

# CURRENT AFFAIRS



JANUARY 2019

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## Current Affairs — January 2019

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This is a guide to provide you a precise summary and a huge collection of Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs) covering national and international current affairs for the month of **January 2019**.

This guide will help you in preparing for Indian competitive examinations like Bank PO, Banking, Railway, IAS, PCS, UPSC, CAT, GATE, CDS, NDA, MCA, MBA, Engineering, IBPS, Clerical Grade and Officer Grade, etc.

### Audience

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Aspirants who are preparing for different competitive exams like Bank PO, Banking, Railway, IAS, PCS, UPSC, CAT, GATE, CDS, NDA, MCA, MBA, Engineering, IBPS, Clerical Grade, Officer Grade, etc.

Even though you are not preparing for any exams but are willing to have news encapsulated in a roll, which you can walk through within 30 minutes, then we have put all the major points for the whole month in a precise and interesting way.

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# Foreign Affairs

## 1. India and Mongolia Sign MoU

With the objective to promote art and culture, the Embassy of Mongolia and International Chamber of Media and Entertainment Industry (ICMEI) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).



For the development of international peace and unity, they will collectively work in different fields including radio, television, cinema, animation, Performing and Fine Arts, hospitality, education, tourism, environment, solar energy, skill development, PR events and advertising, Fashion and Design, and Journalism.

### What is ICMEI?

International Chamber of Media & Entertainment Industry (ICMEI) is the only chamber dedicated to Media & Entertainment Industry; it is global in nature. It works with the objective to bring Love, Peace, and Unity through Art and Culture.

## 2. India Signed MoUs worth \$9.5 Million with Afghanistan

Amid the prevailing crisis in Afghanistan, India has signed 11 Memorandums of Understanding with the Afghan Government. The projects covered under these are worth 9.5 USD million.



The projects involved under the agreement will involve the construction of health clinics, orphanages, classrooms, and canal protection walls. Besides, the agreements will also help empower women by providing them with economic opportunities. The projects will cater to seven provinces of Afghanistan – Ghor, Balkh, Kapisa, Badghhis, Bamyan, Kabul, and Herat.

### 3. World's First Human Rights TV Channel Launched in London

With the objective to deliver hidden stories ignored by mainstream media into people's living rooms, world's first dedicated television channel has been launched in London, UK. The topics covered by the channel will include refugees, women's rights, LGBT issues, extremism, incarceration of journalists, and the plight of the world's stateless people.



As per the report of the International Observatory of Human Rights (IOHR), the web-based channel is designed to bring human rights issues to audiences in more than 20 countries across, Latin America, Europe, and the Middle East.

## 1. China Tested 'Mother of All Bombs'

As per the report, China has tested the most powerful non-nuclear weapon, named "Mother of All Bombs." The huge bomb was dropped on to a plain region and resultantly it produced a vast ball of fire and black smoke. Therefore, the official Xinhua news agency named it "the Chinese version of the Mother of all Bombs."



Dropped by a Chinese H-6K bomber, its strength is only second to that of the nuclear weapon. Before this, in 2017, US has already dropped the most powerful conventional bomb in its arsenal, dubbed the "Mother of All Bombs." US had done this to destroy a tunnel network, which was used by the Islamic State group in the east of Afghanistan.

## 2. US President Trump Signed Asia Reassurance Initiative Act

Donald J. Trump, the President of the United States, signed the bill for the Asia Reassurance Initiative Act (ARIA). The ARIA has already been passed by the US Senate in the beginning of December 2018.



The objective of this Act is to establish a multifaceted US Strategy to enhance US security, economic interests, and values in the Indo-Pacific region. Further, the law intended to develop a diplomatic strategy with the United States' allies and partners. Under the diplomatic relation, it will conduct joint maritime training and freedom of navigation operations in the Indo-Pacific region.



### 3. PIA Banned Entertainment on Flights Going to Saudi Arabia

The Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) has banned entertainment in flight especially for the pilgrims travelling to Jeddah and Madina. However, in the flight, only Quranic verses and *naats* (recitation of poetry praising the Prophet) will be played for the pilgrims.



Besides, the PIA has also announced that it will welcome its passengers on board with the *Qaseeda Burda Sharif* (Islamic hymn), which will be played in the background instead of soft music.

### 4. Trump Threatens to Declare National Emergency

Donald Trump, the President of the United States, has threatened to declare a national emergency to build barriers along the southwestern border if Congress will not approve funding to build a border wall by February 15, 2019.



Further Mr. Trump confirmed that he had consulted lawmakers to re-open the government for three weeks; however, he was not able to secure any funding for a border wall in the temporary spending measure. Mr. Trump was evident about his intentions to declare a national emergency if the Democrats do not agree to build barriers costing about \$6 billion.

In his statement, he said –

*"We'll work with the Democrats and negotiate and if we can't do that, then we'll do a – obviously we'll do the emergency because that's what it is. It's a national emergency."*

### 5. France Slapped €50 Million Penalty on Google

France Data Watchdog has slapped a penalty of 50 million euros (i.e. \$57 million) to the United States' search engine giant 'Google.' The penalty imposed under the European Union's strict General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).



CNIL's (French National Data Protection Commission) restricted committee imposed such penalty because of the following breaches of GDPR:

- Google violated the obligations of transparency and information (i.e., the use or storage of data was not presented in a clear and transparent manner by Google and
- Google violated the obligation to have a legal basis for ads personalization and ads targeting process.

As per the rule, such information must be free, informed, unambiguous, and specific; however, in the present case, it is neither informed, unambiguous nor specific.

## 6. Germany Bans Iranian Airline, “Mahan Air”

German Government has banned Iranian Airline (Mahan Air) to operate in its airports. It is done to protect Germany’s Foreign and Security Policy Interests.” Mahan is the second-largest carrier of Iran after Iran Air. It operates between Tehran and the German cities of Dusseldorf and Munich.



The Airline was already blacklisted by the United States in 2011 because the carrier was providing the technical and material support to an elite unit of Iran’s Revolutionary Guards known as the Quds Force. As per the report, European countries have been under consistent pressure to re-impose sanctions on Iran.

## 7. Indonesia Floods and Landslides Increase the Death Toll to 59

As per the latest report, floods and landslides caused by heavy rain have taken over 59 lives in Indonesia. The heavy rain has increased the water levels in rivers and burst their banks; communities in 11 districts of southern Sulawesi, have been badly affected.



With 44 people dead, Gowa district suffered the heaviest casualties. However, as much as 3,400 people were evacuated from their homes and provided shelter in schools, mosques, and other tent houses.



## 8. Sugarcane Juice Declared as 'National Drink' of Pakistan

As per the latest report, the government of Pakistan has declared sugarcane juice as the 'national drink' of the country. In order to arrive at this decision, the government of Pakistan conducted a poll on social networking sites including Twitter and asked to decide the national drink of the nation.



In the poll, 81% voted for sugarcane juice; whereas, 15% voted for orange juice while the remaining 4% opted for carrot juice. Based on the poll, sugarcane juice has been declared the 'national drink' of Pakistan.

## 9. US & Israel Officially Quit UNESCO

Blaming that the United Nation's Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Agency (UNESCO) fosters anti-Israel bias, the United States and Israel officially quit the UNESCO. It is believed that the withdrawal by the US and Israel is just procedural yet is a new blow for the UNESCO to deal with.



However, for such withdrawal, the President of the United States, Mr. Donald Trump, filed the notice in October 2017 and subsequently Benjamin Netanyahu, the Prime Minister of Israel also filed a notice. On the other hand, the United States had demanded the "fundamental reform," which is essential in the agency. The organization has to be original for which it is best known – World Heritage program to protect cultural sites and traditions.

## 10. Dubai Airport Listed As World's Busiest Airport

As per the recent report, Dubai International Airport (DXB), has been listed as the world's busiest airport in terms of counting the international travelers. In 2018, 89.1 million passengers travelled through Dubai International Airport; it is about one percent higher than the previous year.



Besides, it is the fifth consecutive year that DXB has been listed the world's busiest airport for international travelers (starting from 2014). It is also expected that by 2021, DXB will overtake Atlantic (USA) and Beijing airports (China).

## 1. With FAO Partnership, Government Launched Green-Ag Project

“Green Ag” - a Global Environment Facility (GEF) assisted project has been launched by the Government of India. The objective of this project is to transform Indian agriculture for global environment benefits and the conservation of critical biodiversity and forest landscapes.



The Minister of State for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Shri Parshottam Rupala informed that the Government had launched a Global Environment Facility (GEF) in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

With high-conservation-value landscapes, the project has been launched primarily in five following states:

- Mizoram – Dampa Landscape
- Odisha – Simpilipal Landscap
- Madhya Pradesh – Chambal Landscape,
- Rajasthan – Desert National Park Landscape
- Uttarakhand – Corbett-Rajaji Landscape

Moreover, the project is designed to harmonize the relationship between India’s agricultural and environmental sector priorities and investments. It will greatly help in strengthening livelihoods and will also ensure food and nutrition security without compromising with national and global environmental benefits.

## 2. Free Wi-Fi Facility at Railway Station

In an attempt to provide free Wi-Fi facility at railway stations, the Indian Railway has been actively setting up the infrastructure. So far, Indian Railway has facilitated free Wi-Fi for passengers at more than 700 railway stations.



In addition to this, Mr. Piyush Goyal, the Railway Minister, has instructed the railway board members to increase the count of railways stations with free Wi-Fi to 2000. To encourage the officials, Mr. Goyal also announced an award – the Division Railway Managers who will complete the Wi-Fi installation early, will be awarded.

As of now, the Northern Railway has announced facilitation of Wi-Fi service in the following stations:

- 1) Gumman
- 2) Koti
- 3) Barog
- 4) Dharampur Himahal
- 5) Kumarhatti Dagshai
- 6) Taksal
- 7) Sonwara
- 8) Kandaghat
- 9) Salogra
- 10) Kathleghat
- 11) Knoh
- 12) Shoghi
- 13) Summerhill
- 14) Tara Devi and
- 15) Jutogh



### 3. Women Representation In CRPF, CISF Increased To 15%

The Union Minister, Kiren Rijiju, has confirmed that the women representation in the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) will now be increased to 15%. Besides, in Border Security Force (BSF), Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) or the Armed Border Force, and Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), the representation will be 5%.



Further, Union Minister of State for Home Affairs of India, Mr. Rijiju said that in compliance of recommendations given by Parliamentary Committee on Empowerment of women in its sixth report, such direction was issued to all paramilitary forces to implement the increased percentage of women in the forces.

### 4. Prime Minister Inaugurated Project Connecting Ganga to Agra

PM Narendra Modi, inaugurated the Gangajal Project with the purpose to improve water supply in Agra. Likewise, the implementation of the project will provide sufficient drinking water required for the local residents as well as tourists.



The project, launched in Agra by Prime Minister, is worth Rs 2,980 crores. The project 'Gangajal' aims to bring 140 cu secs of Ganga water to Agra.

### 5. Chhattisgarh Third State to Bar CBI to Investigate in State

Bhupesh Baghel, the Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh and a senior leader of Congress party of India, withdrew the general consent granted to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to probe cases in the state. Likewise, now the CBI needs to take the State's permission first to initiate any investigation in the state.



With this move, Chhattisgarh has become the third state in the country that has made such decision. In the list, Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal have already made their entry. However, for this move, the state government has not given any reason – why it has withdrawn the general consent, which was given previously to the CBI.



## 6. Centre Signed Agreement with 5 States for Renuka Dam

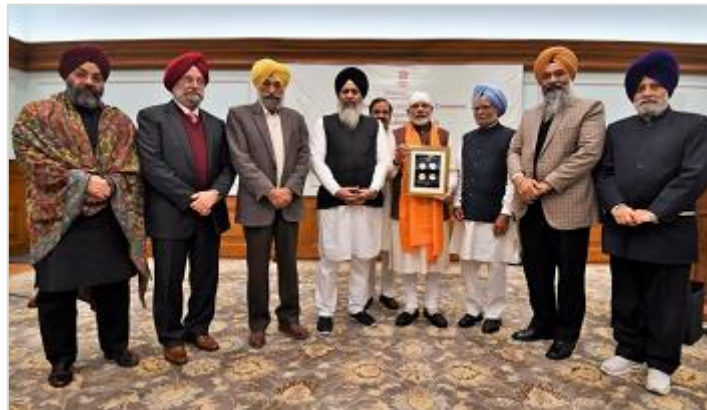
To restart the construction of the Renuka multipurpose dam project, Center has signed an agreement with the Chief Ministers of four States and National Capital Territory. The four States are – Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and the National Capital Territory Delhi.



The Renuka project has been planned as the storage project on the Giri river in Sirmaur district of Himachal Pradesh. The Giri river is a tributary of the Yamuna river. As per the plan, the project will make 148 meter-high dam for supplying water to Delhi and other basin States as well. Besides, it will also generate 40 MW of power.

## 7. Prime Minister Released Commemorative Coin on Guru Gobind Singh

Mr. Narendra Modi, the Prime Minister of India, announced to release a commemorative coin to mark the birth anniversary of the 10<sup>th</sup> Guru of Sikhs, Guru Gobind Singh.



On January 5, 2019, on the eve of celebrating the birth anniversary, Prime Minister announced the release of commemorative coin along with a postage stamp. Besides, Mr. Modi also announced that the Kartarpur corridor, between India and Pakistan located at Punjab in Pakistan, will be built for devotees to go visit and pray.

## 8. NGT Slaps 100 Crore Fine On Volkswagen

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has instructed Volkswagen to pay a fine of 100 crores to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB). The NGT slapped fine, as it violated emission norms.



Furthermore, the NGT also said that the non-compliance of its direction may also lead to the arrest of the company's (India) head and seizure of property. As per the instruction, the fined amount has to be submitted to CPCB by 5 pm on January 18. However, the order of NGT is already challenged before the Supreme Court of India.

## 9. Prime Minister Inaugurated National Museum of Indian Cinema

Mr. Narendra Modi, the Prime Minister of India, inaugurated the first-ever National Museum of India Cinema (NMIC) in Mumbai. While inaugurating the museum, Mr. Modi said that his government will support individuals from the film industry who aspire to develop a communication and entertainment university in the country.



Besides, on this occasion, Mr. Modi also announced a pan-country single window system for film permissions that are usually getting delayed in the present system. His government also started amending the cinematography act, 1952 to make film piracy a harsher offence.

Mr. Modi said –

*"The film industry of this country has huge potential to bring out social changes and has a very important role to play in the establishment of a New India. I know that piracy is a very big problem faced by the industry. We are working towards adding stricter punishment for piracy."*

## 10. First Inter-State Bridge Inaugurated in J&K

Mr. Nitin Gadkari, the Union Minister for Road Transport & Highways, Shipping and Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation, inaugurated the 1.2 km long Keediyar-Gandiyal bridge in Jammu and Kashmir. The bridge is constructed on Ravi river in Kathua district of Jammu and Kashmir.



The bridge which took 3 and half years for construction and costs 150 crores, links Kathua district of J&K to Punjab. This bridge will give the boost to economic and social development of the people living in the vicinity. In addition, it will also strengthen the inter-state connectivity.

## 11. Six Monuments Included in the List of National Importance

The Ministry of Culture has confirmed that the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has included six monuments in the list of 'protected and of national importance.' It is done under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958.



Following are the six monuments included in the list:

- Old High Court Building of Nagpur, Maharashtra (it is 125-year old);
- Haveli of Agha Khan (located in Agra, Uttar Pradesh);
- Hathi Khana (located in Agra, Uttar Pradesh);
- The ancient Neemrana Baori (located in Alwar district of Rajasthan);
- Group of Temples at Ranipur Kharail (located in Bolangir district of Odisha); and
- Vishnu Temple (located in Kotali Pithoragarh district of Uttarkhand).

## 12. “Web Wonder Women” Campaign Launched

First of its kind, the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India, launched an online campaign “WonderWomen.” The objective of this campaign is to discover and celebrate the exceptional achievements of women especially one who has been practicing positive agenda of social change *via* social media.



Furthermore, the campaign is designed to recognize fortitude of Indian women stalwarts from all across the globe who are actively involved in running positive campaigns to steer a change in society through social media.



### 13. TN Bull Taming Event Enters World Record

A grand "Jallikattu"- Bull Taming event organized on January 20, 2019 in Pudukottai, Tamil Nadu, enters the world record for releasing highest number of bulls in an arena. The number of bulls was about 1,354 and number of tamers was 424, almost double of previous record i.e. of 647 bulls.



According to the report given by district police, two men were killed in the event while 31 including some spectators were injured.

### 14. Netherlands Plant of Tata Steel Recognized as 'Manufacturing Lighthouse'

Tata Steel's Plant located in Netherlands, has been recognized as the 'Manufacturing Lighthouse.' World Economic Forum (WEF) has given the status of 'Manufacturing Lighthouse' – with state-of-the-art production facilities, as it successfully adopted and integrated the cutting-edge technologies of the future.



In 2018, thousands of factories have been analyzed, the World Economic Forum (WEF) announced that TATA Steel plant located at IJmuiden in Netherlands has been inducted into its prestigious community. It is a distinction award given to the manufacturing facilities, recognized as leaders in technologies of the 'Fourth Industrial Revolution.'

### 15. Andhra Pradesh's Polavaram project enters Guinness Book of World Record

Polavaram project, one of the India's largest projects of India, entered the Guinness Book of World Record by pouring 32,315.5 cubic meters of concrete in just 24 hours on January 7, 2019.



Besides, Polavaram project has also been awarded with the Central Board of Irrigation and Power (CBIP) award for fast execution of Polavaram multipurpose project and best planning, implementation and monitoring of water resources project.

Likewise, the project beats previous world record of 21,580 cubic meters made by Abdul Wahed Bin Shabib project, in Dubai between May 18 and 20 in 2017.

# Regional

## 1. Amul Camel Milk Launched in Gujarat Markets

The Gujarat Co-operative Milk Marketing Federation Limited (GCMMF) launched Amul Camel Milk in selected markets of Gujarat. The selected markets are in Gandhinagar, Ahmedabad and Kutch.

The product branded 'Amul Camel Milk' initially will be available in PET bottles of 500 ml, which need to be refrigerated. Its life would of 3 days. The price of each bottle will be Rs 50.



Major benefits of the camel milk (as source said) are:

- It is healthy and easy to digest;
- It has high insulin (including protein) content; and
- It is highly beneficial for people suffering from diabetes.

## 2. Andaman Airport Confirmed as Authorized Immigration Check Post

Veer Savarkar International Airport, located at Port Blair in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, has been authorized to have immigration check facility. Resultantly, it became check post for entry and exit from India for all classes of passengers with valid travel documents.



Upon deliberations with the Central Government, the local administration (of Andaman and Nicobar) started taking various measures to facilitate better connectivity. In a follow-up of events, Veer Savarkar Airport is now open for direct international flights and immigration facilities.



### 3. Andhra Pradesh CM Launched 'NCBN App'

N Chandrababu Naidu, the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, launched a mobile app to help people. The app will provide real-time news updates and act as a platform for local people to interact with the government.

The app named 'NCBN' is made available for Android and Apple phones. With the help of this app, people can file complaints and can give suggestions to the government. Besides, some of the significant speech of Mr. Chandrababu Naidu (Chief Minister) will also be available through this application.



### 4. Haryana Government Approved 11 Projects

Haryana Saraswati Heritage Development Board (HSHDB) met Manohar Lal Khattar, the Chief Minister of Haryana. The CM approved 11 projects aimed at the resurrection of the Saraswati river. Under the project, the authority will revive the mythical river Saraswati to find the regular flow of fresh water into it.

Following are the major projects approved for the rejuvenation and development of Saraswati river:



- Construction of Somb Saraswati Barrage
- Construction of Saraswati Reservoir
- Interlinking of Markanda River and Saraswati River through kainthla supply channel
- Construction of waste-water treatment plants for recycling all waste water falling into Saraswati river
- Construction of RCC divide wall at Saraswati Tirath
- Construction of Saraswati Ghat at Bhaini and Mangna villages in Kurukshetra district
- Construction of bridges on Saraswati at Ishargarh and Beer Pipli villages
- Construction of Adi Badri Dam

## 5. Tripura Government Expecting Rs 8389.71 Crore From Center

Biplab Deb, the Chief Minister of Tripura approved a proposal of Rs 8389.71 crore to implement different projects for the development of tribal people. The funds are expected to pour in from the Centre.



In reference to this project, in 2018, the Ministry of Home Affairs, constituted a committee of senior officials from different ministries and the state government. The

committee is assigned to recommend an action plan and come up with strategies to address specific problems. As the Tribal Welfare minister Mr. Mevar Kr Jamatia said that the committee had prepared its report and highlighted the demands raised by the stakeholders and organizations and sent it to the state government.

## 6. NGT Slapped Rs 100 Crore Fine on Meghalaya Government

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) slapped a fine of Rs 100 crore on the Meghalaya Government, as it failed to control the illegal coal mining in the state. A majority of the mines located in the northeastern part of the state were operating without an official lease or license.



There were about 24,000 mines in the state and majority of them were operating illegally. Senior advocate Raj Panjawani confirmed that the aforesaid fine has to be deposited to the Central Pollution Control Board within two months.

## 7. Gadkari Announced Projects Worth Rs 5,300 Crore in Jodhpur

Road Transport Minister, Nitin Gadkari, unveiled projects worth Rs 5,300 crore in Jodhpur, Rajasthan. Further, he laid the foundation stone for six road projects. At the event, Mr. Gadkari said that while constructing the roads with concrete, the focus is given on quality and claimed that these roads will not have any potholes for the next 150 - 200 years.



Furthermore, Mr. Gadkari said that emphasis will always be given to the quality of work, reduction of cost, and timely completion of projects. Besides, he also emphasized on the use of bio-fuel, electricity, and ethanol as an alternative to the conventional fossil fuel.

## 8. Odisha CM Announced Interest-free Loans for Women Self-Help Groups

Mr. Naveen Patnaik, the Chief Minister of Odisha, announced interest-free loans of up to Rs 3 lakh for women self-help groups (WSHGs) in the state. While addressing the "Mission Shakti" convention he made the announcement.



The 'Mission Shakti' convention was attended by more than 50,000 women from different parts of the state. However, there are about 6 lakhs WSHGs in Odisha. In addition to this, Mr. Patnaik also distributed financial assistance of Rs 3,000 each to six lakhs WSHGs as part of the state government's efforts to digitally empower women in the state.

## 9. Women-Only Taxi Service Launched in Bengaluru

Karnataka State Tourism Development Corporation (KSTDC) launched an exclusive cab service for women. The special cab service launched by KSTDC at *Kempegowda* International Airport, Bengaluru will be driven by only women.



The objective of women driven taxi is to strengthen safety and security for women passengers. Not only this, the women drivers will speak multiple languages and be aware of the areas in and around the city. These women will also be trained in self-defense tactics. On top of this, the service will be available round the clock.

## 10. Rajya Sabha Passed 10% Quota For Economically Weak in General Category

After getting approval from the Lok Sabha, the Bill seeking 10% quota for the economically weak in general category, has also been passed by the Rajya Sabha. As the Bill becomes an Act, it will provide 10% reservation in jobs and educational institutions to all candidates of general category who come under the category of economically backward sections.



However, since the quota is increasing the total of 50%, which has already been secured for the SCs, STs, and OBCs; therefore, this reservation bill will go under the scanner of

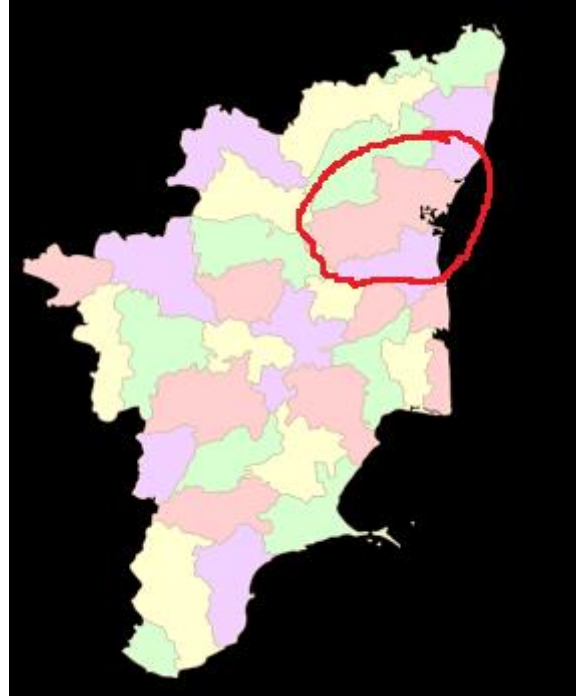


the Supreme Court. As per the Constitutional mandate, the reservation quota should not be increased the mark of 50%.

### 11. Kallakurichi Is Now The 33<sup>rd</sup> District of Tamil Nadu

The Government of Tamil Nadu has announced the formation of a new district – Kallakurichi. The new district will be carved out by bifurcating Villupuram. Villupuram is one of the largest districts located in the eastern part of the State.

Edappadi K Palaniswami, the Chief Minister, while announcing the formation of the new district said that this decision of creating a new district has been taken in view of administrative convenience. Besides, the formation of new district will also fulfil the two-decades old demand of the Kallakurichi people.



### 12. Byorong Bridge, Single Lane Steel Cable Bridge in India Opened in Arunachal Pradesh

Pema Khandu, the Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh, inaugurated the country's first single lane steel cable suspension bridge in Arunachal Pradesh. The length of bridge is 300 meters. The bridge is constructed on Siang river at Yingkiong in Upper Siang district of the State.



Named the Byorong Bridge, it was constructed at a cost of Rs 48.43 crores. This bridge will reduce the distance of about 40 kms from Yinkiong to Tuting. Hence, it is expected that the bridge will benefit 20,000 people on either banks of the river Siang.

### 13. Chandrababu Naidu Inaugurated Seventh Airport in Andhra Pradesh

Mr. Chandrababu Naidu, the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, inaugurated the state's 7<sup>th</sup> airport at Orvakallu, near Kurnool city. The new airport at Orvakallu is kept in the category of '3C.' It is capable of handling turboprop aircraft such as ATR 72 and Bombardier Q-400.



The airport covers an area of 1,010 acre and it has 2000 meter runway with 4 aprons for parking of aircraft. The construction of this airport cost Rs 110 crore. At the inauguration, Mr. Naidu said that development of aviation sector is a key driver of the state's economic growth.

### 14. Sikkim Launched 'One Family One Job Scheme'

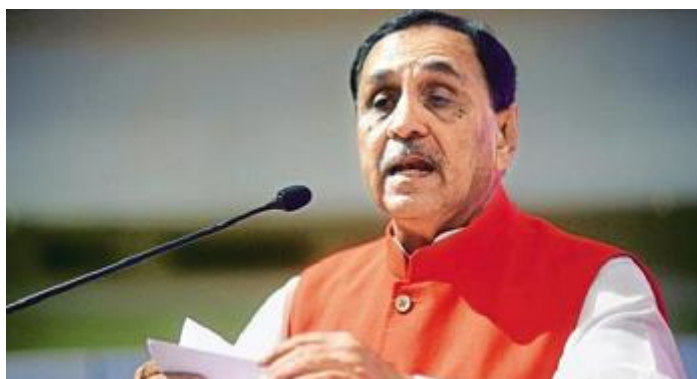
Pawan Kumar Chamling, the Chief Minister of Sikkim, launched the 'One Family, One Job' scheme. The objective of the scheme is to envisage jobs to one member of every family, which has no government job in the state.



In order to implement the scheme, Mr. Chamling himself handed out (temporary) appointment letters to individuals from each of the 32 Assembly constituencies in the state. The step was taken by the state at the 'Rojgar Mela 2019' held at the Paljor Stadium. In addition to this, Mr. Chamling also announced that 20,000 youths will be given temporary jobs immediately.

### 15. Gujarat Became First State to Adopt 10% Quota For Economically Weaker Sections

Gujarat Government has announced the implementation of new introduced act of giving 10% reservation to economically weaker sections in the state. Likewise, it became the first State in the country to implement the new act. Vijay Rupani, the Chief Minister of Gujarat, has confirmed the implementation of the new reservation in the State.



Earlier this month, the Bill of 10% reservation for the economically weaker section, has been passed by the Parliament. As per this new Act, the economically weaker sections will be given 10% reservation in government jobs and in higher education.



## 16. The Largest Ecosystem Inaugurated in Kerala

Mr. Pinarayi Vijayan, the Chief Minister of Kerala, inaugurated India's largest startup ecosystem. With a dash of modern technology, the ecosystem is set up in Kochi, Kerala.



The ecosystem has 1.8 lakh square feet facility housing incubation infrastructure across a series of technology sectors. Likewise, under the Kerala Startup Mission (KSUM), the Integrated Start up Complex, includes the ultra-modern facilities of Maker Village. It endorses hardware startups, the BioNest that promotes medical technologies.

## 17. Mughalsarai Tehsil Renamed

Uttar Pradesh Government has changed the name of Mughalsarai tehsil to "Deen Dayal Upadhyay Nagar Tehsil". The cabinet of Uttar Pradesh approved the proposal of renaming Mughalsarai tehsil.



Mughalsarai tehsil is located in Chandauli district of Uttar Pradesh and it is a centuries old name. However, the new name is after the name of Bharatiya Janata Party ideologue Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyay.

In the recent times, Uttar Pradesh witnessed several changes in the names of places such as:

- Allahabad renamed as Prayagraj
- Faizabad division and district as Ayodhya
- Mughalsarai railway station renamed Deen Dayal Upadhyay

## 18. Odisha Government Announced Free Health Services to All Medical Colleges

Naveen Patnaik, the Chief Minister of Odisha, announced free health services to all government medical colleges and hospitals. The free medical facilities that have been given under Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana will be available from February 1, 2019.



The free treatment facilities will be available at sub-centers in villages and district headquarters. On top of this, the free treatment facility will be given to all categories irrespective of whether they are Above Poverty Line (APL) or Below the Poverty Line (BPL).

## 19. Swami Vivekananda Memorial Inaugurated in Belgavi

HD Kumaraswamy, the Chief Minister of Karnataka, is all set to inaugurate 'Vivek Smarak', the Swami Vivekananda Value Education and Cultural Centre on February 1, 2019.



The place where the memorial is constructed, is the ancestral home of Sadashiv Balakrishna Bhate. It is the place where Swami Vivekananda had stayed for three days 127 years ago (i.e. October 16-18, 1892). The heritage home is constructed of red tiles and adorned with extensive wood work.

The is transformed into a sub-centre of the Ramakrishna Mission and now will be used to train youths in "moral values and right conduct."

## 20. Telangana Government Set up 'Save Tiger Protection Force'

With the exclusive objective to save the Big Cat population in the State, Telangana Government has announced the constitution of a "State Tiger Protection Force." S.K. Joshi, the Chief Secretary who headed the State Forest Protection Committee, announced the decision to form the STPF.



The STPF will have 112 armed members and it will be headed by an Assistant Conservator of Forests. The task force will protect tiger population in Amarabad and Kawal Tiger Reserves.

## 21. Hyderabad International Airport Set to Have Face Recognition Entry

Rajiv Gandhi International Airport, Hyderabad will soon have the face recognition based terminal entry system. The authorities have stated that over the last few years, the airport has experienced robust passenger growth (more than 20% every year); therefore, it is essential to expand the services integrated with technology.



Besides, 26 new aircraft parking stands have also been commissioned for airside capacity enhancement. While considering the enhancement of services, environmental concerns are not being ignore either. Therefore, the airport has now renewed to Level 3+ carbon neutrality status. In addition to this waste recycling, composting plant and water conservation measures will also be taken care of.

## 22. Vizag Became The Only Major Port to Fulfil Energy Requirement from Solar Power

Visakhapatnam Port Trust (VPT) has now become the only major port in India driving all its energy requirement from solar energy. NOIDA-based company, Jackson Engineers Limited, which is operating the power plant in the region, has installed solar panels near the Visakhapatnam international airport with an investment of around Rs 60 Crore.



Likewise, VPT is now generating 17 million units of power per annum from its 10 MW solar power plant. Therefore, after fulfilling VPT's requirements as well as its BOT operators such as Viskha Container Terminal, Vizag General Cargo Berth, and Essar Vizag Terminal Limited, the remaining surplus 5 million units is being sold to State.



# Defence

## 1. Indian Navy Commissions New Airbase

Indian Navy has commissioned a new airbase – INS Kohassa on the Andaman and Nicobar Islands in Bay of Bengal. The objective of setting up the new airbase is to expand its footprint in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). The new airbase INS Kohassa was inaugurated by Navy Chief Admiral Sunil Lanba.



Geo-strategically, the location of new airbase is much beneficial for India, as its coverage of wide expanse of Indian Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Coverage of such a huge EEZ in Bay of Bengal (in the proximity of Indian Ocean) makes the base a vital asset.

## 2. Tamil Nadu Defence Corridor Launched

The government of Tamil Nadu launched a defence industrial corridor in the state on 20 January 2019. Defence products were unveiled, at the launch of the defence innovation hub in Coimbatore



Two other defence industrial production corridors will be set up in the country to promote domestic defence industry. These corridors will be built in Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. The objective behind setting up the defence industrial corridors is to ensure connectivity among various defence industrial units. The Tamil Nadu industrial corridor will connect major districts – Chennai, Hosur, Coimbatore, Salem and Tiruchirappalli.



### 3. India Set to Buy \$5 Billion Oil & Gas From US

India is all set to purchase oil and gas worth USD 5 billion from the United States. Besides, India will also purchase defence equipment worth USD 18 billion. According to a report by Mr. Harsh Vardhan, India's Ambassador to the US, in the recent years, the United States' export to India has gone up by about 30 percent.



In the last two years, the bilateral trade between India and the United States has increased from \$ 119 billion to \$ 140 billion.

### 4. Defence Minister inaugurates *Diffo* Bridge in Andhra Pradesh

Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman inaugurated the Diffo Bridge over Chipu River in Lower Dibang Valley District, Arunachal Pradesh. The length of the bridge is 426 mts.



The construction of the bridge started in 2011. The bridge constructed on Roing-Koron-Paya road in Arunachal Pradesh, is constructed of Pre Stressed Concrete Box Girder.

### 5. Joint Disaster Control Exercise By Coast Guards of India & Japan

Coast Guards of India and Japan jointly organized disaster control, search and rescue exercise off the coast of Yokohama in Japan on January 23, 2019. The drill was monitored by Indian Coast Guard Chief Rajendra Singh and Japanese counterpart Shuichi Iwanami. And, the main Indian ship was ICGS Shaunak.



In last three years, the Coast Guards of India and Japan have been working in close proximity and also having joint exercise on a certain interval of time. Last year, Japanese ships had come India to carry out the joint exercise with Indian Cost Guard.

## 6. India Africa Field Training Exercise (IAFTX)- 2019

On January 23 and 24, 2019, the final planning conference to work out the modalities for Indian Africa Field Training Exercise (IAFTX) - 2019, was held at Pune in Maharashtra. Such joint training exercises are being conducted between dozens of countries of the African continent and India with the objective to synergize humanitarian mine action and joint peace operations.



The significant African countries that participated in the conference were:

Egypt, Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Sudan, Namibia, Tanzania, Uganda, Mozambique, Zambia, and Niger.

## 7. ISRO Chairman Confirmed Rs 10,900 Crore Approval for Development of 40 SLV in Next 4 Years

Dr. K Sivan, the Chairman of Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO), has confirmed that the Union Government has allocated Rs 10,900 crore. The amount is approved for the development of total 40 satellite launch vehicles (SLV) in next four years.



In addition to this, Dr. Sivan also said that 'Chandrayan Mission' will also be launched within the next three months. The specific purpose of this mission is to explore the unexplored part of the Moon. Besides, the human space flight project - 'Gaganyaan' is also on the cards and will tentatively be launched by 2022 (75th year of Indian independence).

## 8. India-Myanmar Joint Training Exercise Held in Chandimandir

The second edition of the India-Myanmar joint army exercise (IMBEX) 2018-19 was held at Chandimandir Military Station located in the Panchkula district of Haryana. *Chandimandir* Military Station is the headquarters of the Western Command.



The joint exercise included 15 officers of the Myanmar Army and 15 officers of the Indian Army. The objective of this joint army exercise (training program) is to train the Myanmar delegation for participation in United Nations peace keeping operations.

## 9. Nashik Will Be Second Defence Innovation Hub

Mr. Subhas Bhamre, the Union Minister of State for Defence, announced that Nashik located in Maharashtra will be second defence innovation hub in India after Coimbatore (in Tamil Nadu).



Furthermore, Mr. Bhamre said that the defence innovation hub at Nashik will be beneficial for the local industries and entrepreneurs. He further added that as expected (as Ministry of Defence had set up a target) the country will be among the top five arms exporter by 2025.



## 1. AAI Bans Single Use Plastic Items Across 129 Airports

The Airports Authority of India (AAI) has strictly prohibited the use of single-use plastic items at its 129 airports of the country. The single-use plastic is that which is used only once and then disposed.

In recent years, different authorities including government of India has taken various step to curb the use of single-use plastic items. Furthermore, on the basis of third-

party assessment carried out by Quality Council of India (QCI), airports of the following cities have been declared "Single-Use Plastic Free:"

Indore, Ahmedabad, Bhopal, Bhubaneswar, Trichy, Tirupati, Vijayawada, Madurai, Dehradun, Chandigarh, Vadodara, Raipur, Vizag, Pune, Kolkata and Varanasi.



## 2. Government Launched NCAP Scheme to Curb Pollution

With the increase in air pollution, Government of India launched a comprehensive PAN-India air pollution abatement scheme in 102 cities under National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) across the country.

The Government has announced that under the NCAP mid-term (five year) pollution reduction target and strategies, by 2024, pollution will be cut by 30%. The following features will be added under the scheme:



- National emission inventory
- Air information centre for data analysis
- Source appointment studies
- Guidelines for indoor air pollution
- Rural monitoring stations



The programme will also get support from the following international agencies:

- World Bank
- German Development Agency
- AFD (French Funding Agency)
- Swiss Development Corporation
- Bloomberg Philanthropies

### 3. Chilika Lake Possesses 20% Seagrass of India

It has been estimated that the Chilika Lake covers an area of 152 square km with seagrass. The area supposedly claims 20% of India's total seagrass distribution. Seagrass plays a vital role in oxygen production and absorption of CO<sub>2</sub>. Because of this property, seagrass is known as a purifier in aquatic ecology.



As per the report of Chilika Development Authority, the apex body for the Lake's management, the coverage area includes different species of seagrass such as:

- *Holodule uninervis*
- *Holodule pinifolia*
- *Halophila ovalis*
- *Halophila ovata*
- *Halophila beccarii*

The area has now reportedly increased from 135 square km. to 152 square km. in the last one year.

#### 4. ZSI Listed 19 Species of Amphibians As Critically Endangered

In its updated list, Zoological Survey of India (ZSI), has listed 19 species of amphibians as critically endangered (beyond the danger line) and 33 species as endangered (around the danger line).

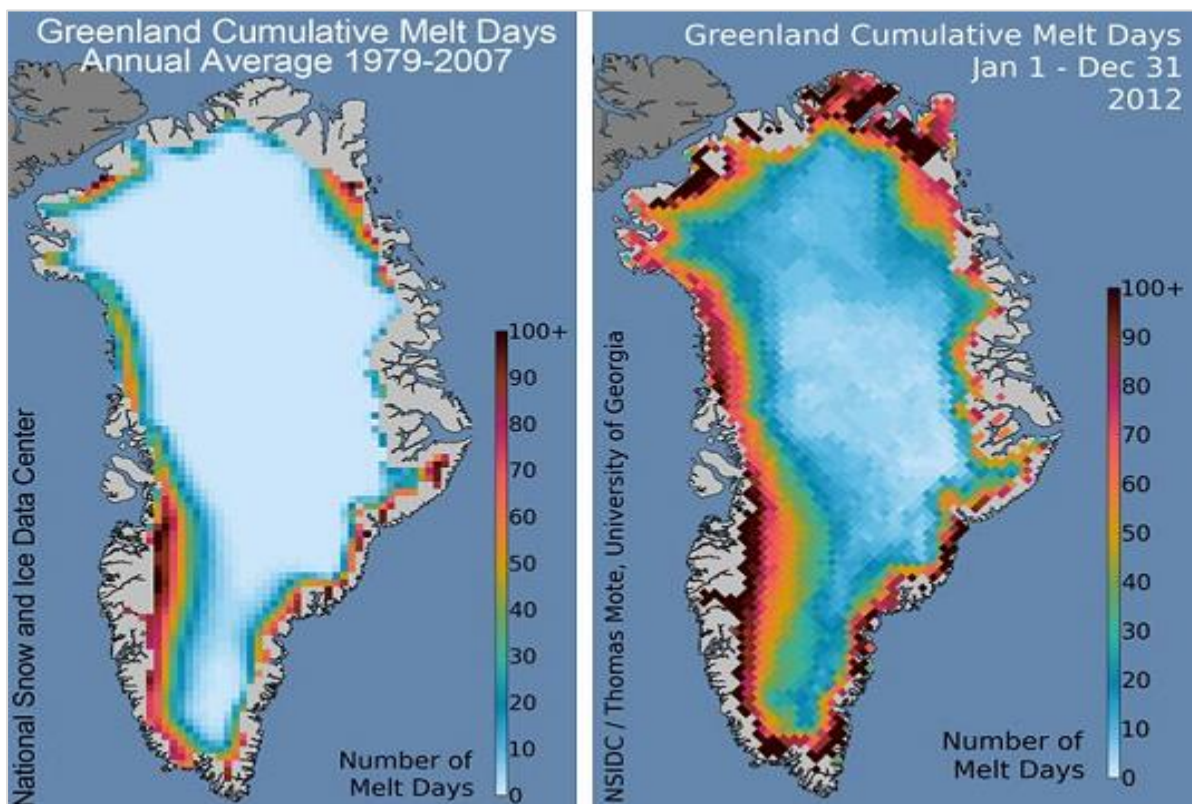


According to IUCN, about 40% amphibians across the globe are critically endangered (i.e. threatened with extinction). The International Union for

Conservation of Nature (IUCN) is an international organization, which works in the field of nature conservation and sustainable use of natural resources. Periodically, it releases 'Red List' illustrating the status of different species across the world. So, the IUCN Red List is an indicator of the health of the world's biodiversity.

#### 5. Greenland's Melting Ice About to Reach at 'Tipping Point'

As per a recent report, the huge ice sheet of Greenland is melting with an accelerated rate, as it may have reached at a "tipping point." Because of such accelerated melting of huge ice sheet, it may cause global sea-level rise in the next two decades.

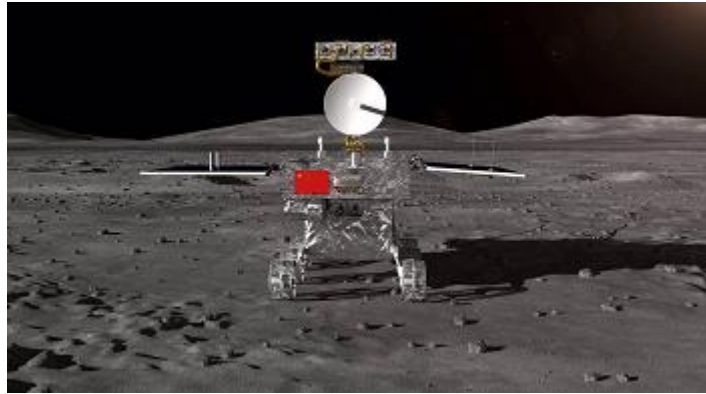


Further, the report shows that the Arctic region (Greenland is located in the Arctic region), is warming at twice the average rate of the rest of the region of the Earth. The researchers

have found that the loss of ice in 2012 was more than 400 billion tons per year, which was nearly four times higher the rate of 2003.

## 1. China Named "Yutu-2" to Its New Moon Rover

China National Space Administration (CNSA) announced the new name of its new moon rover as "Yutu-2" or Jade Rabbit-2. As per the Chinese folklore, Yutu is the name of white pet rabbit of Chang'e. Chang'e is the moon goddess who lent her name to the Chinese lunar mission.



According to the CNSA, Yutu is a symbol of kindness, purity, and agility, and is identical to the moon rover in both sense – outlook and connotation. Besides, it also reflects China's peaceful use of space. As per the Chinese story, Chang's, after swallowing a magic pill, took her pet and flew to the moon where she became a goddess and lived with the white jade rabbit since.

## 2. ISS Crew All Set to Grow Beans in 2021

Scientists of the International Space Station (ISS) are planning to grow beans in space in 2021. The beans will be planted in high-tech planters, developed by the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU).



In an experiment, three years ago, ICC crew members already have grown lettuce in space. As per the plants' requirement, the planters will provide all the water, nutrients, gas, and air. The food, which will be grown in space will have the potential to sustain the crew members in future deep space missions.

In addition to this, the European Space Agency is planning to build a lunar base by the year 2030 as a stopover on the way to Mars. On the other hand, NASA is planning to fly directly to the planet with a target landing date of 2030.



### 3. China's New Naval Radar Capable to Monitor Areas The Size of India

Chinese scientists have invented an advance and compact size maritime radar. This radar can monitor and keep constant surveillance over an area of the size of India.

The indigenously developed advanced radar will make the Chinese capable to extensively cover Chinese seas and spot incoming threats from the enemy ships, aircraft, and other missile systems.



### 4. China Clones Five Gene-Edited Monkeys

In an experiment, Chinese scientists have cloned five monkeys after editing the genes. The scientists edited genes to induce several human diseases such as Alzheimer's with the objective that it will help in medical research. The scientists claimed that the cloned monkeys, closer to human in physiology, make better models for research on disease pathogenesis and potential therapeutic treatments.



The cloned monkeys were born at Institute of Neuroscience of Chinese Academy of Sciences located in Shanghai, the financial capital of China. It is the first experiment of its type where multiple clones have been made from a gene-edited monkey to help in biomedical research.

## 1. NRB Asked RBI to Affirm Banned New Indian Currency Notes Legal

Nepal's central monetary authority, the Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB), has consulted the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and asked to make Indian bank bills of Rs, 200, 500, and 2000 as legal tender in Nepal.



Further, NRB asked the RBI to issue a notification under the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) with the purpose to make Indian bank notes of denomination more than Rs 100 legal tender in Nepal. Besides, NRB also asked to provide exchange facilities to get bills of such denominations.

The request comes at a time when India is releasing new currency notes (200, 500, & 2000) after demonetization. RBI has not issued any notification (for these newly circulated bank notes), which is causing illegal use of such currency in Nepal. Last month, the Nepal Government banned Indian notes, with value of more than 100 – Rs 200, 500, & 2000.

## 2. Three Regional Rural Banks Merged

Government of India merged three regional rural banks – Punjab Gramin Bank, Malwa Gramin Bank, and Sutlej Gramin Bank into a single Regional Rural Bank.



The sponsor banks of these Regional Rural Banks are National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), Punjab National Bank, the Government of Punjab, State Bank of India, and Punjab and Sind Bank.

## 3. An Iranian Bank Allowed to Open Branch in Mumbai

After a meeting between Iran's Foreign Minister Md. Javad Zarif and Union Minister Mr. Nitin Gadkari, the government has granted the permission to set up an Iranian bank with its branch in Mumbai, Maharashtra.

After getting the permission, the Iranian Bank Pasargad, is all set to open its first branch in Mumbai most likely in the next three months.

The important benefit of such approval would be:

- India may get smooth oil purchase from Iran
- Indian banks will also get permission to open its branch in Iran
- India will get transaction facilities from Iran's Chabahar Port, which India is developing.



#### 4. RBI About to Give \$400 Million to Central Bank of Sri Lanka

The Central Bank of Sri Lanka has confirmed that the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has agreed to give \$400 million under the scheme of swap arrangement. This amount will increase the Sri Lanka's reserves.



Economic analysts are of the opinion that RBI's assistance will be beneficial for the Sri Lankan economy especially in a situation when the island is still recovering from a political and constitutional crisis. In the months of October and November last year, Sri Lanka suffered a political crisis, which adversely affected the economy with poor investor sentiment and foreign outflows of capital.

#### 5. GST Exemption Limit Doubled

The Goods and Services Tax Council approved the doubling of the exemption threshold under the GST regime to Rs 40 lakh. Besides, it has also raised the turnover limit under composition scheme to Rs 1.5 crore from current Rs 1 crore. The new scheme will be effective from April 1, 2019.



However, states would have the option to choose between two exemption thresholds – Rs 20 lakh and Rs 40 lakh and will have to intimate their decision within a week. In addition to this, the Council permitted the State of Kerala to levy 1% disaster cess on intra-state sale of goods and services for a period of up to two years. It will help to mobilize revenues to meet the cost of rehabilitation, which were ravaged by flood last year.



## 6. RBI Imposed Rs 3 Crore Penalty on Citibank

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has slapped a penalty of INR 3 crore on Citibank (India). RBI imposed this penalty because Citibank did not comply with the directions in reference to the 'fit-and-proper criteria' for directors of the bank.



The US-based Citibank has already been given a 'cautionary letter' in July 2013 for the violations of instructions in reference to know your customer and anti-money laundering.

## 7. Centre Allotted Rs 6,084 Crore to MGNREGA

The Government of India has approved an additional Rs 6,084 crore at RE stage to MGNREGA. The additional amount made the total allocation to the scheme Rs 61,084 crore in 2018-19. Likewise, it became the highest ever allocation for this scheme. Such governance reforms emphasize on sustainable livelihoods.



### What is MGNREGA?

MGNREGA stands for Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act. It is a flagship programme under the Ministry of Rural Development. It addresses poverty in a holistic manner by diminishing the social inequalities and creating a base for sustainable & long term development. The objective of Mahatma Gandhi NREGA is to transform rural India into a more productive, equitable and connected society.

## 8. Vijay Mallya the First Tycoon Declared a Fugitive Economic Offender

A special anti-money laundering court of Mumbai has declared Vijay Mallya as a fugitive economic offender. With this, he becomes the first tycoon to be listed as the economic offender under the new law. Such act of government will prevent financial fraud. Furthermore, such tag now will allow the government to confiscate his properties in the country.



Mr. Mallya escaped from India in March 2016 owing more than \$1 billion. He had defaulted the loan payments to state-owned banks and allegedly misused the funds. The loans taken from the state-owned IDBI bank were intended to bail out his disastrous carrier Kingfisher Airlines.



## 9. Amazon Surpassed Microsoft

Amazon has overtaken the world's largest company Microsoft and hence became the world's largest company. Microsoft is now down to the second rank. As per the recent report, Amazon's total market value is about \$797 billion; on the other hand, Microsoft's total market value is \$783 billion.

According to reports, Amazon's stock has risen up by 3.5% to close at \$1,629.51 per share. On the other hand, Microsoft rose just a fraction of 1% to close at \$102.06 per share.



## 10. Boeing Set New Record in 2018

In the year 2018, Boeing Co. set a new record by delivering 806 aircraft. Likewise, Boeing has retained the title of the world's biggest plane-maker for the seventh straight year. However, it missed its full-year target of 810-815 due to supplier miseries that delayed shipments.



On the other hand, European rival Airbus SE, met its own 800-jet target pending final audit, but positively will lag behind Boeing due to engine delays. However, 2018 when compared to 2017 had orders for Boeing and Airbus (both) on a low. Airlines fret over trade tensions and the slowing global economic growth.

## 11. India Will Soon Grow Crops for UAE & Saudi Arabia

Mr. Suresh Prabhu, the Union Commerce Minister, has announced that Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirate (UAE) have decided to use India as a base to resolve their food security issue. Mr. Prabhu added that for the first time India's export policy will identify the potential of agriculture along with horticulture, dairy, fisheries, and plantation.



Such farm-to-port project will be similar to a special economic zone (SEZ); however, the model will be that of a corporatized farm. In this farm, crops will be grown for the convenience of UAE market to ensure food security in UAE.

## 12. BASF & Adani Signed MoU Worth of €2 Billion

Germany company BASF SE has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Adani Group and will invest €2 Billion (about 16,000 crore) in the acrylics value chain. This will be BASF's largest investment in India till date.



The designated site will be set up at Mundra port located in Gujarat. BASF will hold majority stake in the venture. The German company BASF is the largest chemical producer in the world.

After signing the MoU, Martin Brudermüller, Chairman of the board of executive directors, BASF SE said –

*"Together with the Adani Group, we would have the opportunity to provide our customers with high-quality chemicals and support them in growing their business. With our production powered by renewable energy, we would be able to minimize our impact on the environment."*

## 1. Climate Change Performance Index 2019

Sweden now ranks first according to the Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI) 2019 report. In the list, Morocco, the North-east country of Africa secured the second rank and East European country Lithuania is placed at the third rank. In this list, India is placed at the eighth position. On the contrary, top two bottom countries in the list are – Saudi Arabia (the last ranker) and the United States (the second last ranker).



CCPI 2019 evaluated the climate protection performance of 60 countries, which are responsible for more than 90% of global energy-related CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

### What is Climate Change Performance Index?

The Climate Change Performance Index or simply CCPI is an instrument, which is designed to enhance transparency in international climate politics. The major objective of this instrument is to put social and political pressure on the countries, which have failed to take proactive steps towards climate conservation. Besides, it also encourages (by highlighting) the countries, which have been performing well towards climate conservation.

Based on environment conservation exercise, CCPI prepares Climate Change Performance Index. Under this Index, the listed countries are ranked based on their aggregate performance, which is measured on 14 indicators given within the following four categories:

- Renewable Energy
- GHG Emissions
- Energy Use
- Climate Policy

The CCPI 2019 report illustrates major regional differences in reference to climate protection and performance within the 56 and evaluated countries and European Union.

The following table illustrates the top ten and bottom five countries of the list:

Rank	Country	Score (in 2019)
1	Sweden	76.28
2	Morocco	70.48
3	Lithuania	70.47
4	Latvia	68.31
5	United Kingdom	65.92
6	Switzerland	65.42
7	Malta	65.06
8	India	62.93
9	Norway	62.8
10	Finland	62.61
<b>Bottom Five</b>		
1	Saudi Arabia	8.82
2	The United States	18.82
3	Islamic Republic of Iran	23.94
4	Korea	28.53
5	Chinese Taipei	28.8

## 2. Andhra Pradesh Tops 'Ease of Doing Business' Ranking

As per a recent report prepared by the World Bank and the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP), Andhra Pradesh topped the list among all states and union territories in reference to 'ease of doing business' ranking. Andhra Pradesh scored 98.42 percent.

In the list, Telangana was placed at the second rank; however, last year, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana jointly had topped the list. The parameters for preparing such ranking list are





construction permit, labor regulation, environmental registration, access to information, land availability, and single window system.

The following table illustrates the list of top ten and five bottom states:

Rank	State	Score (in %)
1	Andhra Pradesh	98.42
2	Telangana	98.33
3	Haryana	98.07
4	Jharkhand	97.99
5	Gujarat	97.96
6	Chhattisgarh	97.36
7	Madhya Pradesh	97.31
8	Karnataka	96.4
9	Rajasthan	95.68
10	West Bengal	94.7
<b>Bottom Five</b>		
5	Mizoram	3.63
4	Manipur	0.27
3	Sikkim	0.13
2	Arunachal Pradesh	0
1	Meghalaya	0

### 3. Among Most Innovative Countries, India Ranked 54

As per the 2019 innovative Index report published by Bloomberg, India is ranked at 54<sup>th</sup> position in the list of world's most innovative countries. To prepare the Bloomberg annual innovation index, the researchers analyze dozens of criteria using seven metrics such as research and development spending, manufacturing capability and concentration of high-tech public companies.

In the beginning, Bloomberg included more than 200 economies; however, majority of nations did not share information for at least six categories, therefore, the list trimmed down to 95. Based on certain criteria, each country is scored.

As per the list:

- With score 87.38, South Korea ranked at the top
- With score 87.30, Germany ranked second;
- With score 85.70, Finland ranked third;
- With score 85.49, Switzerland ranked at four; and
- With score 84.78, Israel ranked five.



#### **4. On Global Talent Competitive Index 2019, India Ranked 80**

As per the Global Talent Competitive Index (GTCI) 2019 prepared by INSEAD (Institut Européen d'Administration des Affaires) business school in partnership with Tata Communications and Adecco Group, India ranked 80.



The report mentioned that the biggest challenge in India, is to improve its ability to attract and retain talent. Besides, India also needs to address the poor levels of Internal Openness when it comes to weak gender equality and low tolerances towards minorities and immigrants. On the other hand, in the top ten list, only two non-European countries (the United States and Singapore) secured their positions.

Top five countries are:

- Switzerland
- Singapore
- The United States
- Norway
- Denmark

# Appointments

## 1. Sheikh Hasina Won Third Term as PM of Bangladesh

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina won third consecutive election on December 31, 2018. She won the highest majority of 287 seats out of 298 while the main opposition Party; Bangladesh National Party (BNP) managed to get merely 7 seats.

Because of such disastrous defeat, the opposition rejected the results of election and termed it 'farical.' They claimed the results are influenced by vote rigging and demanded fresh election, which was not allowed.



## 2. Sudhir Bhargava Appointed as New Information Chief Commissioner

Sudhir Bhargava has been appointed as the new Chief Information Commissioner. He had taken charge on January 1, 2019 with four new members appointed by the Central Information Commission (CIC) taking its strength to seven. However, four vacancies of CIC still remain vacant.

Under the Right to Information Act, the Central Information

Commission is the highest authoritative body. All this while, it was working with only three members and they completed their tenure last month.



### 3. President Kovind Approved Two Judges Elevation to Supreme Court

The Supreme Court collegium headed by Chief Justice of India, Justice Ranjan Gogoi has recommended Justice Sanjiv Khanna, Justice Dinesh Maheshwari for promotion to the Apex Court.

On January 16, 2019, honorable president of India, Ram Nath Kovind approved the recommendation of elevating them to be judges of Supreme Court of India.



### 4. Solar Man of India, Pranav R Mehta, Became the first Indian to Head Global Solar Council, USA

Mr. Pranav R Mehta has been appointed the president of Global Solar Council. The headquarters of Global Solar Council is located in Washington DC, USA.

Mr. Mehta is a visionary in the field of solar energy and the chairman of National Solar Energy Federation. At present, India is placed in Top 5 countries in the field of Solar energy and for this Mr. Mehta's contribution cannot be denied. He has been invited by more than 15 countries



because of his ideals and work in the field of Solar Energy in India.



# Awards

## 1. Mandhana Won ICC women's Cricketer of the Year Award

Smriti Mandhana, the opener batsman of India, won the Rachael Heyhoe-Flint Award for best cricketer of the year and the ICC ODI player of the year award. Mandhana has outstandingly performed in ODI series against England and helped India win the ODI series. Besides, she has also helped her team to win ODI series against Sri Lanka and South Africa this year.



With 669 runs in 12 matches, the 22-year-old Mandhana finished as the highest scorer in ODIs in 2018. She scored seven half-centuries and one hundred in this year. New Zealand's Sophie Devine announced as the runner-up for the ODI Player of the Year.

## 2. India born, Dr. Rattan Lal Honored Japan Prize - 2019

India born, Dr. Rattan Lal, who is a distinguished University Professor of Soil Science at The Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio, U.S.A. has been honored with Japan Prize 2019. He has been given this award for his work in identifying technological options adapted to various ecosystems through his intensive basic and applied research on processes and factors of soil degradation.



The soil degradation, that he found, is caused by inappropriate biological production. Therefore, Dr. Rattan was recommended for his commendable agricultural practices, which reduce risks of soil degradation.

### 3. Kohli Became First player to Win All Three Top ICC Awards in Single Year

Indian Cricket Team Captain, Virat Kohli, has become the first player in the world who has won all the top three ICC Awards of 2018. Mr. Kohli has made several records in the year 2018-19.

Kohli won Sir Garfield Sobers Trophy for ICC Cricketer of the Year, the ICC Men's Test Player of the Year, and the ICC Men's ODI Player of the year for his outstanding performance in 2018.



### 4. BJP MP Anurag Thakur Honored with Sansad Ratna Award

Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) leader and member of parliament (MP) Anurag Thakur became the first BJP leader to be honored with the Sansad Ratna Award. The award is given to him on January 19, 2019 for his distinguished performance as a parliamentarian.

The Sansad Ratna Award was set up on the suggestion of former President of India, Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam in 2010. Dr. Kalam himself launched the first edition of the award in May 2010.



### 5. Bharat Ratna CNR Rao Chosen for Sheikh Saud International Prize

Eminent Scientist and Bharat Ratna recipient, CNR Rao has been nominated by the Centre for Advanced Materials of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) for the first Sheikh Saud International Prize, 2019. He has been chosen for this award for his work namely Materials Research.

The award will be presented to Rao during the International Workshop on Advanced Materials, which will be held in Ras Al Khaima, UAE on February 25, 2019.



## 6. Indian Athlete Vinesh Phogat Nominated for Laureus World Sports Award for Comeback of the Year

Indian female wrestler Vinesh Phogat has been nominated for the prestigious award 'Laureus World Comeback' Award on January 18, 2019 in Monaco, France.

She is nominated for this award for her comeback and winning the Asian Games Gold medal. She suffered an injury during the quarterfinal of 50 kg freestyle wrestling event at the 2016 Olympic Games.



## 7. WHO Goodwill Ambassador Yohei Sasakawa Received Gandhi Peace Prize for 2018

Goodwill ambassador of World Health Organization (WHO), Yohei Sasakawa, has been honored with the Gandhi Peace Prize for 2018. He has been given this award on January 17, 2019. The award is given for his work of Leprosy Elimination.

This award is presented to him in recognition of his work towards the eradication of the disease in India as well as across the world.



## 8. PM Narendra Modi Honored with Philip Kotler Presidential Award

Prime Minister of India, Mr. Narendra Modi, has become the first recipient of the prestigious 'Philip Kotler presidential award.' He received the award on January 14, 2019 in New Delhi.

As per a report from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO)- "The award focuses on the triple ('P') bottom-line of 'People, Profit and Planet.' From now onwards, this will be offered annually to the distinguished leader of a nation".





### 9. Filmmaker Buddhadeb Dasgupta Received Lifetime Achievement Award

At the 3rd Cinemar Samabartan ceremony, which was held in Kolkata, filmmaker Buddhadeb Dasgupta received the Lifetime Achievement Award 2019. West Bengal Film Journalists' Association (WBFJA) conferred this award to veteran filmmaker Buddhadeb Dasgupta for his unforgettable contribution to Bengali cinema.



In addition to this, he has already been honored with other prominent awards such as lifetime achievement award at the Spain International Film Festival, Golden Athena Award at the Athens International Film Festival, etc.

### 10. Namita Gokhale Won Sushila Devi Literature Award

Noted author Namita Gokhale won the Sushila Devi Literature Award for her novel "Things to Leave Behind" in the Best Book of Fiction category. She received the award at Bhopal Literature and Art Festival (BLF) on January 12, 2019.



Ms. Gokhale is the author of sixteen books in which nine books are work of fiction such as 'Paro', 'Lost in Time', 'Priya', 'The Puffin Mahabharata' etc.

### 11. Ravi Shastri and Virat Kohli Received Honorary Membership of Sydney Cricket Ground

Virat Kohli, the present captain of Indian cricket team, and former cricketer and coach of Indian cricket team Ravi Shastri have been given honorary membership of Sydney Cricket Ground.



In the world's cricket history, only iconic international players like Sachin Tendulkar of India and Brian Lara of West Indies have been given honorary membership of Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG) but now two more Indian cricketers have been honored.

On January 11, 2019, Indian cricket team's Captain and skipper Virat Kohli along with coach Ravi Shastri received the honorary membership of SCG.



## 12. 2018 Confederation of African Football Player of the Year Award Given to Mohamed Salah

Mohamed Salah, the player of Liverpool, has been honored with the Confederation of African Football Player of the Year Award 2018. The Premier League's player of the year, Mohamed Salah scored 44 goals in 52 games for Liverpool last season and secured 2018 Confederation of African Football Player of the Year award for the second time.



He also won BBC African Football Player of the year award second time in row.

## 13. Bimal Roy Memorial and Film Society Honored Farooq Sheikh & Asha Parekh

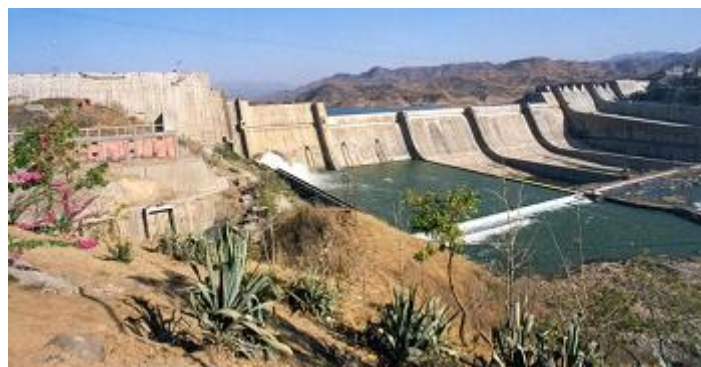
Veterans Asha Parekh and Late Farooq Sheikh were honored by the Bimal Roy Memorial and Film Society to commemorate the 52nd death anniversary of the renowned filmmaker, Bimal Roy on January 8, 2019.



The organization, Bimal Roy Memorial and Film Society was established 22 years ago in memory of the late filmmaker 'Bimal Roy'. Its main aim is to reward unpraised heroes of the Indian film industry.

## 14. Andhra Pradesh's Department of Water Resources Received Award for Polavaram Project

Department of Water Resources (WR) was honored with the highly prestigious 'Central Board of Irrigation and Power (CBIP) Award' for 2019 on January 4. The award is given for its planning, implementation and monitoring of the *Polavaram* project located on the Godavari River for the category of water resources.



This award is presented to them for the completion of about 55.12 percent of this multi river valley project. As of now, it is one of the largest projects of the country. While executing this project, the department also faced several challenges in the excavation and concrete work for spill channel, spillway and the construction of the earth-cum-rock-filled (ECRF), etc.

### 15. 15-year Old Wahengbam Lamnganba Singh Selected for National Bravery Award

Indian Council for Child Welfare (ICCW) has selected Wahengbam Lamnganba, a 15 years old boy for National Bravery Award. Wahengbam is a native of Bishnupur district in Manipur. He has been selected for this award for saving his two and half years old cousin from drowning in a pond on May 16, 2018.



Lamnganba will soon receive award and memento with other kids from honorable Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi.

### 16. Prof. Manoj Das Received *Kabi Samrat Upendra Bhanja* National Award

On the occasion of the 53rd foundation day ceremony of Berhampur university, Odisha; Notable English and Odia writer, Prof. Manoj Das was awarded with '*Kabi Samrat Upendra Bhanja* National Award.' The Lifetime Achievement is given to him for his distinguished contribution in the field of Literature.



He has also been awarded with other eminent awards such as *Saraswati Samman* in the year 2000 and the fourth highest Civilian Award, *Padma Shri* in 2001 for his great contribution in the field of Literature and Education.

### 17. IIT Professor Jayanta Kumar Ghosh Honored with Life Time Achievement Award

IIT professor Jayanta Kumar Ghosh has been honored with Life time achievement award namely '*National Geospatial Award for excellence*' on January 1, 2019. The award is given for his work in the field of Geo-Spatial Science by The Indian Society for Remote Sensing.



The award comprises a citation, a medal and Rs 1 lakh. Ghosh is a professor of Indian Institute of Technology in Roorkee, Uttarakhand. According to Ghosh, the award is an acknowledgement of his scientific contribution.

### 18. National *Nritya Shiromani* Award 2019 Given to Anindita

Anindita Neogy Anaam is a US based Kathak dancer, recently honored by the award '*National Nritya Shiromani*.' She has been honored for promoting and encouraging different dance forms all over the world.



The award was given to her in Cuttack on the occasion of 10<sup>th</sup> Cuttack *Mahostsav* (festival) on January 2, 2019. Anindita also showed her talent as a *Kathak* dancer in the opening ceremony of this annual festival.

Besides, Anindita has also been honored with other national awards such as *Jayadev Rashtriya Puraskar* and *Bidagdha Nartaki Samman* for her great contribution in upbringing Indian Art in India as well as across the world.

### 19. Three Indian-origin Women Scientists Awarded by The Australian Government

Three Indian-origin women scientists – Devika Kamath, Onisha Patel and Asha Rao have been awarded by the Australian Government.



These three woman scientists had gone Australia to pursue the research of search of better opportunities. In due course of time, Australian Government recognized them through Superstar of STEM initiative and made to the list of 60 superstars of STEM list announced by the Australian Government. Besides, the Australian Government is also planning to provide them training to engage them as mentor for female students.



# Persons in News

## 1. Arunima Sinha, First Female Amputee to Scale Mt Vinson in Antarctica

Arunima Sinha, the Indian mountaineer has become the first female amputee to climb Mount Vinson. The Mount Vinson is the highest peak of Antarctica. Prior to this, in the year 2013, she had already set a record of climbing Mount Everest, the highest peak of the world.



Sinha is the world's first woman amputee to climb Mount Everest. On her milestone achievement, Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated her and said –

*"Excellent! Congratulations to Arunima Sinha for scaling new heights of success. She is the pride of India, who has distinguished herself through her hard work and perseverance. Wishing her the very best for her future endeavours."*

## 2. IWF President, Birendra Prasad Baishya Nominated as Chef de Mission for Tokyo Olympics

Birendra Prasad Baishya, the president of the Indian Weightlifting Federation (IWF), has been named as Chef de Mission for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. Mr. Baishya, currently, is also one of the Indian Olympic Association Vice Presidents.



Besides, he also holds several other directorial position and executive board member –

- Member – International Weightlifting Federation;
- Vice-President – Asian Weightlifting Federation; and
- Vice-President – Commonwealth Weightlifting Federation.



### 3. Sultan Abdullah Elected as the New King of Malaysia

Sultan Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah has been elected as the new king of Malaysia. Sultan Abdullah, currently, is the ruler of Pahang state. The leaders of royal houses of Malaysia, popular as the 'Conference of Rulers,' elected Sultan Abdullah to a five-year term under the system of rotational monarchy.



The leaders of Malaysia's royal houses, known as the Conference of Rulers, elected the 59-year-old Sultan Abdullah to a five-year term under a system of rotational monarchy that is unique to Malaysia.

In addition to this, Sultan Abdullah is also:

- a member of the non-executive supervisory committee for world soccer known as the FIFA Council;
- president of the Asian Hockey Federation, and
- an executive board member of the International Hockey Federation.

### 4. Su Tseng-chang Appointed as Taiwan PM

Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen has appointed Su Tseng-chang as the Prime Minister of the country on January 10, 2019.

Su has already been appointed in 2006 by then-President Chen Shui-bian and remained as chairman of Tsai's Democratic Progressive Party for two terms.



## 5. For first Time in History, Malaysia's Monarch, Sultan Muhammad V, Stepped Down Before Completion of Tenure

Malaysia's king Sultan Muhammad V relinquished his position of King on January 6, 2019. According to the report, this is first time in Malaysia's history that a monarch resigned in just two years before completing the tenure of 5 years.

Malaysia has a constitutional monarchy system and the king bears huge ceremonial responsibilities as a custodian of Islam.



## 6. Brazil Elected Jair Bolsonaro as its 42nd President

Former army captain Jair Bolsonaro was elected as the president of Brazil on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2019.

It is surprising that Mr. Bolsonaro openly supports the torture used by Brazil's former military regime; however, still he managed to attract the voters through their deep anger for different problems of their country such as corruption and crime.



## 7. SC judge Justice M B Lokur Retired

Supreme Court Justice Madan B Lokur retired from his position on December 31, 2018; however, his last working day in the court was December 14, 2018.

Justice Lokur joined Delhi High Court as an Additional Judge. Later, he was appointed as a Permanent Judge of that High Court on July 5, 1999. He was elevated as Judge of the Supreme Court on June 4, 2012.

He is the man of the masses who always protected the rights of poor and impoverished sections of society by heading social Justice bench of Supreme Court.



## 8. Aparna Kumar First Female IPS to Reach South Pole

2002 batch IPS officer of Uttar Pradesh cadre, Aparna Kumar, has become the first female IPS officer to reach South Pole. She reached the South Pole on January 13, 2019 and she also unfurled the National as well as Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) flags.



Furthermore, she already climbed Mt Everest in the past. After two unsuccessful attempts to scale the Everest in 2014 and 2015 (due to Avalanche and Earthquake respectively, she could not make it possible), she finally did it in 2016. Likewise, she successfully scaled the Highest peak of the world on May 21, 2016.

## 9. India's Satyarup Siddhanta Became World's Youngest Mountaineer to Climb 7 Peaks & 7 Volcano Summits

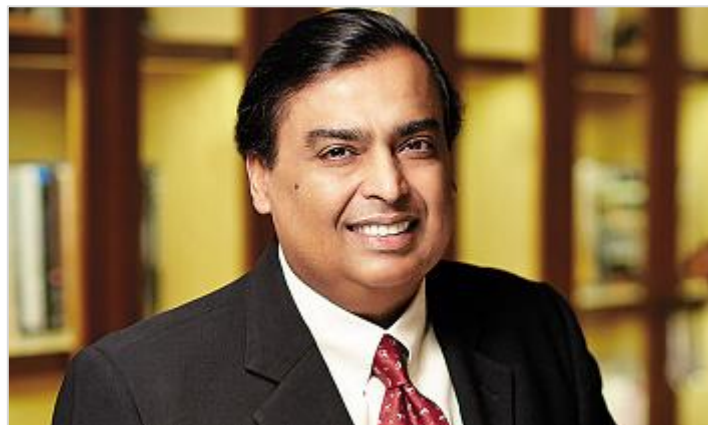
35 years old Mountaineer and Software Engineer of Kolkata, Satyarup Siddhanta, climbed Antarctica's highest point – Mount Sidley on January 16, 2019. The height of the peak is 4,285m. Likewise, Mr. Siddhanta became the youngest man to climb the seven highest peaks and the seven volcanic summits.



In addition to this, Siddhanta also become first man of India to conquer the seven highest peaks and the seven volcanic summits in merely 7 years of time.

## 10. Mukesh Ambani Included in Top Global Thinkers List of Foreign Policy

Chairman and Managing director of Reliance Industries, Mukesh Ambani, has secured his position in the list of Top 'Global Thinkers 2019.' The list is published by prestigious Foreign Policy Publication. Apart from him, Alibaba founder Jack Ma, Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos, and MF head Christine Lagarde included in the list.



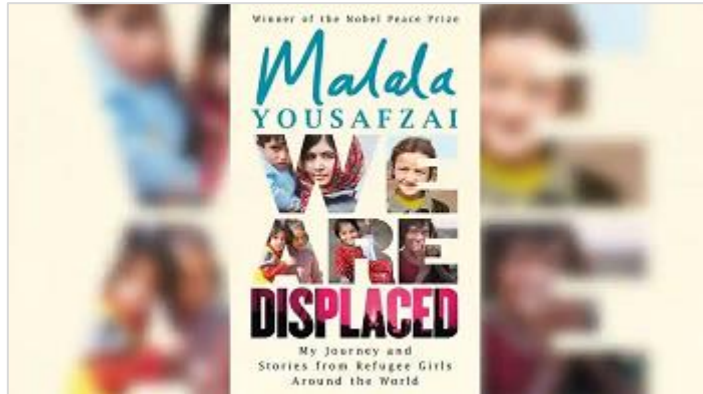
Apart from this, Mukesh Ambani has replaced Jack Ma from the position of the richest man of Asia in 2018 and became the richest person of Asia. The value of his total asset is USD 44.3 billion.



# Books & Authors

## 1. Malala's Released Her New Book "We are Displaced"

Pakistani activist and Nobel Peace Prize winner Malala Yousafzai has written her new book titled "We are Displaced." In this book, she has narrated her experiences that she has been observing through travelling the world and visiting refugee camps.

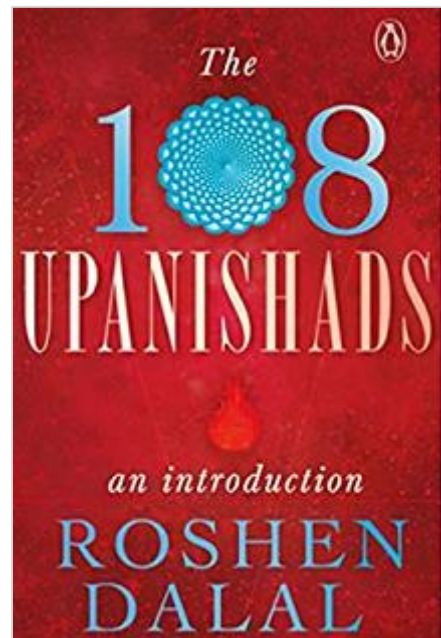


The 244-page book, which is priced Rs 399, is fundamentally part memoir and part communal storytelling. Through this book, Malala not only interprets her own story of migration, adjustment, and compromise with her changing life (in search of home), but also she shares the true stories of some of the girls she met on her journeys. These girls also lost their parents, relatives, and community.

## 2. Roshen Dalal Released his Book "The 108 Upanishads: An Introduction"

Roshen Dalal released his book "The 108 Upanishads: An Introduction." The book is well-structured, simplified, and explained (the Upanishads) by Ms. Dalal.

Ms. Dalal has thoroughly researched 108 Upanishads and philosophical treatises that form part of the Vedas, the revered Hindu texts. These Upanishads interpret the most crystallized bits of wisdom gathered from Hinduism. Ms. Dalal explains the concepts at the core of each Upanishad clearly and lucidly.

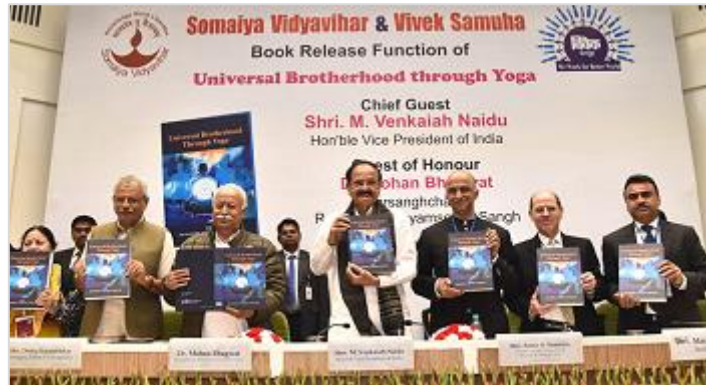


## 3. Vice-President Released Book – Universal Brotherhood Through Yoga



The book 'Universal Brotherhood Through Yoga' was released by Mr. M. Venkaiah Naidu, the Vice-President of India. The book is compiled by Bharatiya Sanskrit Pitham.

On the occasion of releasing the book on yoga, Mr. Naidu said that "Yoga is India's greatest legacy, it is the most glorious gift to the world." Further he says that 'yoga has the power to bring in the essential transformation required to change the way people live, think, and interact with fellow human beings and mother nature. Therefore, Yoga could indeed serve as a force for unity in the world."



# Death

## 1. Veteran Bollywood Actor-writer Kader Khan Passed Away

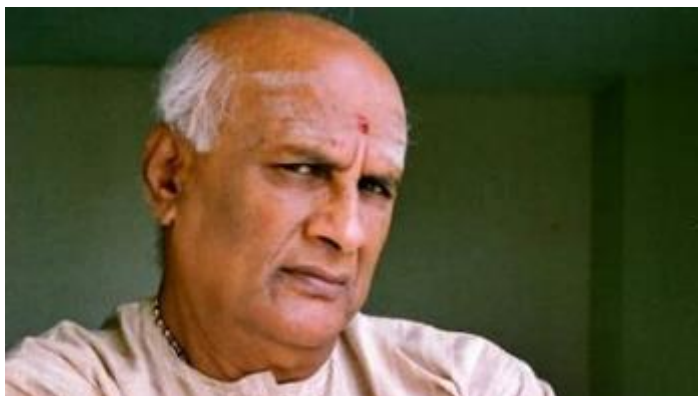
One of the most popular and veteran actors Kader Khan died on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2018 in Canada. He was an eminent actor, screenwriter and also director. As an actor, he appeared in more than 300 movies. His career started with the movie "DAAG" directed by Yash Chopra. After that he showed his skill as a comedian in many films such as 'Hum hain kamal ke', 'Coolie no. 1' and many more.



Khan is best remembered as a writer than an actor. Movies like "Coolie no. 1" and "Muqaddar ka Sikandar" are superb examples of his writing skills. He was the man who took Bollywood to new heights with his contribution as an actor, director, writer and most importantly as a comedian. Indian film industry will never ever able to substitute him.

## 2. Veteran Kannada Actor Loknath Passed Away

The Kannada Veteran actor CH Loknath has passed away on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2018 at the age of 91. It is interesting to share that People of Sandalwood affectionately used to call him 'Uncle'.



Apart from more than 1,000 plays, he also appeared in more than 600 movies. He almost spent ten decades of his life as an actor. He showed his skill of acting in movies such as 'Samskara', 'Naagara Haavu', 'Bangarada Manushya', 'Pushpaka Vimana', etc.

## 3. Bengali writer and Sahitya Akademi awardee Dibyendu Palit Passed Away

One of the most eminent Bengali literature and Sahitya Akademi Award winner Dibyendu Palit, died on January 3, 2019 due to old age complications.

Mr. Palit was popular poet, short story writer, and novelist. Palit's first short story was published in the Sunday edition of the daily *Anandabazar Patrika*. After this, he moved to Kolkata and joined the Hindustan Standard as an assistant editor.

He also won Bankim Puruskar in 1990 for his novel 'Dheu' and eight years after this, he won another award 'Shahitya Academy award'. Based on his short story, a film namely 'Antardhana' has also been filmed.



#### 4. Former Banker and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Leader Meera Sanyal Passed Away

Ms. Meera Sanyal, former banker and AAP leader, died at the age of 57 on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2019 due to illness. AAP leader Ankit Lal posted on twitter that she was suffering from cancer for the past two years before her demise.

Ms. Sanyal was the country chief executive of Royal Bank of Scotland before joining Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in 2014.



#### 5. 1956 Olympian Footballer Zulfiqar Passed Away

Former Indian footballer and Olympian Zulfiqar died on January 13, 2019. He was 83 years old. In 1956 Olympics, which was held in Melbourne, he was the part of the fourth placing finishing team.

He was the captain of Andhra Pradesh police force team from 1954 to 1967 and won different tournaments including Rovers cup, IFA Shield, and Durand Cup.



## 6. Malayalam Director Lenin Rajendran Passed Away

Veteran filmmaker and Chairman of Kerala State Film Development Corporation, Lenin Rajendran, died on January 14, 2019. He was 67 years old.

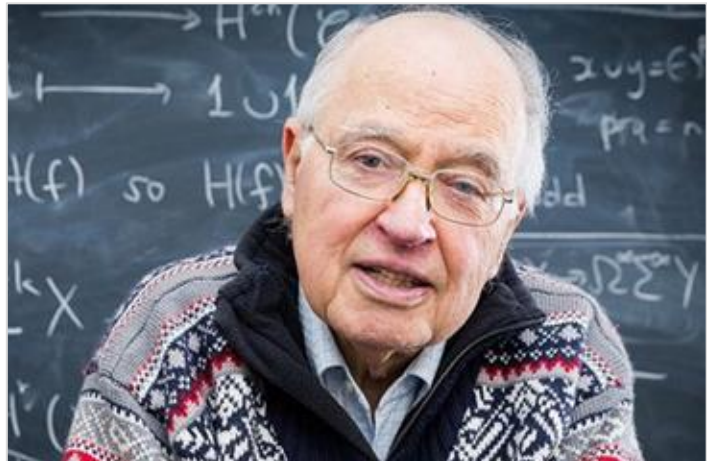
He began his career as an assistant director with his first film, 'Venal' in 1982 and his last film was 'Edavappathy,' in 2016. He went on to win a number of awards in his career for his films - *Swathi Thirunal*, *Kulam*, *Daivathinte Vikrithikal*, and *Makaramanju*.



## 7. Fields Medal-Winning Mathematician Sir Michael Atiyah Passed Away

One of the great Mathematicians, Sir Michael Atiyah, died on January 14, 2019. He was 89 years old. He won the Fields Medal for his works in mathematics in 1966.

His contribution in a branch of mathematics called topological K-theory and the Atiyah-Singer index theorem cannot be forgotten.



## 8. World's Oldest Man Dies in Japan

World's oldest man, Masazo Nonaka, died on January 19, 2019. He was officially 113 years old. He was born in July 1905. According to Guinness book of world record, just one month before Nonaka's birth, Einstein published his special theory of relativity.

Nonaka had six brothers and one sister. He got married in 1931 and had five children.





# Places in News

## 1. The Australian Cities Sydney & Brisbane Chosen to Host Top Tennis Tournament

The two Australian cities Sydney and Brisbane have been announced as the first two host locations for the newest team event in the category of men's tennis. However, the name of the third city will be announced soon. For the first time, the ATP Cup will feature on the calendar from January 2020.



In this new tournament, more than 100 players from 24 nations will participate. The prize money will be \$15 million.

## 2. Shenzhen Became Second City in China to Attain 99% Electric Taxis

Located in the southern part of China, Shenzhen city has become only second city (after Taiyuan) where 99% taxis run on electricity. However, out of 21,689 operation taxis in the city, about 7,500 taxis are still run on gasoline (as per 2018 report).



On the other hand, Taiyuan, located in the northern part of China, has had only electric taxis since 2016.

## 3. Rio de Janeiro Named as World Capital of Architecture for 2020

Located on the eastern coast of Brazil, Rio de Janeiro has been declared as the World Capital of Architecture for the year 2020 by UNESCO and UIA. Rio de Janeiro is the second-most populous municipality in Brazil and the sixth-most populous in the America. It has the second largest economy in Brazil.



From decades, Rio de Janeiro is the most popular and frequently visited tourists' destination not only in Brazil but also in entire South America.

Further, because of such honor (that of being the first World Capital of Architecture), Rio de Janeiro will hold a series of events under the theme "All the worlds. Just one world." In addition to this, it will also promote the internationally agreed 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development's 11th Goal: "Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable."

## 1. Rishabh Pant Became First Indian Wicket-keeper to Claim 20 Catches in Test Series

Twenty-one-year-old, Indian wicket keeper and batsman, Rishabh Pant became India's first wicket keeper to complete twenty catches in one Test Series. During the final day of the 'Boxing Day Test,' which was played against Australia on Australian ground, Pant took his 20<sup>th</sup> catch.



Likewise, Pant has surpassed former cricketers Naren Tamhane who had record of 19 catches (in 1954-55) and Syed Kirmani who had also taken nineteen catches in 1979-80. Both the players had recorded this against Pakistan. Pant has made this record in merely three Test matches whereas Kirmani achieved in six Test matches and Tamhane in seven Test Matches.

Besides, Rishabh Pant also became the first Indian wicketkeeper-batsman to score a century in a Test match against Australia on Australian soil.

## 2. Virat Kohli Equals Saurav Ganguly's Record

Captain of Indian cricket team Virat Kohli has equaled former Indian captain Sourav Ganguly's record of most wins in overseas Test matches. By the time, as captain, Kohli has played 24 overseas Tests and won total 11 matches. On the other hand, Ganguly has also same number of overseas victory (as captain) in 28 Tests.



Besides, Virat Kohli became first ever Indian captain who has won a Test Series against Australia on Australian ground.

Captain	Overseas Matches	Win
Virat Kohli	24	11
Sourav Ganguly	28	11

<b>M S Dhoni</b>	30	6
<b>Rahul Dravid</b>	17	5

### 3. India Won First Ever Test Series on Australian Soil

In a four matches Test Series, held in Australia, India won the series by 2-1. Indian cricket team has been touring Australia since 1947, but never had won test series. However, Virat Kohli led Indian team to win the 2018-19 test series by 2-1.



With this Test series victory, Virat Kohli became the first ever Indian captain who won the test series against Australia on Australian soil. In this series, Pujara and Pant have outstandingly supported Kohli and helped team to win the series.

### 4. The United States Cricket Team Became ICC's 105<sup>th</sup> Member

In an its announcement, the International Cricket Council (ICC), has declared the United States Cricket Team as its 105 member. USA Cricket's application for the 93<sup>rd</sup> Associate Member has been approved by ICC following the Membership Committee's recommendation to the ICC Board last year.



By virtue of becoming the official member of the ICC, USA Cricket team is now eligible to receive funding in accordance with the ICC Development Funding Policy. Besides, it can also sanction domestic and international cricket in the United States.

### 5. Mary Kom Became World No 1 Boxer

As per the latest world ranking report published by the International Boxing Association (AIBA), the sixth time world champion Mary Kom now ranks at number one. The 36 years old boxer has 1700 points in the category of Light Fly 45-48 kilogramme.



Last year, she won her sixth world championship (2018) title by



defeating Ukraine's Hanna Okhota in Delhi. Besides, she also won gold at the 2018 Commonwealth Games and the Silesian Open Boxing Tournament, which was held in Poland. In addition to this, she won a silver medal at the Strandja Memorial in Bulgaria.

## 6. Stephen Constantine, Indian Football Team Coach Resigned

Stephen Constantine, the Englishman, has resigned from his position of Indian football team's head coach. His resignation came after the Blue Tigers defeat, an exit from the group stage of the AFC Asian Cup 2019.



After the heartbreaking 1-0 loss against Bahrain at the Sharjah Stadium, India had to bow out of the tournament. However, in his last four years of career as the coach of Indian team, he also counted many achievements. So, after his resignation, he said to media –

*"I've been here for four years. My objective from day one was to qualify for the Asian Cup and I've done that and we've broken a few records as we'd done that. I'm exceptionally proud of the players and everything they've given."* Further he said -

*"I think my cycle has finished. I did what I was asked to and a little bit more and after four years, I think it's time to leave."*

## 7. Ankita Raina Wins ITF Women's Tennis Tournament Title

India's Ankita Raina defeated Arantxa Rus, the top seed and World No.122, of the Netherlands. Ankita defeated Rus by 6-3, 6-2 in the final match of International Tennis Federation (ITF) women's tennis tournament.



26 years old, Ankita won \$25,000 ITF women's tennis tournament. The tournament was played in Singapore.

## 8. India Won Both Test & One Day Series against Australia

India defeated Australia in the third ODI and likewise won the three-match series by 2-1. With this victory, India became the first visiting team to win a bilateral series (two or more matches) in all three formats on Australian soil.

Yuzvendra Chahal was given the player of the match award and MS Dhoni was honored with Player of the series award. India has already secured its first Test series win in Australia earlier this month.



## 9. Mohammed Shami Became Fastest Indian Bowler to Claim 100 ODI Wickets

During the first one-day match against New Zealand at Napier, Mohammed Shami became the fastest Indian bowler to claim 100 ODI wickets. In his 56<sup>th</sup> One-day match, Shami reached the milestone. He took the wicket of opener batsman Martin Guptill as his 100<sup>th</sup> wicket.

The previous Indian record was held by Irfan Pathan. Pathan had reached the mark of 100 wickets in his 59<sup>th</sup> match against Pakistan, which was held in Abu Dhabi in 2006.



## 10. Virat Kohli Became Fastest To Make 19,000 International Runs

Virat Kohli, captain of Indian Cricket, has set another record in his name by completing fastest 19,000 international runs. Likewise, he surpassed the previous record of Sachin Tendulkar. Kohli ended 2018 with a total of 2735 international runs, which includes 11 century.

Sachin Tendulkar had made this record in 432 innings; whereas, Kohli has attained this landmark record in 399 innings.



Other players who have crossed 19,000 international runs:

- Brian Lara (of West Indies) – 433 innings
- Ricky Ponting (Australia) – 444 innings

- Jacques Kallis (South Africa) – 458 innings

## 11. MS Dhoni Became 5<sup>th</sup> Indian Batsman to Score 10,000 in ODIs

Mahendra Singh Dhoni, the former captain of Indian Cricket Team, has completed his 10,000 runs in One-Day Internationals. Likewise, he became fifth Indian who crossed the 10,000 mark and entered the 10,000<sup>th</sup> club.



MS Dhoni joined the 10,000 club while playing against Australia. Before, MS Dhoni, other four players who scored 10,000 ODIs runs for India, are Sachin Tendulkar, Sourav Ganguly, Rahul Dravid, and Virat Kohli. Furthermore, in the world, Dhoni is the 12<sup>th</sup> player (in the history of ODI Cricket) to enter the 10,000-run club.

The following list illustrates the names of all cricketer who scored 10,000+ runs in ODIs:

Name	Total Run	Country
Sachin Tendulkar	18,426	India
Kumar Sangakkara	14,234	Sri Lanka
Ricky Ponting	13,704	Australia
Sanath Jayasuriya	13,430	Sri Lanka
Mahela Jayawardene	12,650	Sri Lanka
Inzamam ul Haq	11,739	Pakistan
Jacques Kallis	11,579	South Africa
Sourav Ganguly	11,363	India
Rahul Dravid	10,889	India
Virat Kohli	10,430	India
Brian Lara	10,405	West Indies
MS Dhoni	10,366	India
Tillakaratne Dilshan	10,290	Sri Lanka

## 12. Australian Open 2019 Result

The Australian Open is a Grand Slam tennis tournament that is played in Australia every year usually in the month of January. In 2019, it was played at Melbourne Park from 14 to 27 January 2019. 2019 Australian Open was the 107th edition of the 51st in the Open Era. Out of four Grand Slam, it is the first Grand Slam of the year.



Following is the list of winners of 2019:

**Men's Singles result:**

Novak Djokovic (of Serbia) defeated Rafael Nadal (Spain) by 6-3, 6-2, 6-3



**Women's Singles result**

Naomi Osaka (of Japan) defeated Petra Kvitova (of Czech Republic) by 7-6<sup>(7-2)</sup>, 5-7, 6-4





# Important Days

## 1. 1 January 2019 - Global Family Day

Celebrated on every January 1 (especially) in the United States as a global day of peace and sharing, is actually the inspiration taken from the United Nations Millennium celebration, "One Day In Peace."

It is the day people unite and encourage others' peace. They also promote an idea – the Earth is a Global Family; therefore, we should make it peaceful and a better place where everyone can live with dignity.



## 2. 8 January 2019 - African National Congress Foundation Day

January 8 of every year is celebrated as the African National Congress Foundation Day. The statement of this year celebration was "The Year of United Action to Grow South Africa."

January 8, 1912 was when John Langalibalele Dube founded the African National Congress in Bloemfontein as the South African Native National Congress (SANNC). The primary mission was to give voting rights to black and mixed-race Africans; however, from the 1940s, the mission transformed to end the apartheid.



## 3. 9 January 2019 – Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD)

January 9 of every year is celebrated as the *Pravasi Bharatiya Divas* (PBD). It is celebrated to mark the contribution of Overseas Indian community in the development of India.

January 9 was chosen to celebrate as the 'Pravasi Bharatiya Divas' day because it was the day on which Mahatma Gandhi returned to India from South Africa. Gandhiji had returned from South Africa on January 9, 1915.

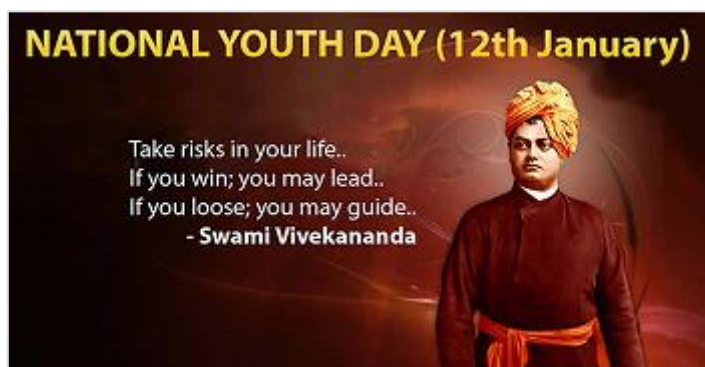
At this event, individuals of exceptional merit are honored with the prestigious "Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award" and appreciated for their role in India's growth. In addition to this, this celebration also provides a forum for discussing the key issues related to the Indian Diaspora.



#### 4. 12 January 2019 – National Youth Day

January 12 of every year is celebrated as National Youth Day in schools and colleges across India. The day marks the birth of Swami Vivekananda.

In 1984, the Government of India decided to celebrate January 12 the birthday of great Swami Vivekananda as the National Youth Day every year.



The students and youth celebrate it with processions, speeches, music, youth conventions, seminars, *Yogasanas*, presentations, competitions in essay-writing, recitations and sports.

#### 5. 15 January 2019 – Indian Army Day

January 15 of every year is celebrated as the 'Indian Army Day.' It was the date (15 January 1949) on which Field Marshal Kodandera M Cariappa's (then a Lieutenant General) took over as the first Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army from General Sir Francis Butcher, the last British Commander-in-Chief of India.



In 1942, K M Cariappa became the first Indian Army Officer to command a unit. In addition to this, Army Day marks a day to salute the valiant soldiers who sacrificed their lives to protect the country.

#### 6. 24 January 2019 – National Girl Child Day

January 24 of every year is celebrated as the 'National Girl Child Day' with the objective to provide support and new opportunities to the girls in the country. Besides, it is

celebrated to increase awareness among people about all the inequalities and other problems faced by the girl child in the country.

National girl child day aims at the development of girls by the Government of India. The theme of 2019 was "Empowering Girls for a Brighter Tomorrow."



### 7. 25 January 2019 – National Voters' Day

January 25 of every year is celebrated as the 'National Voters' Day' with the objective to encourage more young voters to take part in the political process. This celebration has been started from January 25, 2011 to mark Commission's foundation day.

Furthermore, as per the data, the youngsters who have attended the age 18, were not much interested in casting their votes; therefore, to motivate the youth and make them aware of the importance of their roles in governance, such celebration has been started.



### 8. 26 January 2019 – Republic Day

January 26 of every year is celebrated as the 'Republic Day;' this was the day on which the Constitution of India came into effect (i.e. on 26 January 1950). As result of this the Government of India Act (1935) was replaced with the governing document of India.

On November 26, 1949, the Constitution of India was adopted by the Indian Constituent Assembly; and, on January 26, 1950, it came into effect.



January 26 was chosen as the Republic day because it was the date on which (i.e. January 26, 1930) Indian Independence (Purna Swaraj) was proclaimed by the Indian National Congress in the opposition to the Dominion Status offered by British Regime.



### 9. 30 January 2019 – Martyrs Day (*Shaheed Diwas*)

January 30 of every year is celebrated as 'Martyrs Day or *Shaheed Diwas*' in the memory of Mahatma Gandhi. It is also known as Sarvodaya day. January 30 was chosen as it marks the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi in the year 1948, by Nathuram Godse.



On Martyr's Day the president, the vice-president, the prime minister, the defence minister, and the three Service Chiefs gather at the *samadhi* at Raj Ghat memorial and lay wreaths of different-coloured flowers.

### 10. 30 January 2019 – World Leprosy Eradication Day

January 30 of every year is celebrated as the 'World Leprosy Eradication Day' internationally. The objective is to increase public awareness of Leprosy or Hansen's Disease.



January 30 was chosen to commemorate the death of Gandhi, the international leader of India. Mahatma Gandhi understood the severity of leprosy. Leprosy is one of the oldest recorded diseases in the world. It is an infectious chronic disease that targets the nervous system and makes person weak and handicapped.

### Important Days in Nutshell

Important Days of January 2019	
Date	Name of important Days
01-Jan	Global Family Day
08-Jan	African National Congress Foundation Day
09-Jan	Pravasi Bharatiya Divas
12-Jan	National Youth Day



15-Jan	Indian Army Day
24-Jan	National Girl Child Day
25-Jan	National Voters Day
26-Jan	Republic Day
30-Jan	Martyrs Day or Shaheed Diwas
30-Jan	World Leprosy Eradication Day

## 1. The Projects/Plans/Policies/MoUs Approved by Cabinet Ministry in December 2018

Following are the important projects/plans/policies/MoUs those were approved by Government of India in the month of December:

**On January 02, 2019**

### 1. The Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Bill,” 2018

The Union Cabinet approved the introduction of a Bill “**The Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Bill,”** 2018 in the Parliament. The objective is to make certain amendments in the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950. Such amendments will modify the list of Scheduled Tribes (STs) of Arunachal Pradesh.

The significant amendments are:

- Deletion of Abor – Removal of duplication
- Replace Khampti – There is no tribe called ‘Khampti’
- Inclusion of Mishmi-Kaman, Idu and Taraon – Existing entry is only of ‘Mishmi’. There is reportedly no such community.
- Inclusion of Monpa, Memba, Sartang, Wancho – Existing entry is of ‘Any Naga Tribes’. These are reportedly the only Naga tribes in the State.
- Inclusion of Nocte, Tangsa, Tutusa, Wancho – Existing entry is of ‘Any Naga Tribes’. These are reportedly the only Naga tribes in the State.

### 2. Rastriya Yuva Sashaktikaran Karyakram Scheme

The Union Cabinet approved the continuation of “*Rastriya Yuva Sashaktikaran Karyakram Scheme*” for the Period 2017-18 to 2019-2020. The scheduled budget of the scheme is about Rs1160 crore.

Significant sub-schemes under Rastriya Yuva Sashaktikaran Karyakram are:

- i. Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan(NYKS);
- ii. National Youth Corps (NYC);
- iii. National Programme for Youth & Adolescent Development (NPYAD);
- iv. International Cooperation;
- v. Youth Hostels (YH);
- vi. Assistance to Scouting & Guiding Organizations;

- vii. National Discipline Scheme (NDS); and
- viii. National Young Leaders Programme (NYLP).

### **What is Rashtriya Yuva Sashaktikaran Karyakram Scheme?**

The Rashtriya Yuva Sashaktikaran Karyakram Scheme is an ongoing Central Sector Scheme of the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports. It has been Initiated during the 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan and since then, the scheme is consistently maintained.

The Scheme aims to develop the personality and leadership qualities of the youth and to engage them in nation building activities.

### **3. Restructuring of existing National Health Agency as "National Health Authority"**

The Union Cabinet has approved the restructuring of existing National Health Agency as "**National Health Authority**" for better implementation of Pradhan *Mantri - Jan Arogya Yojana* (PM-JAY).

Furthermore, in the meeting it is also visualized that the National Health Authority shall have full accountability, authority and mandate that will help to implement **PM-JAY** through an efficient, effective and transparent decision-making process.

### **4. Cabinet Approves India's Approach for COP 24, Katowice, Poland**

The Union Cabinet has given its ex-post facto approval to the negotiating stand of India at the 24th Conference of Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The conference was held in Katowice, Poland from December 2 to December 15, 2018. The Indian delegation was led by Dr. Harsh Vardhan, the Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

The key focus of the conference was to finalize guidelines for implementation of Paris Agreement in post 2020 period. India's approach was guided by principles and provisions of UNFCCC and Paris Agreement particularly the principles of Equity and Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capability (CBPR-RC).

### **5. Cabinet Approved Amendment to the Trade Unions Act, 1926**

The Union Cabinet has approved Amendment to the Trade Unions Act, 1926. The objective is to make provisions regarding Recognition of Trade Unions. This 'Bill' will ensure that the nomination of workers' representatives in tripartite bodies by the government will become more transparent.

Significant benefits of the 'Bill' are:

- Recognition of Trade Unions at Central and State level;
- Ensure true representation of workers in the tripartite bodies;
- Check on the arbitrary nomination of workers' representatives by the Government; and
- Reduce litigations and industrial unrest.

## **6. Cabinet Approved Merger in Indian Banking with Amalgamation of Vijaya, Dena and Bank of Baroda**

The Union Cabinet has approved the scheme of amalgamation for amalgamating Bank of Baroda, Vijaya Bank and Dena Bank. Bank of Baroda would be the transferee bank and Vijaya Bank and Dena Bank as transferor banks.

Such amalgamation is the first-ever three-way consolidation of banks in India. After this amalgamation, the amalgamated bank would be India's second largest Public Sector Bank. Further, the amalgamation will help create a strong globally competitive bank with economies of scale and enable realization of wide-ranging synergies.

The scheme shall come into force on 1.4.2019.

## **7. Cabinet apprised of MoU Between India and Morocco**

The Union Cabinet has been apprised of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and Morocco. The objective of this MoU is to cooperate in the area of Cyber Security.

The MoU is designed to promote closer cooperation for the exchange of knowledge and experience in detection, resolution and prevention of security-related incidents between India and Morocco. It is expected that the implementation of the MoU will result in significant mutual benefits in the Cyber Security sector.

## **8. Cabinet Approved 3 New AIIMS**

The Union Cabinet has given its approval to establish three new AIIMS. These three new AIIMS will be set up under the Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Surakhsha Yojana (PMSSY).

Following are the places where new AIIMS are planned to set up:

- i. Vijaynagar, Samba in Jammu,
- ii. Awantipur, Pulwama, Kashmir, and
- iii. Rajkot, Gujarat

Establishment of new AIIMS will have:

- Hospital,
- Teaching Block for medical & nursing courses,
- Residential complex, and
- Allied facilities/services.

Likewise, the objective behind setting up the such new AIIMS as Institutions of National Importance, is to provide:

- Quality tertiary healthcare,
- Medical education,
- Nursing education, and
- Research in the respective regions.



**On January 10, 2019**

### **9. Cabinet Approved Bilateral Swap Arrangement Between India and Japan**

The Union Cabinet approved the proposal for entering into an Agreement for Bilateral Swap Arrangement (BSA) between India and Japan. In addition to this, it authorized the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to sign the Agreement for Bilateral Swap Arrangement (BSA) between the RBI and the Bank of Japan. The limit of maximum amount is USD 75 billion.

Significant benefits of BSA:

- It will further boost up the mutual cooperation between India and Japan for the strategic purpose;
- It will assist each other in times of difficulty;
- It will help to restore international confidence;
- This scheme will enable the agreed amount of Capital being available to India on tap for use;
- BSA will improve the prospects of Indian companies;
- It will help to stabilize the difficulty (if any) arising out of Balance of Payment (BOP); and
- It will also increase the RBI's ability to manage exchange rate volatility.

Likewise, such arrangement between India and Japan unquestionably, is another milestone in mutual economic cooperation and special strategic and global partnership.

### **10. Cabinet Approved MoU Between India and France for Renewable Energy**

The Union Cabinet has approved the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and France. The MoU is signed on technical bilateral cooperation in the field of new and renewable energy. However, this MoU was signed on October 3, 2018.

The MoU will help in strengthening the bilateral cooperation between India and France.

Further, this technical cooperation is designed to cover:

- Joint research working groups,
- Pilot projects,
- Capacity building programs,
- Study tour,
- Case studies, and
- Sharing of experience/expertise.

## 11. Cabinet Approved Tax Assistance to Swaziland

The Union Cabinet approved the Signing of Terms of Reference (TOR) governing the engagement of the designated Indian Expert to provide tax assistance to Swaziland. It is done under the Tax Inspectors Without Borders Programme between India and Swaziland. Swaziland is now named as **Eswatini**.

Under the TIWB Programme, the Terms of Reference will formalize the conditions of the engagement of the designated Indian Expert to provide tax assistance to Eswatini. In addition to this, such engagement of the Indian Expert under the TIWB programme will give impetus to India's support in capacity building in tax matters in developing countries.

## 12. Cabinet Approved MoU on Maritime Issues Between India and Denmark

The Union Cabinet has approved the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Maritime issues between India and Denmark. The MoU is proposed to be signed during the upcoming visit of the WIP from Denmark to India in January, 2019.

Major benefits of such MoU between India and Denmark are:

- The MoU will pave way for both countries for exploration of areas for bilateral collaboration;
- It will facilitate cross-border cooperation and investments between the maritime sectors of India and Denmark;
- It will enable both the countries to exchange expertise, publications, information, data and statistics to improve mutual capabilities for ensuring quality shipping; cooperation in the field of green maritime technology and shipbuilding, granting the Indian Register of Shipping (IRS) the status of Recognized Organization (RO), cooperation in the fields of maritime training and education;
- It will assist in research and development for sustained cooperation in the field of merchant shipping and maritime transport related matters; and
- It will also further extend and deepen the cooperation on the opportunities of mutual benefits to both the countries, at both bilateral and international level.

**On January 16, 2019**

## 13. Cabinet Approved Recapitalization of Export-Import Bank of India

The Union Cabinet has approved the recapitalization of EXIM Bank. The EXIM Bank, which is Export-Import Bank of India will further strengthen the export ability of India.

Further, the infusion will give an impetus to anticipate new initiatives:

- Like supporting Indian textile industries,
- Likely changes in Concessional Finance Scheme (CFS),
- Likelihood of new LoCs in future in view of India's active foreign policy and strategic intent.

Significant points of such recapitalization are:

- Issuance of Recapitalization Bonds by Government of India to the tune of Rs 6,000 crore for capital infusion in Export Import Bank of India (Exim Bank).
- The equity will be infused in two tranches of Rs 4,500 crore in FY 2018-19 and Rs 1,500 crore in FY 2019-20 respectively.
- The Cabinet also approved an increase in the authorized capital of Exim Bank from Rs 10,000 crore to Rs 20,000 crore. The recapitalization bonds will be on the lines issued to Public Sector Banks.

### **What is Exim Bank of India?**

The Export-Import bank of India (or simply Exim Bank) was established in 1982 under an Act of Parliament. It has been set up as the apex financial institution for financing, facilitating and promoting India's international trade. It is regulated by RBI.

The Bank primarily lends for exports from India including supporting overseas buyers and Indian suppliers for export of developmental and infrastructure projects, equipment, goods and services from India.

## **14. Visa Arrangements Signed Between India and Maldives**

The Union Cabinet has given its ex-post facto approval to the Agreement on the facilitation of visa arrangements signed between India and Maldives.

The Visa Facilitation Agreement that was signed during the visit of Maldivian President to India, has the objective to deepen people to people exchanges between the two countries. It will now be easier for Maldivian and Indian nationals to travel to each other's' countries for tourism, medical treatment, education as well as business and employment purpose.

This Agreement provides for 90-day visa free travel for tourism, medical and limited business purpose. Further, it also provides for easy conversion of such visa free entry to medical visa as well as visas for dependents of students and those pursuing employment in each other's territories.

## **15. Cabinet Approved MoU Between India and Australia**

The Union Cabinet has given its approval for signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Directorate General of Mines Safety (DGMS), Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India and Department of Natural Resource Mines and Energy, Queensland Government, Australia. The objective of such agreement is to improve Safety in Mines, Testing and Research Station (SIMTARS).

Significant points of this MoU are:

- The MoU will help in establishing a partnership between DGMS and SIMTARS for:
  - implementation of risk based safety management system, providing training, organizing, conference, seminar and other technical meetings, setting up occupations safety and health academy and national mine disaster centre, and
  - modernizing R&D laboratory of DGMS.

**On January 23, 2019**

## **16. Cabinet Approved Creation of the National Bench of the GSTAT**

The Union Cabinet approved the creation of National Bench of the Goods and Services Tax Appellate Tribunal (GSTAT). The building of GSTAT will be set up at New Delhi. It would have two Technical members – one Member at Center and the second member would be at State and it will be presided by its President.

The setting up of the National Bench of the GSTAT would amount to one-time expenditure of Rs 92.50 lakh whereas the recurring expenditure would be about Rs6.86 crore per annum.

### **What is GSTAT?**

Goods and Services Tax Appellate Tribunal or GSTAT is the forum of second appeal in reference to GST laws and the first common forum of dispute resolution between Centre and States.

## **17. Cabinet Approved MoU Between India and Kuwait**

The Union Cabinet has approved the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and Kuwait for the cooperation on the Recruitment of Domestic Workers. This MoU will provide a structured framework for the cooperation on domestic workers related matters. It will also provide strengthened safeguards for Indian domestic workers including female workers who are deployed in Kuwait.

The MoU will promote bilateral cooperation in domestic workers related matters between the two countries. However, the MoU will be initially valid for a period of five years and incorporates provision for automatic renewal.

## **18. Cabinet Approved Amendment to the 'Framework on Currency Swap Arrangement for SAARC Member Countries'**

The Union Cabinet has given ex-post facto approval for amendment to the 'Framework on Currency Swap Arrangement for SAARC Member Countries.' This agreement will incorporate a 'Standby Swap' amounting to USD 400 million. It will operate within the overall size of the Facility of USD 2 billion and build in flexibility with respect to modalities of its operation, such as period of swap, roll over, etc.

Reserve Bank of India will negotiate the operational details bilaterally with the Central Banks of the SAARC countries to avail the Standby Swap.