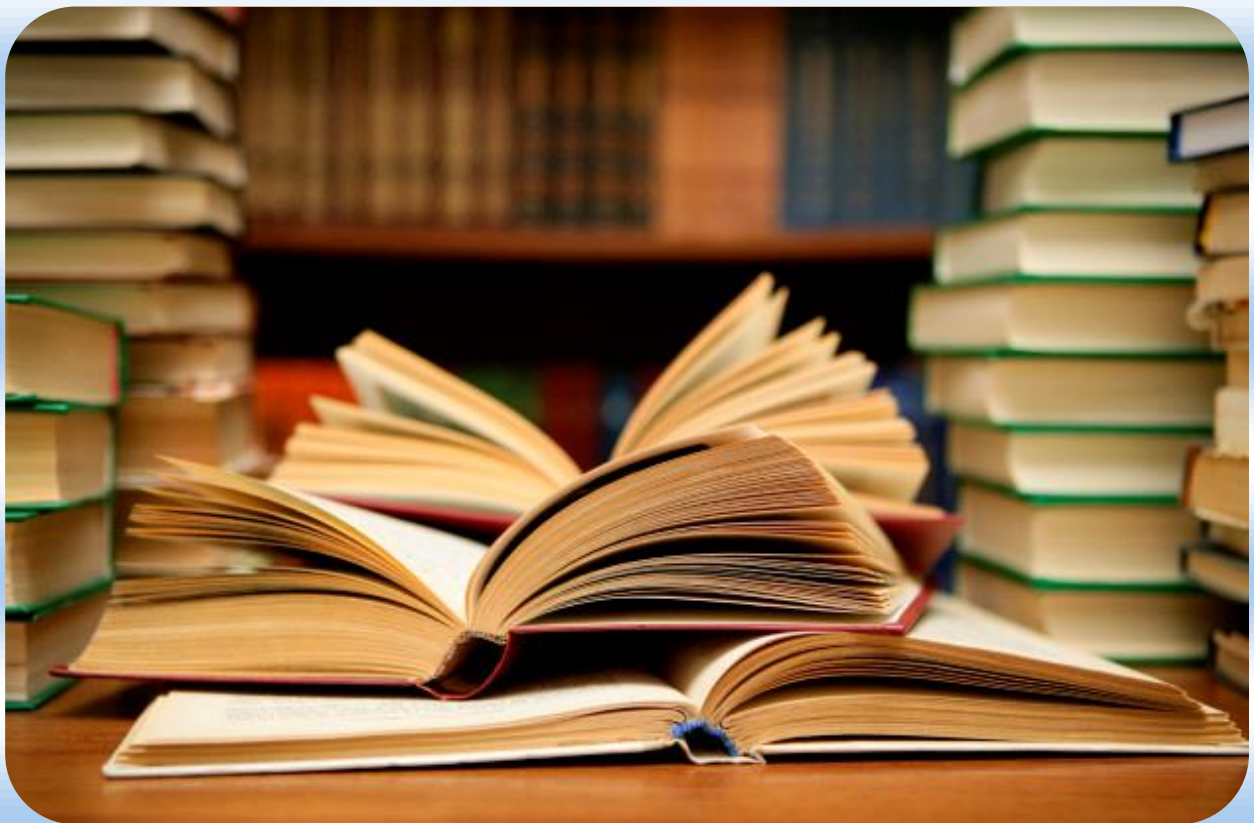


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GENERAL KNOWLEDGE MONTHLY



JANUARY-2018

NATIONAL CURRENT AFFAIRS

GAIL commissions India's second largest rooftop solar plant in UP

State-owned gas utility GAIL India Ltd today said it has commissioned the country's second largest rooftop solar power plant. The firm has installed a 5.76 MWp (Mega Watt peak) solar plant at its petrochemical complex at Pata in Uttar Pradesh, a company statement said. The plant over the roofs of warehouses covers a total area of 65,000 square meters. "With an expected PLF of around 15 per cent annually, over 79 lakh KWh (or units) of electricity is targeted to be generated for captive use of India's largest gas-based petrochemicals plant," it said.

MHA exempts cruise tourists with e-visa from biometric enrolment till 2020

To promote cruise tourism in the country, tourists arriving at ports with e-visa have been exempted from the requirement of biometric enrolment for a period of three years till 2020, the government said on Tuesday. This will make immigration clearance of such passengers faster, leaving them with more time to spend on shore. The move is aimed at making India an attractive cruise tourist destination as biometric enrolment is an important factor that helps cruise lines decide whether or not to include a destination in their itinerary, a statement said.

CEA approves construction of bi-directional Zojila Tunnel in J&K

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved the construction, operation and maintenance of two-lane bi-directional Zojila Tunnel with Parallel Escape (Egress) Tunnel. According to the cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the construction of the tunnel will provide all weather connectivity between Srinagar, Kargil and Leh and bring about all round economic and socio-cultural integration of these regions. "The project has strategic and socio-economic importance and shall be an instrument for the development of the economically backward districts in Jammu and Kashmir," said an official statement.

26th World Book Fair held in New Delhi with focus on environment

Burning environment issues like climate change, global warming, and water pollution will be the main theme for this year's New Delhi World Book Fair. With 'Environment and Climate Change' as its main theme, the 26th edition of the annual book fair, will be held here at Pragati Maidan from January 6. Organised by National Book Trust, in association with ITPO, the event's Theme Pavillion will have an international rights exhibition of nearly 500 titles published in English, Hindi, and other Indian languages. "During the fair, discussions, conversation with authors and environmentalists will be organised where the experts will discuss ways through which environment can be saved from further deterioration," the organisers said in a statement.

HRD Ministry releases All India Higher Education Survey

New Delhi: The number of students enrolling for higher education in India saw a marginal 0.7 per cent increase in 2016-17, according to a government survey released on Friday. Human Resource Development (HRD) Minister Prakash Javadekar released the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) for the year 2016-17 in New Delhi on Friday. It said the gross enrolment ratio (GER) in higher education had gone up 25.2 per cent in 2016-17 from 24.5 per cent in 2015-16.

CBDT relaxes norms for MAT on firms facing insolvency

The Income Tax Department today relaxed norms for levy of Minimum Alternate Tax (MAT) on companies facing corporate insolvency proceedings. As per Section 115JB of the Income Tax Act, MAT is levied on book profit after deducting the amount of loss brought forward or unabsorbed depreciation, whichever is less. "With effect from assessment year 2018-19 (FY2017-18), in case of a company, against whom an application for corporate insolvency resolution process has been admitted by the adjudicating authority.

Government to raise Territorial Army battalion of ex-Armymen to clean Ganga

AS PART of its mission to clean the Ganga by 2020, the Central government has sanctioned the raising of a Territorial Army (TA) battalion comprising ex-servicemen of the Army. This battalion will be raised in Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh, next month as a Composite Ecological Task Force (CETF) battalion of TA for National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG). The government has allocated Rs 167 crore for the battalion under NMCG, the nodal agency for cleaning the Ganga.

Supreme Court stays High Court verdict against 85% pictorial warning on tobacco

In a setback to the cigarette and tobacco industry, the Supreme Court on Monday stayed a Karnataka High Court order quashing 85% pictorial warnings on packs containing such products. "Though a... submission has been advanced... that it will affect their business, we have remained unimpressed... as we are inclined to think that health of a citizen has primacy and he or she should be aware of that which can affect or deteriorate the condition of health,".

National anthem not mandatory in cinema halls: SC

NEW DELHI: Diluting its earlier order, the Supreme Court on Tuesday made playing of the national anthem in cinema halls before screening of films optional. However, should a movie theater choose to play the national anthem, the audience would have to stand as a mark of respect except for certain exempted class of people, such as the handicapped, the ill, etc, the apex court said. A three-judge bench led by CJI Dipak Misra took this decision at the instance of the central government.

UIDAI introduces 2-tier security to Aadhaar to address privacy concerns

In the wake of a report of an alleged breach of the Aadhaar database published in a newspaper last week, the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) has rolled out a new two-tier security process that will come into effect from June 1. Aimed at eliminating the need to share and store Aadhaar numbers, the UIDAI has introduced the concept of a virtual ID, which an Aadhaar holder can use in lieu of his/her Aadhaar number at the time of authentication, besides sharing of 'limited KYC' with certain agencies.

CABE sub-committee recommends free education for girls up to PG level

The Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) has decided to recommend free and compulsory education for girls up to post-graduate level across the country, said Telangana Deputy Chief Minister and Education Minister Kadiam Srihari on Tuesday. He was addressing a press conference here after a meeting of the committee in which Jharkhand Education Minister Neera Yadav, Assam Education Minister Himanta Biswa Sharma, Special Human Resources Development Department Special Secretary Rinarayi.

Cabinet approves amendments to FDI Policy

New Delhi, Jan 10 () In big bang FDI reforms ahead of the budget, the government today permitted foreign airlines to invest up to 49 per cent in debt-ridden Air India, and eased norms for investment in single brand retail, construction and power exchanges. The government also relaxed foreign direct investment (FDI) policy for medical devices and audit firms associated with companies receiving overseas funds. The decisions were taken by the Union Cabinet headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi here.

Delhi and Punjab is richest state, Jain wealthiest community: NFHS-4 wealth index

Why is Gujarat like Christians and Delhi like Jains? The analogy has nothing to do with religious beliefs of these two states. However, the comparison holds if one were to compare wealth levels of the population in these two states with that of the two religious groups, on the basis of data from fourth round of the National Family and Health Survey (NFHS-4). The survey was conducted among more than 6 lakh households in 2015-16.

Teen Murti Chowk renamed after Israeli city Haifa

EW DELHI: The iconic Teen Murti Chowk has been renamed after the Israeli City Haifa, a year after the plan was put on hold by the NDMC. The announcement comes after the scheduled visit of Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to India. The idea of renaming Teen Murti road and chowk after Haifa was proposed in the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) council during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Israel last year.

IPrism: CIPAM-DIPP launches IP competition for college & university students

NEW DELHI: Cell for IPR Promotion and Management (CIPAM), under the department of industrial policy and promotion, has launched a competition for college and university students to foster a culture of innovation and creativity in the youth. The competition - IPrism - invites students to submit films on piracy and counterfeiting under two categories of 30 and 60 seconds, it said in a statement. Another category in the competition is for a mobile gaming app on intellectual property (IP).

NITI Aayog launches first course under GIAN Program on Sustainable Urban Planning

The Principal Adviser of NITI Aayog, Ratan P. Watal, has inaugurated the first GIAN course on sustainable urban planning using remote sensing and GIS at the Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur's outreach centre at Noida. The course will provide participants latest remote sensing and GIS skills which will enable them to manage the rapidly changing urban environment of Indian cities.

Government ends Haj subsidy

Union Minister for Minority Affairs Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi on Tuesday announced the Centre would phase out subsidies for the annual Haj pilgrimage, two months after his Ministry had taken the decision. "It is part of the Modi government's efforts to empower minorities with dignity and without appeasement," he told a media briefing at the BJP headquarters here. The decision was first reported in The Hindu in November.

Khap Panchayats can't interfere in marriages of adults: Supreme Court

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Tuesday declared it was illegal for parents or khap panchayats to interfere in decisions of adult men and women of different castes to marry. "Any adult man or woman can marry anyone of their own choice. No parents, no society or khap panchayat can stop them," said Chief Justice Dipak Misra. Misra added that a khap panchayat cannot summon adults and question their choice of marriage partner.

NPPA fixes retail price of 30 drug formulations

New Delhi: National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) on Wednesday said it has fixed the retail price for 30 drug formulations, including those used for treatment of diabetes, bacterial infections and high blood pressure. NPPA has also revised the prices of three formulations, including that of anti cancer drug—Gemcitabine. "NPPA has fixed/revised ceiling prices/retail prices of 33 formulations under Drugs (Prices Control) Order, 2013," NPPA said in a notification.

Government planning to set up of Cyber Warrior Police Force to tackle internet-related crimes

The government has decided to set up a Cyber Warrior Police Force (CWPF) to tackle internet-related crimes such as cyber threats, child pornography and online stalking. The CWPF is likely to operate under the National Information Security Policy and Guidelines wing of the Union home ministry's Cyber and Information Security (CIS) division, which was created last November. It is proposed to be raised on the lines of the Central Armed Police Force.

India to set up \$350 million Solar Development Fund for solar projects

BENGALURU: India is setting up a \$350-million solar development fund to support financing of solar projects, minister of state for new and renewable energy Raj Kumar Singh said. Delivering the keynote address at the International Solar Alliance (ISA) Forum in Abu Dhabi on Wednesday, the minister said the cost of renewable energy has fallen steeply over the years and it was set to replace conventional energy.

India's First Automatic Early Warning Dissemination System to come up in Odisha

The Early Warning Dissemination System (EWDS), a project that aims at establishing a fool-proof communication system to disseminate disaster warning up to the community level, is expected to be commissioned by this March. The EWDS had missed several deadlines before being fast-tracked recently. "The EWDS is a first of its kind automatic public address system in the country.

2018 to be observed as National Year of Millets

Nutrient-rich millets have got a boost with the Union government deciding to declare 2018 as the 'national year of millets'. This decision has been taken following a request by Karnataka, which is the country's leader in the millet sector. At the inauguration of the three-day international trade fair of organics and millets, Union Statistics and Programme Implementation Minister D.V. Sadananda Gowda said the Union Agriculture Ministry.

Government launches National CSR Data Portal & Corporate Data Portal

New Delhi: Stakeholders can soon have customised data on corporates, including about independent directors, with the launch of a government portal that will cater to "heterogeneous requirements", a senior official said on Friday. Besides, a dedicated portal on corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities carried out by the companies has been launched by the corporate affairs ministry on Friday. There are around 12 lakh active companies in the country and most information about them would be available through these portals.

Website Accessibility Project launched to make 100 websites accessible to persons with disabilities

In an initiative to empower Persons with Disabilities, 100 websites of various State Governments/UTs under Accessible India Campaign were launched by the Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment Thawarchand Gehlot on the occasion of 'National Conference on Improving Accessibility' here on Friday. A statement by Ministry of Social Justice said that accessible websites are those websites into which Persons with Disabilities can perceive.

Bharat Ke Veer anthem launched in New Delhi

Launching the anthem of Akshay Kumar's 'Bharat ke Veer' initiative, the actor announced on Saturday the portal has helped raise Rs 129.3 million till now. The anthem has been penned, composed and sung by Kailash Kher, who has in the past been associated with government initiatives like Swachh Bharat Abhiyan and Beti Bachao Beti Padhao. Akshay shared the news on his Twitter account on Saturday. He posted: "No amount of gratitude is enough for our soldiers.

Bharat Parv to be held at Red Fort on Republic Day

The Central government will organise a four-day long event 'Bharat Parv' to generate a patriotic mood in the nation starting from January 26. The event, being held under the Ministry of Tourism, will feature glimpses of the culture of all the states. In an effort to 'generate a patriotic mood' and promote the rich cultural diversity of the country, the government will organise the 'Bharat Parv'. The event will be organised at the Red Fort from January 26 to 31.

Government to increase number of 'AMRIT' pharmacy stores 4 times

New Delhi, January 25: In an order to reduce the cost of treating the two health issues, cancer and heart diseases, that are on the rise in India the Affordable Medicines and Reliable Implants for Treatment (AMRIT) Retail Pharmacy scheme is launched. Now this AMRIT pharmacy will be increased four times giving relief to many. Union Health and Family Welfare Minister J.P. Nadda launched the first AMRIT Retail Pharmacy at All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS).

Government announces 4 new schemes to promote young scientists

The government has announced four new schemes to promote young scientists and researchers in the country. Science and Technology Minister Harsh Vardhan said the Teacher Associateship for Research Excellence Scheme will connect the educators to leading institutions such as IIT, IISc and CSIR to pursue research. They will be paid Rs 5 lakh yearly, and a monthly out-of-pocket expense of Rs 5,000. The second scheme – Overseas Visiting Doctoral Fellowship – offers support.

UDAN Phase-II: 325 routes awarded; 40% for North East, hills

Around 40 per cent, or 129, of the 325 air routes awarded under the second phase of the regional connectivity scheme were for Northeastern and hill states, underscoring the Centre's emphasis on enhancing air connectivity to the remote terrains. These include strategic airports such as Kargil in Jammu & Kashmir, Pakyong in Sikkim, and Tezu in Arunachal Pradesh, where civilian air connectivity will be provided for the first time. Further, the phase-II of the government's flagship scheme.

India-Japan Smart Grid Pilot Project inaugurated in Panipat

The state government of Haryana announced on January 25, 2018 that it would be installing 10 lakh smart meters in the state to solve various complications faced by the power distribution sector. The announcement was made by Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar in the presence of Japanese Minister Keniko Sen after he inaugurated the India-Japan Smart Grid Pilot Project in Panipat. The project has been initiated under intensive relations between Japan and India.

Government relaxes norms of Atal Pension Yojana to expand coverage

The Centre would now allow small finance banks and payment banks to offer the Atal Pension Yojana (APY), which is expected to significantly increase the coverage of the scheme. "To strengthen the existing channels of APY distribution, it is felt that these new payments banks and small finance banks will provide a boost to the outreach of subscribers under APY," the Ministry of Finance said in a statement. Pensioned society.

India to host informal WTO Ministerial gathering in March 2018

India has announced to host informal Ministerial meeting of World Trade Organisation (WTO) in March 2018 in New Delhi to muster support for issues and also help to multi-lateral process It was announced by Deepak Jagdish Saksena, India's ambassador and permanent representative to WTO during informal WTO during informal WTO ministerial gathering at Davos on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum (WEF) annual summit.

President Ram Nath Kovind launches Pulse Polio programme for 2018

NEW DELHI: President Ram Nath Kovind on Saturday launched the Pulse Polio programme for 2018 by administering polio drops to children below five years at the Rashtrapati Bhavan here. The president administered the drops on the eve of National Immunisation Day, which is observed on Sunday, a Union Health Ministry statement said. Over 17 crore children below five years across the country will be given polio drops as part of the Government of India's drive, it said.

2018 Republic Day parade: Maharashtra wins best tableau prize

The Punjab Regiment has bagged the award for the best marching contingent among the three services and the Indo-Tibetan Border Police among the paramilitary and other auxiliary forces in the Republic Day parade, the Defence Ministry said in a statement. Maharashtra got the first prize for the best tableau. Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman gave away the awards at Cariappa Parade Ground in Delhi Cantonment on Sunday.

Acid attack victims to get quota in Central Government jobs

NEW DELHI: People with autism, mental illnesses, intellectual disability and victims of acid attacks will now get quota in central government jobs, an official order said. In case of direct recruitment, four per cent of the total number of vacancies, up from the existing three per cent, in groups A, B and C shall be reserved for people with benchmark disabilities, it said. Benchmark disability means a person with not less than forty per cent of a specified disability.

Pratyush: India's fastest supercomputer unveiled

Pratyush, India's fastest supercomputer yet, was unveiled on Monday at the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM) in Pune, where it was inaugurated by Union Minister for Earth Sciences Dr. Harsh Vardhan. Pratyush is a collection of several computers that can deliver a peak power of 6.8 petaflops, facilitating the weather forecasting and climate monitoring in the country. India's Pratyush is its first multi-petaflop supercomputer to date that is a part of the efforts made by Ministry of Earth Sciences to grow 'High Performance Computing' .

NASA to launch two missions — GOLD and ICON to explore the ionosphere

NASA has announced that it would launch two missions to explore the little-understood area of 96 km above Earth's surface. The Global-scale Observations of the Limb and Disk (GOLD) mission will be launched in January 2018, and the Ionospheric Connection Explorer (ICON) will be launched later this year, the US space agency said on Thursday. GOLD and ICON will team up to explore the ionosphere, a boundary area between Earth and the space where particles.

India Ranked 177 in Environmental Performance Index (EPI)

India is among the bottom five countries on the Environmental Performance Index 2018, plummeting 36 points from 141 in 2016, according to a biennial report by Yale and Columbia Universities along with the World Economic Forum. While India is at the bottom of the list in the environmental health category, it ranks 178 out of 180 as far as air quality is concerned. Its overall low ranking — 177 among 180 countries — was linked to poor performance in the environment health policy and deaths due to air pollution categories.

Mercedes-Benz first to launch locally-made BS-VI-compliant car

MUMBAI: German auto major Mercedes-Benz today unveiled a BS-VI-compliant S-Class produced at its Pune facility, more than two years ahead of the government deadline of April 2020 for switching to new emission norms. Along with the unveiling of the new car, the company also received the certificate of compliance to the CMVR (Central motor vehicles rule) from the Automotive Research Association of India (ARAI).

Mangalajodi Ecotourism Trust of Odisha wins prestigious UNWTO Award

Mangalajodi Ecotourism Trust, a community owned and managed venture promoted by RBS Foundation India and Indian Grameen Services on the banks of Chilika Lake in Odisha, has won the prestigious United Nations World Tourism Organisation Awards. The trust was honoured with the coveted award for "Innovation in Tourism Enterprise" at the 14th UNWTO Awards ceremony held in Madrid, Spain on Wednesday, RBS Foundation India said in a release.

OPV Vijaya: Indian Coast Guard patrol vessel launched

The second offshore patrol vessel (OPV) built by the Larsen and Toubro Shipyard near here for the Indian Coast Guard was launched today. The indigenously built vessel 'Vijaya', equipped with state-of art radar, navigational and communication system, will be utilised for day and night patrol and surveillance, anti-terrorist, anti-smuggling operations and coastal security, the Coast Guard said. According to a Rs 1,432 crore contract signed with the Defence Ministry.

Indian Navy decommissions INS Nirbhik and INS Nirghat warships

MUMBAI: Warships INS Nirbhik and INS Nirghat were decommissioned here, after serving the Navy for 30 and 28 years respectively. The warships were decommissioned at a solemn ceremony at the Naval Dockyard yesterday, a Defence spokesperson said today. The ceremony involved traditional lowering of the ensign and commissioning pendants with playing of 'Last Post'. The chief guest for the ceremony was Rear Admiral R B Pandit, Flag Officer Commanding Western Fleet.

Defence Ministry gives final nod for Barak missiles, PGM bombs

The Defence Ministry on Tuesday gave the final approvals for the procurement of 131 Barak missiles for the Navy and 240 precision-guided munitions (PGM) for the Indian Air Force (IAF), together estimated at ₹1,714 crore. The proposals were cleared by Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, the Ministry said in a statement. "This PGM is a variant of the KAB PGMs the IAF has in service and employed by Su-30 fighter jets. It is a regular procurement through the revenue expenditure.

Mehul Garg: Indian-origin boy sets new Mensa record

A 10-year-old Indian-origin boy in the U.K. has become the youngest applicant in a decade to achieve the highest score in the Mensa IQ test, beating geniuses like Albert Einstein and Stephen Hawking. Mehul Garg from the Reading Boys Grammar School in Reading, southern England, scored the maximum score of 162 to become a member of Mensa, the High IQ Society. His score is two points higher than Einstein and Mr. Hawking.

Narayanan appointed Director of ISRO's Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre

Senior ISRO scientist Dr V Narayanan has assumed charge as Director of the space agency's Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre (LPSC), at nearby Valiamala. He succeeds S Somanath who has been appointed Director, Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre. Narayanan, who is a rocket propulsion expert, joined ISRO in 1984 and functioned in various capacities, a press release said. As Project Director for C25 Cryogenic Project.

Scientist S. Somanath takes charge as Director of Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: In a fresh change of guard, ISRO's Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre (LPSC) director S Somnath has taken charge as the new director of Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC), which is ISRO's lead centre for launch vehicles, here on Monday. He says the focus is on two upcoming launches next month. Soon after taking charge, VSSC new director Somnath told TOI that his priorities will be on technology upgradation of launch vehicle design.

Om Prakash Rawat appointed New Chief Election Commissioner

The Union Law Ministry on Sunday appointed seniormost Election Commissioner Om Prakash Rawat as the next Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) as the incumbent A.K. Joti will retire on Monday. Former Finance Secretary Ashok Lavasa was appointed as Election Commissioner to fill the vacancy created by Mr Rawat's elevation. Mr Rawat, who will take charge on Tuesday, will have a tenure of almost a year till his retirement in December 2018.

Anandiben Patel appointed as Governor Madhya Pradesh

Former Gujarat chief minister Anandiben Patel has been named the next Madhya Pradesh Governor. She replaces Om Prakash Kohli, who has additional charge of the office of MP Governor along with the office of Gujarat Governor. "The President of India is pleased to appoint Smt. Anandiben Patel to be the Governor of Madhya Pradesh, with effect from the date she assumes charge of her office," announced the Rashtrapati Bhavan on Twitter. A protege of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Ms. Patel succeeded Mr. Modi as Gujarat CM after the 2014.

Sudeep Lakhtakia appointed as new DG of National Security Guard

IPS officer Sudeep Lakhtakia was appointed as the new director general of National Security Guard (NSG) on Friday. Lakhtakia is a 1984-batch IPS officer of Telangana cadre. He is currently serving as a special DG of Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) headquarters. He will take over incumbent SP Singh, who will retire from the post on January end. NSG, commonly known as black cat commandos, is a special forces unit which was raised in 1984 to combat terrorism.

Indu Malhotra: First woman lawyer to be directly promoted as SC judge

Senior Advocate Indu Malhotra will be the first woman lawyer to be directly elevated from the Bar to the Supreme Court as a judge. Her name was cleared unanimously by the Supreme Court Collegium which met Wednesday. The five-member Collegium, comprising Chief Justice Dipak Misra and Justices J Chelameswar, Ranjan Gogoi, Madan B Lokur and Kurian Joseph, also recommended elevation of Uttarakhand Chief Justice K M Joseph to the Supreme Court.

Mumbai's Matunga Railway Station enters Limca Records for All Woman Staff

The Matunga suburban station on the Central Railway (CR) has found its way into the Limca Book of Records for having an all-woman staff, an official said today. The achievement comes six months after Matunga became the first railway station in the country to be run by an all-woman staff. "We are happy to inform that six months after the CR appointed an all-woman staff at Matunga, this station has figured in the Limca Book of Records 2018," said the Railway official.

Asha Bhosle selected for fifth Yash Chopra Memorial Award

Legendary playback singer Asha Bhosle will be conferred with Yash Chopra Memorial Award for her outstanding contribution to the Hindi film industry. Bhosle, 84, whose illustrious music career spans nearly seven decades and recorded over 11,000 songs in 20 different languages, has been selected for the award instituted in the memory of the filmmaker. The award jury members comprising Chopra's wife Pamela Chopra, filmmakers Boney Kapoor, Madhur Bhandarkar, singer Alka Yagnik, actor Padmini Kohlapure, scriptwriter Honey Irani, and Anu and Shashi Ranjan made the announcement last evening here.

2018 Padma Awards

NEW DELHI: In keeping with its mission to honour "unsung heroes", the government announced 85 Padma awards on Thursday. Of these, three were Padma Vibhushan, nine Padma Bhushan, and 73 Padma Shri. 16 awardees were either foreigners, PIOs, or NRIs, while three of the awards were conferred posthumously. Over 15,700 applications were received for this year's awards, the ministry of home affairs said. PADMA SHRI Padma Shri awardees include scientist toymaker.

IAF Corporal Jyoti Prakash Nirala posthumously conferred with Ashok Chakra

India's highest peacetime gallantry award, Ashok Chakra, was conferred on Corporal Jyoti Prakash Nirala of the Indian Air Force (IAF) who died fighting militants in Kashmir valley. This is the third Ashok Chakra for the IAF and its first for ground combat. "The President of India has approved awards of 390 Gallantry and other Defence decorations to armed forces personnel and others on the eve of the 69th Republic Day Celebrations," the Defence Ministry said.

President felicitates 112 first ladies

NEW DELHI: When Manju Yadav lost her husband who worked as a "coolie" (porter), she was left with three children and no source of income. Staring at a bleak future at her home in Sundarpura village in Jaipur district of Rajasthan, Manju resolved to shun the 'ghoonghat' and challenge the stereotype to follow her late husband's footsteps. Her decision to become a 'coolie' came as a shock to her family and community.

Vidarbha wins 2017 Ranji Trophy tournament

Quite fittingly, Wasim Jaffer put the finishing touches to the historic script of Vidarbha's tryst with destiny in this year's Ranji Trophy. Though the result was as foregone conclusion, Jaffer ended Vidarbha's wait by whipping four boundaries, between square leg and fine-leg, in one over from a wayward Kulwant Kheroliya. In a way, this was symbolic of how Vidarbha dismissed Delhi's half-hearted challenge in the final.

Tamil Nadu CM Edappadi K Palanichamy receives UNESCO Award

CHENNAI: Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami received the Unesco Award of Merit awarded to the iconic Ranganathaswamy temple in Srirangam (Tiruchy), in November last. The Award of Merit, 2017, was given by Unesco Asia Pacific region for the cultural heritage conservation activities taken up at the temple without altering its original splendour. A delegation led by the temple trustee committee chairman Venu Srinivasan and comprising of trustees.

JioCoin: Reliance Jio planning to launch its own cryptocurrency

New Delhi: After disrupting the telecom sector with its free offers and hyper-competitive tariffs, Reliance Jio Infocomm Ltd plans to create its own cryptocurrency, JioCoin. With Mukesh Ambani's elder son Akash Ambani leading the JioCoin project, Reliance Jio plans to build a 50-member team of young professionals to work on blockchain technology, which can also be used to develop applications such as smart contracts and supply chain management logistics.

NCDEX launches India's first agri-options trading in Guarseed

NEW DELHI, JAN 14: Finance Minister Arun Jaitley today launched options trading in guarseed on the commodity bourse NCDEX and asserted that the new initiative will benefit farmers and ensure better prices in the coming days. Higher production has led to fall in prices of some agri-commodities in some places, he said, adding that options trading is one of the major steps towards taking farmers out of this situation.

ONGC to acquire Government's entire 51.11% stake in HPCL

NEW DELHI: State-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corp (ONGC) today announced acquisition of government's entire 51.11 per cent stake in oil refiner HPCL for Rs 36,915 crore, paying a premium of over 10 per cent. ONGC will pay Rs 473.97 per share for 77.8 crore shares of the government in Hindustan Petroleum Corp Ltd (HPCL), the company said in a stock exchange filing. The price it is paying is 14 per cent higher than Friday's closing price of HPCL and over 10 per cent of the 60 -day weighted average of the scrip.

IRFC's green bonds: India INX lists 1st debt security at IFSC

The BSE's India International Exchange (India INX) today listed the IRFC's green bonds on its debt listing platform -- the global securities market. With this, the Indian Railway Finance Corporation's (IRFC) green bonds have become the first debt security to be listed on an exchange at International Financial Services Centre in Gujarat's GIFT city. IRFC had last year raised USD 500 million from the 10- year green bond from investors in Asia, Europe and offshore US.

Kolkata becomes first Indian metro to get floating market

KOLKATA, JANUARY 25: Kolkata is now witness to a floating market, the first of its kind across any metro. The market, as the name suggests, will be located on a water-body with boats doubling up as shops. The market, located on the eastern fringes of the city, was inaugurated by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday, and open to the public from Thursday. The aim is to rehabilitate over 200 shopkeepers from a nearby market.

Agni-5 ballistic missile successfully test-fired

India on Thursday successfully tested Agni-V, validating the long range surface-to-surface ballistic missile's reliability. "This was the fifth test of the missile and the third consecutive one from a canister on a road mobile launcher. All the five missions have been successful," the Defence Ministry said in a statement. The missile was tested for its full range at 9.53 a.m. from the Dr. Abdul Kalam Island in Odisha. The launch was supervised by project director G. Ramaguru.

INTERNATIONAL CURRENT AFFAIRS

SpaceX launches secretive Zuma mission

SpaceX on Sunday blasted off a secretive U.S. government payload known as Zuma, a mission whose nature — and the agency behind it — remains a mystery. "Three, two, one, ignition and liftoff," said a SpaceX commentator as the Falcon 9 rocket launched under cover of darkness from Cape Canaveral, Florida, at 8:00 p.m. (0100 GMT Monday). The launch was initially supposed to take place in November but was postponed so the California-based company could take a closer look at potential problems with the fairing.

Xian smog tower: China builds world's biggest air purifier

In an attempt to fight air pollution, China has constructed an experimental air purifying tower, touted to be the world's biggest at a height of over 100 meters (328 feet). According to a report in the South China Morning Post, the tower, built in Xian in Shaanxi province, has brought a positive effect on the chronic smog problem in the country. The Xian smog tower is undergoing testing by researchers at the Institute of Earth Environment at the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

Rizhao: China commissions new missile frigate

BEIJING: The People's Liberation Army Navy commissioned a new missile frigate, named 'Rizhao', in a naval port in China's Dalian located in the Liaoning Province. Rizhao is China's indigenous missile frigate. It is 140-meter-long and 16-meter-wide with the capability to displace more than 4,000 tonnes. Rizhao is equipped with an advanced weapon systems. It has the capability to attack enemy ships and submarines alone or along

China develops underwater surveillance networks in Indian Ocean, South China Sea

China has developed a new underwater surveillance network to help its submarines get a stronger lock on targets while protecting the nation's interests along the maritime Silk Road, which includes the Indian Ocean, a media report said today. The system, which has already been launched, works by gathering information about the underwater environment, particularly water temperature and salinity, which the navy can then use to more accurately track target vessels as well as improve navigation and positioning, the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post reported.

75th Annual Golden Globe Awards

The 75th Annual Golden Globe Awards honored the best in film and American television of 2017. The ceremony was organized at Beverly Hills, California, United States (US). The Golden Globe Awards are the annual awards that honour the best in Motion Pictures and American Television for the previous year. This year The Shape of Water had received most overall nominations of show with seven.

Australian Open 2018: Roger Federer wins Men's Singles title

Federer sounds like he's about to burst into tears as he thanks the crowd. He's getting more emotional as he thanks Marin Cilic's team. "I have to stop," he says. Here come the waterworks. His dad's crying in the crowd. Rod Laver is taking photos on his phone. Cilic is trying to make Federer look on the bright side. He'll need to compose himself before his lap of honour with the trophy. That's all from me. Thanks for reading and emailing over the past.

Viswanathan Anand wins World Chess title 2017

First, he stunned the World champion. Then, he stunned the world. Viswanathan Anand did all that at the age of 48, as he lifted the World rapid chess championship in Riyadh on Thursday. The genial genius from Chennai, who defeated Magnus Carlsen of Norway earlier in the tournament, went on to finish on top with 10.5 points at the end of the 15th and final round. But, since two other men, Vladimir Fedoseev and Ian Nepomniachtchi, both of Russia, also scored 10.5, a tie-breaker was required to decide the winner.

India's richest 1% corner 73% of wealth generation: Oxfam Survey

DAVOS: The richest 1% in India cornered 73% of the wealth generated in the country last year, a new survey showed today, presenting a worrying picture of rising income inequality. Besides, 67 crore Indians comprising the population's poorest half saw their wealth+ rise by just 1%, as per the survey released by the international rights group Oxfam hours before the start of the annual congregation of the rich and powerful from across the world.

India ranked 81st on Global Index of Talent Competitiveness

Davos: India has moved up on a global index of talent competitiveness to the 81st position, but remains a laggard among the BRICS nations, an annual study showed here today while warning that the country faces "serious risk of worsening brain drain". While Switzerland continues to top the list released every year on the first day of the World Economic Forum (WEF) annual meeting here, India has improved its position from 92nd last year. India was at the 89th place in 2016 on the index that measures how countries grow.

India ranked 62nd on WEF's Inclusive Development Index 2018

Despite an improved performance, India continues to be ranked below neighbours Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Nepal in the Inclusive Development Index released by the World Economic Forum. India has been ranked 62 out of 74 emerging economies on a metric focussed on the living standards of people and future-proofing of economies by the WEF. Pakistan has been ranked 47, Sri Lanka is at 40, and Nepal at 22.

India ranks 30th on WEF's Global Manufacturing Index

NEW DELHI/GENEVA: The World Economic Forum (WEF) has ranked India at 30th position on a global manufacturing index - below China's 5th place but above other BRICS peers, Brazil, Russia and South Africa. Japan has been found to have the best structure of production in the Geneva-based WEF's first 'Readiness for the future of production report' and is followed by South Korea, Germany, Switzerland, China, Czech Republic, the US, Sweden, Austria and Ireland in the top 10.

World Bank Report projects 7.3% growth for India in 2018

India's growth rate in 2018 is projected to hit 7.3% and 7.5% in the next two years, according to the World Bank, which said the country has "enormous growth potential" compared to other emerging economies with the implementation of comprehensive reforms. India is estimated to have grown at 6.7% in 2017 despite initial setbacks from demonetisation and the Goods and Services Tax (GST), according to the 2018 Global Economics Prospect released by the World Bank here.

Chinese scientists for first time successfully clone monkeys

LONDON (Reuters) - Chinese scientists have cloned monkeys using the same technique that produced Dolly the sheep two decades ago, breaking a technical barrier that could open the door to copying humans. Zhong Zhong and Hua Hua, two identical long-tailed macaques, were born eight and six weeks ago, making them the first primates -- the order of mammals that includes monkeys, apes and humans -- to be cloned from a non-embryonic cell.

China launches two BeiDou-3 navigation satellites into space

China on Friday successfully launched two BeiDou-3 satellites to provide navigation and positioning services to countries along the Belt and Road initiative of the Communist giant by the end of 2018. The Long March-3B carrier rocket took off from Xichang Satellite Launch Center in the southwestern province of Sichuan at 7:18am. (local time). This is the first launch of the BeiDou satellites in 2018, which will see intensive launches throughout the year.

Mauritius was largest source of FDI in India in 2016-2017: RBI

Mauritius was the largest source of foreign investment in India, followed by the US and the UK, according to a census by the Reserve Bank. Singapore and Japan were the next two sources of foreign direct investment (FDI), said the Census on Foreign Liabilities and Assets of Indian Direct Investment Companies 2016-17, released by RBI on Friday. Of the 18,667 companies that participated in the census, 17,020 had FDI/overseas direct investment.

Indian economy to grow at 7.4% in 2018: IMF

WASHINGTON/DAVOS: India is projected to grow at 7.4 per cent in 2018 as against China's 6.8 per cent, the IMF said on Monday, making it the fastest growing country among emerging economies following last year's slowdown due to demonetisation and the implementation of the GST. In its latest World Economic Outlook (WEO) update released on Monday in Davos, Switzerland on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum.

Saudi Arabia, UAE introduce VAT for first time

Value Added Tax (VAT) has been introduced in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates for the first time. The 5% levy is being applied to the majority of goods and services. Gulf states have long attracted foreign workers with the promise of tax-free living. But governments want to increase revenue in the face of lower oil prices. The tax kicked in on 1 January in both countries. The UAE estimates that in the first year, VAT income will be around 12 billion dirhams (£2.4bn; \$3.3bn).

WEF launches Global Centre for Cybersecurity

In a bid to safeguard the world from hackers and growing data breaches — especially from nation-states — the World Economic Forum (WEF) on Wednesday announced a new Global Centre for Cybersecurity. Headquartered in Geneva, the centre will become operational from March. "Cybersecurity has been the most pressing issue of our times. We badly need a platform to ward off cyber criminals.

