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# Monthly GK Mania

## **NATIONAL NEWS**

### **A new M Tech programme is soaring above IIIT-Delhi**

Indraprastha Institute of Information Technology-Delhi is about to give wings to a new M Tech programme with specialisation in Artificial Intelligence from the academic year beginning in July 2018. The programme will prepare graduates for industry careers involving innovation and problem solving using Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) technologies. This course will sprawl for duration of four semesters and the intake would be 20 students. The programme will enable students to recognise and analyse problems related to AI applications, apply pattern recognition, machine learning and artificial intelligence techniques to solve real-world problems.

### **15th January 2018 : The 70th Army Day**

Army celebrated its 70th Army Day on 15th January 2018. On this occasion, Chief of Army staff General Bipin Rawat reviewed the parade at Cariappa Parade Ground in Delhi Cantonment. He also presented gallantry awards. This day is being celebrated annually to commemorate the day when General (later Field Marshal) K.M. Cariappa took over the command of Army from General Sir F.R.R. Bucher, the last British Commander-in-Chief in year 1949 and became the first Commander-in-Chief of Indian Army post Independence. General Rawat applauded Indian army's efforts for infusion of technology for better capabilities in its weapon system for which there is need of upgradation of the required training benchmarks for optimal exploitation of these systems.

### **World's Largest Garden will bloom in Mumbai port**

On 12th January Minister of Road Transport and Highways of India, Nitin Gadkari announced that the Mumbai Port Trust (MbPT) will create the "world's largest garden" in central Mumbai by reclaiming 350 hectares of land at Haji Bunder near Sewri after sprouting of the ground-breaking ceremony of Rs. 300-crore international cruise terminal in the country's financial capital. On this occasion Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis promised status of 'Special Planning Authority' (SPA) to the Mumbai Port Trust. It is worth knowing that MbPT is the biggest landowner in the city, and its efforts are in process to create open spaces in the space-starved city.

### **IndusInd Bank & Dynamics coupled to conceive India's first battery-powered interactive**

IndusInd Bank and Dynamics Inc. announced launching of the first battery-powered, interactive payment cards to the Indian market at the 2018 Consumer Electronics Show (CES). The proposed new IndusInd Bank card from Dynamics has multiple buttons that let the consumers use a single card to pay in multiple ways. With a touch of a button consumers will be able to select credit, points or monthly instalments as payment option. A different colour light will activate based on the selected payment option. These cards will need no changes to the payment infrastructure or merchant systems. Dynamics Inc. will furnish a personalization and card fulfilment facility in India. It is worth knowing that IndusInd Bank and Dynamics lured four CES Innovation awards via the Consumer Technology Association (CTA).

### **Teen Murti Chowk got christened as Teen Murti-Haifa!**

On 14th January Historic War memorial Teen Murti Chowk of New Delhi got renamed as 'Teen Murti-Haifa' after Israeli city Haifa. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Israeli counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu graced the christening ceremony to commemorate sacrifice of forty-four Indian martyrs who were part of the brigade that carried out the victorious assault on the fortified Israeli city of Haifa to liberate it from the joint force of Ottomans, Germany and Austria-Hungary during World War I, on 23rd September

1918. It is worth knowing here that the three bronze statues at Teen Murti represent the Hyderabad, Jodhpur and Mysore Lancers who were part of the 15 Imperial Service Cavalry Brigade. The year marks the centenary year of the Battle for Haifa.

### **First Learn-Earn-Return fellowship came via IIT Kharagpur's pipeline**

In January 2018, on the occasion of Annual Alumni Meet, IIT Kharagpur awarded the first ever Learn-Earn-Return fellowship based on JEE Advanced ranking to three of its first year students. Jyoti Agrawal, Jyotisman Das and Rathin Singha from the Department of Computer Science and Engineering were the proud recipients and each of the students will receive Rs 10,000 per month for 4 years as cash award. IIT KGP Director Prof P P Chakrabarti instituted this award and in this context it is worth knowing that around 120 alumni across the globe and India donated for the fellowship since its launch. From second semester onward the recipients of the award would have to maintain a CGPA (Cumulative Grade Point Average) 9.

### **IIT Kanpur erected 5G antenna**

In January 2018, researchers of IIT Kanpur have developed a high tech antenna for 5G communication system. The researchers Yashika Sharma, Deep Sarkar and K Saurabh under guidance of professor Kumar Vaibhav Srivastava of electrical engineering department made this antenna. This 5G antenna will transform the dream of next generation of driverless car and faster loading of any data or HD movie. Web pages could be boosted in milli-seconds through the advent of the 5-G technology. The new technology will enable a surgeon to conduct surgery of the patients from a very distant place effectively. The 5G wireless network needed high data transfer rate which was made possible by installing several small and powerful antennas with several devices in a smaller place.

### **Shirdi Sai Baba actor Sudhir Dalvi won Janakavi P Savlaram award**

In January 2018, Thane mayor Meenakshi Shinde felicitated Sai Baba actor, Sudhir Dalvi with Janakavi P Savlaram award which is jointly sponsored by the Thane Municipal Corporation and the Janakavi P Savlaram Kala Samiti. Dalvi first came into light through his 'Guru Vashishtha' role in Ramanand Sagar's TV series "Ramayan". Then he gave outstanding performance in guise of Shirdi Sai Baba character. Besides these, he has also played roles in the famous TV show "Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi" and other Hindi serials.

### **Former Union Minister Raghunath Jha left constituency of life**

January 2018 spelled an end of Senior Rashtriya Janata Dal leader and former Union Minister Raghunath Jha at the age of 78 in New Delhi. He was victim of Kidney problem. The deceased was elected as Member of Parliament twice from Gopalgunj and Bettiah Lok Sabha constituencies in Bihar and was also six-time legislator from Sheohar Assembly constituency of the State. He was Union Minister of State for Heavy Industries and Public Enterprise in the UPA government which was led by former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. He was recently in news for donating land to the family of RJD chief Lalu Prasad.

### **Bank of Baroda heard voice of Invoicemart**

On 17th January India's leading digital invoice discounting marketplace, 'Invoicemart' under umbrella of Trade Receivables Discounting System (TReDS) has partnered with leading PSU bank, Bank of Baroda (BoB) for offering discount invoices for MSMEs. The partnership is on purpose of providing buyers and sellers registered on Invoicemart with option like they will be able to access funding from Bank of Baroda. It is worth knowing here that 'Invoicemart' is a joint venture between the third largest private-sector bank of India, 'Axis Bank' and 'mjunction services', Indian steel conglomerate of the Steel Authority of India Ltd and Tata Steel. Being an online mechanism, TReDS helps MSMEs unlock working capital without the hassle of applying for loans. To facilitate trade finance for Indian SMEs and MSMEs, Government of India advised all public sector banks and undertakings to get registered on TReDS platforms.

### **India walked into the first SCO military cooperation meeting**

According to an Indian Embassy press release of January 2018, for the first time India participated in a meeting of the international military cooperation departments of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) since its joining the bloc. Indian delegation led by Major General Ajay Seth discussed matters of practical cooperation among SCO nations viz. China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India and Pakistan.

### **India flared ICBM Agni-V !**

On 18th January India successfully test-fired its nuclear-capable ICBM Agni-V missile before its eventual induction into the Strategic Forces Command. This surface to surface, nuclear-capable Agni-V intercontinental ballistic missile encompasses the whole of Asia and China as well as parts of Europe and Africa within its nuclear strike envelope with its strike range of more than 5,000-km. Once it gets inducted into the Indian force then India will gate-crash into the super-exclusive club of countries with ICBMs (missiles with a range of over 5,000-5,500km) like the US, Russia, China, France and the UK. In this race of nuclear capable weapons, it is worth learning that North Korea has recently tested its two new ICBMs, 'Hwasong-14' and 'Hwasong-15'.

### **Ex CM of Gujarat will be the next Governor of MP.**

On 19th January Rashtrapati Bhavan heard the announcement of appointment of former Gujarat CM Anandiben Patel as the next Governor of Madhya Pradesh. She will be succeeding OP Kohli who is actually Gujarat Governor holding the additional charge of Madhya Pradesh Governor since 2016. Before him, Ram Naresh Yadav served on this post. In context to Anandiben Patel, it is worth knowing that she is a BJP member who became the first woman chief minister of Gujarat in 2014. She resigned from this post in year 2016. She had served as the cabinet minister for education in the BJP-led government in Gujarat from year 2002 to 2007.

### **Australia Group export control regime welcomed India**

On 19th January India became member of Australia Group export control regime. This group is an informal forum that seeks to ensure that exports stay away from lab of chemical or biological weapons. With this, India has become the 43rd nation to join the group. It has also become the first South Asian nation to become a full-time member of this group. This inclusion is likely to enhance India's image in the field of non-proliferation and help in acquiring critical technologies. However, India is not a signatory to the Non-Proliferation Treaty. The move will strengthen India's bid to enter the 48-member Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG).

### **Uttarakhand became first to expose wild animals to ultrasound!**

On 19th January Uttarakhand became the first state in India to use ultrasound for detecting pregnancy on wild animals viz. wild boars, monkeys, neel gais and elephants before administering reproduction control method on them. The Uttarakhand government granted certification to the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) as part of its three year sterilization project worth Rs 10 crore under the Union environment ministry in collaboration with National Institute of Immunology, New Delhi. For this a separate wing would be established inside WII to produce contraceptive pills for animals and the surgeries would be conducted at Chidiyapur Rescue Centre in Haridwar. According to Chief medical officer (CMO), Y C Thapliyal, "Since the guidelines of pre conception and pre natal diagnostic technique Act does not apply on wild animals, so approval was granted to WII readily." It is worth knowing that in case of humans, ultrasound is used to determine the gender and safety, whereas in wild animals, the test is done to confirm pregnancy and then the animal is released in the wild undisturbed.

### **20th January 2018 : The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF)'s 13th Raising Day**

The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) cheered its 13th Raising Day on 20th January. The Director of Intelligence Bureau, Shri Rajiv Jain was the guest of honor. Shri Sanjay Kumar, Director General of NDRF, Shri R K Jain, Member of NDMA, Shri Ravi Joesh Kokku, IG, NDRF and Vishal Sharma, NSDC graced the programme with their presence. The NDRF saves the lives of people in distress by demonstrating high level of professionalism, determination and hard work by facing multiple challenges with bravery. It is worth knowing that NDRF saved around 4000 lives from disaster last year. According to Shri Sanjay Kumar, Director General, NDRF there is need of sensitising each and every citizen through various outreach programmes viz. Familiarization Exercises, School Safety Programmes (SSPs) and Mock Exercises of NDRF.

### **GST Council trimmed rate on 82 goods and services**

In January 2018, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley announced rate cuts on 83 items including 53 services and 29 goods and the introduction of 'anti-evasion measures' to take care of faltering indirect tax revenue in the 25th GST Council meeting. Among these, nearly 40 items are from handlooms. According to an official release from 25th January 2018, cheaper GST will be implemented on tailoring, old cars, biodiesel, drip irrigation systems, precious stones and cooking gas. The tax on old and used motor vehicles and buses that run on biodiesel would be lowered to 18% from the current 28%, while diamonds and precious stones will be taxed at 0.25% and tailoring services at 5%. Rates of goods viz. packaged drinking water, drip irrigation system, bio-pesticides have been cut down to 12% from 18%. De-oiled brown rice will have nil tax. Apart from this, the council also discussed revenue collections under the new levy and possible deterrent provisions. This would cover the E-Way Bill, which will begin from 1st February. In addition to these, to ease fiscal pressure on the finances of the Centre and States, the Council also decided that Rs. 35,000 crore from the Integrated GST collections would be distributed among them.

### **First blind IFS officer got felicitated by President**

In January 2018, President Ram Nath Kovind felicitated Beno Zephine, India's first 100% visually-impaired person who joined Indian Foreign Service in 2015 along with other 111 women achievers for their remarkable journey as "first ladies" in their respective fields at Rashtrapati Bhawan in New Delhi. Presently, Beno Zephine is serving in the Indian embassy in Paris. Coming from Chennai, Zephine was posted as a language trainee in Paris. She is experimenting with speech assistive tools to help her dispose off her duties. She also uses Job Access With Speech (JAWS), a software that allows the visually challenged to read from a computer screen. Besides her, the "first ladies" club was greeted by India's first bartender, first coffee taster, first train driver, first woman porter, first woman detective, first woman bagpiper and many more.

### **CRIH chose Jaipur for its appearance**

On 23rd January, Union minister of state for AYUSH, Shripad Yesso Naik, laid foundation stone for Central Research Institute of Homeopathy (CRIH) in Pratap Nagar, Jaipur. The institute will give a new thrust to homeopathy with facilities of out-patient department (OPD), research OPD, admissions of patients and pathological investigations. The proposed institute will be the third CRI under umbrella of Central Council for Research in Homoeopathy (CCRH) which is an autonomous body of Ministry of AYUSH for performing scientific research in homoeopathy, with 23 institutes in India. Presently, Jaipur accommodates Regional Research Institute of Homeopathy (RRIH) that works in fields of acute otitis media, psoriasis and vitiligo. Besides this, some other homoeopathy research institutes at Shimla in Himachal Pradesh, Lucknow in UP and Siliguri in West Bengal are also in the pipeline.

### **IIT Roorkee has devised way for cancellation of Cancer**

In January 2018, researchers of Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee developed a new technique for treatment of cancer. The new method has been devised from Photodynamic Therapy that works on the concept of targeted drug delivery into the afflicted area, with the use of light. Dr. Kaushik Ghosh of Department of Chemistry and Dr. Prabhat Mandal of Department of Biotechnology have illustrated the use of a nitrosyl compound, which releases Nitric Oxide (NO) into the afflicted area under visible light. The nitric oxide has anti-cancer properties.

### **Usha Ananthasubramanian: First woman Chairman of IBA**

On 26th January 2018, Usha Ananthasubramanian, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of Allahabad Bank, has been elected as the first woman chairman of Indian Banks' Association (IBA). She was elected IBA Chairman for the year 2017-18 by its Managing Committee. IBA Chairman's position fell vacant following the superannuation of Jatinder Bir Singh. Rajnish Kumar, Chairman of State Bank of India, has been elected as the Deputy Chairman of IBA for the year 2017-18

### **India celebrated 69th Republic Day**

India celebrated its 69th Republic Day on 26th January 2018 in Rajpath, New Delhi. This year, the guests of honour were Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah, Sultan of Brunei, Prime Minister Hun Sen of Cambodia, President Rodrigo Roa Duterte of The Philippines, Joko Widodo, President of Indonesia, Najib Razak, Prime Minister of Malaysia, Nguyen Xuân Phúc, Prime Minister of Vietnam, President Halimah Yacob of Singapore, President Htin Kyaw of Myanmar, Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-Ocha of Thailand and Prime Minister Thongloun Sisoulith of Laos. For the first time in Indian history, 10 chief guests graced the Republic Day of India. It is very special because the Southeast Asian bloc completed its 50 years of formation (created on 8 August 1967) and India completed its 25 years of partnership (started in 1992) with the grouping in 2017. Besides this, the family members of Corporal Jyoti Prakash Nirala (Posthumous) of the Indian Air Force (IAF), who died fighting militants in Kashmir valley, received India's highest peacetime gallantry award, Ashok Chakra.

### **S. Somanath appointed as a VSSC Director**

In January 2018, Renowned scientist, S Somanath has been appointed as the new Director of Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC) in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala. He succeeded K Sivan, who was recently appointed as ISRO Chairman. Somanath took up the significant role at a function held in ISRO headquarters in Bengaluru. Currently, he is the director of Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre. Until June 2015, he was the Associate Director (Projects) of VSSC and also the Project Director of GSLV Mk-III launch vehicle. He joined ISRO in 1985 and was a team leader for Integration of PSLV.

### **Ashok Lavasa: New Election Commissioner of India**

In January 2018, Ashok Lavasa has been appointed as the new Election Commissioner (EC) of India. He succeeded Om Prakash Rawat, who was elevated as the Chief Election Commissioner. Lavasa's term as Election Commissioner would end in October 2022 and would thereafter serve as the Chief Election Commissioner. He is an Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer from Haryana cadre of 1980 batch. Prior to this, he served as the Finance Secretary in the Union Finance Ministry and retired from the post on 31st October 2017.

### **Zojila tunnel will zoom in India**

In January 2018, the National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation (NHIDCL) under hood of the Union Ministry of Road Transport & Highways and IL&FS Transportation Networks Ltd inked a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for construction of the 14.15 km long, 2-lane bi-directional Zojila

Tunnel in Jammu & Kashmir (J&K). The proposed tunnel will be India's longest road tunnel and the longest bi-directional tunnel in Asia. The tunnel will appear between Baltaland Minamarg to provide all weather connectivity between Srinagar, Kargil and Leh. The project will get completed in 7 years at an estimated expenditure of Rs 68.08 billion and it will cover the cost regarding land acquisition, resettlement and rehabilitation as well as maintenance. The tunnel will be well equipped with all modern technical safety arrangements viz. cut and cross ventilation system, two axial fans, fully transverse ventilation system, uninterrupted power supply, CCTV monitoring, traffic logging equipment, tunnel radio, emergency telephone system etc.

### **Muslim driver won 2nd highest gallantry award**

On the Republic Day eve President Ram Nath Kovind lauded a Muslim bus driver Sheikh Salim Gafur from Gujarat with the Uttam Jeevan Raksha Padak, which is the second highest gallantry award for displaying exemplary courage and presence of mind during terrorist attack at the time of Amarnath pilgrimage. In 2017 the honored driver accomplished courageous feat of saving lives of 52 passengers. The incident happened on 10th July 2017, when a bus was on its way back from Amarnath Yatra became victim of terrorist attack at Batengoo in Anantnag. However, Gafur kept driving the bus amid the indiscriminate firing and managed to sail it away from the attack site to a spot near a security post, saving lives of 52 passengers. Total 44 civilians became proud recipients of Jeevan Raksha Padaks. Among them 7 received Sarvottam Jeevan Raksha Padak (all posthumous), 13 got Uttam Jeevan Raksha Padak and 24 were acknowledged with Jeevan Raksha Padak.

### **85 Padma awards glittered in Indian sky**

On 26th January Government of India aired 2018 Padma awards. Among them 3 were Padma Vibhushan, 9 were Padma Bhushan, and 73 were Padma Shri. According to Times of India publication, among the felicitated awardees 16 were either foreigners, PIOs, or NRIs, while three of the awards were conferred posthumously. Senior RSS ideologue P Parameswaran, Music composer Ilaiyaraja and Ghulam Mustafa Khan were the recipients of the Padma Vibhushan awards. Cricketer and former Indian captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni billiards player Pankaj Advani, Philipose Mar Chrysostom, Alexander Kadakia, Ramachandram Nagaswamy, Laxman Pai, Ved Prakash Nanda, Arvind Parikh, and Sharda Sinha were the Padma Bhushan awardees. The celebrated ones, among the 73 Padma Shri awardees were Scientist toymaker Arvind Gupta, healer Lakshmikutty, Gond artist Bhajju Shyam, 98-year-old social worker Sudhanshu Biswas, 'father of palliative care in India' MR Rajagopal, activists Rani and Abhay Bang, social worker Lentina Ao Thakkar, wildlife conservationist Romulus Whitaker, Sampat Ramteke, Sanduk Ruit, India's first Paralympic gold medalist Murlikant Petkar, plastic road maker Rajagopalan Vasudevan, midwife Sulagatti Narasamma, Tamil folk art exponent Vijayalakshmi, physician Yeshi Dhoden, and Subhasini Mistry, a housemaid who built a hospital for the poor became Padma Shri awardees.

### **Observation of the 70th Death Anniversary of Mahatma**

The entire nation observed 70th death anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi today, who was assassinated on 30 January 1948. Politicians of different political parties paid tribute to Gandhiji at Gandhi Smriti Tees January Marg in New Delhi along with prayers. The Father of Nation was a true apostle of peace and non-violence. He transmitted message by leading an exemplary life and became role model for all citizens of our nation. Besides this, several programmes were organized in Gujarat. On this occasion, in Ahmedabad, an inter-religion prayer was organized at Sabarmati Ashram and an exhibition of Mahatma Gandhi's oil paintings was inaugurated. In addition to this, a special film titled 'Saints of Sabarmati' was also screened.

### **IIMS climbed global MBA ranking ladder**

In January 2018, the premier Indian Institutes of Management in Bangalore and Kolkata have shown improvement in the London's Global MBA Ranking 2018. IIM-Bangalore has shown massive improvement to 35th position from 49th. IIM-Ahmedabad which was at 29th position last year, is now at 31st position. IIM-Calcutta also displayed considerable improvement in its position to 78th this year from 95th, sharing the honours with McGill University Desautels, Canada. But on the other hand, the Indian School of Business, Hyderabad has slipped from 27th to 28th position this year. In this ranking the Stanford Graduate School of Business has grabbed the top position followed by the French school INSEAD.

### **Asha Bhosle to get Yash Chopra Memorial Award**

On 16 February 2018 'Yash Chopra Memorial Award' will be conferred upon Asha Bhosle for her outstanding contribution to the Hindi film industry. The 84 year old Bollywood legend will be the fifth winner of this award which was earlier bestowed to her elder sister and Bollywood playback singer Lata Mangeshkar. Besides them, Amitabh Bachchan, Rekha, and Shah Rukh Khan were also the recipients of this award. She has been giving playback in Hindi films for nearly 70 years and has earned entry into the Guinness World Records for recording over 11,000 songs in 20 different languages.

### **Centre will grace them grants**

The Ministry of Human Resource Development (HRD) has sanctioned a grant of Rs 456 crore for IITs Kharagpur, Delhi, Madras and Bombay for development projects in January 2018. Among the sanctioned amount IIT-Kharagpur got entitled for Rs 151.19 crore, IIT-Delhi will receive Rs 105 crore, IIT-Madras will get Rs 103.41 crore and IIT-Bombay will gain Rs 96.5 crore. The obliged IITs will invest the received amount in development of lab infrastructure, equipment, etc. for making world-class laboratories and high-end equipment for cutting-edge research and ensuring quality living experience viz. accommodation facilities for students.

### **30 scholarships at one click!!!**

The government of Madhya Pradesh initiated a Mission One Click scheme to distribute 30 types of scholarship in schools in January 2018. For this the government has designated School Education Department as a nodal department for online distribution of 30 types of scholarship of 8 Government departments of the state via Samagra Education Portal. The system has succeeded in bringing profiles of 1 crore 48 lakh students of all government and private educational institutions of the state online. Transparent, certified and updated information regarding caste, parents' profession, annual income of the family, BPL status, hostel status and previous year's exam result of students are available on the Samagra Education portal which generates a Unique I.D that prohibits double entry and duplication of scholarships in Mission One Click scheme. It is worth knowing that all students from Class 1 to Class 12 have been sent the funds for 30 kinds of scholarships directly in their accounts.

### **IIM Bodhgaya welcomed Professor Vinita Sahay**

Appointments Committee of Cabinet (ACC) approved appointment of Professor Vinita Sahay as head of IIM Bodhgaya in January 2018. Presently she is a professor at IIM Raipur who is specialized in marketing management. Her selection is the HRD Ministry's second attempt at appointing a head to the institute. Flashback says before her appointment government was planning to appoint Ganesan Kannabiran from NIT Trichy on this post which was later cancelled. It is worth knowing that Sahay is the second women director the IIMs have ever had as last year, Neelu Rohmetra was appointed as director of IIM Sirmaur in Himachal Pradesh.

### **Demise of Senior BJP MP Chintaman Wanaga**

Senior BJP MP from Maharashtra Chintaman Wanaga died at the age of 67 at Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital in New Delhi. His cause of death is still a mystery. The deceased was elected to the Lok Sabha from Palghar in Maharashtra. He had been a member of the 11th and the 13th Lok Sabha as well. He was an advocate by profession as well as Thane district president of the BJP from year 1990 to 1996. He was also a member of the parliamentary standing committee on rural development and the committee on welfare of SCs and STs.

### **Union Budget 2018 is on the table**

The Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley presented the 88th Union Budget on 1 February 2018 in the parliament. The domain of fiscal situation and targets reveals that GST revenue will be collected for 11 months and that would impact balance sheets. Rs 21.57 lakh crore transferred in the form of net GST against the predicted Rs 21.47 lakh. Government aims for 2018-19's fiscal deficit target of 3.3 % of GDP. Revised fiscal deficit for 2017-18 was Rs 5.95 lakh crore or 3.5 % of GDP.

In a major relief to farmers, minimum support price (MSP) for all upcoming Kharif crops has been raised to 1.5 times the cost of production in case the market prices are lower than MSP. The flagship National Health Protection Scheme has been announced which will cover 10 crore poor and vulnerable families in the country, or about 50 crore beneficiaries, with a cover of 5 lakh per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalisation. In context to cooking gas the minister announced that eight crore free gas connections will be given to poor women.

As far as income tax is concerned Mr Jaitley has made no changes in income tax slabs for individuals this year. But all salaried people will get a standard deduction of Rs. 40,000 on their income in lieu of medical and transport reimbursements. The finance minister increased cess on personal income tax and corporation tax to 4 % from present 3%.

### **Innovation in aerial survey got projected via IIT-Roorkee**

Professor of civil engineering department, Kamal Jain of IIT-Roorkee developed a new technology for aerial survey, which is not only cost-effective but also more precise than the LiDAR (light detection and ranging) system used at present. The innovation will seek a significant place in infrastructure and defence sectors. It is worth understanding here that in the LiDAR system, to map aerial images of an area, an aircraft needs to fly at a specific height but it is a costly and inconvenient technology. It requires a camera-mounted aircraft and one km of aerial video monitoring costs more than Rs 30,000. On the other hand in the new technology the professor used an unmanned aerial vehicle or a drone for taking videos with an interactive web map that records data, including the place and time on a computer screen.

### **UK-India intimacy mirrored in education sector**

University of Birmingham launched India Institute 'UBII' to empower its 100-year-old relationship with India. The new centre, UBII will look into academic research and scholarship, teaching and postgraduate research, policy analysis and debate, collaboration with corporate partners and public engagement in culture. Besides this, UBII will also start a fellowship scheme about which pro-vice-chancellor (international) professor Robin Mason of this university said, "the scheme will support the visits of researchers to and from India, to spend a period of time at Indian institutions or at the University of Birmingham to help the development of research projects, applications for external grants, joint publications, and business and policy engagement." It is worth knowing that the first cohort of Indian students travelled to Birmingham to study for degrees in mining and commerce. Since then, the university has provided education to around 2,000 Indian alumni.

### **USC & Cochin Shipyard Limited entered into a contract**

The Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL) and joint stock company United Shipbuilding Corporation (USC), Russia signed Memorandum of Understanding to collaborate and engage in Design, Development and Execution of modern vessels for Inland and Coastal Waterways. Madhu S Nair, Chairman & Managing Director of Cochin Shipyard Limited and Alexey Rakhmanov, President of United Shipbuilding Corporation did the signing ceremony. The MoU will lead to development of High-Speed Vessels, River-Sea Cargo Vessels, Passenger Vessels, Dredgers, and other watercrafts for inland waterways and coastal shipping. The MoU will also give thrust to Sagarmala Project.

### **New Wildlife Sanctuary at Ghodazari.**

The Maharashtra government has approved Ghodazari in Chandrapur district as a new wildlife sanctuary in the state. The decision was taken at the 13th meeting of the Maharashtra State Board for Wildlife, chaired by Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis. The sanctuary, in the North East of Tadoba, will include 159 sq km of Brahmapuri forest. This will not only save the forest but will also improve tourism in nearly 40 villages in the area. Besides this, the board also discussed various proposals for development work within the Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP) and wildlife sanctuaries in the state.

### **Sudeep Lakhtakia: New Director General of NSG**

In February 2018, Sudeep Lakhtakia, 1984 batch IPS officer took charge as the Director General (DG) of National Security Guard (NSG). He succeeded S.P. Singh, who retired on January 31, 2018. Before this, Lakhtakia was serving as a Special DG in the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) headquarters in New Delhi. Among other positions, Lakhtakia occupied in his long career include Superintendent of Police in Warangal, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Traffic) in Hyderabad-West Zone, Commissioner in Vijayawada and Deputy Inspector General of Security.

### **'Exam Warriors'- A Book Penned Down By Prime Minister of India**

The book "Exam Warriors" has been written by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to inspire youth to face the difficult moments of examinations and life with fresh and new energy. It emphasizes the importance of play, sleep & even travel. The book was released by External Affairs Minister, Sushma Swaraj at a function in New Delhi on 3 February 2018. The book is said to be interactive, with illustrations, activities and yoga exercises, and intended to be a friend to youths not only in facing exams but also in facing life. It was published by Penguin India. Currently, it is available in English and will soon be published in multiple languages.

### **TDP leader parted from party of life**

Telugu Desam Party veteran leader, former minister and sitting member of Andhra Pradesh Legislative Council Gali Muddu Krishnama Naidu died of health complications on 7th of February in Hyderabad at age of 71. He was a teacher turned into politician in year 1983. He was inducted into the first cabinet of the TDP Government in year 1984 and looked into education, higher education and environment etc. The deceased represented Puttoor Assembly Constituency in Andhra Pradesh for six times and won from Nagari after reorganisation of constituencies. The departed leader will meet his last rites at his native village in Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh.

### **PVC Aadhaar Smart Card goes beyond purview of usage**

The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) clarified yesterday that the plastic or PVC Aadhaar Smart Cards are not usable as the QR code mentioned on them usually becomes dysfunctional during printing. Moreover, there suspends a possibility that through such plastic cards the Aadhaar details might be hacked by unreliable elements without informed consent. UIDAI also made clear that Aadhaar letter or its

cutaway portion or downloaded versions of Aadhaar on ordinary paper or mAadhaar are perfectly valid. With this UIDAI dissolved the concept of smart or plastic Aadhaar card. In case a person loses his Aadhaar card, he can download his Aadhaar card free of cost from <https://aadhaar.uidai.gov.in>. And even the print out of the downloaded Aadhaar card, be it in black and white form, is as valid as the original Aadhaar letter sent by UIDAI. There is absolutely no need to even get it laminated. UIDAI has also warned the unauthorized agencies to discontinue the practice of collecting Aadhaar information from general public for printing of Aadhaar card. It should be noted that collection of such information would be considered as a punishable criminal offence under Indian Penal Code, 1860 and Aadhaar Act, 2016.

### **Indian universities miss Asia's top 25 list**

Times Higher Education (THE) tabled list of 350 Asian varsities on 6th of February among which no Indian institution was traced in top 25. However, the Indian Institutions did succeed in increasing their number in top 350 list. India claimed 42 places, up from 33 last year, with 12 new entrants. Among them, the top-most Indian centre of higher learning was the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bangalore at the 29th place. The Indian Institute of Technology-Madras witnessed a steep decline in the top 200. It dropped 41 places to 103rd and Indian Institute of Technology Bombay dropped two places to 44th position as compared to last year.

### **Commitments of Space Department...**

The Union Budget 2018-19 unveiled briefcase of Rs 10,783 crore for Department of Space for various space-related projects. The department will use the grant for delivering 3 earth observation satellites and 2 communication satellites. It is worth registering here that this time the budget's total allocation for the Department of Space has climbed up from last year's allocation, which was Rs 9,155.52 crore.

### **Rhododendron park will bloom in Tawang**

Pema Khandu, Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh laid the foundation stone of a Rhododendron Park in Tawang district of the state on 6 February 2018. Rhododendron is an ornamental shrub or small tree of the heather family, with large clusters of bell-shaped flowers and typically large evergreen leaves. More than 30 species of Rhododendrons would be planted in total area of 1.15 hectares. Border Area Development programme (BADP) will aid this project which would not only add to the scenic enhancement of the city, but would also offer an opportunity for conservation of rhodo species that has been reduced to only 50 species from 100 species. Rhododendron is the national flower of Nepal.

### **Madavoor Vasudevan Nair did dance of death**

Kathakali maestro Madavoor Vasudevan Nair passed away while performing at Agasthyacodu Mahadeva Temple, Anchal in Kerala on 6th of February, 2018. The deceased was recipient of several prestigious awards including Padma Bhushan. He followed the Kaplingattu School, the particular style of south Kerala. He also served as a faculty in the Thekkan Kalari (Southern school of Kathakali) of Kerala Kalamandalam and had been the principal of Kalabharathi performing art institute.

### **Antony Dominic became Chief Justice of Kerala**

Acting Chief Justice of the Kerala High Court, Antony Dominic got appointed as Chief Justice of Kerala on February 9, 2018. With this, Justice Dominic became the first Keralite to serve in capacity of Chief Justice of Kerala in 17 years. Justice KK Usha was the last Keralite who occupied the top post in the year 2001. Justice Dominic took oath in presence of Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan at Raj Bhavan, Kerala. The appointee is a native of Ponkunnam near Kanjirappally in Kottayam district. He is a member of the Karikattukuppam House, Ponkunnam.

### **60 Discovered Small Fields of ONGC & OIL are on auction...**

Union Cabinet gave nod to Bid Round II of Discovered Small Fields (DSF) of 60 un-monetised discoveries of Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) Limited and Oil India Limited (OIL) under Nomination and Relinquished Discoveries on 7th of February, 2018. Among these 60 un-monetised discoveries, 22 fields are of ONGC, 5 are of OIL and 12 are abandoned fields from the New Exploration and Licensing Policy (NELP) Blocks. And the remaining 21 fields are the ones left after DSF Bid Round-I. These discoveries are estimated to have 194.65 Million Metric Ton (MMT) of oil and oil equivalent gas. The investments into these fields are likely to generate big employment opportunities. It is worth knowing that the Discovered Small Field Policy was notified by the Union Government on October 14, 2015.

### **India stood at 44th step on intellectual property ladder**

The Global Innovation Policy Center (GIPC) of U.S. Chamber of Commerce has put out 'International Intellectual Property Index of 50 nations. India ranked 44th of 50 economies. India has shown improvement in its performance in relative and absolute terms by virtue of passing guidelines to bolster the patentability environment for technological innovations, improving the protection of well-known trademarks, and initiating IP awareness and coordination programs which led to implementation of some principles of its 2016 National IPR Policy. According to Patrick Kilbride, vice president of GIPC, "For the first time, India has broken free of the bottom 10% of economies measured, and its score represents the largest percentage improvement of any country measured. This is further evidence of a country on the move."

### **Litterateur Chandrasekhar Rath Climbed Chariot of Death**

Eminent litterateur Chandrasekhar Rath died of age-related ailments at age of 89 on February 9, 2018 in Bhubaneswar. The deceased penned many novels, short stories, essays and poems during his career. Some of his famous novels are Yantrarudha (The Instrumented), Asurya Upanivesh (The Sunless Colony) and Nav Jatak (Regenesis). He was not only a good writer but was also a good translator. He had translated a biography from Odia to English and also translated a few English poems into Odia language. He was acknowledged with Kendra Sahitya Akademi Award, Odisha Sahitya Akademi Award and Atibadi Jagannath Das Samman for his remarkable contribution in the field of literature. Besides these, he was also nominated for the prestigious Padma Shri award this year.

### **'Grand Collar of the State of Palestine' chose Modi's collar**

President Mahmoud Abbas of Palestine conferred 'Grand Collar of the State of Palestine' upon Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Ramallah, in the occupied West Bank on 10th of February, 2018. Modi was honored with this highest order which is given to foreign dignitaries for his significant contribution in promotion of relations between India and Palestine. It is worth registering that the Grand Collar is given to Kings, Heads of State/Government and persons of similar rank. King Salman of Saudi Arabia, King Hamad of Bahrain, President Xi Jinping of China were previous recipients of this honor. Apart from this, Modi became the first Indian Prime Minister to make an official visit to Palestine.

### **Digital Payments will come on their scheduled time**

The India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) will enable Digital Payments in Post Offices by April 2018 under India Post Payments Bank Expansion Programme as per 10th of February announcement. The digital payments will provide the largest financial inclusion network in India covering both urban as well as rural environment. It is good to learn that IPPB is planning to enable over 17 crore active account-holders of Post Office Savings Bank to make digital payments including the benefit of NEFT, RTGS, UPI and bill payment services. The upcoming digital payment services will be delivered at the doorstep with the help of Postmen and Gramin Dak Sewaks (GDS).

### **INS Garuda preened over IAAMS**

Integrated Automatic Aviation Meteorological Systems (IAAMS) began soaring over INS Garuda naval air station in Kochi, Kerala on February 9, 2018. Rear Admiral RJ Nadkarni, VSM, Chief of Staff, Headquarters, Southern Naval Command inaugurated it. INS Garuda is the fourth naval air station that has witnessed this installation. The system is meant to modernise the meteorological infrastructure of 9 Naval Air Stations (NAS). It will bolster aviation safety via automation of weather monitoring process. It is equipped with special alarm feature and state-of-the-art meteorological sensors viz. radar vertical wind profiler, transmissometer, ceilometer and automatic weather observation system. It is good to know that INS Garuda is the oldest operating air station of the Indian Navy that serves as major naval air training center as well as an operational base.

### **NEET became a gateway for foreign universities!**

Union Health Ministry accepted the proposal of Medical Council of India (MCI) to amend the Screening Test Regulations, 2002, making NEET qualification mandatory for Indian students who are wanting to obtain primary medical qualification from any medical institution outside India, on or after May 2018 for admission to MBBS course. In this context an official said, "A mere 12-15% of the graduates who come back after studying abroad manage to clear the Foreign Medical Graduates Examination (FMGE) . If they don't clear the FMGE, they don't get registered to practice in India. In such cases, they start quackery or practice illegally, which can be dangerous. So the move is aimed at ensuring only competent students get to study medicine in foreign universities." It is worth recalling here that NEET was introduced in 2016 for admission to government and private medical colleges in India.

### **First female filmmaker of Odisha faded from screen of life**

First female filmmaker of Odisha, Parbati Ghose died of prolonged illness at age of 85 in Bhubaneswar on February 11, 2018. She began the journey of her career as a child artist in All India Radio. She played role of Nila Madhava in Shri Jagannath (1949) which was her first role on the silver screen. After that she worked in Amari Gaan Jhua. Her performance as the female protagonist in Goura Prasad Ghose's Bhai Bhai (1956), fetched her recognition. In mid-1980s she won three national awards.

### **'Darwin Week' observed in India.**

India March for Science Organising Committee and the Breakthrough Science Society, West Bengal organized 'Darwin Week' on February 12 which will continue upto February 18, 2018 . The week is meant to generate awareness among the public about Darwin's contributions to science of evolution via a series of workshops and seminars. The scientists are asserting in this event that Darwin's theory of evolution offers the correct explanation of the observed evolution in nature and it is no longer a subject of debate within the scientific community. Apart from West Bengal, universities of Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka are also participating in this drive. In this context it is worth knowing that Charles Darwin was an English naturalist, geologist and biologist who proposed theory of evolution.

### **Spoken Sanskrit centre made appearance in Gujarat University.**

In order to popularise the ancient Sanskrit language, Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh launched Spoken Sanskrit Centre that offers the first course of its kind in Gujarat University in February 2018. The new centre will offer a six-month course for people on how to speak the language. Prior knowledge of Sanskrit is not required to enrol in this course worth Rs 500. According to its coordinator, Atul Unagar, "Anybody who loves Sanskrit, but did not have a chance to learn it in college or school, can join this course. It will teach them how to speak Sanskrit. People will be able to converse in the language after a six-month course."

**Anti-narcotics scheme will intoxicate for 3 more years.**

The Union Government has approved extension of the anti-narcotics scheme, 'Assistance to States and UTs for Narcotics Control' for a further period of three years from 2017-18 to 2019-20 with an estimated budget of Rs 21 crore. The scheme will continue to assist states and Union Territories that are contributing in controlling the inter-state and cross-border drug trafficking. The scheme follows strategy of reduction of both supply and demand in which supply reduction includes enforcement activities while the demand reduction involves rehabilitation and de-addiction measures. It is worth registering here that the scheme was first launched by the Union Home Ministry on October 24, 2004 for a period of 5 years up to March 31, 2009 with an estimated budget of Rs 10 crores. The popularity of the scheme opened a series of extension which began from 2009-10 to 2013-2014 at a cost of Rs 15 crores. Then from 2014-15 to 2016-17 with an estimated budget of Rs 15 crores under surveillance of IS-II Division, Ministry of Home Affairs and DG, Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB).

**India's first online radio station went live.**

India's first online radio station, Radio Umang was launched in February 2018. The frequency of Radio Umang vibrated listeners of India as well as 60 nations across the globe. Listeners tuned in to this online radio station through web streaming or downloading the app that plays programmes based on love, peace and happiness along with soothing soulful music. Founder of Quick Call, Neeraj Tyagi is the incharge of this the station and veteran of Radio Industry, Vidhi Maheshwari is its Creative Director.

## **INTERNATIONAL NEWS**

### **Saudi Arabia has put the first women-only car showroom on display**

In January 2018 a Saudi Arabian private company started the first car showroom 'Le Mall' in the Saudi Red Sea port city of Jeddah. The exhibition pampers fuel-efficient cars and provides a team of saleswomen to help their new customer base. The showroom has signs emblazoned with the slogan "Drive and Shop". According to Sharifa Mohammad, the head of the exhibition's sales women, "This whole mall is run by women anyway. All the cashiers are women. Everyone in the restaurants are women." It is worth recalling here that Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman issued landmark royal decree in September ending ban on women drivers and permission of this female car showroom is a proof of a new progressive trend in the deeply conservative Muslim kingdom.

### **Ecuador confirmed Julian Assange's Ecuadorian citizenship**

In January 2018 Ecuador's foreign minister, Maria Fernanda Espinosa confirmed WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange's Ecuador citizenship at a press conference in Quito, capital of Ecuador. He is an Australian-Ecuadorian computer programmer who was granted this citizenship in December 2017. It is worth knowing here that Assange has been holed up for over five years in the Ecuadorian embassy in London where he was granted asylum in 2012 to avoid extradition to Sweden over rape allegations. Assange denied the allegations and feared that Sweden would hand him over to the United States to face prosecution over WikiLeaks' publication of thousands of classified military and diplomatic documents in one of the largest information leaks in U.S. history. In May, though Swedish prosecutors had quit the investigation regarding rape allegations, yet the British police kept the ember of investigation alive and proclaimed to arrest Assange if he left Ecuador's London embassy. Prior to that, Ecuador requested Britain to grant Julian Assange a diplomatic status of a 'spokesman' for Britain's Foreign Office with an aim to devise a "dignified" solution to his situation with Britain. But Britain straight away refused the request.

### **China wishes to rule GPS world via BeiDou-3 satellites**

In January 2018 China launched two BeiDou-3 satellites via March-3B carrier rocket from Xichang Satellite Launch Center in the south western province of Sichuan with an aim to provide navigation and positioning services to nations that are lined up along the Belt and Road initiative (BRI) by the end of 2018. The two satellites are coded as the 26th and 27th satellites in the BeiDou Navigation Satellite System (BDS). Through these two satellites, China wishes to achieve an edge over the United States, Russia and the European Union in domain of GPS.

### **Jeff Bezos made efforts for transforming dreams of 'Dreamers'**

In January 2018 globe's wealthiest person, founder of Amazon and owner of the Washington Post, Jeff Bezos announced donation worth \$33 million to a scholarship fund for young "dreamers," immigrants brought to the United States illegally as children. It is a step in resolving legal status of dreamers. In this context it is good to learn that Donald E. Graham, chairman of the board of Graham Holdings Company which was previously known as The Washington Post Company, co-founded "TheDream.US", the nation's largest college access and success program for DREAMers, that has helped over 1,700 immigrants financially with more than \$19 million so far.

### **Romania's PM tabled his resignation**

On 15th January Prime Minister of Romania, Mihai Tudose resigned from his post after ruling left-wing Social Democratic Party withdrew its support for him amid a power struggle with party chairman. In parliament 60 Social Democratic lawmakers voted to withdraw their support for him while four supported Tudose and four abstained from the vote. According to Social Democratic Party officials now Development Minister, Paul Stanescu would serve as interim prime minister. It is worth knowing here that Tudose is the

second prime minister expelled by the Social Democrats since they won Romania's December 2016 general election. Sorin Grindeanu was the previous prime minister who was voted out in June with a vote of no-confidence.

### **India & Sri Lanka entered new contracts**

On 15th January, India and Sri Lanka inked four agreements for collaboration in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) sector. The agreement would lead to establishment of an e-office system and linkage of National Knowledge Network (NKN) for collaboration among universities and academics. With this agreement Sri Lanka has become the first country to get connected to India's NKN through a Gigabyte optical fibre network. Besides this, the duo inked agreement for enhancing cooperation between them in the IT sector, cyber security and eGovernance.

### **Top 100 Global Tech Leaders List is out**

On 17th January Thomson Reuters Corp published its debut 'Top 100 Global Technology Leaders' list. In this list Microsoft, Intel Corp and Cisco Systems stood at first, second and third positions respectively. Besides them, Apple Inc, Alphabet Inc, International Business Machines Corp, Texas Instruments Inc as well as Microchip maker Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing, German business software giant SAP and Dublin-based consultant firm Accenture succeeded in occupying place in top ten. It is worth registering here that five Indian companies managed a place among rest 90 companies. In this list only those tech companies were selected who had annual revenue \$1 billion and above. In addition to this, the companies were judged on benchmarks like finance, management and investor confidence, risk and resilience, legal compliance, innovation, people and social responsibility, environmental impact and reputation.

### **\$350 million Solar Development Fund found way via Indian Subcontinent**

In World Future Energy Summit (WFES) of 17th and 18th January, India announced establishment of a \$350 million solar development fund for financing solar projects in the first International Solar Alliance (ISA) outreach programme. India inked LoIs / MoUs of 9 solar related projects with several companies and bankers. YES Bank entered into solar project contracts worth \$5 Billion. M/s CLP and M/s NTPC Limited became partners of International Solar Alliance (ISA) and committed a voluntary contribution of \$1 million each to ISA fund corpus. International Energy Agency (IEA) and Green Climate Fund (GCF) also showed interest in ISA partnership. It is good to know that WFES was a signature event of a global initiative, Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week, hosted by Masdar at Abu Dhabi (UAE). Around seven Energy Ministers of ISA Member nations participated in ISA Forum and expressed their views on benefits of collaboration, synergies, and knowledge sharing at the international level to boost solar energy for universal energy access and investing in Innovations, Technology and R&D for solar projects.

### **American Express CEO is now in Facebook black board.**

On 18th January Facebook appointed American Express CEO, Kenneth Chenault as first black board member. With this, he has become the first African-American board member at the social media giant. Besides this, Chenault is slated to become one of a few black board members at major technology firms across Silicon Valley, joining others like Ursula Burns at Uber and Debra Lee at Twitter. Chenault is presently a board member at IBM and has been working at American Express since 1981.

### **Mexico made visible world's biggest flooded cave !**

In January 2018, a group of archaeologists explored world's biggest flooded cave in eastern Mexico. The discovery would give clue to ancient Maya civilization. The group discovered a gigantic passage which was

initially thought to be two different cave systems viz. The Dos Ojos cave system and Sac Actun cave system. But actually it is Sac Actun when measured around 262 km, showed connection with the 83-km long Dos Ojos cave system. Sac Actun now absorbs Dos Ojos and its former length to form the world's largest known underwater cave, beating the Ox Bel Ha System that held the title earlier with a total estimated length of 270 km.

### **India's first ever tourism university will come via IIHM.**

In January 2018 the International Institute Of Hotel Management (IIHM) announced establishment of country's first ever tourism university named 'IIHM University' in West Bengal under the WB Pvt University Act. In this university, IIHM will offer courses in tourism development, hospitality and tourism studies, eco- tourism, sustainable tourism etc. IIHM will set up this university in Salt Lake Electronic Complex Sector 5 with academic collaboration of world's top institutions at estimated cost of Rs 150 crores. It is worth knowing that IIHM has campuses at Kolkata, Bengaluru, Delhi, Pune, Ahmedabad, Jaipur, Hyderabad as well as at Bangkok.

### **Apple became apple of Fortune's 'World's Most Admired Companies' list.**

In January 2018 Fortune released its 2018 'World's Most Admired Companies' list in which Apple topped for the 11th year in a row. Apple did the feat despite of many problems on the public relations front, delayed products and a number of high profile software bugs. It was followed by Amazon, Alphabet, Berkshire Hathaway, Starbucks, Disney, Microsoft, Southwest, FedEx and JPMorgan to complete the top ten list. The industries were judged on parameters like investment value and quality of management and products, social responsibility, ability to attract talent and many more.

### **NASA Tested New Alloy to Fold Wings in Flight.**

In January 2018, NASA successfully applied a new technology in flight that allows aircraft to fold their wings to different angles during flight . The subscale testbed Prototype Technology-Evaluation Research Aircraft, 'PTERA' took off over NASA Armstrong Flight Research Center in California with its wings at zero degrees deflection, keeping them leveled during takeoff. After that the outer portions of its wings were folded 70 degrees upwards using a thermally-triggered lightweight material called 'shape memory alloy' which was developed at Glenn Research Center and integrated into an actuator at Boeing Research & Technology. This technology has come as boon for pilots, who can now fold their aircraft's wings to different angles to adapt to multiple flight conditions for aerodynamic benefit. The technology found its root in the Spanwise Adaptive Wing (SAW) concept that seeks to enhance aircraft performance.

### **Apple fell into gravity of Malala Fund!**

In January 2018, the technology giant, Apple has teamed up with the Malala Fund, to empower girls' education in India and abroad. It will help doubling the number of grants awarded by Gulmakai Network and extend funding programmes to India and Latin America with the initial goal of extending secondary education opportunities to over 100,000 girls. It is worth knowing that since 2013, Malala Fund has been working in partnership with other organisations, private sector and governments worldwide to realise every girl's right to 12 years of free, safe and quality education. In context to Gulmakai Network, it is worth knowing that Gulmakai Network is christened after the pseudonym that 11-year-old Malala used while writing blog for the BBC about life under the Taliban. The fund's Gulmakai Network presently aids programmes in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Lebanon, Turkey and Nigeria.

### **Ocean Pollution Observation System will surf on Indian water.**

In January 2018, Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) sailed announcement of upcoming ocean pollution observation system to help monitor ocean pollution levels along with offering insights on the changes in the marine system. According to SSC Shenoi, Director of INCOIS, the system worth Rs 100 crore, would be very effective in obtaining the data about ocean pollution, which will be used in understanding the quality of water. The new system will punctuate the present practice of collecting water samples from the sea and studying their pollution levels thereafter with a fullstop. The proposed observation system is likely to float from April 2018, after getting final consent of the Indian government. It will be deployed in six coastal areas of India viz. Digha (West Bengal), Goa, Mumbai, Kochi, Visakhapatnam and Chennai.

### **Global Talent Competitiveness rankings are out!**

In January 2018 World Economic Forum (WEF) released Global Talent Competitiveness index in which Switzerland topped the list. It was followed by Singapore and the US. Most of the European countries dominated the top ranks, with 15 out of the top 25 places. Among the five BRICS countries, China occupied 43rd position, Russian Federation grabbed 53rd, South Africa was spotted on 63rd, Brazil at 73rd position and India was ranked 81st. It is worth knowing here that though India has improved its position from 92nd last year yet it continues to lag behind the other BRICS nations in race of global talent. The index measures how countries grow, attract and retain talent.

### **International Dam Safety Conference concluded in Thiruvananthapuram.**

The two day International Dam Safety Conference met an end on 24th January in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala. Union Minister of State for Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation, Arjun Ram Meghwal had presided over the conference. The Dam Safety Rehabilitation and Improvement Project (DRIP) was discussed at length in the conference. The project is being run by the Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation (MoWR, RD & GR) in the seven states viz. Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Tamil Nadu and Uttarakhand. The project is about rehabilitation of old dams under distress and ensuring their structural safety and operational efficiency. The project began in year 2012 with a total financial outlay of Rs 2100 crores.

### **China embraced Latin America in 'One Belt, One Road'.**

On January 22nd China invited Latin American and Caribbean countries to join its 'One Belt, One Road' initiative to strengthen its economic and political cooperation in a region where US influence is historically strong. China is the top trading partner of many nations in the Latin American region that includes Brazil, Chile and Argentina. Representatives from China and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) entered into a contract to expand ties in Santiago, Chile. It is worth recalling here that the 'One Belt, One Road' (OBOR) initiative was proposed by China's President Xi Jinping to expand connectivity and cooperation among Asia, Africa and Europe.

### **Jerome H Powell: New Chairman of Federal Reserve System.**

On 24th January 2018, the United States Senate confirmed the appointment of Jerome H Powell as the Chairman of the Federal Reserve System, the central banking system of the United States. He will succeed Janet Yellen, whose term will end in February 2018. He has been serving on the Federal Reserve's board since 2012. Prior to this, he served as a visiting scholar at the Bipartisan Policy Center, a Washington think tank.

### **Global Centre for Cybersecurity launched.**

On 24th January 2018, the World Economic Forum (WEF) has launched the Global Centre for Cybersecurity to safeguard the world from hackers and growing data breaches. The centre will help all the stakeholders together in warding off cyber criminals. Initially, the centre will reach out the key industry players and G-20 countries to make this platform a success for dialogue and real-time action on cyber threats. It will establish an independent cyber library of best practices and will strengthen cyber resilience and robustness. It also assist regions which are less cyber developed in establishing their national/regional cyber strategy and certification in cyber preparedness.

### **Scientists discover the Smart solar windows that could produce electricity.**

In January 2018, scientists have discovered a new material for next-generation smart windows that will not only get a tinted look when the Sun is too bright but will also convert solar energy into electricity. The discovery was made by scientists at Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory (Berkeley Lab) in the United States. The scientists discovered a form of perovskite that works well as a stable and photoactive semiconductor material that can reversibly switch between transparent and non-transparent state, without degrading its electronic properties. The inorganic halide perovskite can essentially change from one crystal structure to another with a slight change in the temperature or when it is introduced to a little water vapour. When the material changes its crystal structure, it changes from transparent to non-transparent.

### **A new group of walking fish wandered in Tasmania.**

In January 2018, the researchers of the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies of the University of Tasmania discovered small population of a new group of walking fish, the Red Handfish, "Thymichthys politus" along the seabed of Australia's south-eastern coast of Tasmania under a reef life survey. The new fish measures around 6 to 13.5 cm in length. The habitat of this handfish was found to be small, within a radius of 20 metres, because instead of swimming it walks on the seafloor. The handfish has an elongated body and use its pectoral fins in an unusual manner to walk slowly over the sea bottom in search of food viz. crustaceans and worms. It is worth knowing that the first-ever Red Handfish was seen in the 19th century near Port Arthur, in Tasmania.

### **Elizabeth Hawley lost the record of life.**

In January 2018, an American journalist, Elizabeth Hawley, who kept records of mountaineers on Nepal's highest peaks died of pneumonia at the age of 94. The veteran record keeper tracked mountaineering activities in Nepal, which has eight of the world's 14 highest peaks, including Mount Everest since 1960. The deceased maintained the "Himalayan Database," which is considered as the unofficial record book for mountaineering.

### **Juan Orlando Hernández became President of Honduras.**

On 27 January 2018, Juan Orlando Hernández sworn in as President of Country in Central America, Honduras for the second term amid protest. The pomp-filled ceremony at the national stadium in the capital, Tegucigalpa, was spoiled by large clashes between security forces and protesters. The 49 year old Hernández has eventually become President after the disputed election of November. According to the observers from the European Union and the Organization of American States, there were several irregularities in the election. The ballot count was suspended several times, and Hernández's rival Salvador Nasralla, who had been substantially ahead, was eventually declared to have lost by about 50,000 votes. Nasralla has now joined the row of protesters and has refused to accept the election results.

### **Grains of Grammy Awards 2018...**

On 29 January 2018 announcements of the 60th Annual Grammy Awards were bestowed in which the best achievements from October 2016 to September 2017 were honored at Madison Square Garden in New York City, the USA. Bruno Mars was awarded Album Of The Year; Bruno Mars', That's What I Like won Song of

the Year title; Bruno Mars, 24K Magic clinched Record Of The Year award; Best Pop Solo Performance award went to Ed Sheeran, Shape of You; Best Pop Vocal Album award chose Ed Sheeran, Divide; Best Dance Recording got tuned to LCD Soundsystem, Tonite; Best Music Film award was won by The Defiant Ones; Best Children's Album award went to Feel What U Feel, Lisa Loeb; Best Compilation Soundtrack for Visual Media was lured by La La Land and Producer of the Year, Classical award made way to David Frost. James Corden was the host of this ceremony for the second year in a row.

### **India-Vietnam first military exercise 'VINBAX'**

The first military exercise 'VINBAX' between India and Vietnam began on 29 January 2018 in Jabalpur Madhya Pradesh. The six-day long military exercise will strengthen the defence ties between the two participating nations. It is worth recalling here that India and Vietnam had inked a protocol on defence cooperation in year 1994. The duo had inked a pact on boosting bilateral defence cooperation in year 2009.

### **US took uplifting decision of lifting ban on refugees from 11 'high risk' nations**

The United States lifted the ban that it had imposed on refugees from 11 nations viz. Egypt, Iran, Libya, South Sudan, Yemen, Sudan, Iraq, Mali, North Korea, Somalia and Syria, which it termed as high-risk countries on 29 January 2018. However, those seeking to enter the US would now have to come under much tougher scrutiny than in the past as per US Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen's statement. The screening procedures and risk-based assessments before getting admission into the nation have been tightened. This move of President Donald Trump has brought a sharp turn in overall US immigration policy. Trump has proposed the end of the 27-year-old green card lottery program which was meant to diversify the source of immigrants, leading to an increase in those from West Asian and African countries.

### **'Aadhaar' : Oxford's first Hindi word of the year**

The Jaipur Literature Festival heard word 'Aadhaar' as the Hindi word of the Year for 2017 of Oxford Dictionary. The word was chosen among Notebandi, Swachh, Vikaas, Yoga and Bahubali, which were used in context to the social, cultural, political and economic trends and events that have been part of year 2017. It is worth knowing that 'Aadhaar' is a word long-established in the Hindi language which attained a new sense in year 2010 as the shorthand name for the Aadhaar Card i.e. Unique Identification Numbers (UIN) introduced by government of India under Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh. This new sense of the word has been at the centre of the national conversation in 2017 as it was frequently used in significant debates in context to linkage of UIN to bank accounts and phone numbers.

### **Shantanu Narayen : The new head of USISPF Board**

Indian-American Adobe CEO Shantanu Narayen got appointed as Vice Chairman of US-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF). The forum is on purpose of enhancing business relations between the two nations. Besides him, former CIA Director Gen (rtd) David Petraeus got appointed as a new advisor, Ajay Singh as chairman and managing director of Spice Jet Limited and John Kern, senior vice president of Supply Chain Operations at Cisco, have joined the Washington-based advocacy group as its new members. With these new additions the USISPF has now 31 board members.

### **Super blue blood moon blazed in sky!**

The night of January 31, 2018 witnessed a rare celestial occurrence. National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) called this event as lunar trifecta where three particular events like total lunar eclipse, blue moon and the super moon phenomena collided to present a super blue blood moon that hung across the globe. The United States, Alaska and Hawaii saw a pre-dawn 'super blue blood moon' while the rest of the world enjoyed the best view of the lunar eclipse. During the total lunar eclipse, the earth came exactly between the sun and the moon and the earth's shadow fell on the moon and the trio aligned to display total lunar eclipse that made the moon glow in a shade of orange- red hence, the moon received the name, 'blood moon'. Generally, a full moon is visible once a month. But occasionally, in every three years or

so, two full moons appear twice in one month and the second full moon of a month is termed as a blue moon. So this was a Blue moon as well. In addition to these, the moon was at its closest point to Earth and it appeared to be 14 % bigger and 30% brighter than normal which turned out to be a Super Moon phenomenon. The combination of these rare events has not been witnessed by anyone in the last 150 years.

#### **A new cord between India & UK made appearance**

The public-private initiative Manchester-India Partnership (MIP) came into existence in UK for linking Indian companies with the northern regions of England. The initiative has been established to enhance trade, investment, science and innovation ties between the two nations. The initiative will have support of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and will have permanent full-time teams which will have roots in Manchester, Delhi and Bengaluru. It is worth knowing that Manchester is a core city termed as the Northern Powerhouse in Britain. Economist Jim O'Neill, who coined the phrase BRICS in reference to Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, launched this partnership at an event which was hosted by the Indo-British All Party Parliamentary Group on the terrace of the Houses of Parliament.

#### **4 February : World Cancer Day**

Entire globe observed World Cancer Day on 4th of February. The theme for observing World Cancer Day for 2016 to 2018, is 'We Can. I can.' To observe this day individually or collectively, people are encouraged to understand and work towards lessening the harmful effects of cancer globally and reduce illness and deaths caused by cancer by 2020. World Cancer Day was founded under guidance of the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC) to support the World Cancer Declaration goals written in 2008.

#### **Cambodia showed the branch of rare vultures!**

US-based Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) discovered three nests of the critically endangered red-headed vulture in Chhep Wildlife Sanctuary of Cambodia in February 2018. The population of Red-Headed, Slender-Billed and White-Rumped are all listed on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List indicating their high risk of extinction in the wild. Although Cambodia supports the largest population of vultures in Southeast Asia yet the population of the said species is reported to be less than 50 in this Asian nation. In this context it is worth knowing that India is home to four critically endangered vulture species like the Red-headed, White-Rumped, Long-Billed and Slender-Billed.

#### **Cyprus President Nicos Anastasiades re-elected for second term**

Cyprus President Nicos Anastasiades has won the election for a second term on 4 February 2018. The official final result after a second-round run-off put the conservative incumbent on 55.99% of the vote, ahead of Communist-backed Stavros Malas on 44%. He has taken credit for steering the economy of Cyprus to recovery after it was plunged into crisis in 2013 by its exposure to debt-racked Greece and fiscal slippage under a former left-wing administration.

#### **Sri Lanka celebrates 70th Independence Day**

Sri Lanka celebrated the 70th Independence Day on 4 February 2018 in a grand ceremony at the Galle Face Green in Colombo. The theme of the ceremony was "One Nation". On this day, in 1948 the country had achieved freedom from British rule. Representing Britain's Queen, Prince Edward, Earl of Wessex, and the Countess of Wessex participated in the celebrations as Chief Guests. President Sirisena hoisted the National Flag and a two-minute silence was observed to commemorate the patriots who had sacrificed their lives for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka. In his address, he called for economic freedom and independence to ensure prosperity for all.

### **Mahmud Hossain: New Chief Justice of Bangladesh**

Abdul Hamid, President of Bangladesh has appointed Syed Mahmud Hossain as the new Chief Justice of the country. He is the 22nd Chief Justice of Bangladesh. He succeeded Surendra Kumar Sinha. The post of the chief justice had fallen vacant when Justice Sinha resigned on November 10 last year. Prior to this, Justice Hossain had served as a deputy attorney general since December 1999. He started practising law as an advocate in the District Court level in 1981, and two years later, he went on to practice in the High Court. Justice Hossain had joined the High Court Division as an additional judge in 2001.

### **February 6: International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation**

Globe observed this day for the first time in year 2003 to weed out the inhuman practice of female genital mutilation. Female genital mutilation (FGM) involves alteration or wounding of the female genitalia for non-medical reasons. The inhuman practice is internationally condemned as a violation of the human rights of girls and women. Unfortunately it is clear cut proof of gender inequality that violates females' rights to health, security and physical integrity, their right to be free from torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, and their right to life which often leads to death. The practice is prevalent in Somalia, Guinea and Djibouti. Only synchronized systematic efforts, engaging the whole community and laying focus on human rights and gender equality, are needed to abolish the practice.

### **Origin of Flowering plants**

Origin of Flowering plants has been a topic of debate between molecular studies and fossil records. The recent study published in the journal *New Phytologist* claims that they originated between 149 and 256 million years ago. Jose Barba-Montoya, the lead author of this study analysed the genetic make-up of dataset of 83 genes from 644 taxa of the flowering plants and the rate at which mutations occur in their genomes to address the timescale of flowering plant diversification.

### **World's Biggest Rocket has set out for Mars**

NASA's SpaceX launched CEO Elon Musk's cherry red Tesla roadster towards Mars via Falcon Heavy rocket which is considered as world's biggest rocket from the Kennedy Space Center at Cape Canaveral in Florida on 6th of February. The Falcon Heavy is made up of three smaller Falcon 9 rockets strapped together, adding up to a total of 27 engines. The massive rocket fired its 27 engines and disappeared into the blue sky over the same NASA launchpad that served as a base for the US missions to Moon 40 years ago. The 70-meter tall rocket is made to carry nearly 141,000 pounds (64 metric tonnes) into orbit more than the mass of a fully loaded 737 jetliner. According to Space X, it is the most powerful operational rocket in the world by a factor of two, which implies it can carry twice the payload of United Launch Alliance's Delta IV Heavy, at a far lower cost about \$90 million per launch compared to \$350 million for its competitor. Earlier, the only rocket that delivered more payload into the space was Saturn V moon rocket, which was last flown in year 1973.

### **Refusal after consent: The new fate of same-sex marriage**

Bermuda has become the first country to legalise and then repeal same-sex marriage. The move is seen as an unprecedented rollback of civil rights by the British island territory. Bermuda's governor, John Rankin has inked a bill into law, reversing the right of gay couples to marry, despite the supreme court verdict of last year that authorised same-sex marriage. In this context political scientist and well known social commentator and analyst, Walton Brown, whose ruling PLP party proposed the repeal said, "The act is intended to strike a fair balance between two currently irreconcilable groups in Bermuda, by restating that marriage must be between a male and a female while at the same time recognising and protecting the rights of same-sex couples."

### **The largest survey of wildlife has gone wild!**

India began 'All-India tiger census 2018' which is considered as the largest survey of wildlife using cameras and mobile app, Monitoring System for Tigers - Intensive Patrolling and Ecological Status (MSTriPES). This tiger census will witness coordination with Bhutan, Nepal and Bangladesh in estimating the territorial wide spread of the animal in the subcontinent. The census will be Rs.10 crore exercise that will traverse 4,00,000 sq. km. of forests. The census will not be about the tiger alone as the estimates of various carnivores, ungulates and other animals will also be done.

### **India - USA MoC for Law Enforcement Training**

India and USA inked a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) for Law Enforcement Training on February 7, 2018. Federal Law Enforcement Training Centers (FLETC), USA and Bureau of Police Research & Development (BPR&D) entered into this contract for enhanced cooperation between the two nations in security related matters under the aegis of the India-US Homeland Security Dialogue. The MoC will ensure improvement in the standards of training, training materials, quality of trainers etc. which will further improve the functioning of police forces in the country. Six Sub-Groups have been formed that cover Global Supply Chain, Transportation, Port, Border and Maritime Security; Megacity Policing and Sharing of Information among Federal state and Local Partners; Illicit Finance, Illegal Smuggling of Cash, Financial Fraud and Counterfeiting; Cyber Information; Capacity Building and Technology Upgradation.

### **The Mathletics Hall of Fame of UK lauded Sohini!**

Indian-Origin Girl, Sohini Roy Chowdhury made place into the top 100 World Hall of Fame by solving mathematical puzzles with speed and accuracy. The 8-Year-Old is New Delhi born who joined in the competition this year as a student of Nelson Primary School in Birmingham. She participated in Mathletics which is an engaging, supportive online learning resource targeted at primary school level maths curriculum that permits children to play live mental arithmetic games against other children from all over the world. Their scores are constantly updated and only the world's 100 best make it to the leaderboard. The schoolgirl wishes to become a doctor in future.

### **Indra Nooyi: International Cricket Council's 1st female director**

Chairman and CEO of PepsiCo, Indra Nooyi has become the first independent female director of the International Cricket Council. She will join the Board in June 2018. The global business leader will serve on this post for upcoming two years. ICC Full Council took this decision in June 2017 as part of wide ranging constitutional change for improvement of the global governance of the sport. The appointee has been ranked among the World's Most Powerful Women by Fortune Magazine. As Chairman and CEO of PepsiCo, she looked into global food and beverage portfolio that included 22 brands generating more than \$1 billion each in annual retail sales, including Quaker, Tropicana, Gatorade, Frito-Lay and Pepsi-Cola.

### **Saudi Arabia pouted over poultry imports from India!**

Country in the Middle East, Saudi Arabia has imposed temporary ban on poultry imports from India on account of reported bird flu outbreak in the Indian subcontinent. In January this year, India had witnessed epidemic of highly contagious bird flu virus near Bengaluru, Karnataka. The H5N8 virus was traced among birds in the village of Dasarahalli that killed 9 out of 951 birds. The ban was imposed in wake of the warning released by the Paris-based World Organisation for Animal Health.

### **World record at Rajim Kumbh Mela !!!**

More than 2,000 pilgrims blowed conch shells 'shankh' together at Rajim Kumbh to build world record in Chhattisgarh's Gariaband. The feat was well registered and certified by the Golden Book of World Records. In

this context Chhattisgarh Agriculture and Water Resources Minister, Brijmohan Agrawal said, “Conch shells are blown before every pious event. The sound of 2100 shells will soothe environment. We wanted to send a message of peace and prosperity. Golden Book of World Records certified this. Our Kumbh Mela will now be known across the world.” Prior to this, another record of burning three lakh earthen lamps was also set in this same Mela which began in first week of February. It should be noted that the Rajim Kumbh is an annual festival celebrated during February-March for about 15 days. Rajim is also known as the Prayagraj of Chhattisgarh for the abundance of temples in the area.

### **Global warming benumbed Polar bears**

According to the recent findings of a new study published in the journal ‘Science’, the population of the polar bear in the Arctic region is going down at a fast rate due to climate change. The thinning of Arctic sea ice is depriving the bears of their prey for their survival. Because of global warming the arctic ice is shrinking. The US Fish and Wildlife Service has put polar bears in threatened species list. The most recent population estimate shows that the polar bear population has declined by about 40% over the past ten years.

### **Johann Johannsson heard call of death**

Golden Globe-winning composer and producer, Johann Johannsson passed away at age 48. The deceased was one of the most talented musicians and native of Reykjavík, Iceland who began his music career as a rock guitarist. He combined classical sounds and modern electronics on the acclaimed soundtracks which fetched him accolades. He won a Golden Globe award and received Grammy and Oscar nominations for his score for “The Theory of Everything” in 2014. He also received an Oscar nomination for the 2015 movie “Sicario.” His score for “Arrival,” a 2016 release, brought him Golden Globe, BAFTA and Grammy nominations. He also recorded many albums of his own, including “Fordlandia” and “Orphee.”

### **13 February: World Radio Day**

World Radio Day was celebrated across the globe on theme 'Radio and Sports'. The theme led to celebration of both radio and sports as ways of helping people to achieve their full potential. Radio plays a key role in bringing communities together and promoting a positive dialogue for change. The day raised awareness about the significance of radio and encouraged decision makers to set up and provide access to information via radio. It also boosted enhancement of networking and international cooperation among broadcasters. Radio is taking up new technological robes viz. broadband, mobiles and tablets. World Radio Day was cheered for the first time in 2012, following its set up by the UNESCO General Conference of 2012.

### **Jacob Zuma left presidency of South Africa.**

South Africa's President Jacob Zuma has resigned from the post. The decision came after the ruling African National Congress (ANC) party threatened to throw him from office via a parliamentary vote of no confidence because of the long-standing corruption allegations. He had been the President of the country for last 9 long years. Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa, ANC's new leader is likely to succeed him.

### **Polar Region was hiding mercury reserves.**

As per journal ‘Geophysical Research Letters’ of the American Geophysical Union, scientists have discovered massive reserves of mercury hidden in permafrost of northern polar regions which are thick subsurface layer of soil that remains below freezing point throughout the year. As per the study around 793 gigagrams, or more than 15 million gallons of mercury was found frozen in northern permafrost soil. And mercury of all frozen and unfrozen soil in northern permafrost regions when calculated together summed upto 1656 gigagrams. And if this happens to enter aquatic and terrestrial food chains then it is bound to impair neurological and reproductive mechanisms of animals.

### **World Government Summit Lauded India's Umang App & Aadhaar.**

India got another moment of pride when its Aadhaar won the best emerging technology award at 6th edition of World Government Summit 2018 in Dubai. India was the 'Guest of Honour' country at the summit. The award acknowledged the Aadhaar project of India as world's largest biometric enabled identification programme, which provided access to service income tax, passport services, bank accounts, social services benefits aimed at providing 1.2 billion citizens unique identification card with fingerprint, eye-print and other vital data. It is indeed an invention and innovation in the field of technology that made the country completely digitized. Besides this, India's Umang App also won the best M-Government Service Award in the Accessible Government category. It is a mobile application that provides users a unified platform that combines government departments and services, facilitating transactions for citizens.

### **Nepal brought KP Sharma Oli back in power.**

KP Sharma Oli became 41st Prime Minister of Nepal. He belongs to the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) President Bidya Devi Bhandari administered the oath of office at Sheetal Niwas on 15th of February, 2018. He has succeeded the Nepali Congress Party's Sher Bahadur Deuba, who resigned nearly two months after the alliance of communist parties swept the parliamentary and provincial elections. This is Oli's second stint as prime minister as before this he had the Prime Minister from October 2015 to August 2016. In past he had also served Home ministry in 1994 and Foreign ministry in 2007.

### **Cyril Ramaphosa: The New President of South Africa.**

Cyril Ramaphosa of the ruling African National Congress, has become the new President of South Africa. He has succeeded Jacob Zuma. The 65-year-old Ramaphosa had also been South Africa's deputy President in year 2014. It is worth knowing that in December 2017, he defeated Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma in the race to replace South African President Jacob Zuma as the head of the party.

### **A new weapon against Cancer knocked via Europe.**

As per US medical journal 'Science Translational Medicine' publication of February 14, 2018, Swedish researchers of Karolinska Institute succeeded in discovering a new weapon against cancer. According to the study, Swedish scientists, small molecules that specifically restrain a selenium-containing enzyme called TrxR1 in the human body can act as a significant weapon against cancer. The researchers concluded this after effectively treating over 60 different types of cancer cells under laboratory conditions with these molecules.

## Sports News

### **India outshone Papua New Guinea by 10 wickets.**

In ICC U19 World Cup, India defeated Papua New Guinea by 10 wickets at Mount Maunganui in New Zealand. Batting first, Papua New Guinea posted target of 64 runs in 21.5 overs. In reply, India furnished 65 runs in just 8 overs. Prithvi Shaw made 57 runs, while Manjot Kalra contributed 9 runs to win the match.

### **India swallowed defeat in Invitational Tournament!**

On 17th January Indian men's hockey team defeated Japan by 6-0 in opening match of the double-leg Four Nations Invitational Tournament in New Zealand. Rupinder, Vivek, Dilpreet Singh and Harmanpreet Singh made key contributions in Indian victory. And on 18th January India got defeated by Belgium in their second match of the Four Nation Invitational Hockey Tournament. Arthur De Sloover and Victor Wegnez were the goal scorers from the winning team.

### **Virat Kohli : World cricketer of the year**

On 18th January, Indian captain Virat Kohli received the title of 'ICC world cricketer of the year' in ICC annual awards which were bestowed in Dubai. In the qualification period from 21st September, 2016 to the end of year 2017, Kohli made 2,203 Test runs at an average of 77.80 which includes 8 centuries. In ODIs, he made 1,818 runs via 7 centuries at an average of 82.63. In Twenty-20s, Kohli posted 299 runs at a strike rate of 153. Kohli succeeded in reclaiming the award as he first won this title in year 2012. It is worth registering here that, this is the second time in succession that an Indian has won the overall cricketer of the year award, as Spinner Ravichandran Ashwin had claimed this honour last year. Apart from this, Kohli also scripted the top honour for ODI players in his name and with this it has become the first instance since 2013 that the ODI Cricketer of the Year award has been won by a non-South African. Quinton de Kock received this honor for year 2016, with AB de Villiers winning it in 2014 and 2015. Kohli also received captain of the ICC Test and ODI teams of the year title. In award ceremony Australian captain Steve Smith got the 'Test Player of the Year' honour. He had posted 1,875 runs in 16 matches at an average of 78.12, with 8 centuries and five 50s.

### **Swedish Open Junior title winner 'Siddharth Singh'**

In January 2018, Young Indian shuttler Siddharth Pratap Singh won his maiden international title, 'Swedish Open Junior International Series'. He defeated Denmark's Mads Christophersen by 21-15, 21-11 in the 33-minute match in the finals in Uppsala in Sweden. Now Siddharth is all set to perform in Iceland International at Reykjavik starting from January 25th to 28th.

### **Indian ladies cheered in India Open**

The five-time World Champion and Olympic bronze medallist, MC Mary Kom coined a gold medal for India in the women's competition in India Open boxing tournament on February 1, 2018. Kom outshone Josie Gabuco from the Philippines in a split 4-1 decision to bag the gold in the women's 48kg weight category. Another Assam boxer, Lovlina Borgohain claimed the welterweight (69kg) gold among women, getting an edge over compatriot Pooja. In the 64 kg category, the former world and Asian bronze medallist Pwilao Basumatary was the first among the women to win gold by 3-2 win over Thailand's Sudaporn Seesondee. Pinki Rani also clinched gold for India after defeating Mongolia's Jargalan Ochirbat in the final of fly (48-51 kg) category. Besides them, L Sarita Devi (60kg) also won a silver medal after losing to Finland's Olympic bronze-medallist Mira Potkenon.

### **India registered a historical win !!!**

India pulled off a sensational eight-wicket victory over Australia in the big final of the ICC Under-19 Cricket World Cup to become the only side in history to lift this most coveted title for a record fourth time. Before this, India won this title in 2000, 2008 and 2012. India began with a clinical bowling performance and restricted Australia to 216. In reply Indian opener Manjot Kalra struck a 101-ball century to lead India to victory. Kalra showed outstanding partnerships with Shaw, Shubman Gill and Harvik Desai and with that touched finish line in just 38.5 overs.

### **Roger Federer won the 20th Grand Slam title**

Roger Federer of Switzerland won his sixth Australian Open and 20th Grand Slam title on 28 January 2018. He outshone Croatian Marin Cilic in the men's singles by 6-2, 6-7 (5-7), 6-3, 3-6 and 6-1 in five-set. With this, the great Tennis champion became the fourth player after Margaret Court, Serena Williams and Steffi Graf to win 20 or more major singles titles.

### **India won first ODI in Durban**

India registered six-wicket victory against South Africa in first ODI in Durban on February 1, 2018. South Africa batted first and posted 269/8. Faf du Plessis scored his ninth century in this match. Yadav took 3 wickets and Chahal took two, while Jasprit Bumrah and Bhuvneshwar Kumar claimed one each. In reply India made 270 in 45.3 overs by virtue of skipper Virat Kohli's score of 112 off 119. This was his 33rd ODI century.

### **Victory is trailing India!**

India has again outshone South Africa by 124 runs in the third ODI to grab 3-0 lead in six-match series in Cape Town. India batted first and posted 303 runs at loss of 6 wickets in the stipulated 50 overs. Skipper Virat Kohli made unbeaten 160 runs off 159 balls which turned out to be the 34th ODI hundred for the Indian captain. Opener Shikhar Dhawan also contributed 76 runs off 63 balls. Chasing a target of 304 runs to win, South Africa managed to make 179 runs in 40 overs. Wrist-spinners Yuzvendra Chahal and Kuldeep Yadav took four wickets each.

### **ITTF Oman World Junior & Cadet Open Table Tennis Tournament tipped medals for India**

India coined two silver and one bronze medal at the ITTF Oman World Junior & Cadet Open Table Tennis Tournament at Muscat on 9th February. Swastika Ghosh and Varuni Jaiswal partnered to win the silver medal in sub junior girls team after defeating Syria. However the duo were defeated by China in the final at Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex. In the cadet boys, Rishikesh Malhotra and Jash Modi outshone Saudi Arabia and Indonesia in the qualifying round. The duo then won against host Oman, Jordan, top seed Egypt before getting defeated from China in the final. In the cadet girls team, Suhana Saini and Ananya won bronze medal.

### **Rohan More conquered Ocean Seven**

Pune-based swimmer, Rohan More became the first Asian and the first Indian to swim across Ocean Seven on February 11, 2018. Besides this, he has also become the youngest person in the world to swim across the Ocean's Seven marathon. He began the Marathon in 2014 and till 2016 he traversed six of the seven water bodies viz the North Channel in 12 hours and 43 minutes, the Molokai Channel in 17 hours and 28 minutes, the English Channel in 13 hours and 23 minutes, the Catalina Channel in 10 hours and 17 minutes, the Tsugaru Strait in 10 hours and 37 minutes and the Strait of Gibraltar in 3 hours and 56 minutes. And now he has completed the Cook Strait between North and South Islands of New Zealand in 8 hours and 37 minutes. With this he has become the ninth person in the world to complete it. He is a national figure who completed his first marathon swim at the age of 11. Indian Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports bestowed him the Tenzing Norgay Award.

### **Story from Pyeongchang Winter Olympics...**

Ice dance stars Tessa Virtue and Scott Moir of Canada secured first gold with 73 points in the Winter Games heavyweights' at Pyeongchang on 12 February 2018. The Russians with 66 points claimed first silver of the Games and the USA team which is just four points behind Russia, grabbed the third. Italy is at fourth and Japan is at fifth spot.

### **India-South Africa six match ODI cricket series is seeking Indian Pocket**

India won the 5th One-Day International against South Africa by 73 runs in six match ODI cricket series at Port Elizabeth on 13 February 2018. India batted first and posted 274 runs. Rohit Sharma was the top scorer with 115 runs, which turned out to be the 17th ODI century. on 13 February 2018. India batted first and posted a target of 274 runs. Rohit Sharma was the top scorer with 115 runs that turned out to be his 17th ODI century. Chasing a target of 275 runs, South Africa made got all out 201 runs. With this win, India is leading the six-match series by 4-1. The sixth and final ODI will be played at Centurion on Friday.

### **Indian boxers bagged medals in Asian Games Testing event in Indonesia.**

Indian boxers clinched 10 medals, including 5 gold, at the Asian Games Test event in Jakarta, Indonesian on 15th February. Manish Kaushik, K.Shyam Kumar, Shaikh Salman Anwar and Ashish won a gold each in their respective categories while Pavitra was the only Indian gold-winner in the 60-kilogram category of women's draw. Shashi Chopra, who was also a bronze-medallist of last month's India Open, won a silver medal. And Muhammad Etash Khan , Ritu Grewal , Pawan Kumar and Ashish Kumar were the other bronze medalists in respective categories.

### **Shikhar Dhawan: The first Indian batsman to score century in 100th ODI.**

Indian opener Shikhar Dhawan became the first Indian batsman to score century in 100th ODI in February 2018. He did this historic feat during the fourth ODI of India's six-match series against South Africa at the Wanderers. This was his first century in South Africa. His score included 2 sixes and 10 fours. And on international level, Dhawan became the ninth batsman to score a century in his 100th ODI. The last batsman to achieve this feat was Australian opener David Warner, who scored a century against India in September 2017. Before him, Gordon Greenidge, Chris Cairns, Mohammad Yousuf, Kumar Sangakkara, Chris Gayle, Marcus Trescothick and Ramnaresh Sarwan were the other batsmen to touch this landmark record. It is worth learning in this context that the only other Indian batsman to have come close to scoring a century in his 100th ODI was former Indian skipper Saurav Ganguly, who scored 97 during the 1999 World Cup game against South Africa.

## CURRENT AFFAIRS TESTS

1. In January 2018 historic war memorial 'Teen Murti Chowk' of \_\_\_\_\_ got renamed as Teen Murti-Haifa.  
(a) Pune (b) Mumbai (c) Bengaluru  
(d) New Delhi (e) Hyderabad
2. In January 2018, Vice Admiral Bahadur Singh has been appointed as the Chief of Staff of which naval command?  
(a) Southern Naval Command (b) Western Naval Command  
(c) Eastern Naval Command (d) Coastal Naval Command (e) None of these
3. Which word has been selected as the "Hindi Word of the Year 2017" by the Oxford Dictionaries?  
(a) Swachh (b) Vikaas (c) Notebandi  
(d) Aadhaar (e) Yoga
4. Vijay Keshav Gokhale has taken charge as the new \_\_\_\_\_ of India.  
(a) Foreign Secretary (b) Home Secretary (c) Chief Secretary  
(d) Cabinet Secretary (e) None of these
5. Juan Orlando Hernandez has been sworn-in as the new President of the \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) Republic of Honduras (b) Republic of Congo (c) Republic of Haiti  
(d) Republic of Ireland (e) None of these
6. In January 2018, who has become the first woman lawyer to be directly appointed as the judge of the Supreme Court?  
(a) Karuna Nundy (b) Indu Malhotra (c) Meenakshi Lekhi  
(d) Menaka Guruswamy (e) Rebecca John
7. Who has been appointed as the new 'Chef de Mission' for Winter Olympics 2018?  
(a) Harjinder Singh (b) Rajeev Mehta (c) Narinder Batra  
(d) Anandeshwar Pandey (e) None of these
8. ISRO has successfully launched Cartosat 2 Series satellite into space from which launch vehicle?  
(a) PSLV C-40 (b) PSLV C-42 (c) PSLV C-46  
(d) PSLV C-44 (e) PSLV C-45
9. In January 2018, which among the following countries has granted the citizenship to Julian Assange, the founder of WikiLeaks?  
(a) Sudan (b) Sweden (c) United States  
(d) United Kingdom (e) Ecuador
10. Baldev Raj, the \_\_\_\_\_ of National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS) has passed away in January 2018.  
(a) Chairman (b) Vice-Chairman (c) Managing Director  
(d) Director (e) None of these
11. Sauli Niinisto has been re-elected as the President of \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) Algeria (b) Bulgaria (c) Fiji  
(d) Finland (e) Ghana

12. Shantanu Narayen has been elected as the \_\_\_\_\_ of the US-India Strategic and Partnership Forum.  
(a) Chairman (b) Vice-Chairman (c) Managing Director  
(d) Director (e) None of these
13. In January 2018, which country has lifted its ban on refugees from 11 countries?  
(a) Canada (b) Germany (c) United States  
(d) United Kingdom (e) Russia
14. Which country has become the third largest producer of crude steel?  
(a) United States (b) Japan (c) India  
(d) Belgium (e) China
15. In January 2018, how many members of parliament (MPs) were chosen for Outstanding Parliamentarian Award ?  
(a) One (b) Two (c) Three  
(d) Four (e) Five
16. In January 2018, Dr. Vinod Paul of \_\_\_\_\_ got Ihsan Dogramaci Family Health Foundation Prize of WHO.  
(a) National Commission on Cattle  
(b) National Institution for Transforming India  
(c) National Statistical Commission  
(d) Election Commission  
(e) None of the above
17. Which country has celebrated its 70th Independence Day on 4 February 2018?  
(a) China (b) Myanmar (c) Malaysia  
(d) Sri Lanka (e) Singapore
18. Who has won the gold medal in the 48 kilogram category among women at the 2018 India Open boxing Tournament?  
(a) Josie Gabuco (b) Pwilao Basumatary (c) Sanjeet  
(d) Pinki Rani (e) M.C. Mary Kom
19. The book "Exam Warriors" has been written by which among the following Union Ministers?  
(a) Rajnath Singh (b) Sushma Swaraj (c) Narendra Modi  
(d) Piyush Goyal (e) Prakash Javadekar
20. Which country has won the 12th edition of ICC Under-19 Cricket World Cup 2018?  
(a) India (b) Australia (c) Pakistan  
(d) New Zealand (e) Afghanistan

## ANSWERS

- 1.(d)** In January 2018 historic war memorial 'Teen Murti Chowk' of New Delhi got renamed as Teen Murti-Haifa after Israeli city Haifa. The three bronze statues at Teen Murti represent the Hyderabad, Jodhpur and Mysore Lancers who were part of the 15 Imperial Service Cavalry Brigade.
- 2.(b)** In January 2018, Vice Admiral Bahadur Singh has been appointed as the Chief of Staff of Western Naval Command. He succeeded Vice Admiral Ravneet Singh. Prior to this, Vice Admiral Bahadur Singh served as the Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Strategic Forces Command.
- 3.(d)** Oxford Dictionaries has selected 'Aadhaar' as the "Hindi Word of the Year 2017". 'Aadhaar' also becomes the first Oxford Dictionaries Hindi Word of the Year. Other words such as Mitron, Notebandi, Gau-Rakshak were also considered, but the widespread discussions and debates around 'Aadhaar' was the reason for its selection as the word of the year.
- 4.(a)** Vijay Keshav Gokhale, a senior diplomat of the External Affairs Ministry, has taken charge as the new Foreign Secretary of India. He succeeded S. Jaishankar. Prior to this, 1981-batch Indian Foreign Service officer, Gokhale served as the Secretary (Economic Relations) in the Ministry of External Affairs.
- 5.(a)** For the second term Juan Orlando Hernandez has been sworn-in as the President of the Republic of Honduras. President Hernández has been in power since 2013, and is the first president in Honduras running for a second term after the country's Supreme Court lifted a ban on re-election.
- 6.(b)** Indu Malhotra, the senior advocate, has become the first woman lawyer to be directly appointed as the judge of the Supreme Court. Along with Indu Malhotra, Justice K M Joseph has also been cleared for elevation to the apex court. Currently, Justice K M Joseph is the chief justice of Uttarakhand High Court.
- 7.(a)** The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) has appointed Harjinder Singh as the "Chef De Mission" for the 23rd Winter Olympic Games to be held in Pyeongchang, South Korea in February 2018. Currently, he is General Secretary in the Ice Hockey Association of India.
- 8.(a)** In January 2018, ISRO has successfully launched weather observation satellite Cartosat 2 Series and 29 other spacecrafts into the space from its Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) C-40 from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) in Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh. The Cartosat-2 series satellite will provide high-resolution scene specific spot imageries. The 30 other satellites include two other satellites from India and 28 satellites from six countries -Canada, Finland, France, Korea, the United Kingdom and the United States.
- 9.(e)** In January 2018, Ecuador has granted citizenship to Wikileaks founder Julian Assange in an attempt to resolve the political impasse over his continued presence in the United Kingdom (UK). Prior to this, he is an Australian.
- 10.(d)** Baldev Raj, the Director of National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS), Bangalore and a renowned administrator of nuclear power technologies in the country has passed away in January 2018 at the age of 70 years. He has assumed leadership of the NIAS in 2014. Before that, he was president of research at P.S.G. Institutions (2011-2014), Coimbatore, and director of the Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research (2004-2011).

- 11.(d)** Sauli Niinisto has been re-elected as the President of Finland. He secured 62.7% of votes and easily defeated his Green party rival (12.4%).
- 12.(b)** Shantanu Narayen, Indian-American Adobe CEO has been elected as the Vice Chairman of the US-India Strategic and Partnership Forum. It is a new organisation set up to enhance business relations between India and the US.
- 13.(c)** The United States has announced that it is lifting its ban on refugees from 11 countries, which it had earlier termed high-risk countries. Though the 11 countries have not been identified officially, reports state that they include North Korea and Muslim-majority nations such as Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Mali, Syria and Yemen.
- 14.(c)** As per the latest report published by World Steel Association (WSA), India overtook the United States to become world's third-largest steel producer in 2018. China has remained world leader by producing 831.7 MT in 2017, up 5.7% from 786.9 MT in the year-ago period. Japan is second largest global steel producer.
- 15.(e)** In January 2018, five members of parliament (MPs) viz. Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad (2015), Trinamool Congress' Dinesh Trivedi (2016), Manipur's governor Najma A Heptulla (2013), BJP's Lok Sabha member Hukumdev Narayan Yadav (2014) and Rajya Sabha member Bhartruhari Mahatab of the Lok Biju Janata Dal (BJD) (2017) were chosen for Outstanding Parliamentarian Award.
- 16.(b)** In January 2018, Dr. Vinod Paul of National Institution for Transforming India got Ihsan Dogramaci Family Health Foundation Prize of WHO. He has made distinguished contributions towards improving the health and well-being of families, especially in developing countries.
- 17.(d)** Sri Lanka has celebrated its 70th Independence Day on 4 February 2018. The theme of the ceremony was "One Nation". On this day, in 1948 the country had achieved freedom from British rule.
- 18.(e)** The five-time World Champion, M.C. Mary Kom has won the gold medal in the women's 48 kg weight category at the 2018 India Open boxing Tournament. In the final, she defeated Josie Gabuco of Philippines by 4-1 points.
- 19.(c)** The book "Exam Warriors" has been written by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to inspire youth to face the difficult moments of examinations and life with fresh and new energy. The book was released by External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj at a function in New Delhi. It was published by Penguin India.
- 20.(a)** India has won the 12th edition of ICC Under-19 Cricket World Cup 2018. In the final match, India has defeated Australia by 8 wickets. With this, India has won the ICC Under-19 World Cup for the fourth time. In the match, Manjot Kalra was declared as Man of the Match and Shubman Gill was declared as the Player of the Tournament.