
• A total of 17 types of Long March carrier rockets have been developed and put into use since then
The rocket series built by China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation was responsible for about 96.4% of all the launch missions in China. The Long March rockets completed 37 consecutive successful launches, ranking a global first for the highest number of successful launches in 2018.

Google - has unveiled a new app ‘Bolo’ for primary school children to learn read in English and Hindi.

- The app uses Google’s speech recognition and text-to-speech technology.
- Through an animated character Diya, the app encourages children to read stories aloud.
- The app has access to 100 stories in Hindi and English.
- Google has already piloted the Bolo App in about 200 villages in Uttar Pradesh, which showed an improvement of 64% in children’s reading ability within 3 months.

Russian spacecraft, Soyuz – successfully reaches International Space Station (ISS).

NASA’s OSIRIS-Rex mission - discovers evidence of water, particle plumes on asteroid Bennu.

- Bennu is a carbonaceous asteroid in the Apollo group and is a potentially hazardous object.
- It has a more rugged surface than expected, posing a challenge for the mission team to collect sample materials.
- The mission began orbiting the asteroid on December 31 last year and is expected to return samples to Earth in 2023.

Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) and France Space Agency CNES - have signed agreement to set up a maritime surveillance centre in the country.
As per the agreement, they will build a constellation of satellites to identify and track ships in the Indian Ocean
CNES will also train Indian Scientists for the ‘Gaganyaan’ project at the Toulouse Space Centre in France
India had earlier signed agreement with Russia also for the Gaganyaan project

**Indian Space Research organisation (ISRO) - has launched the ‘Young Scientist Programme’ (YuvaVigyaniKaryakram)**

- It seeks to impart basic knowledge on space technology, space science and applications to the young ones to arouse their interest
- ISRO will select over 100 students from each state/union territory to participate in the programme and give them practical experience of how satellites are built
- It is a two-week residential training programme to be held each year during summer holidays for students who are studying in class 9
- The students from rural areas will be given special weightage in the selection
- All the expenses of travelling and boarding will be funded entirely by ISRO
- The first such centre was established in Agartala of Tripura

**ISRO - to launch EMISAT, an advanced electronic intelligence satellite, on April 1**

- It was developed by DRDO
- It will track enemy radars and sensors, can find out exact topography of enemy areas and identify the ‘active’ communication mobile devices in an area
- The 436-kg satellite will be placed in the 763-km orbit, to monitor hostile countries like Pakistan

**Chandrayaan-2 – to carry NASA’s Laser retroreflector arrays to Moon**

- Besides Chandrayaan-2, Israel’s Beresheet lander, touching down Moon on April 11, 2019, will also be carrying the reflector arrays to the Moon
- Chandrayaan-2 is the second moon mission of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)
✓ It will study the conditions of Moon and collect data of its
topography, mineralogy and exosphere.
✓ Chandrayaan-1 was India's first mission to the moon
✓ It was launched by Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) on
  October 22, 2008 from the Satish Dhawan Space Center in
  Sriharikota, India, aboard a Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle rocket.
✓ The mission was concluded on August 29, 2009

◆ ISRO – to send 29 satellites, including the primary payload EMISAT,
on April 1

✓ They will take off from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in
  Sriharikota onboard PSLV-C45 (Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle)

◆ Researchers at the GRAPES-3 muon telescope facility in Ooty - have
  measured a thundercloud’s electrical potential

◆ Astronomers from the University of Texas at Austin, in partnership
  with Google - have discovered two hidden planets in the data
  collected by the Kepler space telescope

✓ The 2 newly discovered planets were named as K2-293b and K2-294b
✓ They both are hot planets, have short orbital periods and are
  slightly larger than Earth
✓ They are discovered from the Kepler’s extended mission, called K2
✓ K2-293b – It orbits a star 1,300 light-years away in the constellation
  Aquarius
✓ K2-294b – It orbits a star 1,230 light-years away, also located in
  Aquarius.

◆ NASA’s Anne McClain and Nick Hague - took a spacewalk on 22nd
  March to replace ageing batteries on the International Space Station
  (ISS)

◆ ISRO – to launch PSLV-C45 from the second launch pad at
  Sriharikota on April 1
Isro will use ‘multiple-burn technology’ to shut down and restart the engines multiple times within a short period of time to propel the payload through the pre-fixed orbits.

Isro has already demonstrated multiple-burn technology in at least four previous PSLV launches – PSLVC35 in September 2016, PSLVC34 in June 2016, PSLV-C29 in December 2015 and PSLV-C40 in January 2018.

PSLV-C45, which is the 47th flight of PSLV, will place EMISAT, an electronic intelligence satellite by DRDO, and 28 international customer satellites onto their orbits.

Surgeons in Baltimore, United States – have performed the world’s first kidney transplant from a living donor with HIV.

Dr. Dorry Segev, a Hopkins surgeon was instrumental in pushing for the HIV Organ Policy Equity,

Tesla - has developed its ‘largest power storage system in Asia’ at Osaka train station in Japan.

It will provide emergency backup power to trains in Japan apart from reducing the energy demand.

SPORTS

National Boxing champion Deepak Singh - won gold ( in 49 kg category) in the Makran Cup in Chabahar, Iran.

India’s PoojaDhanda – won the Gold in the 59 kg category at the Dan Kolov-Nikola Petrov wrestling in Ruse, Bulgaria.

Rio Olympic bronze medallistSakshi Malik settled for a silver medal in the 65kg category.

India’s SandeepTomar also won a silver medal in the 61kg category after losing the final in the Men’s freestyle event.

With Dhanda and Malik's podium finishes, India had four medals in their kitty.
Anil Kumble, former Indian captain – reappointed as ‘Chairman’ of the ICC cricket committee – for a final 3-year term on March 2 in Dubai

✓ Kumble has been the Chairman of the committee since 2012

Roger Federer (Switzerland) – becomes the second ever tennis player in the Open era – to win 100 ATP singles titles on March 2 in Dubai

✓ The tennis legend won his 8th crown in the final of the Dubai duty free tennis tournament against Greek Stefanos Tsitsipas
✓ Jimmy Connors is the only other player to have reached 100 titles (he won totally 109 titles)
✓ John McEnroe leads the overall titles list (including singles and doubles combined) with 149 (singles 77 and doubles 72)

Manjit Singh Chahal – wins Gold in 1500m category – in the Indian Grand Prix at Panchkula

✓ He had won his first international gold medal in 800 metres recently in 2018 Asian Games, the country’s first gold medal in the event since 1982

The BCCI – announced the latest Annual contracts for Indian cricketers on March 7

✓ This year 25 cricketers were contracted in four groups of A plus (Rs 7 crore), A (Rs 5 crore), B (Rs 3 crore) and C (Rs 1 crore)
✓ Last year, 26 players were handed contracts
✓ List of contracted Male cricketers
  ✓ Grade A PLUS - Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma, Jasprit Bumrah
  ✓ Grade A - MS Dhoni, Cheteshwar Pujara, Rishabh Pant, R Ashwin, Ravindra Jadeja, Ishant Sharma, Mohammed Shami, Kuldeep Yadav, Shikhar Dhawan, Bhuveshwar Kumar, Ajinkya Rahane
  ✓ Grade B - KL Rahul, Hardik Pandya, Umesh Yadav, Yuzvendra Chahal.
  ✓ Grade C - Kedar Jadhav, Dinesh Karthik, Ambati Rayudu, Manish Pandey, Hanuma Vihari, Khaleel Ahmed, Wriddhiman Saha.
✓ Women players
✓ **Grade A** (Rs. 50 lakhs) - Mithali Raj, HarmanpreetKaur, PoonamYadav, SmritiMandhana

✓ **Grade B** (Rs. 30 lakhs) - EktaBisht, JhulanGoswami, Shikha Pandey, Deepi Sharma, Jemimah Rodriguez.

✓ **Grade C** (Rs. 10 lakhs) - RadhaYadav, D. Hemalatha, AnujaPatil, Veda Krishnamoorthy, Mansi Joshi, PoonamRaut, Mona Meshram, Arundathi Reddy, Taniya Bhatia, RajeshwariGayakwad, PoojaVastrakar

♦ Team India – sports ‘Camouflage’ caps on March 8 – during the third ODI cricket match between India and Australia - at JSCA International Stadium, Ranchi

♦ Indian test cricketer, R Ashwin – unveils the first non-electric ball thrower ‘Freebowler’ at the Centre for Sports Science in SRMC, Chennai

♦ Chennai City FC’ – crowned as the I-League champions

✓ This is the last season of the I-league as Indian football’s premier football tournament

♦ **ViratKohli** – became the 6th batsman to score 9000 or more runs in International cricket as Captain

✓ He achieved the feat in 159 innings, the fastest among all captains in the list, during his 40th century knock in the second One day international between India and Australia in Nagpur

✓ Only Sachin Tendulkar has scored more hundreds in ODIs than Kohli, with 49 centuries against his name

♦ **Erode-based Chess player P. Iniyan** – became the country’s 61st Grand master in the ongoing Noislel Open in France

✓ The 16-year old player crossed the 2500-point in ELO ratings to reach the title

✓ Iniyan got his maiden GM norm in the Montcada open at Spain in July 2017
India's star wrestler, Bajrang Punia - won a gold medal in 65 kilogram freestyle at the International wrestling tournament, “Dan Kolov – Nikola Petrov” in Ruse, Bulgaria

✓ Punia dedicated the victory to Indian Air Force Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman, from whom Punia said he got inspiration

Australia - to compete in the 2022 Asian Games, scheduled to take place in China’s Hangzhou

✓ Oceania nations-Australia, New Zealand and several Pacific islands
✓ The decision to this effect was made at the Olympic council of Asia meeting in Bangkok last week

Website hosting company, GoDaddy - became the official sponsor of the International Cricket Council (ICC) World Cup 2019

✓ GoDaddy has cricketer MS Dhoni as its brand ambassador.
✓ The 2019 World Cup will be held in the United Kingdom from May 30 to July 14, 2019.

Special Olympics World Games 2019 - began at Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates on March 14, 2019

✓ 7,500 athletes from 200 nations will take part in 24 Olympic-style sports over a period of 7 day games show that is held in West Asia for the very first time

Karnataka – lifts ‘Syed Mushtaq Ali T20’ trophy for the very first time

✓ In the final, it had defeated Maharashtra at the Holkar stadium in Indore on March 14
✓ This was Karnataka’s 14th consecutive T20 win, a joint Indian record along with Kolkata Knight Riders for an Indian side

India – finished the 38th GeeBee Boxing Tournament with one gold, four silver and three bronze medals at Helsinki, Finland
The lone gold medal for India was won by Kavinder Singh Bisht in the 56kg category, defeating Indian counterpart Mohammed Hussamuddin in the final.

Other Silver medals for India were won by Govind Kumar Sahani (49kg), Shiva Thapa (60kg) and Dinesh Dagar (69kg).

Bronze Medallists were SachinSiwach (52kg), SumitSangwan (91kg) and Naveen Kumar (+91kg).

Indian Grandmasters B Adhiban and Surya ShekharGanguly – win Gold medals at the World Chess Championships at Astana in Kazakhstan

However, Indian Men’s team finished without a ‘medal’ after a disappointing fourth by losing to Russia in the final Round.

During the competition, Adhiban crossed the 2700 ELO rating, the fifth Indian to achieve this feat after Grandmasters Viswanathan Anand, Krishnan Sasikiran, P Harikrishna and ViditGujrathi.

India – to host FIFA U-17 Women’s Football World Cup in 2020, ahead of France

The country had earlier hosted the FIFA U-17 Men’s World cup in 2017 at Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in New Delhi successfully.

Being the hosts, India gets automatically qualified to play in the World cup as well.

This is only the second time that India will play in a FIFA World Cup, after the last Men’s U-17 World cup in which also India qualified being the hosts.

World football governing body, FIFA – has recommended expanding the 2022 World cup in Qatar from 32 to 48 teams.

However, a final decision on a possible expansion will be taken in a vote of its members at the FIFA’s congress in Paris in June.

Bangladesh cricket team – narrowly avoided being caught up in a Shooting attack at a mosque in Christchurch on March 15, which left 49 people dead and more than 20 injured.
The team is on a tour visit to New Zealand and was on its way to the Masjid Al Noor mosque for Friday prayers, where the shooting attack took place.

At least one gunman was on a shooting spree during the Friday prayers at two New Zealand mosques (Al Noor Mosque in central Christchurch and another one was Linwood Islamic Centre in suburban Linwood) in the country's worst ever mass shooting.

The third test match between Bangladesh and New Zealand at nearby Hagley Oval was called off immediately after the attack.

After the attack, 9 Indians were named as 'Missing' and 2 'injured' in the attacks.

Australian citizen Brenton Tarrant has been charged with murder and will appear in Christchurch Court on March 16, 2019.

Tarrant livestreamed one of the attacks himself while attacking the Christchurch mosque in a Facebook Live video.

As per his claims, he wanted to avenge the deaths caused by foreign invaders through this attack.

In 2017 New Zealand was rated as the World’s 2nd most peaceful country after Iceland.

Diksha Dagar – wins the South African Open, becomes the second Indian woman golfer to win on Ladies European Tour (LET)

She follows Aditi Ashok, who was the first Indian in 2016 to win on the LET.

Aditi went on to win two more LET events and now plays on the LPGA.

Tamil Nadu’s PM Thabita – wins her second Gold at the Asian youth athletics championships in Hong Kong on March 16.

The 17-year old clinched the Gold in the girls’ long jump event with a distance of 5.86 m.

She had earlier won the girls 100m hurdles on March 15.

Tamil Nadu’s Dharun Ayyasamy – shattered his own National record in the men’s 400m hurdles at the 23rd Federation cup in Patiala.
With the win, he is now eligible to participate in the upcoming World Athletics Championships in Doha in April 2019, which has a qualification mark of 49.30 seconds for the event.

He won in a time of 48.80 seconds to erase his old national record of 48.96 registered at the Jakarta Asian Games last year.

Annu Rani, Javelin thrower – sets a new national record of 62.34 metres in the women’s javelin throw event in the ongoing 23rd Federation Cup in Patiala.

She broke her own record of 61.86m that she recorded two years ago in the same venue.

With the record throw, she got qualified for the Asian championship and the World championships.

However, she fell well short of the qualifying standards for the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo, which is 64 m.

Kerala’s K T Irfan – becomes the first Indian from athletics to qualify for 2020 Tokyo Olympics, after finishing fourth in the 20km event of the Asian Race Walking Championships in Nomi, Japan.

Tamil Nadu’s B Mathesh – won silver in the 800m boys event at the 3rd youth Asian athletics championships in Hong Kong.

17-year old Mathesh, son of a farmer from Vadugapatti village in Theni district in Tamil Nadu, won the 800m and 1500m events at the Khelo India Youth Games in Pune in January this year.

Finland’s Valtteri Bottas (Mercedes) – won the season-opening Australian Formula 1 Grand Prix on March 17 at Melbourne.

Bengaluru FC – won their maiden Indian Super League title at the Mumbai Football Arena.

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

India - wins 50 gold, 63 silver and 75 bronze medals at the Special Olympics World Games in Abu Dhabi, till now.
The first-ever International Special Olympics Summer Games were held in Chicago, US, in 1968 and the Winter Games in February 1977 in Steamboat Springs, US.
Sweden will host the next Special World Winter Games in 2021, for the very first time

Asian Youth Athletics Championships - concludes in Hong Kong

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

Afghanistan's cricket team - recorded its maiden Test win after beating Ireland by seven wickets in a one-off test match at Dehradun in Uttarakhand on March 18

Indian shuttlers, Lakshya Sen and RiyaMookerjee - entered into the top-100 among men's and women's singles players in the latest World Badminton Rankings

India's Lakshya Sen is currently placed at the 76th position with a jump of 28 places, and RiyaMookerjee climbed up 19 spots to be placed 94th
In the women's singles rankings, P V Sindhu and SainaNehwal are at the same sixth and ninth positions respectively

Rajasthan Royals - becomes the first IPL franchisee to start academy in UK

It had launched its first cricket academy ‘Rajasthan Royals Academy’ in association with The Star Cricket Academy at Reed’s school in Surrey
Keith medlycott, former England international is the mentor to the academy
India – loses the hosting rights of 2 premier international tennis tournaments, Junior Davis Cup and Fed Cup, scheduled to be held in New Delhi in April

✓ Both the tennis tournaments will now be held in Bangkok

Abu Dhabi – to host the T10 league for the next 5 years

✓ The Zayed Cricket Stadium in Abu Dhabi will be hosting an exclusive T10 Cricket League starting from 2019 season
✓ T-10 is the third short form of cricket, after One Day internationals and T20

India – finishes with 368 medals, including 85 Gold, at the Special Olympics World Summer Games, held at Abu Dhabi, UAE from March 14 to 21

✓ The team had also clinched 154 silver medals and 129 bronze medals in its successful campaign

Indian Women’s team – had defeated Nepal in the final to win the SAFF Women’s Championship in Biratnagar (Nepal)

✓ This is the 5th straight title for the Indian team, extending their unbeaten run in the tournament's history to 23 games

Hardik and Krunal Pandya - have signed up as brand ambassadors for fantasy sports startup, Hala-Play

✓ They will battle for the fantasy league opposite Virat Kohli, who has signed up for Mobile Premier League, and MS Dhoni who is the brand ambassador for Dream11
✓ CSK’s Suresh Raina has been roped in by Chennai-based Fantain Sports
✓ Dream11 is also the official fantasy sports platform for IPL
✓ Bengaluru-based HalaPlay was launched in 2017

Indian Weightlifting Federation (IWLF) – to ban the Punjab, Haryana and Karnataka state weightlifting federations for a year
The move follows after more than two lifters each from the states tested positive for banned substances by the National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) in the last one year during the Youth and Junior National Weightlifting Championship that was held in Nagpur from December 14-22.

During the event, 8 lifters tested positive with three of them were from Punjab, two from Haryana, two from Karnataka and one from Uttar Pradesh.

In the past, the IWLF, in order to curb the dope menace, had banned units such as Services Sports Control Board (SSCB) and Uttar Pradesh

In a first of its kind, ESPNcricinfo - has launched "Superstats", counting the luck percentage of teams and players

It was developed in association with the researchers from Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IIT-M) and Gyan Data (an IIT-M incubated company)

Superstats, a new metrics to analyse the game of cricket, comprises of three components - Luck Index, Forecaster, and Smart Stats

It takes into account score-cards i.e. ball by ball database of all IPL matches played in India in the last ten years to develop an algorithm based on machine learning system

It is based on data science to give a context to every event in a game during this IPL season

According to the algorithm, Kolkata Knight Riders with 349 lucky runs stands at the top while Chennai Super Kings follows with 315 lucky runs

ArchanaKamath - wins the Silver medal at the ITTF Challenge Oman Open

She had lost the Under-21 final to top-seeded Japanese Satsuki Odo

Fourth-seeded, G Sathiyan clinched the bronze medal after losing the semifinal on March 24

Archana won the national women singles crown at Cuttack this January
Former Coach of Iran, Veselin Matic (58) - has been appointed as the national men’s Basketball team coach - by Basketball Federation of India

IT major, Infosys – ties up with Roland-Garros for a three-year partnership agreement - to provide digital solution for French Open tennis tournament in Paris

Australian, Graham Reid – to become new coach of the Indian men's hockey team with Hockey India (HI) forwarded his name to the sports ministry

Indian Shooting sensations, Saurabh Chaudhary (16 years) and Manu Bhaker (17 years) - claimed the senior World qualification record and gold in the 10m air pistol mixed team event at the 12th Asian Airgun Championships in Taoyuan, Taipei

Ravi Kumar and Elavenil Valarivan – wins silver medal in the senior 10m air rifle mixed team event at the 12th Asian Airgun Championships in Taipei

Former India striker Shivendra Singh - is set to be appointed assistant coach of the national men's hockey team

✓ He will form an integral part of the Indian coaching staff set to be headed by Australian Graham Reid

Breakdancing - was among four sports given a provisional green light for inclusion in the Paris 2024 Games by the International Olympic Committee (IOC)

✓ The Paris 2024 organizing committee in February proposed surfing, skateboarding and sport climbing as well as breakdancing for inclusion in the Games
✓ A final decision will be made by the board in December 2020 after further monitoring of the four sporting categories

India’s Muskan Kirar - claimed a hat-trick of medals in the opening leg of the Asia Cup archery meet in Bangkok – for the second year in a row

✓ The 18-year-old Madhya Pradesh archer,
Chennai Super Kings' player, Suresh Raina - has become the first ever cricketer to reach 5,000 runs in Indian Premier League (IPL)

National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) - was awarded the ‘Best Sports Federation’ award in the country by the Association Chambers of Commerce and Industry (ASSOCHAM)

✓ NRAI secretary-general D.V.S. Rao and secretary Rajeev Bhatia received the trophy from Director General of SAI Neelam Kapoor and cricketer Madan Lal
✓ Star javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra - was named to lead a 39-member Indian athletics team for next month's Asian Championships in Doha

World No. 5, India - was stunned by 17th ranked Korea in the final of Azlan Shah Cup hockey held in Ipoh, Malaysia

✓ Korea defeated five-time champion, India by 4-2 in the penalty shootout to lift the Cup on March 30
✓ Both the sides have ended at 1-1 after regulation time in the summit clash

Former hockey captain, Sardar Singh - appointed in Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) standing committee

✓ All the members have been elected for a **four-year term** from 2019 to 2023.

Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) - decided to reinstate the Chess game to the Asian Games fold for the 2022 edition in Hangzhou

ESPN World Fame 100 list

✓ Portuguese footballer Cristiano Ronaldo at the top spot, followed by former Basketball player Lebron James and FC Barcelona captain Lionel Messi at the 3rd place
✓ Indian skipper, Virat Kohli, stands on the seventh position and is the only Indian athlete in the top 10 club, whereas Dhoni is placed on the 13th position
There were only three women in the list - Serena Williams (17), Maria Sharapova (37) and Sania Mirza (93); making Sania Mirza the only Indian woman athlete to feature in the list.
IMPORTANT DAY

International Women’s Day – March 8

✓ The UN theme for International Women's Day 2019 was: 'Think equal, build smart, innovate for change'
✓ **History of the Women’s Day**
✓ The first International Women's Day occurred on March 19, 1911, supported by over one million people in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland
✓ In 1913 Russian women observed their first International Women's Day on the last Saturday in February
✓ In 1914 International Women's Day was held on March 8 in Germany, possibly because that day was a Sunday, and now it is always held on March 8 in all countries
✓ The United Nations began celebrating International Women's Day in the International Women's Year, 1975
✓ In 1977, the United Nations General Assembly invited member states to proclaim March 8 as the UN Day for women's rights and world peace

50th Raising Day of Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) – March 10, 2019

✓ In a first for any paramilitary, Prime Minister Narendra Modi attended the 50th Raising Day celebrations of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) on March 10 in Ghaziabad
✓ The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) is a Central Armed Police Force in India
✓ It was set up under an Act of the Parliament of India on 10 March 1969 with a strength of 2,800

World Kidney Day - March 14, 2019 (Second Thursday of March)

✓ The observance of the day intends to raise awareness about the importance of our kidneys
✓ Theme 2019 - “Kidney Health for Everyone Everywhere”
The day is jointly observed by the International Society of Nephrology (ISN) and the International Federation of Kidney Foundations (IFKF)

**World Pi Day – March 14**

**30 years of the World Wide Web (WWW) - March 12, 2019**

- Google Doodle celebrated 30 years of the World Wide Web (WWW) on March 12, 2019 with an animation showing block graphics that were common earlier
- In 1989, Sir Tim Berners-Lee developed the first web browser, the World Wide Web, writing the HTML language, the HTTP application, and the first Web browser ‘WorldWideWeb.app’
- The web was made public in April 1993 and the first search engine ‘Mosaic’ was launched in November 1993 to accept pictures

**World Consumer Rights Day - March 15**

- The observance of the day promotes and protects the basic rights of consumers
- Theme 2019 - ‘Trusted Smart Products’
- This year, the Day called for access to secure internet for all and encouraging consumer protection online.
- On March 15, 1962, the then US President John F Kennedy formally addressed the issue of consumer rights in the US Congress, becoming the first leader to do so
- The first World Consumer Rights Day was observed in the year 1983.

**World Sleep Day – March 15, 2019**

- Theme 2019 - 'Healthy Sleep, Healthy Aging'
- The day aims to raise awareness regarding sleep disorders and promote their prevention and management.
- The day is observed annually on the Friday before the March Equinox on the Earth, when the subsolar point appears to leave the Southern Hemisphere and cross the celestial equator, heading northward as seen from Earth
- Most adults require 7 to 8 hours sleep while babies and children need even more sleep for optimal learning and play
The observance of the day has been organised by the World Sleep Day Committee of the World Sleep Society, formerly World Association of Sleep Medicine (WASM World Sleep Society), since 2008.
The first World Sleep Day was held on March 14, 2008.

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

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

**International Sparrow Day – February 20**

World Sparrow Day is a day designated to raise awareness of the house sparrow and other common birds to urban environments, and of threats to their populations, observed on 20 March. It is an international initiative by the Nature Forever Society of India in collaboration with the Eco-Sys Action Foundation (France) and numerous other national and international organisations across the world. It aims to spread the awareness on the need of conserving common biodiversity or species of lower conservation status.

The Day is observed every year in order to raise awareness about the bird, due to its decreasing population.
Theme 2019 – ‘I Love Sparrows’
The initiative was started by Nature Forever Society (NFS) of India, founded by Mohammed Dilawar, an Indian conservationist.
He was named one of the "Heroes of the Environment" for 2008 by Time for his efforts.
The first World Sparrow Day was celebrated in 2010.

**International Day of Happiness – March 20**

The day recognizes the importance of happiness in the lives of people around the world.
The observance of the day is conceptualized by UN special advisor Jayme Illien to inspire and spread a happiness movement globally.
✓ The first ever international day of happiness was observed on March 20, 2013
✓ March 20 was chosen for International Day of Happiness 2019 for its significance as the March equinox, when the plane of Earth’s equator passes through the centre of the Sun’s disk

◆ World Head Injury Awareness Day – March 20

✓ India has the highest rate of Traumatic brain injury’s (TBI) in the world, with nearly 1.5-2 million persons are injured and 1 million die every year

◆ International Day of Forests – March 21

✓ The Day celebrates and raises awareness of the importance of all types of forests.
✓ The UN General Assembly proclaimed 21 March the International Day of Forests on November 28, 2012
✓ Theme 2019 - ‘Forests and Education’
✓ International Day of Forests was observed for the first time on March 21, 2013
✓ The theme of the International Day of Forests in 2018 is "Forests and Sustainable Cities”

◆ International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination – March 21

✓ The UN General Assembly proclaimed 21 March as the ‘International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination’ on 26 October 1966
✓ On that day, in 1960, police opened fire and killed 69 people at a peaceful demonstration in Sharpeville, South Africa, against the apartheid "pass laws"
✓ Theme 2019 - Mitigating and countering rising nationalist populism and extreme supremacist ideologies

◆ World Down Syndrome Day – March 21

✓ On this day, people with Down syndrome and those who live and work with them throughout the world organize and participate in
activities and events to raise public awareness about the genetic disorder
✔ On December 20, 2007, WHO recognized March 21 as the World Down Syndrome Day
✔ The general Assembly of the United Nations recognized also the same date on December 19, 2011
✔ The first World Down Syndrome Day was observed in 2012

✦ World Poetry Day – March 21

✔ The purpose of observing the day is to promote the reading, writing, publishing and teaching of poetry throughout the world
✔ It was declared by UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) at its session in Paris in 1999

✦ International Colour Day – March 21

✔ The adoption of an international day of colour was proposed in 2008 by the Portuguese Color Association, whose president, Maria Joao Durao, presented the idea to the International Colour Association.
✔ The proposal was agreed in 2009 among the members of this society, comprising of more than 30 countries
✔ The choice of the date every year, March 21 is the “equinox” – aequus (equal) and nox (night)
✔ Around the equinox, the night and day are approximately equally long, symbolically relating to the complementary nature of light and darkness

✦ World Water Day – March 22

✔ The day aims to underline the importance of water
✔ Theme 2019 - ‘Leaving no one behind’
✔ An International Day to celebrate freshwater was recommended at the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro
✔ In 1993, the United Nations General Assembly officially designated March 22 as World Water Day
✔ World Water Day is coordinated by UN-Water in collaboration with governments and partners
UN’s Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6) aims to ensure availability and sustainable management of water for all by 2030.

In 2010, the UN recognized “the right to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation as a human right that is essential for the full enjoyment of life and all human rights”.

An estimated 2.1 billion people live without safe water at home.

**Navroz – March 21**

- Parsis celebrate Navroz, which is the Iranian New Year
- In India Parsis who follow Zoroastrianism celebrate Navroz
- March 21 which is the first day of the Iranian calendar is also marked as the day

**World Meteorological Day – March 23**

- The date of the establishment of the World Meteorological Organization in 23 March 1950 has been named World Meteorological Day
- Theme 2019- “The Sun, The Earth and The Weather”

**Shaheed Divas (Martyr’s day) – March 23**

- On this day in 1931, Bhagat Singh along with his associates SukhdevThapar and ShivaramRajguru were hanged to death for the killing 21-year-old British police officer John Sanders
- January 30, which marks the death anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, is also observed as the Martyrs Day

**World Tuberculosis (TB) Day – January 24**

- Theme 2019 – ‘It’s time’
- On the eve of the day, World Health Organization (WHO) launched a joint initiative “Find. Treat. All. #End TB” along with the Global Fund and Stop TB Partnership

**Epilepsy Awareness Day (or) World Purple Day - March 26**

- The observance of the day encourages people to wear the purple colour to increase the awareness of Epilepsy
The day was first observed in 2008 in Nova Scotia, Canada.
Epilepsy is neurological disorder in which brain activity becomes abnormal causing seizures.

**World Theatre Day – March 27**

It is initiated by International Theatre Institute in 1961.