CENTRE FOR AMBITION
(An Institute for Civil Services)

CURRENT AFFAIRS

JANUARY -2018

INDIAN AFFAIRS

- On January 2, 2017, Union Defence Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman cleared two proposals to procure Barak Missiles for the Indian Air Force from Russia. 1) 131 Barak missiles and from Israel's Rafael Advance Defence Systems Ltd at a cost of Rs 460 crore 2) 240 precision guided bombs from M/s JSC Rosonboron Exports, Russia at a cost of Rs 1254 crore

- On 1st January 2018, the Puducherry goverment launched a special police force to safeguard tourists with special blue colour head gears. They will also wear blue badges with police emblem. This wing was launched by Director General of Police S K Gautam.

- On January 3, 2018 ,Union Cabinet approves setting up of new All India Institutes of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in Bilaspur (Himachal Pradesh)will be set up at cost of Rs.1351 crore under the Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY)

- On January 2, 2018, Indian Parliament passed Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Amendment) Bill, 2017 as it was passed by Rajya Sabha

- On January 2, 2018, National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (Amendment) Bill, 2017, was passed in the Rajya Sabha by voice vote

- ii. On January 2, 2018, Lok Sabha passed the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (Amendment) Bill 2017 that permits government to take up infrastructure projects within the 100 metre prohibited area around protected monuments.

- On January 2, 2018, Greater Hyderabad was declared an open defecation free (ODF) city by the Centre and thereby became second major city (after Mumbai) with over 1 crore population to attain this status.Swachh Bharat Mission Directorate of the Ministry of Urban Development grants ODF certificate to a city only if not a single person is found defecating in the open.

- Minister of State for Defence, Subhash Bhamre has informed Lok Sabha that Central Government has identified Delhi and six other cantonments for introducing 'smart solutions' and upgrading civic amenities.

- In a bid to promote cruise tourism in India, Central Government has announced that cruise tourists with e-visas will be exempted from the requirement of biometric enrolment till December 31, 2020.Due to this immigration clearance of cruise passengers will become faster and passengers will have more time to spend on shore.

- On January 4, 2018, Union Defence Ministry approved procurement of simulated training solutions for Indian Navy's P-8I long range maritime patrol aircraft and electronic warfare systems for the Army. Total cost involved in these deals is Rs. 2420 crore.. It will come along with 10 year comprehensive maintenance service.

- On January 4, 2018, Lok Sabha passed a bill to hike the salaries of judges of Supreme Court and 24 high courts. The bill proposes to raise the monthly salary of Chief Justice of India to Rs 2.80 lakh from the present Rs. one lakh per month.The salary of judges of the high courts, from Rs. 80000 per month now, to Rs 2.25 lakh per month.

- On Jan.4 2017 , Kolkata's Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International Airport has become the 5th airport in India having CAT III B landing system runway 01R. It enables flights to land even when visibility is 50 metres with decision height of 15 meters.

- 'New Delhi World Book Fair 2018 'began on January 6, 2018 at Pragati Maidan, New Delhi. 'Environment and Climate Change' is the main theme of New Delhi World Book Fair 2018. This fair is being jointly organised by the National Book Trust (NBT) and India Trade Promotion Organisation(ITPO).

- On 5th January 2018, the Atal Pension Yojana's (APY) subscriber base reached a mark of 80 lakhs. The Atal Pension Yojana (APY) is run by the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority of India (PFRDA).

- On January 5, 2018, Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister, Jai Ram Thakur announced setting up of 24X7 'Gudiya helpline' for reporting crimes against women. 'Gudiya' is a nickname given to the 16- year-old victim of rape and murder in Kotkhai town. The incident took place in 2017.

- On January 6, 2018, Union Minister of State for Development of North Eastern Region, Dr Indian Railways has finalised a plan to equip nearly 8500 railway stations across India (including those in rural and remote areas) with Wi-Fi facilities at an estimated cost of Rs 700 crore.

- Central Government has sanctioned the construction of 14460 individual and community bunkers at a cost of Rs 415.73 crore for people living along the Line of Control (LoC) and International Border (IB) in Jammu & Kashmir.

- On January 7, 2018, BSES Rajdhani Power Ltd launched "Solar City Initiative", aimed to maximize rooftop solar power use in south and west Delhi. This initiative has been launched in partnership with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) PACE-D and Indo-German Collaboration (GIZ).

- On January 8, 2018, Delhi Chief Minister, Arvind Kejriwal launched a first common mobility card for rides on public buses and the metro in Delhi.

- On January 3, 2018, Central Government notified the Companies (Amendment) Act, 2017. Certain provisions of this amendment act will ease the implementation of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code 2016.As per Section 53 of the Companies Act, 2013 companies were prohibited tissue shares at a discount.

- Central Government has sanctioned the raising of a Territorial Army (TA) battalion for cleaning River Ganga. This battalion will comprise only of ex-servicemen of the army.

This battalion will be raised in February 2018 in Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh, as a Composite Ecological Task Force (CETF) battalion of Territorial Army (TA).

- Union Cabinet has approved a number of amendments in the existing Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) policy and to provide ease of doing business in India.

- Cabinet has approved proposal to amend Section 4(1) and Section 5(1) of the National Trust for the Welfare of Person with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities Act, 1999.

- On January 9, 2018, India and Indonesia held their first bilateral security dialogue in New Delhi During the dialogue, India and Indonesia agreed on operational cooperation in security and counter- terrorism.

- From financial year 2018-19, Union Health Ministry will roll out a National Programme for Control of Viral Hepatitis, with a focus on Hepatitis C.Under the programme, an anti-viral treatment for Hepatitis C will be provided free at all government health set-ups.

- On 9th January 2018, the central government insisted people not to use national flag made of plastic, ahead of Republic Day celebrations. An advisory from the Union Home Ministry has said that, since plastic flags are not biodegradable like paper flags, they do not decompose for a long time.

- On 10th January 2018, the UIDAI launched 'Virtual ID', which an Aadhaar-card holder can generate from UIDAI website. This virtual ID that can be generated from UIDAI website can be used for purposes like SIM verification, instead of sharing the actual 12-digit biometric ID.

❖ On January 10, 2018, Committee of Governors submitted a report, titled 'Rajyapal —Vikas Ke Rajdoot: Catalytic Role of Governors as Agents for Change in Society' to President Ram Nath Kovind.The report outlines best practices that have been adopted by offices of Governors, issues and an action-outcome framework to deal with them.

❖ A sub-committee of Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) looking into the issues of girl education in India has recommended free and compulsory education for girls up to post-graduate level across India. This sub-committee of CABE was formed by Union Human Resources Development (HRD) Ministry in February 2017.

❖ On January 1, 2018, Bhopal station has become the first railway station in the country to have Sanitary napkin Vending Machine.This machine has been named 'Happy Nari'.It was installed by the Railway Women Welfare Association of Bhopal division with help from a local NGO 'Arushi'.

❖ Finance Minister Arun Jaitley while presenting the General *Budget* 2017-18 said that the Government has prepared an action plan to eliminate Kala-Azar by 2017.

❖ Kala-azar also known as black fever, and Dumdum fever is a slow progressing indigenous disease caused by a single-celled parasite of the Leishmania family.

❖ On January 12, 2018, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated 22nd National Youth Festival ,a five-day event being held at Gautam Buddha University, Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh through Video conferencing from 12th to 16th January, 2018. Theme of 22nd National Youth Festival is 'Sankalp Se Siddhi'.

❖ The Election Commission has formed a 14-member panel to study the usage of social media and other digital platforms before elections and to suggest modifications in the Model Code of Conduct. Umesh Sinha, Deputy Election Commissioner, will be the head of the panel.

❖ As per data collected through National Family and Health Survey (NFHS-4) conducted among more than 6 lakh households in 2015-16, Delhi is the richest state while Bihar is the poorest.

❖ On 14th January 2018, the 'Bhogali Bihu' also called as 'Magh Bihu' festival began in Assam.

The Bhogali Bihu is a harvest festival celebrated in Assam. The festival kick-started with the burning of traditional Meji and Bhelaghar made from thatch and fire woods. People offered prayers to God Agni.

❖ 7th edition of the Rashtriya Sanskriti Mahotsav, under the Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat programme, began in Karnataka on January 14, 2018. This event will continue till January 20, 2018. This event is being organised by Union Ministry of Culture.Under this programme, Karnataka is paired with Uttarakhand.

❖ On January 14, 2018, President of India, Ram Nath Kovind, inaugurated the 'Economic Democracy Conclave' at Thane, Maharashtra.This conclave has been organised by Rambhau Mhalgi Prabodhini.

❖ On January 13, 2018, Network for Certification and Conservation of Forests (NCCF) launched India's internationally benchmarked Forest Management Certification Standard (FMCS).The FMCS enlists measures to be taken for responsible utilisation of natural resources and trade of forest products.

❖ On January 15, 2018, Union Home Minister, Rajnath Singh inaugurated the International Workshop on Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (IWDRI) which was organised by the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) in collaboration with United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) in New Delhi.

❖ Petroleum Conservation Research Association (PCRA) has launched a month-long 'Saksham-2018' campaign.Saksham (Sanrakshan Kshamta Mahotsav) is an annual flagship event of PCRA aimed at creating focused attention on fuel conservation through people centric activities.

❖ On 15th January 2018, the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) approved authentication based on facial recognition in combination with fingerprint or iris scan for Aadhaar users. The facial recognition-based authentication will come into act from 1st July 2018.

- Cell for IPR Promotion and Management (CIPAM) a professional body under Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP) has launched a one of its kind Intellectual Property (IP) Competition, 'IPrism' for college and university students. Winning teams will be awarded cash prizes worth INR 4 lacs.

- West Bengal, Kerala and Odisha have opted out of the Central Government's Transformation of Aspirational Districts scheme. In context of this scheme, aspirational districts refer to selected 115 backward districts that are lagging on specific development parameters.

- Bar Council of India (BCI) has announced that it has formed a seven-member delegation that will meet honourable judges of the Supreme Court and will try to bridge their differences with the incumbent Chief Justice of India (CJI), Dipak Misra.

- On 16th January 2018, Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, Union minister for minority affairs, announced that, the government has withdrawn the subsidy given for Haj pilgrims.

- On 17th January 2018, the government lowered the additional borrowing requirement for the current fiscal year to Rs 20,000 crore from the previously estimated Rs 50,000 crore. The government has lowered additional borrowing requirements considering revenue receipts and expenditure pattern.

- On 16th January 2018, the Supreme Court stated that, attacking any adult man or woman opting for inter-caste marriage, by khap panchayats is "absolutely illegal". The bench consisted of Chief Justice Dipak Misra, Justices A M Khanwilkar and D Y Chandrachud.

- Central Government has sanctioned projects worth over Rs. 10000 crore in the North East for better network connectivity. . Union Telecommunication Minister Manoj Sinha has stated that most of these projects will be completed during 2018.

- On January 16, 2018, Defence Acquisition Council (DAC), chaired by Union Defence Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman, cleared procurement of 72400 assault rifles and 93895 carbines to meet their immediate requirement of Defence Forces deployed in border areas.

- The government has planned to form a Cyber Warrior Police Force (CWPF) to combat cyber-crimes like cyber threats, child pornography, online stalking etc. This would function under the National Information Security Policy and Guidelines wing of the Cyber and Information Security (CIS) division of the Union home ministry.

- On January 17, 2018, Minister of State for Textiles, Ajay Tamta inaugurated 60th edition of India International Garment Fair (IIGF) at Pragati Maidan, New Delhi.

- Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was on a six-day official visit to India starting from January 14, 2018. It is to be noted that Mr. Netanyahu is the second Israeli Prime Minister after Ariel Sharon to visit India in the last 25 years of India-Israel diplomatic relationship.

- On January 19, 2018, Minister of State, Housing & Urban Affairs, Hardeep S Puri announced names of nine new cities selected under the Smart Cities Mission. The nine cities that have been selected have proposed an investment of Rs. 12824 crore.

- J P Nadda, Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare has stated that antenatal check-ups under Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan (PMSMA) has crossed one crore mark.

- PMSMA programme was launched in 2016 with an objective to ensure comprehensive and quality antenatal checkups to pregnant women across India.

- Indian Institute of Information Technology and Management-Kerala (IIITM-K) and Blockchain Education Network (BEN) have planned to jointly set up Kerala Blockchain Academy at Technopark campus, in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala.

- On January 19, 2018, Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Housing and Urban Affairs Hardeep S Puri, announced commencement of the Liveability Index Programme in 116 Indian cities. This programme would be funded by the World Bank.

- On January 19, 2018, Minister of State for Electronics & Information Technology. KJ Alphons launched Cyber Surakshit Bharat initiative. Objective of this initiative is to spread awareness about cybercrime and to train and prepare Chief Information Security Officers (CISOs) and frontline IT staff of all government departments to effectively deal and neutralise cyber threats.

- On January 19, 2018, Union Minister for External Affairs, Sushma Swaraj inaugurated Post Office Passport Seva Kendra (POPSK) at Karaikal in the Union Territory (UT) of Puducherry.Objective of this initiative is to ensure wider coverage of passport related services.

- On January 20, 2018, Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh launched 'Bharat Ke Veer' graphic novel series on Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) martyrs, 'Bharat Ke Veer' anthem and a short film on India's bravehearts.

- On Jan 19 2017, during the occasion of 'National Conference on Improving Accessibility', Justice and Empowerment Minister Thaawarchand Gehlot launched 100 accessible websites for Divyangs to empower the disabled persons in all over the country.

- Ministry of Science & Technology has confirmed that 4th edition of the India International Science Festival will be held in Lucknow.

- On 19th January 2018,Environment ministry issued a notification that the use and sale of imported petroleum coke has been banned in the National Capital Region (NCR) by the environment ministry in order to control air pollution.

- The DefExpo India 2018 will be hosted by Chennai for the first time from April 11 to 14 at a temporary expo centre on East Coast Road near Mahabalipuram. DefExpo India is the largest event of India's defence sector. It is held once in 2 years.

- On 21st January 2018, President Ram Nath Kovind approved disqualification of 20 MLAs of Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) for , being parliamentary secretaries, they held office of profit and they should be disqualified as MLAs of the Delhi Assembly.

- S S C Shenoi, Director of Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) has stated that India will function the own new ocean data acquisition system (called automated moorings) in April 2018.

- On January 21, 2018, Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh launched the Chief Minister-gi Hakshelgi Tengbang (CMHT), Under this scheme, poor people of Manipur will be provided cashless treatment at government hospitals, health centres and other empanelled selected private hospitals.

- On 19th to 21st January 2018, 'Kachra Mahotsav 2018', India's first garbage festival was organised by the Raipur Municipal Corporation in Chhattisgarh. Kachra Mahotsav's aim was to increase awareness, utilise the waste accumulated in a creative way, and to display various techniques for reusing things that are branded as garbage.

- On 22nd January 2018, Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur unveiled a state-level nutrition scheme for HIV-positive children, at a campaign conducted by Himachal Pradesh AIDS Control Society on the eve of National Youth Day, in Shimla.

- As per the survey and the accompanying report (titled 'Reward Work, Not Wealth') released by the international rights group Oxfam, richest 1 per cent in India amassed 73 per cent of the wealth generated in the country last year.

- On 24th January 2018 ,Government of Japan has committed JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency) Official Development Assistance loan for Yen 45 billion for Bengaluru Water Supply and Sewerage Project (Phase 3) (I).

- On January 24, 2018, Central Government launched four new schemes to promote young scientists and researchers in India to focus on empowering, recognising and motivating youth.

❖ Teacher Associateship for Research Excellence (TARE) Scheme , Overseas Visiting Doctoral Fellowship scheme, Distinguished Investigator Award scheme, Augmenting Writing Skills for Articulating Research (AWSAR) scheme.

❖ Union Health Minister, J P Nadda has stated that his ministry is working to increase the number of AMRIT pharmacy stores by four times (from the existing 111 outlets) by the end of 2018.

❖ On 24th January 2018, the Central Government sanctioned the establishment of Indian Institute of Information Technology (IIIT) at Raichur, Karnataka. Prakash Javadekar, Union Human Resource Development Minister, said that, the required funds for IIIT-Raichur will be allocated in the 2018 Budget.

❖ On 25th January 2018, India and Vietnam launched the first ever set of commemorative postage stamps to highlight the bilateral ties between them. The theme of these stamps is 'ancient architecture'.

❖ On January 27, 2018, India and Cambodia inked four pacts , post comprehensive talks between Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Visiting Cambodian Prime Minister, Samdech Hun Sen.

❖ Jammu & Kashmir Student Exchange programme 'Maitreyi Yatra' concluded on January 26, 2018 in New Delhi. Student Exchange Programme is organized by Ministry of Human Resource development with an objective to acquaint the youth of Jammu & Kashmir with culture, language and development of different parts of India.

❖ Union Home Ministry is coordinate with state governments to set up Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C), an apex centre to deal with cyber crimes such as financial frauds, circulation of pornographic and communal contents.

❖ On 25th January 2018, the first Khadi Haat of India was launched by Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) and New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC), in Connaught Place, New Delhi. The Khadi Haat was inaugurated by Union Minister of State for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Giriraj Singh.

❖ Union Information and Broadcasting Ministry has decided to set up a social media communication (SMC) hub for keeping a tab on trending news in districts and gather feedback on the Central Government's flagship schemes. Rs 17 crore (in this fiscal year) has been sanctioned for setting up 707 SMC hubs.

❖ On January 27, 2018, President Ram Nath Kovind launched the Pulse Polio programme for 2018 from Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi, by administering polio drops to children below five years.

❖ The Assembly session will start from 6th February 2018. Assam budget will be presented in a digital form by Finance Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on 12th March 2018.

❖ On 28th January 2018, Assam Governor Prof. Jagdish Mukhi released a postage stamp in memory of eminent football player Dr. Talimeren Ao at Sports Authority of India (SAI) complex playground in Paltan Bazar, Guwahati, Assam.

❖ On 29th January 2018, Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur launched Zero Budget Natural Farming project, at Chaudhary Sarvan Kumar Himachal Pradesh Krishi Vishvavidyalay in Palampur, Himachal Pradesh.

❖ On 27th January 2018, Information technology minister Ravi Shankar Prasad launched 'Stree Swabhiman', an initiative by CSC (Common Services Centres) in New Delhi to develop a model for providing adolescent girls and women access to affordable sanitary products.

❖ On 29th January 2018, Airports Authority of India (AAI) chairman Guruprasad Mahapatra said that, AAI has allocated Rs 3400 crore for upgradation of airports in the North East region.

❖ The Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) has issued an order to provide quota in Central Government jobs to people with autism, mental illnesses, intellectual disability and victims of acid attacks.

❖ 19th India International Watch and Clock Fair "Samaya Bharati 2018" was held in Mumbai, Maharashtra from January 25, 2018 to January 28, 2018. The fair was inaugurated by Amruta Devendra Fadnavis, Deputy Vice President of Axis Bank.

STATE WISE NATIONAL NEWS

Andhra Pradesh

❖ On 31st December 2017, year 2018 was declared as Telugu promotion year by Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu at the 29th edition of Annual Book Exhibition of Vijayawada which is inaugurated by Vice President M Venkaiah .

Assam

❖ As per Supreme Court directive, first draft NRC for Assam has to be published on or before December 31, 2017.Registrar General of India, Sailesh has stated that it contains names of 1.9 crore applicants.

❖ On 2nd January 2018, Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal launched 'Chah Bagichar Dhan Puraskar Mela 2017-18' at a function held at Sarbananda Singha auditorium in Tinsukia, Assam. . Under this scheme people belonging to tea community who opened bank accounts during demonetisation will be credited Rs 2500 in their accounts.

❖ Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal has launched nearly 249 skill development centres throughout Assam.These centres aim to improve skilled manpower in Assam. These centres provide vocational training to the youth of Assam and help them to be financially independent.

Arunachal Pradesh

❖ On December 31, 2017, Arunachal Pradesh was declared as the second state in the Northeast (after Sikkim), to be declared Open Defecation Free (ODF).Arunachal has attained ODF status much before the national deadline of October 2, 2019.

❖ Jitendra Singh announced that Central Government will set up second Film and Television Institute of Indian (FTII) in Arunachal Pradesh. Objective behind setting up FTII in Arunachal Pradesh is to tap the potential of India's North Eastern region.

❖ On January 21, 2018, Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu inaugurated the World War II Memorial Museum in state's Changlang district. World War II Memorial Museum in Changlang has been built by the Union Culture Ministry at a cost of Rs 2.25 crore.

Bihar

❖ On January 6, 2018, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar inaugurated and laid foundation stones of around 750 projects, worth more than Rs 500 crore, in Begusarai and Khagaria districts.These projects were launched during Nitish Kumar's state-wide "Vikas Samiksha Yatra" which began on December 28, 2017.

❖ Bihar State Government has imposed a ban on manufacture, distribution, sale, purchase, display and advertisement of electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes) across the state.. The ban also applies to online sale and purchase of e-cigarettes which are handheld battery-run devices which are smoked just like a conventional cigarette.

❖ On 13th January 2018, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar launched schemes worth over Rs.200 crore during his state-wide "Vikas Samiksha Yatra".He inaugurated and laid foundation stones for schemes valued at more than Rs. 200 crore.

? On 30th January 2018, the Bihar cabinet allocated funds worth Rs 105 crore for Bihar Mahadalit Vikas Mission, which formulates and implements schemes for the most backward sections among the Scheduled Castes.

Chhattisgarh

? Chhattisgarh High Court has issued a directive to all trial courts in the state to mandatorily obtain Aadhaar Cards of accused persons and sureties before issuing release warrant of a prisoner/accused. The order is an attempt to curb the rampant

practice of obtaining bail on the basis of forged revenue papers or by impersonating the real surety.

Goa

❖ 21st India International Seafood Show (IISS) opened in Margao, Goa on January 27, 2018. This event was inaugurated by Goa Chief Minister Manohar Parrikar. Focial theme of 21st IISS is 'Safe & Sustainable Seafood from India'.

❖ Third edition of the Science Film Festival of India will be held between 16th – 19th January, 2018 in Goa. This festival has been titled SCI-FFI Goa and being jointly organized by the Goa-based Vidnyan Parishad, Entertainment Society of Goa, Goa's Department of Science and Technology and the Goa College of Art.

❖ On January 20, 2018, Minister of State (I/C) for Housing and Urban Affairs, Hardeep Singh Puri along with the Chief Minister of Goa, Manohar Parrikar launched the 'Protocol for Star Rating of Garbage-Free Cities' in Goa. This seven star-rating system has been developed by the Swachh Bharat Mission – Urban. Under this system, cities will be assessed on multiple cleanliness indicators for solid waste management.

Gujarat

❖ Gujarat Animal Husbandry department has banned all voluntary animal care and NGOs working under 'Karuna Abhiyan' to function in residential areas during the 2018 Uttarayan festival. Because of Usage of abrasive thread for flying kites during Uttarayan festival injures a lot of birds in January 2017 and a Gujarat High Court order issued in 2017.

❖ On 7th January 2018, the International Kite Festival started at Sabarmati River Front in Ahmedabad, Gujarat. The International Kite Festival was inaugurated by Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay

Rupani. Gujarat Governor O. P. Kohli was also present at the occasion.
❖ Dev Information Technology Ltd has announced the setting up of "DevX", an Accelerator Center for startups in Gujarat. Entrepreneurs can develop, test and commercially release their ideas at DevX. DevX will be Gujarat's largest accelerator.

Haryana

❖ On January 2, 2018, Haryana Chief Minister, Manohar Lal Khattar directed the state irrigation department to implement the integrated solar-based micro irrigation scheme in all districts of Haryana.

❖ On 1st January 2018, Haryana tourism department announced that Uttar Pradesh is the theme state for the 32nd Surajkund International Crafts Mela, to be held at Surajkund, Faridabad, from 2nd to 15th February 2018. It projects Indian handicrafts, handloom, cultural heritage and prosperity of India at global level.

❖ The Haryana government has mandated installation of Solar Photovoltaic Power plant in new buildings as per specified norms. This has been done in a move to conserve electricity and use it efficiently.

❖ On.Jan 5 2017, The residents of Bhanakpur village in Faridabad district plan to begin their day by listening to the national anthem at 8am. This village becomes first in Haryana and second in India to introduce the system. Jammikunta become the first village has implemented this system.

❖ On January 16, 2018, Haryana State Government took a decision to form a non-banking financial company (NBFC), Haryana State Financial Services Limited. It will be established as a limited company under the Companies Act and will be registered as NBFC with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

Jammu and Kashmir

❖ On January 3, 2018 ,Union Cabinet approves Rs 6809-cr Zojila tunnel project in Jammu and Kashmir will provide all-weather connectivity between Srinagar, Kargil and Leh which remains cut- off from the rest of the world during winters due to heavy snowfall.

❖ Border Security Force (BSF) has launched "Operation Alert" along 200 km long International Border (IB) in Jammu and Kashmir to prevent infiltration attempts by terrorists from the Pakistani side.

❖ Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) Government has announced to launch 'Muhafiz' scheme, a major welfare initiative for providing institutionalized socio-economic security to workers in the unorganised sector of the state. Under this scheme, 3 lakh workers registered with Jammu and Kashmir Building and Other Construction Workers' Welfare Board (JKBOCWWB), will be provided accidental, life and disability insurance cover

❖ With an objective to empower the Kashmiri youth, the Indian Army has established a Skill Training Centre at sector 10 Headquarters of Rashtriya Rifles (RR) in Baramulla district of Jammu and Kashmir. Initially, this centre will offer courses in Food Processing and Information Technology.

❖ On 17th January 2018, Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly passed grants of horticulture department for 2018-19, for Rs 528.33 crore. Jammu and Kashmir Horticulture Minister Syed Basharat Ahmad Bukhari said the horticulture sector is a key source of employment opportunities in Jammu & Kashmir.

❖ The Jammu and Kashmir government has formed a committee to study the scope and definition of horticulture in Government of India and other states. The committee is headed by the chief secretary of Jammu Kashmir Bharat Bhushan Vyas.

Jharkhand

❖ On December 31, 2017, Jharkhand Chief Minister Raghubar Das launched 'Saubhagya Yojana', aimed at providing electricity to all the 29376 villages across the state and all such households will get 24X7 electricity supply by December 2018.

❖ On 25th January 2018, Jharkhand Chief Minister Raghubar Das launched 'Pradhan Mantri LPG Panchayat' at Balijore village, in Dumka district of Jharkhand. Jharkhand is the first state in India, where beneficiaries are provided stoves along with gas connections.

Karnataka

❖ On January 1, 2018, Karnataka State Government announced to procure 40 electric buses, 100 four wheelers and 500 three wheelers electric vehicles under the Central Government's Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of (Hybrid &) Electric Vehicles in India (FAME-India) Scheme.

❖ On January 8, 2018, Supreme Court of India stayed a Karnataka High Court order quashing 85% pictorial warnings on packets of cigarettes and other tobacco products.

❖ Karnataka State Government will hold a 'Blockchain Hackathon for Governance' from 19th – 21st January, 2018 at the Koramangala Indoor Stadium, Bengaluru. Karnataka is the third Indian State (After Andhra Pradesh and Telangana) that has announced plans to adopt blockchain for governance.

Madhya Pradesh

❖ Madhya Pradesh has become the first state in India to completely implement door-to-door garbage collection in all areas under urban bodies.

Maharashtra

❖ Maharashtra government has imposed a spot fine of Rs 500 for open defecation. Also spot fine is levied for littering, spitting and urinating in public places. The municipal corporations and councils have power to issue spot fines on people and institutions as per the Solid Waste Management Act, 2016.

❖ On January 5, 2018, Maharashtra State Education Minister, Vinod Tawde stated that Maharashtra State Government has decided to form an international education board for non-English medium schools.

- On January 17, 2018, Maharashtra State Cabinet approved one per cent reservation for orphans in government jobs under general category.

- On January 17, 2018, Maharashtra State Government approved Rs 4000 crore - Nanaji Deshmukh Krishi Sanjivani Yojna. It is aimed at promoting climate-resilient agriculture in 5142 villages across 15 districts of Maharashtra.

- Maharashtra State Government will soon start a system to issue daily district-wise weather advisory to farmers across the State.Objective behind this initiative is to help farmer to minimise their crop losses due to adverse weather conditions.

- On 24th January 2018, Maharashtra government announced that, it has banned the sale of tobacco at stores that sell Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) items. The ban has been implemented to prevent youngsters getting addicted to tobacco products.

- Maharashtra State Government has framed a comprehensive helipad policy which lays down strict guidelines for helipads, their location and other procedures to be followed. This policy has been framed by the aviation department of Maharashtra Government's General Administration Department.

- Maharashtra State Government's General administration department under Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis has proposed a Performance-linked marking system for 7.5 lakh state government employees.The new 100-point performance marking system, will take into account subjective as well as objective evaluation of an employee's performance during the year.

- On 30th January 2018, the Maharashtra state cabinet approved the introduction of Asmita (dignity), a scheme to provide sanitary pads to 7 lakh girls in government schools for Rs 5 a pack to girls in the age of 11 to 19 years. This scheme will be launched on 8th March on the World Women's Day.

Nagaland

- Union Home Ministry has declared entire state of Nagaland as "disturbed area" for six more months (till June 2018) under Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act – AFSPA due to killings, loot and extortion have been going in various parts of Nagaland, making it necessary to grant special powers to armed forces in tackling such incidences.

Odisha

- On 2nd January 2018, the Dhanu Yatra festival held in Bargarh district of Odisha came to an end.The Dhanu Yatra festival was held for 11 days. It began on 23 December 2017. This festival is based on Krishna Leela and Mathura Vijay.

- Mankidia, a tribe of Odisha, was denied habitat rights inside the Similipal Tiger Reserve (STR) in Odisha.Mankidia is one among the 13 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG) in Odisha. On January 12, 2018, Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik inaugurated 12th International Film Festival on Art and Artist in Bhubaneswar.This three-day festival has been organised by Bhubaneswar-based Jatin Das Centre of Art (JDCA).Short film stories written by eminent writers Manoj Das and Gourahari Das will also be presented by Jatin Das Centre of Art (JDCA).

- On January 15, 2018, Odisha State Government announced 'Mukshyamantri Kalakar Sahayata Jojana' (MMKSJ), under which artists from across the state will get a monthly assistance of Rs 1200. Around 50000 artists across Odisha will be benefited from this scheme.

- The Odisha government has planned to commission Early Warning Dissemination System (EWDS) in coastal areas of 6 districts by March 2018.This project aims to provide foolproof communication system for providing information to the local people about disasters like cyclone and tsunami.

- On January 19, 2018, Odisha State Government launched Odisha e-Hospital Management Information System (OeHMIS), an online platform which hosts all clinical parameters of patients and reporting of performance criteria of hospitals.

Punjab

❖ On 26th January 2018, Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh launched the 'Mahatama Gandhi Sarbat Vikas Yojana' to help the distressed sections distressed sections of the society socially, economically and psychologically.

Rajasthan

❖ The Rajasthan government has started to digitise 10,000 pages every day, in order to preserve administrative and historical records of Rajputana's princely states.This has been done in a move to protect old and fragile documents.

❖ On 13 and 14th January 2018, the Bikaner camel festival was organised by the Department of Tourism, Art and Culture in Rajasthan. The Bikaner camel festival is celebrated every year in Rajasthan to honour camels. During the festival, camel dances, camel races, camel rides etc. were also held.

❖ On January 16, 2018, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the commencement of the work of an oil refinery in Rajasthan's Barmer district. It is the first such refinery in entire Rajasthan and being set up by HPCL-Rajasthan Refinery Ltd (HRRL).

Tamil Nadu

❖ On 2nd January 2018,' e-Governance policy 2017 booklet 'was released by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister K Palaniswamy to help public, government and commercial establishments avail all services through digital medium.

❖ On 2nd January 2017, the 171st Araadhanai Music Festival started in Thiruvaiyaru, Tamil Nadu. The Araadhanai Music Festival of musician Thyagaraja was inaugurated by Tamil Nadu Governor Banwarilal Purohit.

❖ On January 5, 2018, Union Minister of Human Resource Development, Prakash Javadekar released All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) report 2016-2017.Among all states, Tamil Nadu topped in terms of Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education. Tamil Nadu recorded 46.9% GER.

❖ 8th edition of biennial 'National Maritime Search and Rescue Workshop and Exercise' between ships and aircraft from the Indian and Japanese Coast Guards commenced on January 16, 2018 in Chennai, Tamil Nadu.

Telangana

❖ On 2nd January 2018, Telangana government formed Minorities Commission with Mohammed Qamaruddin as its Chairman. Rajarapu Pratap was made vice chairman.

❖ On January 5, 2018, Telangana Municipal administration and Urban Development Minister K.T. Rama Rao inaugurated India's first National Park for differently abled people in Hyderabad. . The park has speech therapist, vocational training instructors and physiotherapist for the differently-abled children.

❖ 'Sammakka Saaralamma Maha Jathara', a tribal festival, will begin on 31st January 2018, in Eturunagaram, Telangana. The tribal people worship the tribal goddess 'Sammakka' during the festival.

Uttar Pradesh

❖ Uttar Pradesh State Government has directed all District Collectors and Superintendents of Police to take action against unauthorized loudspeakers and public address systems installed at religious and public places.

❖ On January 15, 2018, Ratan P. Watal, Principal Adviser of NITI Aayog inaugurated the first Global Initiative on Academic Network (GIAN) course on Sustainable Urban planning using remote sensing and Geographic Information System (GIS) at Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur's outreach centre at Noida, Uttar Pradesh.

❖ On January 20, 2018, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) chief Amit Shah launched "Yuva Udghosh programme" in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh. 'Yuva Udghosh programme' focuses on enrolling youths, above 17 of age, who will eligible for voting in the 2019 Lok Sabha election.

❖ On January 23, 2018, Uttar Pradesh State Cabinet approved 'one district, one product' scheme to promote products indigenous to every district.Under this scheme, one product indigenous to every district of Uttar Pradesh would be showcased at the three-day UP Diwas event beginning from January 24, 2018.

❖ On January 25, 2018, Union Road Transport and Highways Minister, Nitin Gadkari inaugurated and laid foundation stone for several projects in Uttar Pradesh with a combined investment of Rs 6517 crore.

❖ International bird festival is to be held for 3 days starting from 9th February 2018, at Dudhwa National Park, in Lakhimpur Kheri, Uttar Pradesh to promote eco-tourism in Dudhwa and to gain a distinct international identity.

❖ On 29th January 2018, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath inaugurated the Mahesra Bridge at Sonauli-Gorakhpur National highway.

❖ On January 30, 2018, Uttar Pradesh State Cabinet launched 'Mukhya Mantri Awas Yojna Grameen', a new scheme to construct houses in rural areas.

Uttarkhand

❖ On Jan.5 2017, Uttarkhand government banned the entry of "unauthorised persons/ reporters". On December 27 Uttarkhand Chief Secretary Utpal Kumar Singh has referred that "Entry of unauthorised persons/ reporters to the sections/ offices (of government departments) must be completely prohibited," in a three page order

West Bengal

❖ National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG), the implementation wing of National Ganga Council has approved five projects worth Rs. 295 crore. Out of the five projects, three projects pertain to sewage management in West Bengal at an estimated cost of Rs 278.6 crore.

❖ On January 29, 2018, Indian Coast Guard (ICG) conducted a 'Day at Sea' event for children of fishing hamlets at Frazerganj in South 24 Parganas district, West Bengal as part of its initiative for close interaction with the fishing community of coastal areas. Frazerganj is a fishing harbour on Bay of Bengal coast at the southern tip of West Bengal.

❖ On Jan.4 2017 , The Centre has approved a logo as the state's symbol which is designed and conceptualized by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.i. The logo highlighting the "Biswa Bangla" theme with Ashoka Pillars .

No.	Name of Summit/Conference	Place	Facts about the summit /conference
1	Conference on Transformation of Aspirational Districts	New Delhi	It was held at the Dr. Ambedkar International Centre, in .and was organized by NITI Aayog
2	18th All India Whips' two-day Conference	New Delhi	It was inaugurated by Union Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Chemicals & Fertilizers, Ananth kumar in Udaipur, Rajasthan. e-Sansad and e-Vidhan are Government of India's projects under Digital India
3	Annual Conference of DGPs and IGPs at the BSF (Border Security Force) Academy	Tekanpur, Madhya Pradesh	Prime Minister Narendra Modi took part in the Annual Conference

4	4th International Dharma-Dhamma Conference	Bihar	President Ram Nath Kovind inaugurated 4th International Dharma-Dhamma Conference on "State and Social Order in Dharma-Dhamma Traditions" at Rajgir in Nalanda district
5	'Transformation of Aspirational Districts' conference	New Delhi	It will come out with a ranking of 115 aspirational districts by April 2018.
6	Two-day International Dam Safety Conference – 2018	Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala	Dam safety conferences are organized every year under the Dam Safety Rehabilitation and Improvement Project (DRIP).
7	7th edition of the Asia Steel International Conference	Bhubaneswar,Odisha	This conference will be organised by Tata Steel and Indian Institute of Metals.
8	Conference on 'Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in the Election Process'	New Delhi	Conference was organized under the VoICE.NET platform.
9	India-UK Createch Summit	Mumbai	It will be held by United Kingdom's (UK's) Department for International Trade (DIT). Objective of this summit is to celebrate and explore the convergence of creativity and technology, 'Createch'
10	Bengal Global Business Summit 2018	Kolkata	The theme of Bengal Global Business Summit 2018 was: "Bengal Means Business."
11	ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit	New Delhi	Theme of this Summit was "Shared Values, Common Destiny".
12	World Future Energy Summit (WFES) 2018	Abu Dhabi, UAE	Indian Government's plans to set up $ 350 million solar development fund for financing solar projects.

Other conference/Summit

- ❖ GAIL India will now be setting up 'coal to synthesis gas' conversion plants in Odisha.Announcement was made by Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas, Dharmendra Pradhan while addressing the FICCI conference on Unleashing India's Domestic Exploration and Production Potential in New Delhi on January 11, 2018.

- ❖ On 24th January 2018, External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj inaugurated the Bharat-ASEAN Maitri Park in Delhi a day before the ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit.

  International Solar Alliance (ISA) hosted a two-day event, 'International Solar Alliance Forum' during 17-18th January, 2018 at the in Abu Dhabi, UAE. Indian Government's plans to set up $ 350 million solar development fund for financing solar projects

Committee/Meeting	Head person	place	Purpose
Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs	Prime Minister Narendra Modi	New Delhi	Approval for implementation of the Jal Marg Vikas Project (JMVP) at a cost of Rs 5369 crore towards capacity augmentation of navigation on the Haldia-Varanasi stretch of National Waterway-1 (NW-1)
Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA)	Prime Minister Narendra Modi	New Delhi	approval for mandatory packaging of foodgrains and sugar in the jute material for the Jute Year 2017-18
12-member inter-ministerial committee to recommend changes in the existing law of playing of the national anthem	B.R. Sharma		committee to recommend changes in the existing law of playing of the national anthem in cinema halls and public places.
9th meeting of High Powered Review Board (HPRB) of Brahmaputra Board	Nitin Gadkari	Kaziranga in Assam	Rs. 237 crore project for protection of Majuli Island from flood and erosion has been ratified.
3rd meeting of Council of Trade Development and Promotion	Suresh Prabhu, Union Minister for Commerce & Industry	New Delhi	
5th Bilateral Technical Meeting		New Delhi	on cooperation in the field of Traditional Systems of Medicine between Government of India and Malaysia was conducted
4th ASEAN-INDIA Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture and Forestry	Co-chaired by Union Minister Radha Mohan Singh and Grisada Boonrach	New Delhi	ASEAN-India Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture and Forestry will be held in Brunei Darussalam in 2019
65th meeting of Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE)		New Delhi	CABE is the highest advisory body to advise the Central and State Governments in the field of education
14th meeting of the Special Committee for Inter-linking of Rivers		New Delhi	during the meeting included the status of clearance of Ken-Betwa Link Project, Damanganga-Pinjal and Par-Tapi-Narmada Link Projects
25th meeting of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council	Arun Jaitley	New Delhi	Highlight of the 25th GST Council meet was the reduction of tax rates on 29 goods and 53 categories of service
16th International Energy Forum (IEF) Ministerial meeting	Dharmendra Pradhan	New Delhi	This event will be hosted by Government of India and co-hosted by the Government of China and South Korea
annual meeting of World Economic Forum (WEF)		Davos, Switzerland	This year's theme is "Creating a Shared Future in a Fractured World". Shah Rukh Khan received Crystal award for raising awareness

Other Committee or Meeting in National & International News

❖ On January 3, 2018, Central Government formed a ministerial committee headed by Finance Minister, Arun Jaitley to take a decision on old, pre-existing projects in ports, which have become unviable.

❖ Union Cabinet has approved the implementation of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA's) decision on closure of Tungabhadra Steel Products Limited (TSPL) and disposal of its immovable assets.

❖ Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has given its approval to continuation of Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS) till the term of the 14th Finance Commission i.e. till March 31, 2020.

❖ On 11th January 2018, the Kerala government gave permission to prisoners in Kerala jails to donate organs to their close relatives.This decision was taken at the cabinet meeting chaired by Pinarayi Vijayan, Kerala Chief Minister.

❖ On 15th and 16th January 2018, India attended a meeting of the international military cooperation departments of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) for the first time, in Beijing, China.India joined SCO in 2017. The Indian delegation was led by Major General Ajay Seth.

RANKINGS & REPORTS

Index/Report/Field	Position	Points to be noted
Manufacturing Index released by World Economic Forum (WEF).	30	Japan has topped in this report. As per 'Readiness for the future of production report', related to Global Manufacturing Index
74 emerging economies on the annual 'Inclusive Development Index 2018'	62	It is to be noted that, in 2017, India ranked 60th among 79 developing economies on this index
Global Talent Competitiveness Index (GTCI)	81	Out of 119 countries .This marks an improvement as compared to 92nd rank in 2017
Environmental Performance Index 2018	177	Out of 180 countries. This marks a drop from 141st position in 2016.
Economist Intelligence Unit's (EIU) Global Democracy Index 2017	42	Norway topped the index with an overall score of 9.87 while North Korea is ranked the lowest at167th. This marks a drop by 10 spots as compared to 32nd rank last year.

Indian states or Cities in Rankings

State or City	Index/Report/Field	Position	Points to be noted
Gujarat	Logistics Ease Across Different States (LEADS) index	1	this index was released by Union Commerce and Industry Minister, Suresh Prabhu at the third meeting of Council for Trade Development and Promotion

Other Rankings in National & International News

❖ The annual survey of Gallup International has placed Prime Minister Narendra Modi at 3rd rank among world leaders.The survey was conducted with people from 50 countries. The survey has ranked German chancellor Angela Merkel as number 1 world leader with a score of 21.

❖ On January 4, 2018, Indian government commenced Swachh Survekshan - 2018. It is being dubbed as the world's largest cleanliness survey. Under Swachh Survekshan 2018, all 4041 cities and towns in India will be rated and ranked on various parameters of sanitation and cleanliness.

❖ As per a survey by travel app 'ixigo', Kozhikode railway station in Kerala was ranked the best railway station in India by travellers in terms of cleanliness. Hazrat Nizamuddin (one of the five main stations in Delhi) was given the lowest ratings. Among trains, Swarna Jayanti Rajdhani has been rated as the cleanest train while Karnataka Express was given lowest ratings.

❖ ISB, which was ranked 27th in 2017 slipped to 28 in 2018, while IIM Ahmedabad, which was at 29th position last year, is now at 31 in this year's Financial Times London's Global MBA Ranking 2018.

❖ As per a survey by GoBankingRates, a personal finance platform, India is the second cheapest country to live or retire among 112 countries. The survey assessed countries on four key affordability metrics viz. local purchasing power index, rent index, Groceries index, and Consumer price index.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

❖ On 1st January 2018, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates (UAE) introduced Value Added Tax (VAT) for the first time on food, clothes, electronics, gasoline, phone, water, electricity bills, hotel reservations, etc. Most of the goods and services are levied 5% tax.Medical treatment, financial services and public transport also excluded from VAT.

❖ On 1st December 2018, India and Pakistan exchanged the list of nuclear installations and facilities on January 1 every year under the Agreement on the Prohibition of Attack against Nuclear installations at New Delhi and Islamabad. This is the 27th consecutive exchange of nuclear installations.

❖ In a bid to reduce accidents and make mountaineering safer, Nepal has brought in new regulations that prohibit solo mountaineers, double amputee and blind climbers from attempting to scale its mountains including Mt. Everest. In case of double amputee and blind climbers, prohibition applies only to those without a valid medical certificate.

❖ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has entered the "bird language" of Black Sea villagers (in northern Turkey) in the list of Intangible Cultural Heritage.This whistle language has been traditionally passed on through generations - from grandparent to parent, from parent to child.

❖ On January 1, 2018, California became the sixth U.S. state to permit the sale of cannabis for recreational use. Other Five U.S. states are Colorado, Washington, Oregon, Alaska and Nevada.Besides, it can be sold only to adults 21 years and older.

❖ China has developed a new underwater surveillance network which will help its submarines to accurately track target vessels and will protect its interests in the Indian Ocean and South China Sea.The network has been developed by South China Sea Institute of Oceanology under the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS).

❖ On 3rd January 2018, Equatorial Guinea, Ivory Coast, Kuwait, Peru, Poland and the Netherlands joined the United Nations Security Council as non-permanent members. The council has 15 members in total. On 31st December 2017, Egypt, Italy, Japan, Senegal, Ukraine and Uruguay left the United Nations Security Council.

❖ On 2nd January 2018, the central bank of Pakistan approved the usage of Chinese currency, Yuan, for bilateral trade with China.This decision has been taken one day after US President Donald Trump announced stopping of all aid to Islamabad.

❖ India has excluded Pakistan from the list of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) member countries with which it will be connecting its state-of-the-art National Knowledge Network (NKN). NKN is a multi-gigabit pan-India network aimed at providing a unified high speed network backbone for educational institutions in India.

❖ From January 1, 2018, a new law has come to force in Iceland, under which it has become illegal to pay men more than women for the same work. Iceland has thus become first country in the world to legalise equal pay. All companies and government departments/agencies employing at least 25 people will have to obtain government certification of their equal-pay policies.

❖ On Jan.5 2017,The US has suspended more than USD 1.15 billion security assistance to Pakistan, accusing Islamabad of harbouring terror groups like the Afghan Taliban and the Haqqani Network within its border.

❖ On 5th January 2018, Himalayan Hydro Expo began at the Exhibition Hall of Bhrikutimandap, in Kathmandu, Nepal. The expo was inaugurated by Bidya Devi Bhandari, President of Nepal. The objective of the expo is to project the hydro power potential of Nepal and to bring together all the stakeholders at one place.

❖ According to a South China Morning Post (SCMP) report, China is planning to build its second foreign naval base in Pakistan. This will be China's second foreign naval base after Djibouti, in the Horn of Africa in Indian Ocean.

❖ As per data released by Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority, India continued to be Sri Lanka's top source of tourists in 2017. As per the data, India accounted for 384628 tourist arrivals in Sri Lanka in 2017, which marks 7.8 per cent growth as compared to previous year.

❖ 34th Harbin International Ice and Snow Festival, world's largest ice festival opened on January 5, 2018 in Harbin ,north-east China. The festival will continue through late February.

❖ Iran has banned English from being taught in primary schools across the country after its Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei said that teaching English will lead to Western cultural invasion.

❖ On January 8, 2018, Turkish government announced plans to extend the ongoing state of emergency for the sixth time.State of emergency was first imposed in July 2016 after a failed coup to overthrow incumbent Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

❖ North Korea has agreed to conduct talks with South Korea to reduce military tensions, to send a delegation to the upcoming Winter Olympics 2018 in Pyeongchang, South Korea. This outcome has come after officials from North and South Korea met for the first time in more than 2 years in Panmunjom, North Korea.

❖ On January 10, 2018, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and World Health Organisation (WHO) agreed to collaborate for accelerating action to curb environmental health risks. The agreement was signed between Erik Solheim, head of UNEP and Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director General of WHO.

❖ Shanghai has set up the world's first 3D-printed bus stops in Fengjing, Shanghai. The bus stops have a closed loop design, accommodating two-round stools inside the structure. The outer portion is a grey coloured rectangle frame.

❖ On January 12, 2018, Union External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj and Bhutan's Minister of Foreign Affairs Lyonpo Damcho Dorji jointly unveiled the 'Special logo' for the Golden Jubilee celebrations in New Delhi and Thimphu through video-conference.

❖ Sri Lanka has removed a 38-year long ban on selling alcohol to women and employing them in places where alcohol is produced and sold. Finance Minister Mangala Samaraweera signed the notification removing the ban on those things, in order to ensure gender equality and promote tourism.

❖ Government of South Australia has given approval to build a major solar thermal plant in the state which, on completion would be the largest of its kind ever built. The plant will be developed by a US company, Solar Reserve at an estimated cost of Australian Dollar 650 million.

- Saudi Arabia's first motorshow for women customers was held in Jeddah on January 11, 2018. In context of this news, it is important to note that in September 2017, Saudi King Salman had ordered an end to the ban on women drivers by June 2018.

- On January 12, 2018, American and Japanese military forces launched 13th annual Iron Fist joint exercises in California, US. Around 500 U.S. Marines and sailors and about 350 members of the Japanese Ground Self-Defense Force are participating in this exercise wherein they will be trained in fire support operations and amphibious assaults.

- China will provide financial support to construct a counter-terrorism base in Badakshan province of northern Afghanistan that would prevent cross-border infiltration of the Chinese Uyghur militants.

- On January 12, 2018, India contributed USD 50000 to the United Nations' youth mission. Office of United Nations (UN) Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres' Envoy on Youth works to raise international awareness and bring attention to youth issues across the world. Paulomi Tripathi, a First Secretary in India's UN Mission, handed over the contribution to the UN Youth Envoy, Jayathma Wickramanayake.

- Indian peacekeepers in UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) have re-built a key bridge in record time in strife-torn South Sudan's Akoka village. In June 2017, heavy rains washed away a 300-metre- long road segment across a river in Akoka village.

- On January 11, 2018, Ecuador's Foreign Minister Maria Fernanda Espinosa announced that the country has granted citizenship to WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange

- On January 15, 2018, Bangladesh, India and Nepal agreed upon operating procedures for trans- border movement of passenger vehicles under Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN) motor vehicles agreement. It is aimed to facilitate seamless flow of passenger and cargo traffic in the sub- region.

- On January 13, 2018, Iranian government lifted restrictions on the use of the Internet, including Instagram and the messaging app Telegram across the country.

- As per World Economic Forums's (WEF's) Global Risks Report 2018, published on January 17, 2018, extreme weather events and natural disasters have been identified as the likeliest global risks to occur in 2018.

- China has set up an experimental air purifying tower, considered the world's biggest air purifier at a height of 100 meters (328 feet), in Xian, Shaanxi province. The tower produces 10 million cubic metres of clean air every day.

- On January 19, 2018 India formally became the 43rd member of the Australia Group (AG). Australia Group is a cooperative and voluntary group comprising countries that are working to prevent the spread of materials, equipment and technologies that could be used to develop or acquire chemical and biological weapons (CBW).

- Divers of Great Maya Aquifer Project have discovered world's largest known underwater, flooded cave in Mexico. This cave system is located near the beach resort of Tulum on the Yucatan Peninsula.

- Maitre-2, a second passenger bus to Kolkata via Dhaka was flagged off from Agartala, Tripura on January 19, 2018. The bus was flagged off by Tripura MLA Ratan Das and Tripura Road Transport Corporation Chairman Rajendra Reang.

- On 18th to 20th January 2018, the 10th Global Forum for Food and Agriculture (GFFA) was held in Berlin, Germany. The theme of the 10th Global Forum for Food and Agriculture was "Shaping the Future of Livestock – sustainably, responsibly, efficiently".

- On January 21, 2018, World Bank approved USD 300 million loan to Nepal for undertaking reconstruction work post April 2015 earthquake. Since then, only 10% homes have been rebuilt. Nepal is currently facing USD 1.2 billion shortfall in reconstruction funds.

- ❖ According to Sanctum Wealth Management report, India will overtake China to be the fastest growing large economy in 2018. In the current global scenario where developed economies are posting 2-3% growth, Indian economy is on the track to cross the 7.5% growth mark.

- ❖ On January 20, 2018, Valletta, the capital of Malta was officially inaugurated as the European Capital of Culture. Every year, the European Union (EU) designates a European city/cities as European Capital of Culture for a period of one calendar year

- ❖ The Sri Lankan government has announced that, from 1st July 2018, vehicles without airbags and seat belts for the driver and front passenger, Anti-Locking Breaking System (ABS) standards, below the emission levels as per Euro IV standard and three-point seat belts at the back portion will not be permitted for import.

- ❖ The UK government has announced the formation of a dedicated national security unit to counter fake news and disinformation. The dedicated national security unit to counter fake news and disinformation will be led by the UK Cabinet Office.

- ❖ On 23rd January 2018, Institute of Management and Technology (IMT) of Ghaziabad was announced as one of the champions of the United Nations' initiative on Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME), at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

- ❖ China has decided to establish three international courts to deal with disputes related to its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). BRI is Chinese Government's development strategy that focuses on road connectivity and maritime cooperation between Eurasian countries.

- ❖ Oxford Dictionaries has declared 'Aadhaar' as the Hindi Word of the Year for 2017 at the Jaipur Literature Festival on January 27, 2018.

- ❖ According to a report by New World Wealth, India is sixth wealthiest country with total wealth of USD 8230 billion. As per the report, United States is the wealthiest country in the world with total wealth of USD 64584 billion in 2017.

- ❖ On 30th January 2018, United States lifted its ban on refugees from 11 "high-risk" countries.

- ❖ US has lifted its ban on refugees from the high-risk countries but people aiming to enter US will face very tough assessments.

- ❖ On 29th and 30th January 2018, the Syrian National Dialogue Congress was held in Sochi, Russia. . The Syrian National Congress was organized by Russia, Iran and Turkey

BANKING & FINANCE

RBI in News

- ❖ Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has initiated prompt corrective action (PCA) against Allahabad Bank owing to its high net non-performing assets (NPA) and a negative Return On Assets (ROA) for two years in a row. Allahabad Bank is the 11th bank to face PCA in last eleven months.

- ❖ Reserve Bank of India (RBI) will soon issue Rs.10 denomination banknotes in the Mahatma Gandhi (New) Series with signature of Dr. Urjit R. Patel, the current Governor of Reserve Bank of India. It will have motif of Sun Temple, Konark on the reverse side. Base colour of these new notes will be Chocolate Brown, while dimension will be 63 mm x 123 mm.

- ❖ RBI (Reserve Bank of India) has approved Telangana Industrial Health Clinic Ltd (TIHCL) to register and function as a Non-Banking Finance Company (NBFC). B Yerram Raju, TIHCL's advisor and director stated that, TIHCL will be the first State promoted and co-financing NBFC

❖ According to a study by Reserve Bank of India (RBI), housing loans in up to Rs. 2 lakh slab had the highest level of non-performing assets (NPAs).In last two financial years, public sector banks (PSBs) reported higher NPAs in Housing Loan segment as compared to housing finance companies (HFCs).

❖ On January 2, 2018, Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs (IICA) and India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) signed an agreement for research support and the training of IPPB employees in the area of payment banking.

❖ On January 23, 2018, public sector lender Indian Overseas Bank announced that it made an agreement with the National Housing Bank (NHB) for implementation of the Rural Housing Interest Subsidy Scheme (RHISS) to provide subsidy for loans to households in rural areas for undertaking construction and modification activities under Union Ministry of Rural Development.

Schemes and Launches in Banking & Finance News

❖ On January 2, 2017, rating agency Crisil launched Crisil FPI Index, an index to measure the performance of investments of foreign portfolio investors (FPI) in the fixed-income market.

❖ This index is expected to serve as benchmark for performance of FPI investments in government securities and high rated corporate bonds with maturity greater than three years.

❖ On January 12, 2018, YES Foundation (social development arm of YES Bank) launched fifth edition of 'YES! i am the CHANGE' (YIAC). The selected entities will receive a grant of Rs 7.5 crore, for scaling up and capacity building.

❖ AGTech and Paytm have announced the launch of Gamepind, a mobile platform offering social and casual games. Gamepind will be available through Paytm app and also as an independent app.

❖ On January 29, 2018, Axis Bank launched the fourth edition of 'Evolve', an annual multi-city knowledge series for its Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) customers. This edition of 'Evolve' has been titled "Transform your Family Business into your dream company".

❖ On January 2, 2018, Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley outlined the basic contours of the electoral bonds scheme including their denominations, eligibility and validity during the 2017-18 Union Budget.This scheme will serve as an alternative to cash donations and is thereby an attempt to make political funding more transparent.

Other Important Banking & Finance News

❖ On January 1, 2017, India's large bank, State Bank of India, reduced its base rate by 30 basis points. Post this reduction, SBI's base rate is 8.65%. It will cut benefit of those borrowers who availed floating rate loans, including home loans, before April 2016 and have not migrated to marginal cost of lending rate (MCLR) regime.

❖ Subhash Chandra, Secretary of Department of Economic Affairs under Ministry of Finance, has tweeted that new subscription to GoI Savings (Taxable) Bonds, 2003 would now bear 7.75 per cent interest rate as compared to 8% earlier.

❖ As per a report by HSBC, India economy is expected to grow at 6.5 per cent in this fiscal (FY 2017- 18) while in FY 2018-19 it will register 7.0 per cent growth. For FY 2019-20, HSBC has forecasted that Indian economy will grow at 7.6 per cent.

❖ Private housing finance company, Indiabulls Housing Finance has raised Rs 1000 crore by selling the India's first "Social Bonds". Social Bonds are debt instrument, issued to raise funds which is to be deployed in financing/re-financing eligible social projects such as affordable housing, water supply, sanitation, transport etc.

❖ Rajiv Kumar, Secretary of Financial Services under Union Finance Ministry has stated that from January 1, 2018, customers will not have to pay any transaction charges for payments made through debit card, BHIM app and Aadhaar-enabled payment systems for up to Rs 2000.

❖ HDFC Bank has entered into a partnership with Rajasthan State Government to promote and nurture the start-ups in the state.Under this agreement, HDFC Bank will provide end-to-end solutions like current accounts, credit cards and other solutions to start-ups in Rajasthan .

❖ Bank of Cyprus has selected Gemalto, an international digital security company to supply world's first biometric payment card for both chip and contactless payments. These cards will use fingerprint recognition instead of a personal identification number (PIN) to authenticate the cardholder.

❖ Paytm Payments Bank has announced a partnership with Induslnd Bank under which, its customers' account balance exceeding Rs. 1 lakh at the end of day will be automatically converted to a fixed deposit (FD) with IndusInd Bank.

❖ Central Statistics Office (CSO) has announced the first advance estimates of National Income 2017- 18 and stated that growth in India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) during 2017-18 is estimated at 6.5% as compared to 7.1% in 2016-17. This has been the slowest growth in past four years.

❖ Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) is planning to issue its first US dollar-denominated bond by June 2018. Soren Elbech, Treasurer of AIIB has stated that the minimum size of the issuance will be one billion dollars. It has received three top-notch ratings from the S&P Global Ratings, Fitch and Moody's.

❖ According to the 2018 Global Economics Prospect released by the World Bank on January 9, 2018, Indian economy is projected to grow at 7.3% in 2018 and 7.5% in next two years. Chinese economy grew at 6.8 per cent in 2017. For 2018, its growth rate is projected at 6.4 per cent.

❖ On January 10, 2018, IndusInd Bank and Dynamics Inc announced plans to introduce the first battery-powered, interactive payment cards in the Indian market in 2018. The new IndusInd bank card will have multiple buttons which will allow consumers to pay in multiple ways viz. through credit points or monthly instalments

❖ India has become the top borrower from Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) with USD 1.5 billion worth of loans in 2017. Indonesia is in the second position with USD 600 million worth loans. India is also the second largest share holder in AIIB. China is the largest shareholder of AIIB.

❖ Mukesh Ambani – led Reliance Jio Infocomm Ltd is planning to create its own cyptocurrency, 'JioCoin'. Mukesh Ambani's elder son Akash Ambani is expected to lead the 'JioCoin' project.

❖ On January 13, 2018, Bombay Stock Exchange's (BSE's) India International Exchange (India INX) listed Indian Railway Finance Corporation's (IRFC's) green bonds on its debt listing platform, Global Securities Market (GSM). IRFC's Green bonds have an annual yield of 3.835 per cent.

❖ On January 22, 2018, Paisabazaar.com, became India's first major online marketplace for Loans and Credit Cards announced to offer direct Mutual Fund plans to retail customers and has thereby to come up with such offering. Broadly speaking, Mutual Fund plans are available in two variants – 'Regular' and 'Direct'

❖ In its January 2018 update of the World Economic Outlook: Brighter Prospects, Optimistic Markets, Challenges Ahead, IMF has forecasted that in FY 2018-19, India will reclaim fastest growing economy tag as China's growth will slip to 6.6% against India's 7.4%.

❖ Bhopal-based Prodigee Finance Limited has received Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC-ND) license from Reserve Bank of India (RBI). 'ND' indicates Non-Deposit accepting NBFC. By attaining the NBFC licence, Prodigee Finance will now be able to extend loans to Small and Medium sized Enterprises (SME) as part of their services.

❖ On January 24, 2018, Government provided details about the recapitalisation plan for Public Sector Banks (PSBs) that was announced in October 2017.In a bid to revise growth of PSBs, Government will infuse Rs. 88139 crore capital in 20 public sector banks (PSBs) before March 31, 2018.

- In a bid to strengthen the existing channels of Atal Pension Yojana (APY) distribution, Government has allowed Small Finance Banks and Payment Banks to sell APY to their customers. As of now banks will get an incentive of Rs. 120-150 for each APY account.

- Rating agency CRISIL has upgraded its outlook on 18 Indian public sector banks (PSBs) from "negative" to "stable". This upgrade by CRISIL was on account of PSB recapitalisation plan unveiled by Government on January 24, 2018

- On January 29, 2018, Union Finance Minister, Arun Jaitley tabled the Economic Survey 2017-18 in Parliament. This year, the colour of the Economic Survey document is Pink. As per Economic Survey 2017-18, Indian economy is expected to grow between 7 per cent and 7.5 per cent in the next fiscal year i.e. April 1, 2018 – March 31, 2019.

ECONOMY

- Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro announced a 40 percent increase to the minimum wage with effect from January 2018.In recent times, Venezuelan economy has witnessed world's fastest inflation.

- On January 3, 2017,At a Cabinet meeting chaired by Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan decided to impose 50 paisa cess on per litre of petrol and diesel for developing and strengthening road infrastructure across Madhya Pradesh and for laying the metro railroad in Bhopal and Indore.

- On January 4, 2018, Minister of State for Civil Aviation, Jayant Singh informed Lok Sabha that government-owned airline, Air India has tied up three international banks UAE-based First Abu Dhabi Bank, Standard Chartered Bank and Mashreq Bank to avail short-term loans for acquiring three Boeing 777 aircrafts.

- Central Government has successfully divested 2.52 % of paid-up capital in National Mineral Development Corporation (NMDC) for an amount of Rs. 1200 crore (approx).Post this divestment, Government of India's shareholding in NMDC has dropped down to 72.42% from 74.94%.

- As per data released by global aviation body, International Air Transport Association (IATA), India topped the worldwide growth chart of domestic air passenger traffic for the month of November 2017. For the month of November 2017, domestic air passenger traffic in India grew by 16.4 per cent, highest in the world

- R V Deshpande, Karnataka Minister for Large, Medium Industries and Infrastructure Development has stated that Karnataka has topped among all states with investment intentions of Rs. 1.49 lakh crore till October 2017 while addressing the third meeting of Council for Trade Development and Promotion at New Delhi..It accounts for 43 per cent of India's total investment intentions.

- Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) has borrowed Rs 4,000 crore from ICICI Bank for a period of one year to acquire government's 51.11 % stake in Hindustan Petroleum Corp Ltd (HPCL)

BUSINESS

- The 'Karnataka International Travel Expo' (KITE), considered the "largest" B2B travel event in India, will be held held for 3 days in Bengaluru, from February 28, 2018.

- On January 1, 2018, GAIL India Ltd announced that it has commissioned India's second largest rooftop solar power plant in Uttar Pradesh.This plant has been installed at GAIL's petrochemical complex at Pata in Uttar Pradesh.

- On 2nd January 2018, Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) announced that, it has commissioned and achieved design throughout of the world's largest refinery off the gas cracker at Jamnagar.

- Indian biotechnology company, Bharat Biotech, has received Pre-Qualification tag from the World Health Organisation (WHO) for Typbar TCV or Typhoid Conjugate Vaccine.Bharat Biotech has spent Rs. 150 crore to develop this vaccine over a period of 12 years.

- On January 6, 2018, Defence Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman announced that a Defence Innovation Centre would be set up by CODISSIA in Coimbatore, to assist small industries in manufacturing components for the defence sector.