Economy

Aviation

- The aviation major Airbus on 15 Feb signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for establishing a Centre of Excellence for aerospace skill development in Hyderabad, together with the Telangana govt, National Skill Development Corporation India and AEROCAMPUS France.

- India’s domestic passenger traffic grew by 23.3 per cent in 2016. The domestic India market topped the growth chart for the second year in a row as passenger volumes surged by 23.3 per cent in 2016 – twice as fast as the next fastest growing market, China, as per the International Air Transport Association (IATA).

Automobiles

- In a bid to regain the lost ground in passenger vehicles segment, homegrown auto major Tata Motors has launched a sub-brand TAMO with an aim to introduce new technology-equipped vehicles faster to the market.

Banking

- RBI’s sixth bimonthly monetary policy
  - The policy repo rate unchanged at 6.25%.
  - The reverse repo rate under the liquidity adjustment facility (LAF) remains unchanged at 5.75%.
  - The statutory liquidity ratio (SLR) will remain at 20.50%.
  - The cash reserve ratio (CRR) unchanged at 4%.
  - The marginal standing facility (MSF) rate and the Bank Rate kept at 6.75%

  - Economic growth for FY17 lowered to 6.9%; growth for FY18 pegged at 7.4%
  - Inflation projected in the range of 4-4.5% in the first half of 2017-18 and 4.5-5% in the second half
  - The RBI shifted its monetary policy stance from ‘accommodative’ to ‘neutral’, keeping in mind transitory effect of demonetisation.

The Reserve Bank of India on 16 Feb doubled the quantum of loan that Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) can give against security of gold/gold ornaments to ₹2 lakh with bullet repayment option. Such loans will be subject to the conditions that the period of the loan cannot exceed 12 months from the date of sanction; interest will be charged on the amount at monthly rates but will become due for payment along with principal only at the end of 12 months from the date of sanction. Further, RRBs are required to maintain a Loan to Value (LTV) ratio of 75 per cent (that is, if the value of gold ornaments pledged with a bank is ₹1 lakh, then it will give a loan of ₹75,000) on the outstanding amount of loan, including the interest on ongoing basis, failing which the loan will be treated as a non-performing asset.

- The Cabinet has approved the merger of five associate banks with the State Bank of India (SBI).
  - The merger will catapult a bank from India which will feature among top 50 global lenders for the first time. SBI will be the 45th biggest bank in the world
  - The merger does not include Bharatiya Mahila Bank.
  - The five associate banks are State Bank of Bikaner and Jaipur, State Bank of Hyderabad, State Bank of
Mysore, State Bank of Patiala and State Bank of Travancore.

- The merger would lead to a synergy in operations and lower State Bank of India’s cost of funds. An official statement said the savings would be over ₹1,000 cr in the first year.

- The merger will create a bank with a projected asset book of ₹37 lakh cr by Mar 31. As of Dec 2016, the asset book was ₹33.5 lakh cr.

- SBI’s asset base will now be five times larger than its nearest rival ICICI Bank.

- After the merger, SBI will have 22,500 branches, 58,000 automated teller machines (ATMs) and over 500 mn customers.

- The five associate banks had a market share of 5.30 per cent in deposits and 5.33 per cent in advances on Mar 31, 2016.

- In earlier rounds of consolidation, State Bank of Saurashtra and State Bank of Indore had merged with State Bank of India in 2008 and 2010, respectively.

- The Reserve Bank on 25 Jan prohibited Indian entities from making direct investments in any entity located in ‘non co-operative countries and territories’, as identified by the inter-governmental body FATF. The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) currently comprises two regional organisations and 35 member jurisdictions, including India, US, UK, China and the European Commission. FATF was established in 1989. Its objectives are to set standards and promote effective implementation of legal, regulatory and operational measures for combating money laundering, terrorist financing and other related threats to the integrity of the international financial system.

- Ant Financial, e-commerce giant Alibaba’s financial arm, has reached an agreement to acquire American money-transfer major MoneyGram for $880 mn, in a deal that will expand the firm’s business in the US after India and Thailand.

- In a bid to discourage cash transactions, the country’s second-largest private sector lender HDFC Bank has decided to steeply increase the fees for savings account holders on a slew of activities involving cash.

- The State Bank of India has launched ‘SBI Exclusif,’ its wealth management offering, in Kochi, Kerala. It will be rolled out in other cities in the state during the course of the year. It aims to provide a comprehensive and best-in-class banking experience to customers. The bank has introduced an ‘open platform’ where customers will also have access to the best products across categories from market-leading institutions.

- The sale of bad loans to Asset Reconstruction Companies (ARCs) that had gained considerable momentum four years ago has halved over the past two years. From about ₹50,000 cr in 2013-14 and 2014-15, bad loans sold by banks to ARCs have fallen to ₹20,000 cr in 2015-16 and slipped further to ₹15,000 cr in 2016-17. The RBI demanding a higher down payment and the ARCs stretching themselves thin on capital have been the main reasons. The primary task of the ARCs is to acquire, manage and recover bad loans.

- The Reserve Bank of India on 16 Feb said it would reimburse banks the merchant discount rate (MDR) charges on debit cards used for paying the govt tax and non-tax dues of up to ₹1 lakh with effect from Jan 1, 2017. MDR is the commission charged by the acquirer (the bank that provides the infrastructure to the merchant to accept payments and facilitates acceptance payments via cards) to the merchant.

- Mastercard will provide payment processing solutions to Airtel Payments Bank. Both have also teamed up to launch an online debit card to enable Airtel Payments Bank customers to make digital payments at over one lakh online merchant outlets.

- In a bid to strengthen cyber security system, the Reserve Bank (RBI) on 9 Feb decided to set up an inter-disciplinary panel on cyber security to examine various threats and suggested measures to deal with it.

- Addressing the need of pacing up constructions with skilled labour that would result in quicker delivery and handovers, PNB Housing Finance Limited (PNBHL) has signed an MoU with CREDAI West Bengal to train 1000 construction workers in Kolkata and nearby villages.

- The private sector lender IDFC Bank has collaborated with fintech startup IndiaLends to enable first-time borrowers who do not have a credit history to take loans.

- In a welcome move, the Reserve Bank of India on 8 Feb decided to phase out weekly limit on cash withdrawal from savings accounts in two stages, starting from Feb 20, in line with the pace of remonetisation. In the first stage, the weekly withdrawal limit for savings accounts has been raised to ₹50,000 from Feb 20. From Mar 13,
there will be no limit on cash withdrawal from savings accounts. It was announced at the sixth bi-monthly monetary policy review of the RBI.

- The Federal Bank has partnered with leading online data and information portal Commodity Online for the distribution of loans against warehouse receipts and collateral management services across the country.

- The private sector lenders HDFC Bank and Kotak Mahindra Bank on 7 Feb went live with the Bharat Bill Payment System (BBPS) that is aimed at easing utility and other repetitive bill payments for consumers.

- After its successful launch on Android, the Bharat Interface for Money (BHIM), an app developed by the govt to further its cashless push, has finally been launched on the iOS platform. With its debut on iOS, it is currently supporting over 35 banks such as State Bank of India, Axis Bank, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, IDBI Bank, Union Bank of India and Kotak Mahindra Bank. The app is currently available in Hindi and English unlike the Android version which supports other regional languages as well such as Bengali, Odiya, Gujarati, Kannada, Malayalam, Tamil and Telugu. The Android version of the app was launched on 30 Dec by PM Narendra Modi to promote digital transactions using the Unified Payments Interface (UPI), a bank-to-bank fund transfer system backed by internet and smartphones, using phone numbers linked to banks. Similar to the Android version, BHIM app on iOS also has a limit of ₹10,000 per transaction and ₹20,000 in a day for transfers through the bank account.

- The ‘Indradhanush 2.0’ will be finalised after completion of the Asset Quality Review (AQR) by the Reserve Bank, which is likely to be completed by March. The RBI had embarked on the AQR exercise from Dec 2015 and asked banks to recognise some top defaulting accounts as non-performing assets (NPAs) and make adequate provisions for them. It has had a debilitating impact on banks’ numbers and their stocks. The central bank has set a deadline of Mar 2017 to complete the AQR exercise. Under Indradhanush roadmap announced in 2015, the govt had announced to infuse ₹70,000 cr in state-run banks over four years while they will have to raise a further ₹1.1 lakh cr from the markets to meet their capital requirement in line with global risk norms, known as Basel-III. In line with the plan, public sector banks were given ₹25,000 cr in 2015-16, and similar amount has been earmarked for 2016-17. Besides, ₹10,000 cr each would be infused in 2017 and 2018.

- The fertilizer major Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative (IFFCO) has tied up with Bank of Baroda to launch co-branded debit cards for farmers as part of strategy to promote cashless transactions in rural areas.

- The largest retail brokerage ICICI Securities on 7 Feb announced a strategic partnership with Saxo Bank, the Denmark-based online multi-asset trading and investment specialist, to enable domestic investors enter overseas markets, including equities and debt segments.

- Lakshmi Vilas Bank, one of the fastest-growing private sector banks in India, has tied up with Fisdom, a fin-tech startup, to launch a financial planning platform called Mission FINFIT for personal wealth management services based on Robo advisory.

- The mobile payment and e-commerce platform Paytm on 20 Feb announced that it would invest ₹600 cr in its QR code-based payment solution to enable digital payments for merchants across India. Paytm’s QR code-based solution is already powering more than 5 mn merchants and is used by consumers to pay at kirana (grocery) stores, tolls, food courts, hospitals and retail outlets. Currently, the Paytm app is available in 10 regional languages, including Hindi, to make digital payments accessible to all.

- The govt has allocated ₹500 cr to India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) for the financial year 2017-18 as it gears up to set up 650 branches across country by Sep 2017. The govt has allocated ₹125 cr as “capital infusion into corporate entity for IPPB” and ₹75 cr as “grant in aid to IPPB”, as per Output-Outcome Framework for Schemes 2017-18 for the department of posts (DoP) released on 13 Feb. The govt has appointed AP Singh interim Managing Director and CEO of IPPB.

**Payments Banks**

- The RBI last year granted ‘in principle’ approval for payments banks to 11 entities.
Introduction

- They are new stripped-down type of banks, which are expected to reach customers mainly through their mobile phones rather than traditional bank branches.

Features

- They can’t offer loans.
- They can raise deposits of up to `1 lakh, and pay interest on these balances just like a savings bank account does.
- They can enable transfers and remittances through a mobile phone.
- They can offer services such as automatic payments of bills, and purchases in cashless, chequeless transactions through a phone.
- They can issue debit cards and ATM cards usable on ATM networks of all banks.
- They can transfer money directly to bank accounts at nearly no cost being a part of the gateway that connects banks.
- They can provide forex cards to travellers, usable again as a debit or ATM card all over India.
- They can offer forex services at charges lower than banks.
- They can also offer card acceptance mechanisms to third parties such as the ‘Apple Pay.’

11 entities get approval

I. Aditya Birla Nuvo Ltd
II. Airtel M Commerce Services Ltd
III. Cholamandalam Distribution Services Ltd
IV. Department of Posts
V. Fino PayTech Ltd
VI. National Securities Depository Ltd
VII. Reliance Industries Ltd
VIII. Dilip Shantilal Shanghvi
IX. Vijay Shekhar Sharma
X. Tech Mahindra Ltd
XI. Vodafone m-pesa Ltd

The IDFC Asset Management Company on 13 Feb launched an open-ended fixed income fund and hoped to mop up revenue in the range of `300 cr-500 cr from the scheme in the New Fund Offers (NFO) period itself. The Credit Opportunities Fund opened for subscription on Feb 14 and closed on Feb 27. It will reopen for continuous sale and repurchase from Mar 6.

Corporate

- The mining baron Anil Agarwal on 16 Feb announced an initial foray into Jharkhand with a $1-bn investment that includes setting up of a one-mn-tonne steel plant. Vedanta initially plans to invest about `2,000 cr in setting up a one-mn-tonne pig iron and ductile pipe plant at Manoharpur in West Singhbhum district of Jharkhand.
- Tata Consultancy Services Ltd (TCS) on 20 Feb announced `16,000 cr share buyback — biggest in the Indian capital market as it looks to return surplus cash to shareholders. The decision comes at a time when India’s largest software services provider is under pressure of losing revenue from its clients in the US, which accounts for 65 per cent of the $155-bn industry, under President Donald Trump’s protectionist measures.
- IT giant Microsoft on 20 Feb announced a “strategic partnership” with Flipkart, wherein as a first step, the online retailer will adopt Microsoft Azure as its exclusive public cloud platform.
- Havells India Limited, a leading electrical appliances and components company, on 19 Feb announced that its board had approved the acquisition of Lloyd Consumer Durable Business Division (Lloyd Consumer).

Disinvestment

- The govt on 7 Feb sold two per cent stake in ITC to Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) and earned `6,690 cr (around $1 bn) as part of its divestment plan for 2016-17.

Energy

- The Hindustan Petroleum Corp (HPCL) and GAIL India have signed an agreement with the Andhra Pradesh govt for setting up a `40,000-cr petrochemical plant in the state.

FDI

- With the govt taking steps to improve ease of doing business and relax regulations, foreign direct investment (FDI) into the country surged by 60 per cent to $4.68 bn.
in Nov 2016. The FDI stood at $2.93 bn in Nov 2015. During the period, India received maximum FDI from Singapore, Mauritius, the UK, the US, the Netherlands and Japan.

Insurance
- HDFC Life on 15 Feb launched Pragati, a traditional life insurance plan that has been specifically designed to empower low-income families. Pragati makes life insurance easily accessible to every person who wishes to financially secure his family.

Power
- The Power, Coal and Mining minister Piyush Goyal launched TAMRA (Transparency, Auction Monitoring and Resource Augmentation) portal and mobile application on 10 Feb. The sole objective is to enhance transparency and accountability as a part of the Ease of Doing Business in the mining sector.
- State-run NTPC’s Power Management Institute will soon impart training to state discom staff across the country for capacity building under the Integrated Power Development Scheme (IPDS). IPDS’ objective is 24x7 power supply for consumers and reduction of AT&C losses.

Taxation
- The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) on 7 Feb announced signing of four more unilateral Advance Pricing Agreements (APAs). The four APAs signed pertain to the manufacturing, financial and information technology sectors of the economy. The international transactions covered in these agreements include contract manufacturing, IT-enabled services and software development services. With this, the total number of APAs entered into by the CBDT has reached 130.
- The Income Tax Department has received responses from more than 5,27,000 taxpayers by Feb 12 about the source of their money deposited in old currencies during Nov 8 to Dec 30, 2016.
- The Income Tax Department has issued refunds to the tune of `1.42 lakh cr so far in 2016-17 till Feb 10, which is 41.5 per cent higher than last year’s. The Centralised Processing Centre (CPC) of the tax department has already processed over 4.19 cr income tax returns (ITRs) and issued over 1.62 cr refunds during the current financial year up to February 10, 2017.
- The Finance Ministry has said that harsh punitive actions will be taken against the deviant shell companies including freezing of bank accounts, striking off the names of dormant companies, and invocation of Benami Transactions (Prohibition) Amendment Act, 2016.
- The Union Finance Ministry has announced that the General Anti-Avoidance Rule (GAAR) will be effective from 1 Apr, 2017. In this regard Income Tax (IT) Department has issued a slew of clarifications on the implementation of GAAR, seeking to address concerns of foreign investors over implementation of the anti-evasion measure. GAAR seeks to prevent companies from routing transactions through other countries to avoid taxes. The rules are framed mainly to minimise and check avoidance of tax.

Others
- The govt has approved `681 cr as seed capital for building a total corpus of over `6,800 cr under the electronic development fund meant to support entrepreneurship and innovation in electronics and IT. The electronic development fund is the mother fund that will contribute to various funds under it for those who invest the money in companies for creation of intellectual property rights in the field of electronics and IT.
- India has become the 12th largest holder of US govt securities at the end of 2016, with exposure worth $118.2 bn. With holdings worth $1.09 tn, Japan remained the largest holder of these securities followed by neighbouring China with exposure to the tune of $1.06 tn. Ireland was at the third place with holdings worth $288.2 bn, followed by Cayman Islands ($263.5 bn), Brazil ($259.2 bn) and Switzerland ($229.3 bn).
- The International Finance Corporation (IFC), part of the World Bank Group, has teamed up with Finance Industry Development Council (FIDC) to conduct training programmes for Non Banking Finance Companies (NBFCs). The training programmes will be on ‘movable asset financing’ and ‘commercial credit reporting’.
- The global financial services major Nomura has muted India’s economic growth, stating Indian GDP is likely to grow at 5.7% in the Jan-Mar period.
The NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant launched “India Innovation Index”, the nation’s first online innovation index portal which will rank states based on their innovations. It will be a “first-of-its-kind online platform” where Global Innovation Index (GII) indicators and India-centric data from various states will be updated periodically.

The Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry has launched pilot Revenue Insurance Scheme for Plantation Crops (RISPC) for protecting the growers from the risks such as pest attacks, yield loss and income decline caused by fall in prices. RISPC announced in Sep 2016 is improved form of the Price Stabilization Fund (PSF) Scheme, 2003 which was closed in 2013.

The Union Cabinet chaired by PM Narendra Modi approved the Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (PMGDISHA) to extend digital literacy to six crore rural households on 8 Feb. The allocated budget for one of the largest digital literacy programmes in the world is ₹2,351.38 cr. The project is targeted to be completed by Mar 2019. To ensure proportionate geographical reach, each of the 250,000 Gram Panchayats would be expected to register an average of 200-300 candidates. The core focus area is cashless transactions through mobile phones which place emphasis on Digital Wallets, Mobile Banking, Unified Payments Interface (UPI), Unstructured Supplementary Service Data (USSD) and Aadhaar Enabled Payment System (AEPS). As per the 71st National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) Survey on Education in 2014, only 6% of rural households have a computer.

Over 13,000 specially-abled people or ‘Divyangs’ have been given jobs in various Central Govt departments. Efforts are on to fill all the 15,694 vacant posts in the Central Govt. About 83.5 per cent (13,401) of 15,694 vacant posts meant for Divyangs have been filled. The Ministry of Railways has filled all of about 3,615 such posts and Finance Ministry has also filled 4,699 vacancies.

Enthused by the success of two pilot projects on utilising the head post offices as Passport Seva Kendra, the govt has now decided to scale up this programme by opening 56 such facilities across the country. The ministry of external affairs and the department of post are working closely for the early commencement of passport-related services at such Kendras located in various states including Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Jharkhand and West Bengal.

The food regulator Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has set up a scientific panel to frame final regulations on fortification of foods and prepare strategies to address malnutrition problem. The FSSAI has already issued the draft guidelines on fortification for five food items — salt, milk, wheat flour, rice and edible oil — to boost production and consumption of fortified foods.

Admission to all engineering colleges in the country will be done through a single entrance examination from next year, doing away with multiple tests conducted by central agencies, state govts and private institutions. A single test for engineering as well as architecture courses will be on lines of the National Eligibility-Cum-Entrance Test (NEET), a single, all-India test for entry to medical and dental colleges launched in 2016.

Aimed at building synergy between business and foreign policy, the Ministry of External Affairs co-hosted the second Gateway of India Geoeconomic Dialogue with Gateway House on Feb 13-14 in Mumbai. At the inaugural dialogue of the event, themed ‘Where Geopolitics Meets Business’, Minister of State for External Affairs MJ Akbar participated in a discussion with his counterpart from Bangladesh, Shahriar Alam.

With an aim to eradicate Rubella and Measles from India, the Union Health Ministry on 5 Feb launched the Measles-Rubella (MR) vaccination campaign, targeting 41 cr children across the country.

Keeping farm activities in mind, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) has decided to set up weather stations in 660 districts of the country, a plan which will be further taken up to the blocks level.

States

The Union minister for textiles Smriti Zubin Irani on 30
India’s Premier Banking / SSC Institute

Paving the way for the conduct of Kambala, the Andhra Pradesh Govt is drawing up plans to make the state govt on 14 Feb decided to set up a tourism The Telangana govt has launched India’s first social The Haryana govt on 14 Feb notified that no person the Kerala govt has launched a project that envisages The Nagaland Cabinet has decided to submit a Kakatiya Hub For Social Arunachal Pradesh on 7 Feb became the first state in the Gujarat has become the first state in the country to Telangana ranked Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on 26 Jan has constituted a 33-member Jharkhand Chief Minister The Jammu and Kashmir govt on 13 Feb launched the e-Cashless India

A two-day mega event of Global Investor Summit, in the ‘Champu Khangpok village in the school has been inaugurated at Langolsabi Leikai of elementary school. Situated about 50 km from Imphal, has now become home to first-of-its-kind floating projects. The committee to monitor the implementation of these Chandrababu Naidu entailung investment of `1,30,762 cr. Chief Minister N Chandra Naidu has constituted a 33-member committee to monitor the implementation of these projects. Loktak lake, the largest freshwater lake in the country, has now become home to first-of-its-kind floating elementary school. Situated about 50 km from Imphal, the school has been inaugurated at Langolsabi Leikai of Champu Khangpok village in Manipur. Paving the way for the conduct of Kambala, traditional buffalo race, the Karnataka Legislative Assembly on 13 Feb passed the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Karnataka Amendment) Bill, 2017.
The Haryana govt on 14 Feb notified that no person shall consume liquor at a place which has not been licensed or authorised under the Punjab Excise Act, 1914, except at one’s dwelling.
Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on 26 Jan announced a total ban on polythene carry bags from May 1 in Madhya Pradesh in a bid to conserve environment, protect cows and promote cleanliness.
A two-day mega event of Global Investor Summit, branded as “Momentum Jharkhand”, was held at Khelgaon of Ranchi.
The Jammu and Kashmir govt on 13 Feb launched the e-Prison project to enumerate jail inmates in the State, where the number of detainees keep swelling during unrest. The Kamal Clubs are being set up, and for this the govt would give kits to players and competitions would be held at block, district and state levels.
Arunachal Pradesh on 7 Feb became the first state in the northeast to implement e-Cabinet solution for the state Cabinet members. Using this system, the Cabinet members can access the Cabinet notes before the meeting.
Gujarat has become the first state in the country to establish cashless system in its public distribution system (PDS) of food grains: The beneficiaries who are eligible for subsidised food grains under the National Food Security Act (NFSA) will now need to carry only Aadhaar cards for getting their food grains in Gujarat.
The Andhra Pradesh Govt is drawing up plans to make the most of Sagarmala project, identifying 90 projects entailing investment of `1,30,762 cr. Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has constituted a 33-member committee to monitor the implementation of these projects.

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along with the accrued interest after she attains 18 years of her age.

- The Telangana govt has signed a memorandum of agreement with French firm Aerocampus Aquitaine, known for aircraft maintenance skill training, to create a world-class aero skill academy in Hyderabad.

- Having identified fintech as a promising space to generate jobs, Andhra Pradesh on 25 Jan announced a ₹100-cr fund of funds to invest in startups. The fund is being launched as part of the govt’s aim to boost fintech activities in the Vizag Fintech Valley, in Visakhapatnam.

### Bills

- The Lok Sabha has passed the Payment of Wages (Amendment) Bill, 2017 to enable employers to pay wages to workers through cheque or directly crediting to their accounts.

- The Union Cabinet has approved introduction of Bill in Parliament to extend the jurisdiction of the Collection of Statistics Act, 2008 to Jammu & Kashmir. The Amendment will pertain to statistics under Union (List-I) and Concurrent lists (List- III) in the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution and Constitution (Application to Jammu & Kashmir) Order, 1954.

- The Union Cabinet chaired by PM Narendra Modi has approved the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Bill, 2017, under which the IIMs would be declared as Institutions of National Importance which will enable them to grant degrees to their students. The Bill also provides for complete autonomy to the institutions, combined with adequate accountability.

### Panel

- The Centre has formed a six-member committee to suggest ways to improve India’s Haj policy and look into the issue of subsidy for the pilgrimage in the light of the Supreme Court’s 2012 order which called for its gradual reduction, leading to total abolition by 2022.Former Consul General of India (CGI) in Jeddah Afzal Amanullah has been appointed as convener of the high-level panel.

### Defence

- Indian Navy has launched an Integrated Underwater Harbour Defence and Surveillance System (IUHDSS) in Mumbai, Maharashtra to enhance the security of valuable naval assets against asymmetric threats. It is third IUHDSS to be installed in India.

- India on 11 Feb successfully tested a Star Wars-type interceptor missile that can hit an incoming ballistic missile, achieving a significant milestone in the direction of developing a two-layered Ballistic Missile Defence system. The Prithvi Defence Vehicle (PDV) mission is for engaging the targets in the exo-atmosphere region at an altitude above 50 km of earth’s atmosphere.

- The Reliance Defence and Engineering Ltd (RDEL) has signed a ₹916-cr contract with Defence Ministry for design and construction of 14 fast patrol vessels for Indian Coast Guard. RDEL is a wholly - owned arm of Reliance Infrastructure Ltd (RInfra).

- The engineering and construction major L&T on 13 Feb entered into a joint venture with European defence major MBDA Missile Systems for development of missiles in India.

- Months after India and US signed a key logistics pact, Reliance Defence and Engineering on 13 Feb announced an agreement with the American Navy for repair and alteration services for warships of the largest forward-deployed Seventh Fleet operating in the region.

- For the first time in the country, solar panels have been installed on an Indian warship. The survey class vessel INS Sarvekshak, attached with the southern naval command, has been fitted with 18 sheets of solar panels atop its hangar.

- India’s inter-services military exercise ‘Theatre Readiness Operational Exercise (TROPEX)’, was held recently which saw participation of major surface combatants and air assets of the Indian Navy, including INS Vikramaditya and nuclear submarine INS Chakra.

### Judiciary

- The Supreme Court has clarified that there is no need to stand inside a cinema hall when the national anthem is featured as a part of a film, documentary or a newsreel.

- The Supreme Court has introduced Middle Income Group Scheme (MIGS) a self-supporting scheme for providing legal services to the middle and relatively lower income groups. Under this scheme, middle class people, who cannot afford the expensive litigation in the apex, can avail the services of the society for a nominal amount.
The Supreme Court on 6 Feb approved the govt’s plan to record the identification details of mobile subscribers through an e-KYC (Know Your Customer) mechanism linked to Aadhaar in a bid to enhance national security and prevent fake users.

The Supreme Court on 16 Feb directed search engines — Google, Yahoo and Microsoft — to set up in-house expert bodies forthwith to ensure deletion of materials which went against Indian laws prohibiting pre-natal sex determination. The apex court, however, assured the Indian units of the multinational cyber giants that it would not initiate any contempt proceedings against them as the idea was to make them responsive to the local laws and concerns. A bench of Justices Dipak Misra and R Banumathi said in case of any doubt, the in-house expert bodies of these firms may communicate with the nodal agency appointed by the Centre for guidance and necessary action.

Others

India scripted a new chapter in the history of space exploration on 15 Feb with the successful launch of a record 104 satellites by ISRO’s Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV)-37 in a single mission.

## Highlights
- PSLV-C37 carrying the 104 satellites lifted off from the first launch pad at Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota at 9.28am in PSLV’s 39th flight.
- Out of the total 104 satellites, 101 satellites belonged to six foreign countries — 96 from the US and one each from Israel, the UAE, the Netherlands, Switzerland and Kazakhstan.
- The main payload was the Cartosat-2 series, India’s indigenously built earth observation satellite. Equipped with panchromatic and multispectral cameras, the 664kg satellite will provide remote sensing services similar to those of its predecessors.
- It was followed by two other nanosatellites of ISRO – INS-1A and INS-1B. These are versatile and modular nanosatellite bus systems envisioned for future science and experimental payload.
- It then took less than 10 minutes for the rocket to spew out 101 passengers, which were all foreign nanosatellites.
- Russian Space Agency held a record of launching 37 satellites in one go during its mission in Jun 2014. India previously launched 23 satellites in a single mission in Jun 2015.
- ISRO has successfully tested its indigenously developed cryogenic engine in a major step forward for its landmark ‘GSLV Mk III’ rocket, scheduled for launch within the first quarter this year. Cryogenic engines are used in the upper stage of a rocket launch as they provide the maximum thrust to a launcher vehicle.

## World

- Seeking investments from India in areas like automation, smart electronics and biotech, Thailand Board of Investment has said that the country provides tax holidays and an investor-friendly environment. With an aim to attract investments from India and other countries, Thailand organised a mega event – ‘Opportunity Thailand Seminar 2017’ – in Bangkok on Feb 15.
- The United States and Japan successfully concluded a flight test of a Standard Missile-3 (SM-3) Block IIA off the west coast of Hawaii on Feb 3.
- China has released the theme and the cooperation priorities of the 2017 BRICS Summit which is scheduled in Sep. The summit will be held under the theme “BRICS: Stronger Partnership for a Brighter Future.” It will also feature five key priorities such as deepening cooperation, strengthening global governance, carrying out people-to-people exchanges, making institutional improvements and building broader partnerships. The summit will take place in Xiamen which is located in east China’s Fujian Province.
- India made a presentation on 9 Feb to World Trade Organisation (WTO) Director General Roberto Azevedo and India Inc on New Delhi’s proposal for a global pact to boost services trade. The proposed Trade Facilitation
Ireland has voted to be India’s Premier Banking / SSC Institute

The 40-year-old Indus Waters Treaty between India and Pakistan has been an outstanding example of conflict resolution but scarcity of water in the basin states since the early 1990s has brought the agreement under strain and its “survival appears weak”, according to a UN report. The treaty fails to address two issues: the division of shortages in dry years between India and Pakistan, when flows are almost halved as compared to wet years, and the cumulative impact of storages on the flows of the River Chenab into Pakistan. Wular Barrage and Kishenganga project on the Jhelum and Neelum rivers present a similar problem whereby water storage during the Rabi season is critical as flows are almost one-fifth of the Kharif season, according to the report which was released on Feb 1.

On 27 Jan, President Donald Trump overhauled US refugee policy — laying the groundwork for a fundamental shift in how the US allows people to enter the country. Trump signed an executive order that bans all immigrants and visa holders from seven majority-Muslim countries from entering the US for 90 days, and opens the door to more country-based bans in future. The order blocked Syrian refugees indefinitely and halted entry for 90 days for people from seven predominantly Muslim countries: Iraq, Syria, Iran, Yemen, Sudan, Libya and Somalia.

Ireland has voted to be the world’s first country to fully divest public money from fossil fuels. The Irish Parliament passed the historic legislation in a 90 to 53 vote in favour of dropping coal, oil and gas investments from the €8bn (£6.8bn) Ireland Strategic Investment Fund, part of the Republic’s National Treasury Management Agency. Once enacted, the bill will force the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund to sell its investment in fossil fuel industries over the next five years. Earlier in 2015, Norway’s sovereign pension fund had divested from some fossil fuel companies, but not fully.

The UN children’s agency on 31 Jan launched an appeal for USD 3.3 billion to help 48 million children caught up in crises worldwide amid fears of a funding cut from top donor the United States. Some 42 per cent of the UNICEF appeal for 2017 — USD 1.4 billion — is earmarked to support Syrian children living in the country and as refugees across the borders in neighbouring states. This year’s appeal represents a 18 per cent increase from the initial 2016 request for funding. Donors contribute to the appeals on a voluntary basis. The United States is by far
India has been ranked 79th among 176 countries in the Corruption Perception Index 2016 released by Transparency International organisation. Its score marginally improved from 38 in 2015 to 40 in 2016. India had a score of 36 in 2012. The list was topped by New Zealand and Denmark with a score of 90 each. Somalia was ranked the most corrupt country with a score of 10.

Denmark has announced it will appoint a ‘digital ambassador’ to manage its relationship with technology giants like Google and Apple, becoming the first country to do so. The new ambassadorship will open a new Danish diplomatic line to the United States beyond Washington for tech diplomacy to build ties with some of the world’s top tech companies, including Apple, Google, and Microsoft. It may also pave way to lobby digital businesses to invest in Denmark. The new appointment reflects diplomatic power shift between the established nations and privately-owned unions.

Abu Dhabi will set up a court for non-Muslims to strengthen the culture of tolerance and acceptance of other communities and ensure access to services for all segments of the society.

India is ranked at the sixth spot, behind China and Japan, in a list of eight great powers for the year 2017 by a leading American foreign policy magazine The American Interest. The list is topped by the US, whereas China and Japan are tied on the second spot. Russia (fourth) and Germany (fifth) are the other two countries ahead of India. Iran is ranked seventh and Israel is on the eighth spot. As per the magazine, India is the world’s largest democracy, home to the second-largest English-speaking population in the world and boasting a diversified and rapidly growing economy.

India and the UAE have signed 14 agreements, including three on defence. Another important agreement that the two countries inked after delegation-level talks between PM Narendra Modi and Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Supreme Commander of its armed forces Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan has been to set up a framework for the storage of crude oil by Abu Dhabi National Oil Company in India.

China has built Longyangxia Dam Solar Park, the world’s biggest solar park in the western province of Qinghai, in an effort to become the super powerful occupier of green energy.

India is among nine countries that will be part of a global health network focused on improving the quality of care for new mothers and babies and strengthen national efforts to end preventable deaths of pregnant women and newborns by 2030. The nine countries are India, Bangladesh, Cote d’Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Nigeria, Tanzania and Uganda.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has opened a first-of-its-kind South Asia Regional Training and Technical Assistance Centre (SARTTAC) in New Delhi for economic capacity building in South Asia. It will work to support local member countries of South Asia, viz India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka, to build human and institutional capacity and implement policies for growth and poverty reduction.

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India and Croatia have signed an agreement to boost bilateral trade and enhance economic cooperation. The agreement was signed by Commerce and Industry Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and Martina Dalic, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Economy, Govt of the Republic of Croatia, in Zagreb, capital city of Croatia. India and Croatia had earlier signed an Agreement on Trade and Economic Cooperation in Sep 1994 with an aim to promote and develop bilateral trade and economic relations. The present Agreement between India and Croatia would be a step in continuity as the last one expired in Nov, 2009.

President Donald Trump on 26 Jan ordered construction of a wall along the country’s southern border with Mexico to thwart illegal migration, while Mexican President Enrique Pena Nieto again clearly stated his country would not be picking up the cost.
The UAE has unveiled plans to build the first city on Mars by 2117 as the energy-rich country looks to transport people to the Red Planet over the next few decades. Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE and ruler of Dubai, Shaikh Mohammad bin Rashid al Maktoum, and Abu Dhabi Crown Prince and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, Shaikh Mohammad bin Zayed al Nahyan, announced the 100-year national project on which the Gulf state would collaborate with specialised international organisations and scientific institutes.

Sports

Athletics
- The International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF), the world governing body, has extended ban on Russia, which will debar Russia from participating in World Athletics Championships in London in Aug. Russia has been barred from international competition since Nov 2015 following a damaging report alleging that state-sponsored doping was rife in the country.
- Siliguri lad Abul Hossain won the Kolkata Marathon as amateur runners from north Bengal and Northeast India dominated the first edition of the meet. Hossain won the race with a timing of two hours 34 minutes and two seconds. Sikkim’s Mangali Tamang won the women’s half marathon with a timing of one hour 31 minutes and 13 seconds.
- In order to woo the young audiences at the 2020 Olympics, the organisers of the Tokyo Games have unveiled Japan’s cult anime character Son Goku as its ambassador. The Japanese character will feature on all the official Olympics 2020 merchandise.

Basketball
- The Basketball Federation of India (BFI) has announced that India will host two international events in 2017 – FIBA Women’s Asia Cup and FIBA Under-16 Women’s Asian Championship. The FIBA Women’s Asia Cup will be held from Jul 23 to 29 in Bengaluru while the FIBA U-16 Women’s Asian Championship will be held from Oct 22 to 28 in Hyderabad. This will be the first time since 2009 that India will host a major International Basketball Federation (FIBA) event.

Chess
- Kush Bhagat, a second-grade student from Hill Spring International School, was awarded the title of Candidate Master (CM) by World Chess Federation body, FIDE, on Feb 14. The title comes after a range of admirable performances by him and his wins at 1st Western Asia Youth Chess Championship in Al Ain Chess Club, UAE.

Cricket

Badminton
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- Rituparna Das claimed the women’s singles title defeating Reshma Karthik in the tournament. In women’s doubles event, the pair of Aparna Balan and Prajakta Sawant clinched the title defeating the pair of Shikha Gautam and Sanyogita Ghorpade.
- Olympic silver medallist PV Sindhu and National champion Sameer Verma began the new season on a resounding note by winning the women’s and men’s singles crowns respectively at the USD 120,000 Syed Modi International Grand Prix Badminton tournament on Jan 29.
India successfully defended their title in the T20 Blind World Cup on Feb 12 at M Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru by beating arch-rivals Pakistan in the final by nine wickets. Incidentally, in the previous and only edition of the T20 World Cup for the visually impaired, Pakistan had been on the losing end then too.

India’s premiere off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin on Feb 12 became the fastest bowler to claim 250 Test wickets. He achieved the milestone in his 45th Test match, playing against Bangladesh. By doing so, the Indian all-rounder surpassed Dennis Lillee’s record, where the former Australian right-arm fast had achieved the milestone in 48 matches.

The Indian Test captain Virat Kohli has now recorded the most number of Test runs in a single home season in India’s cricket history. He continues with his love of breaking cricket records. He broke Sehwag’s record of 1,105 runs in 17 Tests which he scored in the 2004-05 season.

The Supreme Court on Jan 31 appointed a four-member panel of administrators to manage the affairs of the cricket board and report on whether it has complied with the Lodha Committee’s recommendations. The panel will be led by former Comptroller and Auditor General Vinod Rai, and have historian Ramchandra Guha, career banker and IDFC managing director Vikram Limaye, and former women’s Test cricketer and Captain Diana Edulji as its members.

Pakistani batsman Nasir Jamshed has been suspended from all forms of cricket for violating the Pakistan Cricket Board’s (PCB) anti-corruption code. The 27-year-old has played in two Tests, 48 one-day internationals and 18 Twenty20 matches for Pakistan.

Australia batsman Adam Voges has announced his retirement from international cricket. The 37-year-old bows out with the second highest Test average of all time behind Australian great Sir Donald Bradman.

The draw for the 2018 World Cup finals hosted by Russia will take place in the Kremlin on Dec 1. Russia will host the 2018 World Cup between Jun 14 and Jul 15 at 12 stadiums in 11 cities, including Moscow, Saint Petersburg, Kazan and Sochi.

The Information and Broadcasting Team won the inter-ministry Hockey tournament 2016-17, which was held at Central Secretariat Ground, Vinay Marg, New Delhi. The final match was played between I&B Ministry and Ministry of Health.

Jehan Daruvala won the Toyota Racing Series’ New Zealand Grand Prix at the Chris Amon Circuit in Manfeild, New Zealand, on Feb 12 to finish the 2017 championship on a high.

Champion cueist Pankaj Advani won the Indian National Snooker Championship with a 6-0 win over Pandurangaiah of Railways in a one-sided final on Feb 02. He became the only Indian men’s cueist to be the holder of all national billiards and snooker titles at the same time – Billiards, 6-red Snooker and 15-red Snooker.

Sharath Kamal, the country’s highest-ranked player, is India’s sole direct entry in the men’s singles draw.

The first ever International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) World Tour event in India was held at the Thyagaraj Sports Complex in New Delhi. This happens to be the biggest ever ITTF event in terms of prize money.

Men’s singles: Roger Federer won men’s singles title at the Australian Open, Melbourne by defeating Rafael Nadal.

Women’s singles: Serena Williams beat her sister Venus Williams in the final to win Australian Open tennis.

Men’s doubles: Henri Kontinen and John Peers beat Bob and Mike Bryan to win the Australian Open men’s doubles.
Women’s doubles: Bethanie Mattek-Sands and Lucie Safarova defeated Andrea Hlavackova and Peng Shuai to win women’s doubles title.


The Frenchman Jo-Wilfried Tsonga claimed the Rotterdam tennis title. In the ABN AMRO World Tennis Tournament final in Rotterdam, sixth-seeded Tsonga defeated third-seeded David Goffin of Belgium.

The Padma Awards are announced on the occasion of the Republic Day every year. The Award list this year comprises Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan and Padma Shri. The list also includes persons from the category of foreigners, NGOs, PIOs and Posthumous awardees.

Padma Vibhushan
- KJ Yesudas, Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev, Sharad Pawar, Murli Manohar Joshi, Udipi Ramachandra Rao, Late Lala Ram Ratan, Prabodh Ananta, Late PA Sangma, Praveen Togadia (Posthumous)

Padma Bhushan
Late Suniti Solomon (Posthumous), Asoke Kumar Bhattacharyya (Posthumous), Mapuskar (Posthumous) and Anuradha Koirala (Foreigner)

- GMR Hyderabad International Airport Ltd (GHIAL), which operates Rajiv Gandhi International Airport, has won the Centre for Asia Pacific Aviation (CAPA) Chairman’s Order of Merit for its focus on environmental sustainability and becoming the first airport in Asia Pacific to become carbon-neutral. GHIAL received the award during the CAPA 12 Annual India Aviation Summit in Mumbai. CAPA India is a specialist aviation consulting and research practice in South Asia, with the region’s largest team of analysts and a portfolio of more than 125 advisory and research projects.

- England Test captain Alastair Cook has been honoured with Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (CBE). He was awarded the CBE at the Buckingham Palace by Prince Charles. He is the only England player to have scored over 10,000 runs in Tests and has also led England in the most number of Tests.

- The Centre’s intense focus on Digital India seems to have drawn greater response this year to the CSI-Nihilent eGovernance Awards. Instituted by the Computer Society of India’s (CSI) Special Interest Group with sponsorship from Nihilent Technologies, these awards help recognise the efforts of eGovernance practitioners from across Central and State departments, projects and in district administrative units as well. This year, under the State category, Rajasthan and Telangana emerged Winners of Excellence while the Award of Recognition went to Odisha and Nagaland. Under the Projects category, 34 projects were from government departments and organisations across the country for their innovative and inclusive eGovernance initiatives.

- The Union Ministry of Mines has selected Dr A Keshav Krishna for the prestigious 2016 National Geoscience Award in the field of Geo-environmental studies in applied geosciences. Besides him, chief scientist at the NGRI N Purnachandra Rao was also selected for National Geoscience Award in the field of Geophysics.

- Havildar Hangpan Dada, who killed four terrorists before laying down his life in Kupwara on May 26 last year, has been awarded Ashok Chakra, the highest peacetime gallantry award.

- The President of India has approved the conferment of Jeevan Raksha Padak Series of Awards 2016 on 36 persons, which includes Sarvottam Jeevan Raksha Padak to 05 persons, Uttam Jeevan Raksha Padak to 08 persons and Jeevan Raksha Padak to 23 persons. 07 awards are posthumous. Jeevan Raksha Padak series of awards are given to a person for meritorious act of humane nature in saving the life of a person.

- The world’s greatest sprinter Usain Bolt pipped the likes of Cristiano Ronaldo and LeBron James to win the ‘Sportsman of the Year’ trophy for a record-equalling fourth time, while gymnast Simone Biles clinched the ‘Sportswoman of the Year’ trophy at the Laureus World Awards on Feb 14. The most decorated Olympian of all-time, Michael Phelps, bagged the ‘Comeback of the Year’ award after returning to the swimming pool and scooping five more gold medals. Formula One champion Nico Rosberg claimed the ‘Breakthrough of the Year’ award.

- Dr P Raghuram, President of Association of Breast Surgeons of India, has been awarded prestigious Dr BC Roy national award for outstanding service in the field of socio-medical relief for 2016. The award will be conferred on him by President Pranab Mukherjee on the occasion of the Doctors Day observed every year on 1 Jul.

70th BAFTA Awards
- Best Film: La La Land
- Best Director: Damien Chazelle (La La Land)
- Best Actor: Casey Affleck (Manchester by the Sea)
- Best Actress: Emma Stone (La La Land)
- Best British Film: I, Daniel Blake

59th Grammy awards
- Album of the year: 25 by Adele
- Record of the year: Hello by Adele
- Song of the year: Hello by Adele
- Best rap album: Coloring Book by Chance the Rapper
- Best rock song: Blackstar by David Bowie
- Best new artist: Chance the Rapper
- India’s Sandeep Das wins Best World Music Album with Yo-Yo Ma
Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Feb 13 extended his greetings on World Radio Day. World Radio Day is celebrated on this day every year to celebrate radio as the medium for entertainment and information and the mode for communication. It was proclaimed on 3 November 2011 by UNESCO’s 36th General Conference after being originally proposed by the Kingdom of Spain.

The famous sand artist Sudarsan Pattnaik on Feb 11 created a Guinness World Record by building the world’s tallest sand castle, which is 48 feet and 8 inch (14.84 metres), at the Puri beach. He has broken the record of 45 feet and 10 inch sand castle which was created in the US. After verifying all the criteria of the sand castle, the official of Guinness World Records Swapnil Dangarikar presented a certificate to Sudarsan for the achievement.

The Ministry of Science and Technology has come up with a comprehensive Braille atlas for nearly 50 lakh visually challenged people in the country, especially students. The atlas has 20 maps on different themes like physical, socio-economic, river system, crops pattern, natural vegetation, cultural, metropolitan areas, roads and railways, and crops. The atlas has been developed in Hindi and English by the National Atlas and Thematic Mapping Organisation (NATMO), Kolkata, an institute under the Ministry of Science and Technology. The Braille atlas has been made using indigenously developed silk-screen painting technology.

A mobile app developed by Alibaba helped Chinese authorities recover 611 missing children in 2016. The Tuanyuan app, which means ‘reunion’ in Chinese, sends push notifications with photos and descriptions to users who are close to the location of a child’s disappearance. The notifications are sent to users farther from the location of the disappearance till the child is found.

As the Mughal Gardens at Rashtrapati Bhavan reopened on Feb 05, visitors for the first time see roses named after the Indian President and his wife, growing next to ‘Abraham Lincoln’, ‘Christian Dior’ and ‘Queen Elizabeth’, ‘President Pranab’, a crossbred variety of rose which was planted this year along with another variety of rose named ‘Suvar Mukherjee’, will blossom in spring. The President’s wife passed away in Aug 2015. Spread over 15 acres, the garden boasts of growing around 140 celebrated varieties of roses named after renowned world leaders.

The Qatar Airways launched the world’s longest scheduled commercial service with its inaugural flight from Doha to Auckland, New Zealand. The Boeing 777 flight takes 16 hours and 20 minutes, passes over 10 time zones, five countries and travels 14,535 kilometres before reaching Auckland. This will make it the world’s longest passenger service in terms of flying time, according to tracking website flightradar24.

The Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) has suspended the licence of budget carrier IndiGo’s aviation security training facility for alleged lapses in the examination system conducted by it. The orders issued by the apex aviation security agency BCAS bar the Gurgaon-based airline from conducting security training programme for its employees any further. The training academy is run by IndiGo’s parent company, InterGlobe Aviation.

People around the world observe World Cancer Day on Feb 4, coming together to raise awareness about cancer and conduct discourses about its treatment and prevention. Started by the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC), the primary aim of the day is to ensure the prevalence of the illness is reduced significantly and deaths due to cancer are reduced by 2020.

The National Rail Museum in New Delhi celebrated its 40th anniversary on 1 Feb 2017. The museum, which houses a large collection of life-size rail exhibits, allows visitors to take a tour on a toy train. Its attractions include the saloons of the Maharajas of Indore and Mysore and Fairy Queen, the oldest working steam locomotive still in operation.

NavIC, the indigenously built satellite-based positioning system, has developed a technical snag in the atomic clocks on its first satellite. In the NavIC, a constellation of seven satellites, one of the three crucial rubidium timekeepers on IRNSS-1A spacecraft failed six months ago. The other two followed subsequently. The satellites of the ₹1,420-cr NavIC, short for Navigation with Indian Constellation, and also known as the Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System, give precise information on
position, navigation and time (PNT) of objects or persons to users on ground, sea and air.

- The Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) has launched climate change programme, under which the first study funded by Oracle and facilitated by CAF-India, will assess the status, distribution and conservation of pheasants and finches in the Central Himalayas. The Himalayas hold a rich natural heritage with diverse flora and fauna enhancing the beauty of the region. The study will focus on their conservation in the context of climate change with the help of community participation.

- The Election Commission of India (ECI) celebrated the 7th National Voters’ Day (NVD) on Jan 25 across country with the theme of “Empowering young and future events” to enhance participation of citizens in the electoral process. The National level function was held in New Delhi. The NVD is celebrated every year in India on Jan 25 to mark the foundation day of ECI, which came into being on this day in 1950. The purpose of the NVD is to increase enrollment of voters, especially of the newly eligible ones.

- Multiplex chain operator PVR has launched theatre on demand service ‘Vkaao’ and plans to add 100 screens by the end of 2017-18 across the country. Vkaao is an online platform that enables consumers to watch any movie of their choice at a theatre of their choice. Vkaao is very disruptive and gives control to a customer to choose what they want to watch, when and where. Minimum requirement for a show to be confirmed would be 50 seats.