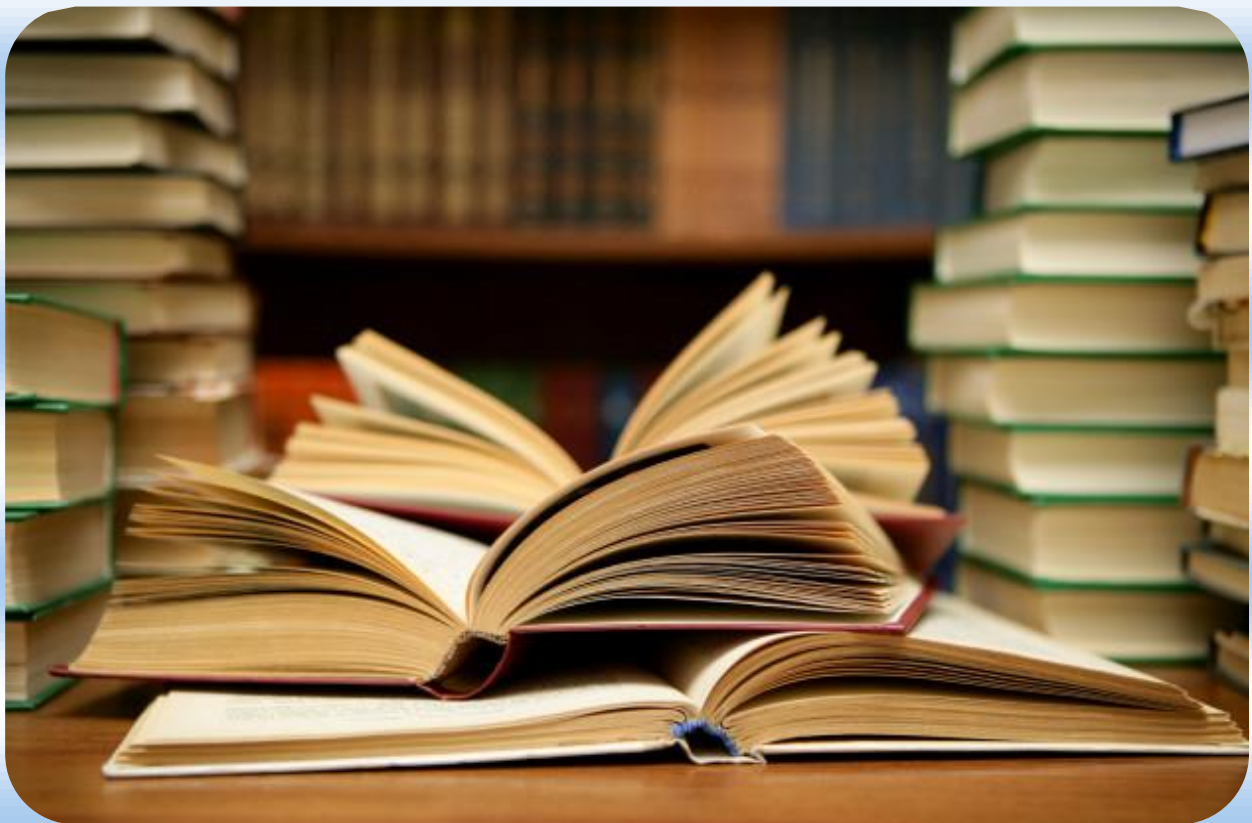


LIBRARY & RESOURCE CENTER, NOIDA

GENERAL KNOWLEDGE MONTHLY



DECEMBER-2018

NATIONAL CURRENT AFFAIRS

Government puts imports of gold dore in restricted category

NEW DELHI: The government Friday put the imports of gold dore in restricted category. "Import policy of gold dore is restricted," the directorate general of foreign trade (DGFT) said in a notification. This means, now, an importer needs a license to import this commodity. Gold dore is a semi-pure alloy which is refined for further purification. Refined gold bars are manufactured from gold dore bar. India, the world's second-biggest gold consumer after China imports about 900 tonnes of gold a year. In value terms, gold imports fell by about 43 per cent to USD 1.68 billion in October.

FSSAI launches Heart Attack Rewind Campaign for elimination of industrially produced trans-fat

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) on Friday launched a new mass media campaign calling for the elimination of industrially produced trans fat in the food supply. Called "Heart Attack Rewind", the 30 second public service announcement (PSA) - the first mass media campaign of its kind – will support FSSAI's global target of eliminating trans fat in India by the year 2022, a year ahead of the global target by the World Health Organization (WHO) for complete elimination of trans fat, a statement said here.

India to Chair Kimberley Process Certification Scheme from January 2019

India will chair the Kimberley Process (KP), a global initiative to remove conflict diamonds from the global supply chain, from January next year, the Commerce Ministry said Friday. KP is a joint initiative of different countries, industry and civil societies to control flow of conflict diamonds, which are used by rebel movements to finance wars against legitimate governments in the world. "India, during its chairmanship will continue with the tradition and aim to support the artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) and with capacity building, technical assistance.

Blue Cross: Abhinav Bindra becomes first Indian to get highest shooting honour

NEW DELHI: Ace Indian shooter Abhinav Bindra added yet another feather to his illustrious cap. The 36 year old who is still India's only individual Olympic gold medallist was awarded the coveted ISSF Blue Cross on Friday. The Blue Cross is the highest recognition conferred by the parent body of international shooting, the ISSF. Bindra is the first Indian to be awarded the Blue Cross. The award is conferred for outstanding contribution to the sport of shooting and honours distinguished members of the international shooting fraternity.

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa to be chief guest at Republic Day celebrations 2019

The Union Ministry of External Affairs confirmed on Saturday South African President Cyril Ramaphosa would be the chief guest at the celebration of Republic Day 2019 in New Delhi. The announcement comes over a month after US President Donald Trump turned down India's invite to be the chief guest at Republic Day 2019. Prime Minister Narendra Modi met Cyril Ramaphosa at Buenos Aires during the two-day G20 Summit on 30 November-1 December.

Sunil Arora takes over as new Chief Election Commissioner of India

Sunil Arora, 62, a retired 1980-batch IAS officer of the Rajasthan cadre, took over as Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) on Sunday. Mr. Arora sought the cooperation of political parties and people to make elections "totally free, fair and ethical." He succeeded O.P. Rawat who demitted office on Saturday. The Lok Sabha election, which is due next year, will be conducted the Election Commission under Mr. Arora. He will also hold elections to the Assemblies of Sikkim, Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Odisha, Maharashtra, Haryana, Jharkhand, Delhi, Bihar and Jammu & Kashmir.

Government forms Rajiv Kumar Committee to look at selling of OIL, ONGC fields to private companies

New Delhi: The government has constituted a six-member committee to look at selling as many as 149 small and marginal oil and gas fields of state-owned ONGC and OIL to private and foreign companies to boost domestic output, sources said. The panel is headed by NITI Aayog Vice Chairman Rajiv Kumar and includes Cabinet Secretary P K Sinha, Economic Affairs Secretary Subhash Chandra Garg, Oil Secretary M M Kutty, NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant and ONGC Chairman and Managing Director Shashi Shanker.

India to host G20 Summit in 2022

NEW DELHI: India will host the G20 Summit In 2022, when the country celebrates its 75th year of Independence, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Saturday during the ongoing meet of the international grouping in Argentina. "It's India's 75th Independence Day in 2022, and we had requested Italy if we can get '22 instead of '21 (for hosting G20 summit). They accepted our request, others accepted it too.

Train 18: India's first engine-less train becomes country's fastest train

India's first engine-less semi-high speed train - "Train 18" - was rolled out Monday by the Integral Coach Factory (ICF) here and will eventually replace the Shatabdi Express for inter-city travel. The 16-coach semi-high speed 'trainset' built at a cost of Rs 100 crore per rake with 80 per cent Indian component has been designed for a maximum operating speed of 160 kmph, officials said. This is the first long-distance train sans separate locomotive (engine) and was flagged of ..

UGC directs universities to observe December 7 as Armed Forces Flag Day

The University Grants Commission (UGC) has directed varsities across the country to observe December 7 as the Armed Forces Flag Day to commemorate the "supreme sacrifices" made by the country's soldiers during conflicts. In a letter sent to the heads of such institutions, the commission asked them to acknowledge the "supreme sacrifices made by our valiant Armed Forces personnel for protecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of our country and securing our lives against the threats of insurgency and terrorism" and against natural calamities.

RBI to introduce Ombudsman Scheme for Digital Transactions

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Wednesday said that it will implement an 'Ombudsman Scheme for Digital Transactions covering services provided by entities falling under Reserve Banks regulatory jurisdiction. According to the central bank, the scheme will be notified by the end of January 2019."With the digital mode for financial transactions gaining traction in the country, there is an emerging need for a dedicated, cost-free and expeditious grievance redressal mechanism for strengthening consumer confidence in this channel

Repo rate keeps unchanged at 6.5%

Mumbai: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) kept its policy rates unchanged on Wednesday, as was widely expected, and cut its inflation forecast for the rest of the financial year, citing a sharp fall in crude oil prices and food "deflation". The central bank also introduced proposals to improve policy rate transmission and credit discipline, besides initiating a predictable liquidity injection over the next six quarters, starting January.

24 poets and authors 2018 Sahitya Akademi Award

An extensive range of works representing diversity in contemporary Indian literature, comprising seven collections of poetry, six novels, six short story collections, three works of literary criticism and two collections of essays were announced on Wednesday as the winners of the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Award 2018 in 24 languages. The awards were recommended by jury members in respective languages and were then approved by the Executive Board of India's.

SC approves Centre's Witness Protection Scheme

The Supreme Court Wednesday approved the Centre's draft witness protection scheme and asked all the states to implement it till Parliament comes out with a legislation. A bench headed by Justice A K Sikri said that they have made some changes in the scheme. The issue of witness protection scheme had cropped up earlier when the top court was hearing a public interest litigation (PIL) seeking protection for witnesses in rape cases involving self-styled preacher Asaram Bapu.

World Bank assisted project SMART launched in Maharashtra

The state government launched an ambitious project – State of Maharashtra Agribusiness and Rural Transformation (SMART) – in 10,000 villages with an objective to achieve sustainable farming within the next three years. The project, which is being undertaken on a mammoth scale, will cover almost one-fourth of Maharashtra. The state has 40,913 villages. The focus is clearly on villages which are reeling under the worst agriculture crisis compounded by lack of infrastructure and assured value chains to channelise the farm produce.

Union Cabinet approves Agriculture Export Policy, 2018

The Union cabinet Thursday approved an export policy for agriculture, lifting all restrictions on organic and processed food, to help the government's efforts to double farmers' income by 2022. The 'Agriculture Export Policy, 2018' seeks to double farm exports to \$60 billion by 2022 from \$30 billion last year, and will invest ₹1,400 crore to set up specialised clusters in different states for different produce to push exports. Policy for sensitive farm goods such as onions

Shi Yomi becomes 23rd district of Arunachal Pradesh

Arunachal Pradesh got its 23rd district on Sunday with the formal inauguration of Shi Yomi, carved out of the West Siang district, officials said. Two more districts would be created, which would increase the total number of districts to 25, they said. Additional Deputy Commissioner of Mechuka read out the notification for creation of Shi Yomi district in presence of Chief Minister Pema Khandu and Union Minister of State for Home Kiren Rijiju, an official release said.

Kerala becomes first state to have 4 international airports with inauguration of Airport at Kannur

Union Minister of Civil Aviation Suresh Prabhu and Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Sunday inaugurated the Kannur international airport making Kerala the only state in the country to have four international airports. The other three international airports are Cochin International Airport, Trivandrum International Airport and Calicut International Airport. The first commercial flight from the airport.

India to receive total remittance of \$80 billion in 2018: World Bank

India will retain its position as the world's top recipient of remittances this year with its diaspora sending a whopping USD 80 billion back home, the World Bank said in a report Saturday. India is followed by China (USD 67 billion), Mexico and the Philippines (USD 34 billion each) and Egypt (USD 26 billion), according to the global lender. With this, India has retained its top spot on remittances, according to the latest edition of the World Bank's Migration and Development.

Government raises its contribution in National Pension System to 14% from 10%

In a bonanza for government employees, the Cabinet Thursday raised the government's contribution to National Pension Scheme (NPS) to 14 per cent of basic salary from the current 10 per cent, sources said. Minimum employee contribution will, however, remain at 10 per cent. The Cabinet also approved tax incentives under 80C of the Income Tax Act for employees' contribution to the extent of 10 per cent, they added.

EU opens India's first Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence in New Delhi

India's first Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence established by the European Union was inaugurated at the Department of European Studies (DES) at Manipal Academy of Higher Education here on Saturday by Ambassador of the European Union (EU) to India and Bhutan, Tomasz Kozlowski. "It is an emotional moment as I inaugurate the Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence. It is something special, a very prestigious award, but at the same time a confirmation of what the Department of European Studies has achieved so far.

CAG Rajiv Mehrishi appointed as Vice-Chair of UN Panel of Auditors

Comptroller and Auditor General Rajiv Mehrishi has become the Vice-Chair of the UN Panel of Auditors, CAG said on Tuesday. The United Nations Panel of Auditors consists of External Auditors of the United Nations and its agencies. Presently, the panel consists of 11 countries -- India, Germany, Chile, Canada, France, Italy, Philippines, Ghana, Indonesia, Switzerland and United Kingdom. Currently, the panel is chaired by the Comptroller and Auditor General of the UK.

IIP grows 8.1% in October 2018

NEW DELHI: India's industrial output grew at an 11-month high of 8.1 per cent in October mainly on the back of mining, power and manufacturing sectors coupled with higher offtake of capital as well as consumer durable goods. Industrial production measured in terms of Index of Industrial Production (IIP) grew 1.8 per cent in October last year, as per official data released by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) Wednesday.

Indian Navy inducts first Deep Submergence Rescue Vessel

The Indian Navy on Wednesday inducted its first Deep Submergence Rescue Vehicle (DSRV) System at the Naval Dockyard in Mumbai. DSRV is used to rescue crew members stranded in submarines that get disabled. The Indian Navy joins a select group of naval forces in the world that boasts of this niche capability. The DSRV can be operated at a depth of 650 meters and can hold around 15 people. The Indian Navy in March 2016 had commissioned two DSRVs, the second will be deployed at the Eastern Naval Command in Visakhapatnam.

Delhi High Court Orders Ban on sale of Online Medicines

NEW DELHI: The Delhi high court on Wednesday ordered a ban on sale of online medicines by e-pharmacists across the country and directed the Centre and the AAP government to immediately implement the order. A bench of Chief Justice Rajendra Menon and Justice V K Rao passed the order while acting on a PIL filed by Delhi-based dermatologist Zaheer Ahmed who complained that lakhs of medicines were being sold on the internet every day without much regulation, posing a huge risk to patients and doctors.

NRTI: India's first Railway University in Vadodara dedicated to Nation

India's first railway university in Vadodara: Indian Railways' big initiative! Railway Minister Piyush Goyal along with the Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani is dedicating India's very first Railway University at Vadodara in Gujarat to the nation today. This is a big step by the national transporter towards professional education and training in the railway sector. The railway university began operations on September 5 this year to mark Teacher's Day.

Bhupesh Baghel to become the new CM of Chhattisgarh

RAIPUR: Senior Congress leader Bhupesh Baghel was Sunday appointed the new chief minister of Chhattisgarh, ending the suspense after days of intense deliberations with top party leadership headed by president Rahul Gandhi. Congress central observer Mallikarjun Kharge made the announcement after the Congress Legislature Party (CLP) meeting here. Baghel will take oath as the the chief minister at 5 pm on Monday, Kharge told media persons in the state capital.

Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) extended to all poor households

The Cabinet on Monday extended the Ujjwala Yojana of providing cooking gas (LPG) connections to 'all poor households,' a move that could potentially bring an additional 1 crore households under the scheme, whose earlier target was 8 crore households. It was also decided to build a new four-lane bridge across the Ganga in Patna at a cost of `2,926 crore. Two new All Institute of Medical Sciences ?at Madurai (Tamil Nadu) and Bibinagar (Telengana) with a combined cost of Rs 2,292 crore – have also been approved.

Kaiga Atomic Power Station creates world record for continuous operation for 941 days

A 220-MW unit of Nuclear Power Corporation of India's Kaiga Atomic Power Station has created a world record for continuous operation for 941 days, state-run BHEL, which supplied equipment for the unit, said Monday. The previous world record of 940 days held by Heysham 2 Unit-8 of the UK, a BHEL statement said. Earlier in October 2018, the unit surpassed the world record of 894 days for continuous operation among all pressurized heavy water reactor.

President's rule comes into effect in Jammu & Kashmir

President's rule will come into force in Jammu and Kashmir from Thursday, after expiry of six months of Governor's rule, an official order said on Wednesday. President Ram Nath Kovind signed the proclamation paving the way for imposition of Central rule in the State which was placed under Governor's rule on June 20 after the BJP withdrew support to the PDP government led by Mehbooba Mufti.

NITI Aayog releases Sustainable Development Goals Index

New Delhi: Himachal Pradesh, Kerala and Tamil Nadu have emerged as the front runners in the race to achieve key sustainable development goals (SDG) like removal of poverty and inequality, while Assam, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh are the laggards in a ranking of states released on Friday by federal policy think tank NITI Aayog and the UN. According to the SDG India Index, the nation as a whole has a score of 58, showing the country has reached a little beyond the halfway mark in meeting the sustainable development goals adopted by India and 192 other nations in 2015.

10 Indian news firms selected for Google News Initiative Funding

As many as 10 Indian startups and news firms are among the 87 news organisations from 23 countries selected for the Google News Initiative (GNI) funding. The GNI-YouTube innovation funding helps the organisations build video capabilities and experiment with new formats for video journalism. Factly, a Hyderabad-based fact-checking startup, is among the 10 organisations selected for the GNI funding. The others include Asianet News Media and Entertainment, NDTV, India Today, Bharatiya Digital Party, Nyooz and Video Volunteers.

Strategy for New India @ 75: Health Sector

The NITI Aayog on December 19, 2018 released 'Strategy for New India @75', its comprehensive national Strategy for New India which defines clear objectives for 2022-23. The Strategy was released by the Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley. It is a detailed account across 41 crucial areas that recognises the progress already made, identifies binding constraints, and suggests the way forward for achieving the objectives. The forty-one chapters in the document have been merged under four sections - Drivers, Infrastructure, Inclusion and Governance.

PM releases commemorative coin in honour of Atal Bihari Vajpayee

On the eve of Atal Bihari Vajpayee's 94th birth anniversary, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday released a ₹100 commemorative coin in memory of the former Prime Minister. Mr. Vajpayee's long-time associate and BJP veteran L.K. Advani, Lok Sabha Speaker Sumitra Mahajan, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley and BJP president Amit Shah were present at the event in New Delhi. Vajpayee died at the AIIMS in New Delhi in August at the age of 93 after prolonged illness.

Sangeeta Verma joins Competition Commission of India (CCI)

The Competition Commission of India said Sangeeta Verma, a former Indian Economic Services (IES) officer, has joined as its member on Monday. The CCI will now have its full strength, with one chairperson Ashok Kumar Gupta and three members. The other two members are Augustine Peter and UC Nahta. In April, the Union Cabinet had approved "rightsizing" of antitrust watchdog Competition Commission by reducing the number of its members to three from six.

PM Modi inaugurates Bogibeel Bridge

Prime Minister Narendra Modi Tuesday inaugurated the country's longest rail-cum-road bridge over the Brahmaputra river at Bogibeel near Dibrugarh in Assam. The prime minister, who reached Dibrugarh in the afternoon from New Delhi, flew directly to Bogibeel in a chopper and dedicated the 4.94-km-long double-decker bridge to the nation from the south bank of the river. After greeting people, standing on the foothold of his vehicle, Modi deboarded the car and walked a few metres o ..

Govt extends ban on import of milk products from China for 4 months

The government has further extended the ban on import of milk and its products, including chocolates, from China for four months till April 23 next year, according to a notification of the commerce ministry issued Monday. "Prohibition on import of milk, milk products (including chocolates, chocolate products, candies, confectionary food preparations with milk or milk solids as an ingredient) from China is extended for a further period of four months, i.e. till April 23, 2019, or until further orders," the DGFT said in a statement.

PIL in Supreme Court against govt's order to snoop on computers

Two public interest litigations were filed on Monday in the Supreme Court challenging the recent Ministry of Home Affairs order authorising 10 central agencies to intercept, monitor, decrypt "any information" on computers. Advocates ML Sharma and Ami Sahni have questioned the December 20 order and sought its quashing. The 10 agencies notified under the new order are the Intelligence Bureau, Narcotics Control Bureau, Enforcement Directorate.

Aadhaar not mandatory for admission in schools

Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) on Wednesday said that no children should be denied admission and other facilities due to want of Aadhaar. This comes after instances of children not being admitted to schools due to lack of Aadhaar have come to light. In a circular titled, "No denial of admission in schools for want of Aadhaar and Organising Special Aadhaar Enrolment/update camps at schools", issued on Wednesday, it is mentioned that for students who are yet get an Aadhaar number or whose biometrics in Aadhaar.

India's largest Cancer Institute to come up in Haryana's Jhajjar

Touted as the largest cancer hospital in India, the National Cancer Institute in Haryana's Jhajjar district would be opened to public by the third week of January, Union Health Minister JP Nadda said Tuesday. The institute, being considered as a landmark in the field of cancer research in the country, shall lessen the deficit of tertiary cancer care in the northern region. "The National Cancer Institute in Jhajjar would be dedicated by the third week of January," Nadda said at an event in AIIMS hospital in Delhi.

Niti Aayog releases second Delta Ranking of Aspirational districts

NITI Aayog on December 27, 2018 released the Second Delta Ranking of the Aspirational Districts Programme (ADP). The rankings were released by NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant. Virudhunagar District of Tamil Nadu was ranked as the most improved district in the Rankings. The ranking represented the incremental progress made by districts between June 1, 2018 and October 31, 2018.

Nitin Gadkari lays foundation stone of 11 projects for Yamuna rejuvenation

Nitin Gadkari, the Union minister for water resources, river development and Ganga rejuvenation was in the news again on Thursday, this time for stepping in to control an unruly crowd mocking Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, who went on to thank him for working together for the development of the city-state. Gadkari and Kejriwal were participating in a high-security function of the central government at Vigyan Bhawan to lay the foundation stone of nine projects for Yamuna Rejuvenation under the Namami Gange Programme.

Government bans Khalistan Liberation Force

The government has banned Khalistan Liberation Force (KLF) for its involvement in several killings, bombings and other terror activities during its violent campaign for "secession of Punjab". The decision to ban the outfit under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) comes in the backdrop of agencies unearthing several KLF modules in recent months which has led to apprehensions that it is attempting to revive militancy in the state.

PV Sindhu wins maiden BWF World Tour Title

India's P.V. Sindhu let out tears of joy and relief when she finally laid her hands on a gold medal by claiming the World Tour Finals with a win over 2017 world champion Nozomi Okuhara on Sunday. With the straight-game victory, Sindhu became the first Indian to win the BWF World Tour Finals title. Playing her third successive season-ending finale, Sindhu, who had lost in the summit clash to another Japanese, Akane Yamaguchi, to settle for a silver in the last edition, prevailed 21-19 21-17 in a match that lasted an hour and two minutes.

Gautam Gambhir announces retirement from cricket

Former India opener Gautam Gambhir on Tuesday announced his retirement from all forms of cricket. Gambhir revealed the same in an emotional video posted on his Facebook page and Twitter handle. "The most difficult decisions are often taken with the heaviest of hearts. And with one heavy heart, I've decided to make an announcement that I've dreaded all my life," Gambhir wrote on his Twitter handle.

WV Raman appointed as the new coach of Women's Cricket Team of India

Former India opener Woorkeri Venkat Raman was on December 20, 2018 appointed as the new Head coach of the Indian women's national cricket team. The announcement was made by the Board of Control for Cricket in India. The 53-year-old will take over the role from Ramesh Powar, whose contract was not renewed after the controversies and fall-out with senior women's cricket team player Mithali Raj. Raman's first assignment in his new post would be the tour of New Zealand, which starts on January 24, 2019. He has been brought on with a two-year contract.

New norms for FDI in e-commerce

Last week saw the government launching stricter guidelines that govern foreign direct investment (FDI) in e-commerce firms. The DIPP updated Press Note 3 that provides guidelines on the functioning of an e-commerce marketplace. The guidelines that will come to effect from February are stricter in nature, causing companies such as Amazon India and Flipkart to go back to the drawing board. Mint takes a look at how the ecosystem may get impacted with the updated guidelines.

P. V. Bharathi appointed as MD and CEO of Corporation Bank

New Delhi: P V Bharathi has been appointed as managing director and chief executive officer of the Corporation Bank, according to an order issued by the Personnel Ministry on Monday. Bharathi is at present Executive Director, Canara Bank. She will take over the charge on or after February 1, 2019 and remain in the post till March 31, 2020 - the date of her superannuation, the order said. In another order, the ministry said Birupaksha Mishra and Balakrishna Aise S has been appointed as executive director in the Corporation Bank and the Oriental Bank of Commerce, respectively.

Capital First merges with IDFC Bank to create IDFC First Bank

New Delhi: IDFC Bank and non-banking financial company (NBFC) Capital First have announced completion of their merger, creating a combined loan asset book of Rs 1.03 lakh crore for the merged entity IDFC First Bank. "IDFC Bank and Capital First merged effective 18th December 2018. Merged entity to be called IDFC First Bank, subject to shareholders' approval," the firms

said in a joint statement. Following the merger, the board of IDFC Bank approved the appointment of V Vaidyanathan, founder and chairman of Capital First Ltd, as Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of the merged entity, said the statement. His appointment awaits shareholders' approval.

Shaktikanta Das: 25th Governor of RBI

New Delhi: Shaktikanta Das, former economic affairs secretary, has assumed charge on Wednesday as the 25th governor of the Reserve Bank of India. The government on Tuesday appointed Das, 61, as the RBI governor for a three-year term, a day after Urjit Patel tendered his resignation.



GST Council slashes rates on 23 Goods and Services

NEW DELHI: In a new year gift to the common man, the government has notified reduction in GST (Goods and Services Tax) on 23 goods and services, including movie tickets, TV and monitor screen. The consumers will pay less for these items of common consumption as the incidence of GST rates on them will come down from Tuesday. The GST Council on December 22 decided to cut tax rates on 23 goods and services, including movie tickets, TV and monitor screens and power banks and exempt.

HUL found guilty of Profiteering Rs 383 crore

The GST anti-profiteering authority has found Hindustan Unilever Limited (HUL) guilty of not passing on rate cut benefits of ₹383 crore to consumers. The complaint before the National Anti-Profiteering Authority (NAA) stated that although the Goods and Services Tax rate on a large number of products was cut from 28% to 18%, the consumer goods company had not reduced the maximum retail price of its products. The NAA, while passing the order, said that ₹383.35 crore worth "benefit has been denied" by HUL to its customers.

Punjab Assembly passed resolution to seek 33% reservation for women in Parliament

The Punjab assembly on Friday passed a resolution urging the Centre to enact Women's Reservation Bill to provide 33% reservation for women in both Parliament and state assemblies. Moving the resolution on day two of the winter session, chief minister Captain Amarinder Singh said his government has already reserved 50% seats for women in the urban local bodies and panchayati raj institutions. He said the bill was passed by the Rajya Sabha during the UPA rule when Sonia Gandhi was the Congress president, but lapsed in Lok Sabha due to the "indifferent" attitude of the opposition.

India to build new vertical bridge to replace Pamban Bridge

Indian railways will be building country's first vertical-lift bridge connecting Rameswaram in Arabian Sea to mainland India that will allow ships and steamers to pass through without any hinderance. It will replace the existing 104-year-old Pamban bridge.



INTERNATIONAL CURRENT AFFAIRS

SpaceX successfully launches 64 small satellites using reusable Falcon 9 rocket

US-based private spaceflight company SpaceX launched Falcon 9 rocket carrying 64 small satellites from Vandenberg Air Force Base in the state of California on Monday. The mission, dubbed SSO-A, or "SmallSat Express," set a US launch record for most satellites put into space at a single time. It is also SpaceX's first flight to reuse the Falcon 9 first-stage booster a third time. The rocket blasted off from Space Launch Complex 4 at the air force base at 10:34 a.m. PST (1834 GMT), Xinhua news agency reported. At about two minutes and 21 seconds after liftoff, SpaceX confirmed first stage main engine cutoff.

Qatar to leave OPEC from January 2019

Qatar will leave the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) next month in order to focus on gas production, the Gulf state's new Energy Minister Saad al-Kaabi announced on Monday. It has been a member of OPEC since 1961, and the decision to pull out after all these decades comes at a turbulent time in Gulf politics, with Doha under a boycott by former neighbouring allies, including Saudi Arabia for 18 months. "Qatar has decided to withdraw its membership from OPEC effective January 2019 and this decision was communicated to OPEC this morning," he said at a press meet here.

Shree Saini wins Miss India Worldwide, 2018

Indian-American Shree Saini has been crowned Miss India Worldwide 2018 at a pageant held in the Fords City of New Jersey. Sakshi Sinha from Australia and Anusha Sareen from United Kingdom were respectively declared first and second runner ups in the 27th annual global pageant for people of Indian origin. Organised by the New York-based India Festival Committee (IFC), the pageant is said to be the oldest and largest event for the Indian Diaspora community. Shree, 22, who was told by the doctors that she can never dance after being installed with a pacemaker at the age of 12, said one should never give up.

Catriona Gray from Philippines wins Miss Universe 2018 Title

MANILA (PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER/ASIA NEWS NETWORK) - Christmas came early to the Philippines as Catriona Gray beat 93 other aspirants to the 2018 Miss Universe crown in ceremonies staged at the Impact Arena in Bangkok, Thailand, on Monday (Dec 17). She is the fourth Filipino woman to win the title.



Angad Vir Singh Bajwa wins gold in Men's Skeet at 8th Asian Shotgun Championship

Angad Vir Singh Bajwa created history on Diwali eve by shooting a gold in the men's skeet final of the 8th Asian Shotgun Championship registered a world record score. With the win, Bajwa became the first Indian skeet shooter to win a gold medal at any continental or world level event. It was perfect shooting from Bajwa on the night as she shot 60 out of 60 in the final round to grab the top spot defeated Chinese Di Jin's 58. Saeed Al Maktoum of UAE won the bronze medal with a score of 46.

Charles Michel resigns as the Prime Minister of Belgium

BRUSSELS (AP) — Belgian Prime Minister Charles Michel has resigned amid pressure on his government after the biggest party in his coalition quit over his support for the U.N. global compact on migration. Michel told Belgian lawmakers Tuesday that “I am taking the decision to offer my resignation. I am now going to see the king” to inform him.



Croatia's Luka Modric wins Men's Ballon d'Or award 2018

Luka Modric saw off competition from France's World Cup stars as the Real Madrid and Croatia midfielder won the Ballon d'Or on Monday to end a 10-year stranglehold on the award by Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi. Modric, 33, was announced as the winner of the prestigious prize in Paris ahead of Ronaldo and French World Cup winner Antoine Griezmann. Meanwhile, Norwegian striker Ada Hegerberg was rewarded for her prolific form with Champions League winners Lyon as she took the first ever women's Ballon d'Or prize.

Belgium wins Hockey World Cup 2018 Title

Belgium win the hockey World Cup take 1- Arthur de Sloover steps up for the penalty stroke in the shootout. He rolls around Pirmin Blaak and then takes a reverse hit into the net. Belgium celebrate as they win the shootout 3-2. The organisers started bringing out the podiums and barricades for presentation stage to the Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar. But they were stopped midway and sent back. Netherlands had taken a review. The replay showed Sloover had hit his leg. The goal was cancelled.



Global Nutrition Report, 2018

Bangkok, 29 November 2018 – The world's most comprehensive report on nutrition highlights the worrying prevalence and universality of malnutrition in all its forms. In its fifth edition, the Global Nutrition Report provides a concrete overview of progress made and highlights solutions from around the globe calling on all stakeholders to act now to address malnutrition. The burden of malnutrition is unacceptably high. Malnutrition is a universal issue that no country in the world can afford to overlook.

International Human Rights Day observed on December 10

Human Rights Day is observed every year on 10 December – the day the United Nations General Assembly adopted, in 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This year, Human Rights Day marks the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a milestone document that proclaimed the inalienable rights which everyone is inherently entitled to as a human being -- regardless of race, colour, religion, sex, language, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. It is the most translated document in the world, available in more than 500 languages.

India and ADB sign Loan Agreement of \$60 million for Assam

India and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) on December 13, 2018 signed a USD 60 million loan agreement to reduce floods and the riverbank erosion in Assam. This Tranche 2 loan is part of the USD 120 million multi-tranche financing facility (MFF) of the ADB for the Assam Integrated Flood and Riverbank Erosion Risk Management Investment Program. The program was approved by the ADB Board in October 2010. The agreement was signed by Sameer Kumar Khare, Additional Secretary (Fund Bank and ADB), Department of Economic Affairs.

Australia Recognizes West Jerusalem as Capital of Israel

Australia has decided to formally recognise west Jerusalem as Israel's capital, but won't move its embassy until there's a peace settlement between Israel and Palestinians, Prime Minister Scott Morrison announced Saturday. He said in a speech that Australia will recognise east Jerusalem as Palestine's capital only after a settlement has been reached on a two-state solution. The Australian Embassy won't be moved from Tel Aviv until such a time, he said.

Ranil Wickremesinghe sworn-in as Prime Minister of Sri Lanka

President Maithripala Sirisena on Sunday reinstated Ranil Wickremesinghe as Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, seven weeks after firing him in a snap move. The media was barred from covering the "swearing-in" ceremony held at the Presidential secretariat, and only a few lawmakers from Mr. Wickremesinghe's front were present, sources said. The re-appointment signals a likely end to the political impasse that has gripped the island since October 26, when Mr. Sirisena appointed his former rival Mahinda Rajapaksa as Premier.

Mount Soputan Volcano erupts on Sulawesi Island of Indonesia

A volcano in central Indonesia has erupted, ejecting columns of thick ash as high as 7,500 metres (24,606 feet) into the sky. Mount Soputan, located on the northern part of Sulawesi island, erupted twice on Sunday morning, according to the national disaster agency's spokesman, Sutopo Purwo Nugroho. He said in anticipation of hot ash and lava sliding down the slope of the volcano, local residents have been urged to avoid activities near the volcano.

Merriam-Webster selects 'Justice' as its 2018 Word of the Year

Racial justice. Obstruction of justice. Social justice. The Justice Department. Merriam-Webster has chosen "justice" as its 2018 word of the year, driven by the churning news cycle over months and months. The word follows "toxic," picked by Oxford Dictionaries, and "misinformation," plucked by Dictionary.com. Peter Sokolowski, Merriam-Webster's editor at large, told The Associated Press ahead of Monday's announcement that "justice" consistently.

International Migrants Day 2018 observed on 18th December

Throughout human history, migration has been a courageous expression of the individual's will to overcome adversity and to live a better life. Today, globalization, together with advances in communications and transportation, has greatly increased the number of people who have the desire and the capacity to move to other places. This new era has created challenges and opportunities for societies throughout the world. It also has served to underscore the clear linkage between migration and development, as well as the opportunities it provides for co-development, that is, the concerted improvement of economic and social conditions at both origin and destination.

India ranked 108th in WEF's Gender Gap Index

India made no improvement in the overall gender gap ranking by the World Economic Forum (WEF) in 2018, compared to 2017. It stood at a low 108 out of the 149 countries in 2018, the same as in 2017. "India maintains a stable ranking this year, but its gap is directionally larger this year, with a 33 per cent gap yet to be bridged," says the report, titled Measuring the Global Gender Gap. India ranked lower on all segments - economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival ranking, and political empowerment. "It (India) needs to make improvements across the board, from women's participation to getting more women into senior and professional roles," the WEF said.

USA pulls out of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty

Donald Trump has confirmed the US will leave an arms control treaty with Russia dating from the cold war that has kept nuclear missiles out of Europe for three decades. "We'll have to develop those weapons," the president told reporters in Nevada after a rally. "We're going to terminate the agreement and we're going to pull out." Trump was referring to the 1987 Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces treaty (INF), which banned ground-launch nuclear missiles with ranges from 500km to 5,500km. Signed by Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev, it led to nearly 2,700 short- and medium-range missiles being eliminated.

US Federal Reserve raised lending rates to 2.5 per cent

The Federal Reserve is raising its key interest rate for the fourth time this year to reflect the US economy's continued strength but signalling that it expects to slow hikes next year. The quarter-point hike, to a range of 2.25 per cent to 2.5 per cent, lifts the Fed's benchmark rate to its highest point since 2008. The increase will mean higher borrowing costs for many consumers and businesses. The Fed's policy statement says "some" further gradual rate increases are likely. But its updated forecast projects just two rate hikes next year, down from three that the Fed had predicted in September.

US Defence Secretary James Mattis resigns from his post

US Defence Secretary James Mattis is resigning, the latest in a string of senior US officials to do so. His announcement came a day after President Trump said he was withdrawing troops from Syria - a decision General Mattis is understood to oppose. In his resignation letter, Gen Mattis strongly hinted at policy differences with Mr Trump. He said the president had the right to appoint someone "whose views are better aligned with yours". Gen Mattis, 68, will leave the job in February. President Trump has not immediately named a successor, but said one would be appointed shortly.

Gitega named as the new capital of Burundi

Authorities in Burundi have named the city of Gitega as the country's new political capital. The small central city now takes over from the bigger city of Bujumbura. The change of capital city was in fulfilment of a presidential promise, over ten years ago.



President Trump names Patrick Shanahan as Acting Defence Secretary

US President Donald Trump has forced Defence Secretary James Mattis to leave his post early, appointing an acting successor to take over in the new year. Gen Mattis, 68, strongly hinted at policy differences with Mr Trump when he resigned on Friday. He offered to stay in the job until February but will now leave on 1 January after Mr Trump reportedly balked at media coverage of his exit. Deputy Defence Secretary Patrick Shanahan, 56, will take over the role. Mr Trump has lauded his achievements and described him as "very talented".

Indian Firm Takes Over Operations of Strategic Iranian Port Chabahar

Over six weeks after getting a waiver from sanctions imposed by the United States, Indian state-owned joint venture India Ports Global Limited formally took over operations at Chabahar's Shaheed Behesti port on Monday. The Iranian port city was the venue on Monday for a meeting of officials from Iran, India and Afghanistan, for the first meeting of the "follow-up committee" to operationalise the trilateral Chabahar agreement. "On the occasion, India Ports Global Limited company opened its office and took over operations at the Shaheed Behesti port at Chabahar," said a press note issued by the Ministry of External Affairs.

China's navigation satellite system BeiDou starts providing global service

Beijing: China's BeiDou Navigation Satellite System (BDS), touted as a rival to the widely-used American GPS, has started providing global services. The construction of the BDS-3 primary system had been completed, BDS spokesperson Ran Chengqi said Thursday. "This signifies that BDS has officially entered the global era as the BDS expands from a regional system to a global navigation system. From now on, no matter where you go, BDS will always be with you," Ran said at a media conference here said. The positioning accuracy of the system has reached 10 metres globally and five metres in the Asia-Pacific region. Its velocity accuracy is 0.2 metres per second, while its timing accuracy stands at 20 nanoseconds, he said.

China launched its First Satellite for Space-based Broadband Services

China on Saturday launched its first communication satellite to provide broadband internet services worldwide in an apparent bid to rival Google and other international firms. The satellite was launched from a Long March 11 carrier rocket from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre in north-western China and is the first in the Hongyun project planned by China Aerospace Science and Industry Corp (CASIC). The Hongyun project, started in September 2016, aims to build a space-based communications network to provide broadband internet connectivity to users around the world, especially those in the underserved regions.

