INDIAN AFFAIRS

- On April 21, 2018, Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi gave its approval for restructured Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA). It will help more than 2.55 lakh Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) to develop governance capabilities to deliver on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through inclusive local governance with focus on optimum utilisation of available resources.

- Sunderban Reserve Forest is likely to be declared a Ramsar Site as West Bengal State Government has given approval to its State Forest Department to apply for recognition under the Ramsar Convention.

- Diu Smart City has become the first city in India to function on 100% renewable energy during daytime. Diu has adopted a two-pronged approach. According to that, a 9 MW solar park has been set up in 50 hectares and solar panels have been installed on the roof tops on 79 government buildings accounting to 1.3 MW power generation annually.

- On April 21, 2018, Union Cabinet stated that India will now maintain a database of sexual offenders to monitor and track those individuals convicted of such crimes. It will be maintained by National Crime Records Bureau. Only eight countries viz. US, Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, South Africa, Trinidad and Tobago and the United Kingdom have sexual offender database.

- Taniya Sanyal from Kolkata has become the first woman firefighter appointed by Airports Authority of India (AAI). AAI currently has 3310 fire fighters posted at different airports across India. Physical standards for selection of male firefighters is minimum height of about 1.6 metres and minimum weight of 50 kg.

- On 21st April 2018, the central government approved an ordinance to amend the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act to provide death penalty for the rape of children below the age of 12 years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crime Description</th>
<th>Penalty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rape of women</td>
<td>Imprisonment had increased from 7 years to 10 years, extendable to life imprisonment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rape of a girl under 16 years of age</td>
<td>Imprisonment had increased from 10 years to 20 years, extendable to imprisonment for rest of life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gang rape of a girl under 16 years of age</td>
<td>Imprisonment for rest of life of the convict.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rape of a girl under 12 years</td>
<td>minimum 20 years of imprisonment or imprisonment for rest of life or with death.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gang rape of a girl below 12 years</td>
<td>Imprisonment for rest of life or death sentence.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- On April 20, 2018, Madras High Court became the first court in south India and eighth in India to introduce e-court fee payment facility. It is an advocate/litigant-centric initiative which enables advocates and litigants to pay court fee online. So far, only Supreme Court and the High Courts in Delhi, Punjab, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh have the e-court fee payment facility.

- On April 23, 2018, Committee headed by Justice Rajesh Bindal, Judge, High Court of Punjab & Haryana, Chandigarh, submitted its report on legal issues related to inter country removal & retention of children to Minister for Women and Child Development, Maneka Gandhi. It should be
chaired by a retired High Court Judge and should have Members from Legal and Social sector background along with representatives from key Ministries.

- On April 24, 2018, Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Dr. Harsh Vardhan inaugurated the four-day Asia-Pacific Regional Workshop of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) in New Delhi. This four-day regional Workshop (April 24-27, 2018) is the fourth in a series of UNCCD Workshops held around the world and the first one being co-hosted by India.

- First meeting of the think tank set up by the government to deliberate on issues related to e-commerce sector and cross-border digital trade was held in New Delhi on April 24, 2018. The meeting is led by Union Commerce and Industry Minister Suresh Prabhu and comprises officials from ministries of finance, corporate affairs, home affairs and electronics and information technology.

- Two day Secure India Conclave, organised by Global Counter Terrorism Council began in New Delhi on April 24, 2018. The conclave has been organised keeping in view, Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s vision of ‘New India : Secure India 2018’. Several sessions on internal security situation on Jammu & Kashmir, Left wing Extremism and cyber security, chaired by eminent personnel will be held during the course of this two day conclave.

- Two craft forms from Telangana - Adilabad Dokra, an ancient bell metal craft popular in the tribal regions of Adilabad district, its speciality of Adilabad Dokra is that no two pieces are alike in shape as well as in size thus making it impossible to replicate. and Warangal Dhurries, a popular cotton rug - are famous across the world due to the high degree of craftsmanship involved in its creation. Both have been issued the Geographical Indication (GI) Registration Certificate by the GI Registry, Chennai.

- Prototype of an intelligent traffic management solution is currently being tested by Bengaluru Smart City jointly with the Electronics City Township Authority (ELCITA), to enhance traffic management. Typical traffic management activities like vehicle detection, traffic density estimation and control of traffic lights will be automated for real-time performance.

- On 23rd April 2018, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu inaugurated the Andhra Pradesh Cyber Security Operations Center (APCSOC) in Amaravati. APCSOC is an initiative taken by Andhra Pradesh Information Technology, Electronics and Communications (IT and E&C) ministry.

- On 23rd April 2018, the central government said that, the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) has been removed from Assam, Meghalaya and parts of Arunachal Pradesh, due to remarkable improvement in security situation in those regions. AFSPA was completely withdrawn from all areas of Meghalaya from 1st April 2018. AFSPA has been in force in Nagaland, Manipur and Jammu and Kashmir for many decades. In Assam it was introduced in 1990s.

- On 24th April 2018, Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh, chaired the third meeting of the Island Development Agency (IDA) in Delhi. The Island Development Agency reviewed the work done for preparation of Development Plans for identified Islands (4 in Andaman and Nicobar Islands - Smith, Ross, Long, Avis and five in Lakshadweep - Minicoy, Bangaram, Thinnakara, Cheriyam, Suheli). After implementation of these projects, investment of Rs. 650 crore is expected from private sector.

- On 24th April 2018, an official announcement stated that, foreign tourists, except those from Pakistan, China and Afghanistan, will now be allowed to visit Nagaland, Mizoram and Manipur. The Home Ministry has decided to relax the Protected Area Permit (PAP) regime from Nagaland, Mizoram and Manipur for five years with effect from 1st April 2018.

- On April 25, 2018, Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi approved following bilateral agreements and initiatives:
  - Cabinet approves Memorandum of Understanding between India and Sao Tome and Principe for Cooperation in the field of Traditional Systems of Medicine and Homoeopathy. It is to be noted that Indian Government has already signed similar MoUs with Malaysia, Trinidad & Tobago, Hungry, Bangladesh, Nepal, Mauritius, Mongolia and Iran.
➢ Cabinet approves MoU between India and Sao Tome and Principe on cooperation in the field of Medicinal Plants.
➢ Cabinet apprised of the Memorandum of Agreement between India and World Health Organisation represented by its Regional Office for South-East Asia acting through its Country Office in India
➢ Cabinet approves MoU on cooperation in the field of regulation of medical products for human use amongst the medicine regulatory agencies of the BRICS countries
➢ Cabinet approves Long Term Agreements for supply of iron ore to Japan and South Korea through MMTC Limited
➢ Cabinet approves declaration of Scheduled Areas in respect of Rajasthan under Fifth Schedule to the Constitution of India

• On April 25, 2018, Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved following initiatives.
  ➢ Cabinet approves Minimum Support Prices for Raw Jute for 2018-19 season
  ➢ Cabinet approves restructured National Bamboo Mission. Mission will be implemented in limited States particularly in the North Eastern region and States including Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Telangana, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

• The e-Way Bill system for Intra-State movement of goods is implemented from 25th April 2018 in Arunachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Meghalaya, Sikkim and Puducherry. As on 20th April, 2018, e-Way Bill system for Intra-State movement of goods has been rolled-out in Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Telangana, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

• On 26th April 2018, the 23rd meeting of the Western Zonal Council consisting of Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa, Daman & Diu and Dadra & Nagar Haveli will be held at Gandhinagar, Gujarat.

• The Meghalaya government has launched 'Mission Lakadong' to achieve a five-fold increase in the production of Lakadong turmeric, an organic variety of turmeric grown in Meghalaya, to at least 50,000 metric tonne per year in the next 5 years. Objective of 'Mission Lakadong' is to improve the livelihood and income of farmers involved in Lakadong turmeric cultivation.

• A MOU was signed between the Indian Culinary Institute (ICI), an autonomous body under the Ministry of Tourism, and Indira Gandhi National Tribal University (IGNTU), Amarkantak. Objective of setting up of ICI was to create a mechanism to support efforts taken to preserve, document, promote and disseminate Indian Cuisine, meet the requirement of specialists in Indian Cuisine, to promote Cuisine as a Niche Tourism product.

• A two-day coastal security exercise 'Sagar Kavach' began on April 24, 2018 along Kerala shores. It is being conducted to strengthen and assess the loopholes in the coastal security mechanism along Kerala shores. Along with Coastal Police and Marine Enforcement wing, Indian Coast Guard and Indian Navy is also participating in Exercise 'Sagar Kavach'.

• The Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) under the NITI Aayog will launch the Atal New India Challenge on 26th April 2018. Through the Atal New India Challenge, AIM will invite prospective innovators/MSMEs/start-ups to design market-ready products, using advanced technologies or prototypes in 17 focus areas like Climate Smart Agriculture, Smart Mobility, Predictive Maintenance of Rolling Stock, Waste Management etc.

• Six countries of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) have suspended their memberships amid differences over who should lead the group they are Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Paraguay and Peru. Owing to this, membership of UNASUR has reduced to half and now only Bolivia, Ecuador, Guyana, Surinam, Uruguay and Venezuela remain in the bloc.

• On April 25, 2018, Union Human Resource Development Ministry launched Unnat Bharat Abhiyan 2.0 in New Delhi. It is a flagship programme of the Ministry of Human Resources Development,
which seeks to bring in transformational change in rural developmental process by leveraging knowledge base and resources of the Premier Institutions of India. IIT Delhi has been designated as the National Coordinating Institute for this programme.

- Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers’ Welfare, Radha Mohan Singh addressed the National Kharif Conference 2018 in New Delhi on April 25, 2018. He outlined that the Central Government is working towards making agriculture policy and programs ‘income-oriented’ rather than ‘production-oriented’.

- On 25th April 2018, J P Nadda, Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare, conducted a high level meeting to review the preparedness of the Ministry for prevention and control of vector borne diseases like kalaazar, dengue, malaria and chickungunya in India. He ordered the officials for launching aggressive IEC campaigns to create awareness on prevention and control of vectors before the season starts.

- On April 24, 2018, Union Tourism Minister K J Alphons awarded Letters of Intent (LoI) to 9 agencies for 22 monuments under ‘Adopt a Heritage: Apni Dharohar, Apni Pehchaan’ project. Under this scheme, Ministry of Tourism invited private and public sector entities to adopt as many as 116 ASI-protected monuments/sites and to take up the responsibility for its maintenance, conservation and development.

- A Cancer Screening Mela was organized in Mizoram by the Health Department of Mizoram jointly with Public Foundation of India and National Health Mission under the initiative of Swasth Uttar Purv. Theme of the mela was: ‘Come on Mizoram, together let's beat Cancer’. The mela was conducted to create awareness on cancer prevention and early diagnosis, early detection and management.

- On April 25, 2018, Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, released a commemorative postage stamp on former Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Late Shri Hemvati Nandan Bahuguna. Hemvati Nandan Bahuguna was the 9th Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh. He held office from November 8, 1973 to November 29, 1975.

- On 21st April 2018, Kerala chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan launched Pravasi Pension Scheme. The Pravasi Pension Scheme offers people hailing from Kerala but living outside the state or country, a pension of Rs 2,000 a month. People aged over 60 years are eligible for this scheme. To avail this scheme a person has to pay Rs 100 per month.

- Council of Scientific and Industrial Research -National Physical Laboratory (CSIR-NPL) and Department of Telecommunications (DoT) under Union Ministry of Communications have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on technical knowledge sharing for establishing a nationwide Time Stamping & Time Synchronization network.

- On 25th April 2018, the third ship of the Landing Craft Utility (LCU) Mk-IV project was inducted into the Indian Navy at Port Blair. The ship was commissioned as INLCU L53 by Vice Admiral Bimal Verma, AVSM, ADC, Commander-in-Chief A&N Command. It was designed and built by Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE), Kolkata.

- On April 26, 2018, National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) conducted a mock exercise on earthquake preparedness in three North Eastern States - Tripura, Nagaland and Mizoram. Conducting such mock exercise was required as these three states fall under seismic vulnerability zone.

- On April 14, 2018, Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the Van Dhan Scheme of Ministry of Tribal Affairs and Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED) during the celebrations of Ambedkar Jayanti at Bijapur, Chattisgarh. This scheme is for socio economic development of tribals living in forests, for whom, collecting Minor Forest Produce (MFP) is a major source of livelihood. Click here to read more.

- On April 26, 2018, Union Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh launched a portal to facilitate import-export of seeds and planting material. This portal will help organisations involved in import-export of seeds to do away with the requirement to submit their applications in 20 copies.

- On April 26, 2018, Union Ministry of Tourism launched a 360° Virtual Reality (VR) experience video on Incredible India in collaboration with Google India. It takes through a journey across
Hampi, Goa, Delhi and Amritsar. The video covers the site-specific as well as the people-aspect associated with these destinations.

- On 27th April 2018, Union Minister Manoj Sinha said that, the Telecom Commission has approved a comprehensive strategy to implement BharatNet in the North East region, mainly in Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Manipur and Tripura will be connected through broadband connectivity on satellite media by December 2018. The estimated cost for this is Rs 733 crore.

- Shirui Lily Festival 2018 is being held in Ukhrul district of Manipur from 24th to 28th April, 2018. The festival commemorates the significance of Manipur's state flower, the Shirui Lily. It is celebrated to spread awareness about conservation of the endangered Shirui Lily and promote the district of Ukhrul as a tourist destination in Manipur.

- Himachal Pradesh Government has decided to introduce free Heli-ambulance services in order to help patients in the far flung and inaccessible areas of the State. The free Heli-ambulance services will be operated by Heli-mission Switzerland with the assistance of Lady Willingdon Hospital, Manali in District Kullu.

- On 26th April 2018, former footballer Bhaichung Bhutia launched his political party named "Hamro Sikkim" at the Press Club of India, New Delhi. He said that "Hamro Sikkim" will focus on corruption and unemployment in Sikkim.

- On 25th April 2018, the Maharashtra government announced the launch of 'Startup Week 2018' from 25th June to 29th June 2018, with an aim to promote entrepreneurial eco-system. Best three among them (a total of 24) will be awarded work orders of up to Rs 15 lakh from the Maharashtra State Innovation Society.

- A five-day training programme, aimed at enhancing the preparedness of Airport Emergency Handlers (AEHs) to respond to Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear emergencies at the airports, concluded on April 27, 2018 at the Lok Nayak Jayaprakash Airport in Patna, Bihar. During the course of this training, NDMA & NDRF jointly conducted its first-ever full-scale Biological Management Emergency Exercise.

- The environment ministry has banned plastics in all protected areas throughout India, declaring them "plastic free zones". Environment secretary C K Mishra said all protected areas and forest reserves will be plastic free zones. This will be mandatorily enforced. He added that, alternatives to plastics will be made available gradually.

- A first of its kind Israeli Modern Art Exhibition was inaugurated in New Delhi on April 28, 2018. This exhibition titled ‘To the End of Land’ was organised by National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi in collaboration with the Embassy of Israel in India and the Petach Tikva Museum of Art, Israel.

- On April 26, 2018, Maharashtra State Government signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the British Council to strengthen educational and cultural cooperation. As per the terms of the MoU, British Council would be training 30000 teachers in the English language in Maharashtra. In the past, British Council already trained more than 100000 teachers, benefitting around five million learners.

- NITI Aayog and ITC Ltd will be collaborating in the area of agriculture and allied sectors with an objective to strengthen farming systems. This collaboration will be for a period of four years till April 2022 under which, both the entities will strive to increase net returns from farming through reduction in costs of production and increasing productivity of major crops.

- On April 26, 2018, Swedish-Swiss multinational giant ABB announced commissioning of India’s first industrial solar microgrid at its factory in Vadodara, Gujarat. Microgrids with integrated battery energy storage is primarily setup to ensure continuity of work during planned and unplanned Power outages.
On 27th April 2018, Andhra Pradesh government and MasterCard, along with Fintech valley conducted the Andhra Pradesh Cyber Security Summit in Visakhapatnam. The summit acted as a platform for top cyber security experts to exchange strategies and solutions to fight the cyber threat issues in India and worldwide. This summit was a part of the MoU signed between Andhra Pradesh government and MasterCard to execute best practices for cybersecurity.

On 26th April 2018, All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) set up India’s first Virtual Bronchoscopy Navigation, an advanced facility for diagnosis and treatment of small tumour-like spots in lungs. The VBN system was installed in the Department of Pulmonary Medicine and Sleep Disorders at AIIMS. Apart from India only few countries like China, Singapore besides the US and Europe own this facility.

President of India, Ram Nath Kovind, visited Madhya Pradesh. On April 28, 2018, President Kovind graced the 27th convocation of Dr. Harisingh Gour Vishwavidyalaya, Sagar. He also attended the Satguru Kabir Saheb Mahotsav, organised on the occasion of 620th Pragatosav of Satguru Kabir in Sagar & the next day he attended an ‘Asangathit Shramik Sammelan’ organised by Government of Madhya Pradesh, in Guna district. In Guna, he also addressed a function related to Mini Smart City Mission of Government of Madhya Pradesh.

On April 27, 2018, Expenditure Finance Committee of Union Finance Ministry accepted the proposal of Union Ministry of Water Resources to provide Central Assistance for completion of 8 Major/Medium Irrigation projects and 83 Surface Minor Irrigation (SMI) projects in Vidarbha, Marathwada and drought prone areas of rest of Maharashtra. Estimated cost for completion of these projects is Rs. 13651.61 Crore.

Delhi government will set up ‘Rogi Kalyan Samitis’ in each Assembly constituency and ‘Jan Swasthaya Samitis’ in state-run dispensaries, poly clinics and mohalla clinics in order to provide support to the health institutions in the national capital. As per the order, ‘Assembly Rogi Kalyan Samitis’ will have an advisory role in assisting health facilities, develop and customise strategies. The ‘Jan Swasthaya Samitis’ will be set up as its sub-committee.

On 28th April 2018, Andhra Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister (Revenue) K E Krishnamurthy initiated Andhra Pradesh government's 'Bhu Seva' (land hub) project aimed at offering integrated services related with land. As per the Bhu Seva project, each land parcel will be given a Bhudhar Number. The Bhudhar Number is an 11 digit unique number.

Indian Government will soon launch a uniform and credible national-level disaster database on UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR’s) insistence to implement its commitment to the Sendai Framework. The Database will be a dynamic platform having locally obtained and validated data on nationwide losses of properties and lives occurring due to disasters.

On 27th April 2018, K.J. Alphons, Minister of State for Tourism (Independent Charge) and Minister of State for Electronics and Information Technology inaugurated the Indian Culinary Institute (ICI) at Noida. ICI offers courses in Diploma, Under Graduation, and Post-Graduation and research in Culinary Arts.

On 28th April 2018, Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik inaugurated 'Odisha Skills 2018', the state-level chapter of India Skill competition organised by National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) in Cuttack, Odisha. Union Petroleum and Skill Development Minister Dharmendra Pradhan also inaugurated a skill-cum-common facility centre for filigree craftsman of Cuttack.

On 27th April 2018, Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur inaugurated the Kanda Pattan-Sarkaghat Water Supply Scheme at Cholthara in Mandi district, Himachal Pradesh. The scheme is developed at a cost of Rs 39.65 crore. It will benefit more than 31,000 people of that region.

On 29th April 2018, Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Kumar Chamling surpassed the record of former West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu as the longest serving Chief Minister of any Indian state. He is also a poet with pen name ‘Kiran’. He received Bhanu Puraskar award in 2010.

On April 30, 2018, Union Minister for Drinking Water and Sanitation, Uma Bharti launched the GOBAR (Galvanizing Organic Bio-Agro Resources) - DHAN scheme at the National Dairy Research Institute (NDRI) in Karnal, Haryana. Ms. Bharti launched this scheme in presence of Haryana Chief Minister, Manohar Lal Khattar. This scheme will be run by Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin). Click here to read more.
Central Government has started a Pilot Scheme for Procurement of Aggregate Power of 2500 MW on competitive basis for 3 years from generators with commissioned projects but without Power Purchase Agreement. Maximum allotment to a single entity has been capped at 600 MW. PFC Consulting Limited, a wholly owned subsidiary of PFC Ltd is the Nodal Agency and PTC India Limited is the Aggregator for this scheme.

On April 29, 2018, PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI) and Indian Yoga Association (IYA) signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to jointly promote yoga, health and spiritual tourism in the Krishna Circuit in Uttar Pradesh. It is among the thirteen thematic circuits under Swadesh Darshan Scheme.

Surat railway station (in Gujarat) will be the third in India to be developed as a world-class facility under Railway Ministry’s station redevelopment programme. Estimated cost for redevelopment of Surat Railway Station is Rs 5000 crore. It is expected to be ready by 2020. India’s two world-class Railway stations — Habibganj (in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh) and Gandhinagar (in Gujarat) — will be ready by the beginning of 2019.


**INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS**

India and Finland have reached an agreement on the dispute between Indian Income Tax Department and Finnish Telecom firm Nokia, under the Mutual Agreement Procedure (MAP). At Nokia India's request, Finland initiated the MAP process under the DTAA in 2013. The process resulted in rectified tax liability of 1600 crore, which Nokia India paid in March 2018, thus bringing an end to the dispute.

On April 23, 2018, Iran banned the use of bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies by its banks and financial institutions. Ban has been imposed citing concerns that cryptocurrencies can be used for money-laundering and financing terrorism.

On 22nd April 2018, Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs Chrystia Freeland announced that, Canada will host the world's female foreign ministers for talks ahead of this year's UN General Assembly & opened a meeting in Toronto of G7 foreign ministers with a session, co-hosted by EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs Federica Mogherini & said that, she and Federica Mogherini had decided to host talks on 21st and 22nd September 2018 ahead of UN General Assembly just for female foreign ministers.

On 25th April 2018, Indian External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj led the delegation at the 6th Joint Committee for Cooperation with Mongolian Foreign Minister Damdin Tsogtbaatar. Various aspects of bilateral relations, particularly in trade and investment, energy, mining, animal husbandry, education and capacity building and tourism were discussed in the meeting.

India is tying up with the United States and Finland to create a pollution-forecast system that will enable anticipation of particulate matter (PM) levels at least two days in advance with a better resolution. Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) will coordinate this exercise. It has been planned to have the system ready by winter.

India has ranked 138th out of 180 countries in the 2018 ‘World Press Freedom Index’ released by Reporters Sans Frontières (RSF), also known as Reporters Without Borders. India’s 138th rank in the 2018 ‘World Press Freedom Index’ marks a drop of two places as compared to 136th rank in 2017.

Among world’s major powers, Russia retained its position at 148th rank while US slipped to 45th as compared to 43rd rank in 2017. China too retained its spot at 176th.
Among India’s neighbouring countries, Bhutan (94th), Nepal (106th) and Sri Lanka (131st) rank ahead of India. Myanmar, Pakistan and Bangladesh rank 137th, 139th and 146th respectively.

2018 ‘World Press Freedom Index’ – Top 10 Countries:

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<th>Rank</th>
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<tr>
<td>1st</td>
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<td>Denmark</td>
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<td>Costa Rica</td>
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• “Harimau Shakti”, a joint training exercise between India and Malaysia will be conducted in the forests of Sengai Perdik, Hulu Langat, Malaysia from 30 April 2018 to 13 May 2018. It is aimed to enhance cooperation & coordination between armed forces of India and Malaysia and to share the expertise of both the contingents. Main focus of the exercise will be on tactical operations in jungle warfare.

• The Government of Kazakhstan has launched a 72-hour-long transit visa free regime for Indian citizens from 17th April 2018 to 31st December 2018. Kazakhstan’s Ambassador to India Bulat Sarsenbayev said that, only citizens of India are eligible for this facility who fly with Air Astana (Kazakhstan’s national carrier) or any other Kazakh airline and are transiting through international airports in Astana and/or Almaty to a third country or returning from a third country through Astana and/or Almaty.

• Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping held the first-ever informal summit in China’s Wuhan city on 27th and 28th April, 2018 to discuss measures for strengthening bilateral ties between both the countries. This was Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s fourth visit to China after he came to power in 2014. Click here to read more.

• India-Nepal Inter Governmental Committee (IGC) meeting on Trade, Transit and Cooperation to Control Unauthorised Trade was held in Kathmandu, Nepal on 26th and 27th April, 2018. IGC also takes up issues relating to bilateral trade, transit facilities provided by India to Nepal to facilitate trade with third countries and Indian investment in Nepal.

• For the first time, India and Pakistan will be part of a multi-nation counter-terror exercise, schedule to be held in Russia in September 2018. This multi nation exercise will be conducted under the framework of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). The exercise has been named ‘Peace Mission 2018’ and almost all SCO member countries including China will be a part of this exercise.

• International Buddhist Conference 2018 was held in Lumbini, Nepal on 28th and 29th April, 2018. The conference was organised as part of 2562nd Buddha Jayanti celebrations. Objective of the conference was to disseminate teachings of Gautam Buddha and spread the messages of brotherhood, nonviolence, co-existence, love and peace to the international community. Theme of International Buddhist Conference 2018 was ‘Lumbini Nepal: The birthplace of Lord Buddha and the fountain of Buddhism and world peace’.

• Office of United States Trade Representative (USTR) released 2018 edition of ‘Special 301 Report’. In this report, India has once again been placed in the ‘Priority Watch List’ on account of longstanding challenges in its Intellectual Property (IP) framework and lack of sufficient measurable progress. Besides India, Algeria, Argentina, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Indonesia, Kuwait, Russia, Ukraine, and Venezuela are also in ‘Priority Watch List’.

• India has been projected as the second fastest growing country in the world for passenger traffic based on traffic forecasts during 2017-40 by the Airports Council International (ACI). Vietnam has topped the list with a 8.5 per cent growth rate. It is followed by India at 7.5 per cent and Iran at 7.3 per cent. China occupies 8th position with 5.9 per cent growth rate. ACI has forecasted that by 2022,
passenger traffic in emerging economies like India will beat advanced economies.

**BANKING & FINANCE**

- According to Union Finance Ministry data, total deposits in Jan Dhan accounts crossed Rs. 80,000 crore mark as on April 11, 2018. The increase in Jan Dhan deposits was fuelled by increase in number of Jan Dhan account holders, which stood at 31.45 crore as on April 11, 2018 as compared to 26.5 crore at the beginning of 2017. The Slogan of PMJDY is “Mera Khata – Bhagya Vidhaata.”
- On April 23, 2018, Paytm Payments Bank announced that it now has over 100 million KYC wallets. Paytm stated that it was able to accomplish this feat on account of a constant campaigning highlighting about the benefits of the Know Your Customer (KYC) system. It also introduced Paytm KYC centers and ‘Paytm-Ka-ATM’ outlets to offer localised support.
- On April 23, 2018, Bank of India (BoI) entered into an agreement with National e-Governance Services Limited (NeSL) for utilizing its Information Utility Services envisaged under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016.
- On 21st April 2018, the World Bank Group approved USD 13 billion increase in paid-in capital, as part of a series of internal reforms. The package approved by the Development Committee of the Board of Governors consists of USD 7.5 billion paid-in capital for International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) and USD 5.5 billion paid-in capital for International Finance Commission (IFC), through both general and selective capital increases.
- Asian Development Bank (ADB) has agreed in principle to give an aid of Rs 1700 crore to Uttarakhand which will be utilised for creation of infrastructural facilities, sewer treatment plants and water supply facilities in urban areas of Uttarakhand.
- On 24th April 2018, Government of India, Government of Madhya Pradesh and World Bank signed a $210 million loan agreement for the Madhya Pradesh Rural Connectivity Project. The Project will cover 10,510 km distance of rural roads in Madhya Pradesh that come under the Chief Minister's Gram Sadak Yojana (CMGSY) program.
- In the 3rd phase of sale, State Bank of India (SBI) has been authorised to issue and encash Electoral Bonds through its 11 Authorised Branches with effect from 01.05.2018 to 10.05.2018. Electoral Bond Scheme 2018 states that, Electoral Bonds can be purchased by a person, who is a citizen of India or incorporated or established in India. Electoral Bonds are valid for fifteen days from the date of issue.
- On April 24, 2018, India signed a loan agreement with World Bank for IBRD credit of $125 for the “Innovate in India for Inclusiveness Project”. Objective is to encourage indigenous innovation, facilitate local product development and accelerate commercialization process in the sphere of affordable and innovative healthcare products.
- National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) has stated that it has provided an assistance of Rs 10012 crore to Uttar Pradesh (UP) during 2017-18. The funds were provided to facilitate overall development in the state with special focus on agricultural credit. Rs 8450 crore released to commercial banks, Regional Rural Banks and Cooperative Banks for providing short and long term finance support to agriculture, allied and off farm sectors across the state.
- On April 24, 2018, Government of India signed a Legal Agreement with World Bank for flexible financing arrangements for National Biopharma Mission (NBM). It is the first ever Industry-Academia mission to accelerate biopharmaceutical development in India. This programme has been named Innovate in India (i3). It is a $250 million dollar initiative that includes a $125 million loan from the World Bank.
- India Index Services & Products Limited (IISL), index services subsidiary of National Stock Exchange of India has introduced Nifty Equity Savings Index, which can serve as a benchmark for equity savings funds offered by various mutual fund houses. This index captures the performance of a portfolio having exposure to equity, equity arbitrage and debt instruments.
On 27th April 2018, Reserve Bank of India (RBI) liberalised External Commercial Borrowings (ECB) Policy by including more sectors in the window, with an aim to enable cheaper access of overseas funds. RBI notified that, it has decided to increase the ECB Liability to Equity Ratio for ECB raised from direct foreign equity holder under the automatic route to 7:1.

Global credit ratings agency, Fitch ratings has retained India’s sovereign rating at BBB- with a stable outlook on account of its assessment that upside and downside risks to ratings remains evenly balanced.

As per a report by Deutsche Bank, Indian economy is likely to register Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth of 7.5 per cent in financial year 2018-19, marks an improvement as compared to the likely 6.7 per cent growth in 2017-18.

HDFC Bank has launched IRA 2.0, the second version of its interactive humanoid at the Koramangala branch in Bengaluru, Karnataka. IRA 2.0 has been developed in collaboration with Invento Makerspaces and Senseforth Technologies. Through voice based navigation, IRA will interact with customers, answer bank-related queries, frequently asked questions and will guide them inside the branch.

As per Niti Aayog Vice Chairman Rajiv Kumar, Indian economy is expected to grow by at least 7.5 per cent in 2018-19. He believes that India’s economic growth in 2018-19 will come on back of improvement in investment cycle and capacity utilisation.

**BUSINESS & ECONOMY**

On 22nd April 2018, Mahindra Electric and cab service Meru announced a joint electric vehicle (EV) pilot project in Hyderabad, which will be introduced soon in other cities also. Meru will deploy Mahindra's eVeritos all-electric sedans.

On 23rd April 2018, the World Bank said that, India has retained its position as the top remittances receiving country with its people who have immigrated to various countries sending nearly USD 69 billion back home in 2017. India is followed by China (USD 64 billion), the Philippines (USD 33 billion), Mexico (USD 31 billion), Nigeria (USD 22 billion), and Egypt (USD 20 billion) in the remittance inflow.

In a bid to boost defence cooperation, Indian Government is planning to gift obsolete military equipment to friendly countries. Military platforms that are being considered to be offered as gifts are artillery guns, armoured vehicles, helicopters, naval patrol vehicles and radar systems that are obsolete or nearing obsolescence.

On April 24, 2018, The National Stock Exchange (NSE) announced the launch of its e-Gsec platform which will allow retail investors to invest in government securities. Government issues securities in order to borrow money from the market. Auction is held by Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on weekly basis, wherein large investors viz. banks, primary dealers, financial institutions, mutual.

According to the Japanese financial services major Nomura, India’s average Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth is expected to rise to 7.8 per cent in the first half of 2018. Further, Nomura has cautioned that rising oil prices may have a direct bearing on Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation, wherein every USD 10/bbl rise in oil prices will spike the CPI inflation by 30-40 bps and would worsen the current account balance by 0.4 percentage points.

On 23rd April 2018, SAIL (Steel Authority of India Ltd) said that, it has signed a MoU with Airports Authority of India (AAI) for utilisation of airstrips at Rourkela, Bokaro and Burnpur under the Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS) - UDAN. AAI will operate and manage airport operations for Burnpur, Rourkela and Bokaro airport on behalf of SAIL for three years.

As per data released by Commerce Ministry, India's global trade at $767.9 billion in 2017-18 marks an increase by 16.32 per cent as compared to $660.2 billion in 2016-17. Bilateral trade with Latin American Countries (LAC) including Bolivia, Peru, Chile and Brazil has recorded healthy growth of 19.63 per cent in 2017-18.

Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) has granted first licence for Liquid Chlorine on All India basis to M/s Gujarat Alkalies and Chemicals Ltd. Liquid chlorine is primarily used in paper, pulp, textile
bleaching, water sterilization and manufacture of chemicals. As the name indicates, this product is in liquid form, but is used as a gas obtained by evaporating the liquid from a metal container.

- Indian Oil Corporation Limited, Research & Development (R&D) centre in Faridabad, Haryana has signed a Letter of Intent (LoI) with ISKCON Food Relief Foundation (IFRF), Haryana, through which, entire cost of Cooking gas and Delivery Vehicle's CNG incurred under IFRF, Haryana’s midday meal initiative will be borne by IOC.
- On 26th April 2018, National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) signed an agreement with Macquarie for road projects under the highway monetisation initiative. The agreement has been signed with Macquarie for the first set of highway projects worth USD 1.5 billion. This is one of the highest FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) in highways.
- Dalmia Bharat Limited has signed a MoU with the Tourism Ministry to take up Red Fort and Gandikota Fort (Andhra Pradesh) under the ‘Adopt a Heritage’ project. It is the first corporate to be part of the ‘Adopt a Heritage’ project & it will look after the operations and the maintenance of Red Fort and Gandikota Fort for the next five years.
- On April 27, 2018, Defence Acquisition Council (DAC), chaired by Union Defence Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman, approved procurement of NAG Missile System (NAMIS) comprising third generation Anti-Tank Guided Missile, the NAG, along with the Missile Carrier Vehicle (NAMICA) & also approved procurement of thirteen 127 mm calibre guns for Indian Navy.
- Airports Authority of India (AAI) has signed its Annual Performance Contract (APC) for 2018-19 with Ministry of Civil Aviation. The MoU was signed between Secretary (Civil Aviation) R.N. Choubey and Dr. Guruprasad Mohapatra, Chairman, AAI, on 27th April 2018.
- One97 Communications Limited, the owner of Paytm, announced the launch of Paytm Tap Card, its offline payments solution to provide easy payments solutions for non-internet customers. The Tap Card utilises Near Field Communication (NFC) technology to enable safe and convenient digital payments, totally offline at Paytm-issued, NFC PoS terminals, within a second.
- As per data provided by Union Finance Ministry, Government has collected Rs 7.41 trillion in taxes in the first year of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) ending March 31, 2018. Rs. 7.41 trillion collection includes Rs 1.19 trillion of Central Goods and Services Tax (CGST), Rs 1.72 trillion of State Goods and Services Tax (SGST), Rs 3.66 trillion of Integrated Goods and Services Tax (IGST) and Rs 620.21 billion of cess for first eight months and Rs 240 billion addition for March 2018.
- According to TRA's Brand Trust Report 2018, Google is the most trusted Internet brand in India. Facebook has attained the second position on the list. TRA's Brand Trust Report 2018 has said that, Google features 1.2 trillion searches every year. Amazon has ranked third. It is followed by eBay in the fourth position. Flipkart has secured 6th position.

AWARDS & RECOGNITION

- Dadasaheb Phalke Excellence Awards 2018, honouring individuals from the entertainment industry for their outstanding contribution towards the growth and development of cinema and/or television were presented on April 21, 2018. This was the fourth edition of Dadasaheb Phalke Excellence Awards & the awards were given by a Mumbai-based organisation called Dadasaheb Phalke Foundation. Click here to read the list of winners.
- Richest Indian, Mukesh Ambani and human rights lawyer Indira Jaising have featured in Fortune magazine’s 2018 ranking of the 50 Greatest Leaders. Mukesh Ambani has ranked 24th on the list. Indira Jaising, the lawyer who has dedicated her life to battling injustice ranked at 20th. Architect Balkrishna Doshi (43rd rank) is another Indian who has made it to the list.
- On 23rd April 2018, President and Supreme Commander of the Indian Armed Forces Ram Nath Kovind conferred 3 Kirti Chakras and 13 Shaurya Chakras to Armed Forces Personnel for displaying courage and devotion to duty. 2 Kirti Chakras and 2 Shaurya Chakras were awarded posthumously.
13 Param Vishisht Seva Medals, 2 UttamYudhSeva Medals, 2 Bar to Ati Vishisht Seva Medals and 26 Ati Vishisht Seva Medals to senior officers of the Armed Forces for distinguished service of an exceptional order.

- On 23rd April 2018, jailed Egyptian photojournalist Mahmoud Abu Zeid won the 2018 Press Freedom Prize awarded by UNESCO. In spite of warnings from Egypt, UNESCO has awarded the World Press Freedom prize to Egyptian photographer Abu Zeid. He is also known as Shawkan.

- On 25th April 2018, Randstad Employer Brand Research (REBR) 2018 stated that, Microsoft India is the most attractive employer brand in India this year. It is followed by Amazon India. On a sectoral basis, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) ranked as the top employer brand for the IT industry. Larsen & Toubro was ranked as top employer for infrastructure & construction and Hindustan Unilever for FMCG.

- Nadiya Shafi, a video reporter from Srinagar, has received 2018’s 'Martha Farrell Award for Excellence in Women's Empowerment', with a cash prize of Rs 1.50 lakh. This award is given in recognition of Nadiya Shafi's contribution to gender equality and leading gender discussion clubs in Srinagar.

- On 26th April 2018, Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) was awarded the National Intellectual Property (IP) Award 2018 in the category 'Top R&D Institution/Organisation for Patents and Commercialisation'. CSIR has been ranked 9th in the world among 1,207 government institutions, with an overall global ranking of 75 in the world, covering 5,250 institutions.

- On 26th April 2018, Moglix, a B2B commerce company, announced that it has won 11th edition of SAP ACE Awards 2018 in Sourcing Excellence category. The awards recognise excellences in IT innovation in various business sectors, bringing a digital impact in India's economy.


- K K Birla Foundation has announced that, Gujarati poet Sitanshu Yashaschandra's poetry collection "Vakhar" has been selected for the Saraswati Samman for 2017. The selection for this award is done by a high level named 'Chayan Parishad' (selection committee). It is presided by former secretary general of Lok Sabha, Subhash C Kashyap. The award carries a cash prize of Rs 15 lakhs, a citation and a plaque.

- Budgam district of Jammu and Kashmir has been shortlisted for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's excellence award for promoting digital payments and cashless economy. Digital payments facility has been implemented at 670 places throughout the Budgam district, under the supervision of District authorities.

- Parijat Industries (India) Pvt Ltd, an Indian agrochemical company, has been conferred the "Sarvashrestha Suraksha Puraskar" gold award for the year 2017. The award was given away by Santosh Kumar Gangwar, Minister of State in the Ministry of Labour and Employment, at an event in New Delhi.

**APPOINTMENTS & RESIGNS**

- On 23rd April 2018, Suresh Kumar took the additional charge as chairman and managing director of Coal India Ltd. He has replaced Gopal Singh as chairman and managing director of Coal India Ltd. Gopal Singh had succeeded Sutirtha Bhattacharya who retired from the post of Coal India CMD on 31st August 2017.

- On 23rd April 2018, former Indian Foreign Secretary S. Jaishankar was appointed as the new president of 'Tata Sons' global corporate affairs. He had joined the Indian Foreign Service (IFS) in 1977. He has served as High Commissioner to Singapore, Ambassador to China and the United States. He was India's foreign secretary from January 2015 to January 2018.
Mario Abdo Benitez has been elected as the new president of Paraguay. Efrain Alegre of the Authentic Radical Liberal Party came second with 42.7% of the votes. Mario Abdo Benitez’s 5 year term begins on 15th August 2018. He is 46 years old.

On 26th April 2018, sources in the Law Ministry said that, the government has cleared the appointment of senior advocate Indu Malhotra as a judge of the Supreme Court, making her the first woman lawyer to become Supreme Court judge. She will be the seventh woman to become a Supreme Court judge.

Haryana State Government has appointed international female shooter Gauri Sheoran as the brand ambassador for its two health-related programmes viz. measles-rubella (MR) vaccination campaign by which about 80 lakh children aged between nine months and 15 would be vaccinated and Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram (RBSK) which involves screening children enrolled in government and government-aided schools and anganwadi centres (AWCs) for detecting deficiencies, diseases, and development delays including disability.

Mike Pompeo former CIA Director, has been sworn in as the 70th US secretary of state. He is a former Army officer. As soon as he was sworn in as US secretary of state, the State Department said that, he will visit Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Israel on the weekend after attending a NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) meeting in Brussels on 27th April 2018.

On 26th April 2018, Lt Gen Bipin Puri took charge as Senior Col Commandant of the Army Medical Corps. He was awarded the Vishisht Seva Medal in 2017. He was Honorary Surgeon to The President of India (PHS) from June 2016. He was awarded ‘Double Helical's National Health Awards-2017’ by Indian Medical Association.

On 26th April 2018, Rajiv Kumar Nagpal was appointed as the next Ambassador of India to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. He is currently the Ambassador of India to Iceland. He has been appointed as the next Ambassador of India to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

On 26th April 2018, Krishan Kumar was appointed as the next Ambassador of India to the Kingdom of Norway. He is an Indian Foreign Service (IFS) Officer of the 1984 batch. He is at present the Ambassador of India to the Czech Republic.

On 26th April 2018, Narinder Chauhan was appointed as the next Ambassador of India to the Czech Republic. She is an Indian Foreign Service Officer (IFS) of the batch 1985. She is at present the Ambassador of India to the Republic of Serbia.

InterGlobe Aviation, the operator of IndiGo airlines, announced that Aditya Ghosh, the President and whole-time Director of IndiGo has resigned from his position. Indigo announced that its Chairman, Rahul Bhatia, will serve as the interim Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and the Director of Indigo.

India’s largest bank, State Bank of India (SBI) has reshuffled the roles of its top management. Padmaja Chunduru, will now be in charge of SBI’s global treasury operations while CVenkat Nageswar, will be the new MD & CEO of SBI Capital Markets. PN Prasad, will be the chief risk officer while DA Tambe will be the new chief information officer. Arijit Basu, will now head corporate accounts group while Sanjeev Nautiyal has been appointed as CEO of SBI Life.

On 29th April 2018, Saudi Aramco appointed a woman to its board, by recruiting American Lynn Laverty Elsenhans to its 11-member board. She is a former chief executive and chairperson of US oil refiny Sunoco. She was named as one of the world’s most powerful women in 2008 by Forbes magazine.

On 29th April 2018, Nirmal Singh resigned as Deputy Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir and Davinder Gupta (Gandhinagar MLA) took oath as the Deputy Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir. The following persons took charge as ministers of state: Mohammad Khalil Band (Pulwama MLA), Sat Paul Sharma (BJP’s state unit chief), Mohammad Ashraf Mir (Sonwar MLA), Rajiv Jasrotia (Kathua MLA), Devinder Kumar Manyal (Sambha MLA), Shakti Raj (Doda MLA).
• Intex Technologies has appointed Rajiv Bakshi as its Chief Marketing Officer (CMO). He has headed brand development, business transformation, consumer acquisition and digital strategy for long term growth and profitability.
• The board of directors of Kotak Mahindra Bank has redesignated Uday Kotak as Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer with effect from 1st May 2018. He also informed that Shankar Acharya, part-time Chairman, will retire on 19th July 2018. Prakash Apte has been appointed as part-time Chairman of the Bank in place of Shankar Acharya.

AQUISITIONS & MERGERS

• On 25th April 2018, Indus Towers and Bharti Infratel Ltd announced that, they have agreed to combine operations in a deal that will create the world's second-largest mobile masts company measured by numbers of towers. The combined company will lag only China Tower. It will still be listed on Indian bourses.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

• Researchers from Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Roorkee have discovered a small molecule named “Pep-I” that exhibits good antiviral activity against chikungunya virus.
• Scientists have successfully removed sulphur from fossil fuels such as petroleum and coal using novel bacterial strains. They used four bacterial strains: Rhodococcus rhodochrous, Arthrobacter sulfureou, Gordonia rubropertinita and Rhodococcus erythropolis. These bacterial strains use dibenzothiophene (an organic sulphur compound which is a major contaminant of fossil fuel) as an energy source. This eliminates the sulphur content.
• In coming months, Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) will be launching a slew of strategically important satellites. In September 2018, ISRO will launch Gsat-7A, for the Indian Air Force (IAF). Gsat-7A will be launched onboard GSLV Mk II rocket and will enable the IAF to interlink different ground radar stations, airbases and Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) aircraft. Risat-2A will be launched by the end of 2018 onboard PSLV rocket. It is an advanced remote sensing satellite and will boost India’s surveillance capabilities.
• On 24th April 2018, Hardeep Puri, Minister of State for Housing and Urban Affairs (I/C) launched a Mobile App (m-Awas) for allotment of Government accommodations in General Pool Residential Accommodation (GPRA) in Delhi under the control of the Directorate of Estates. m-Awas was developed by NIC (National Informatics Centre). e-Awas, the application of online allotment will support this App.
• Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) has developed ‘Bhabha Kavach’, a next-generation bulletproof jacket for the Indian armed forces, which is cheaper and much lighter as compared to the ones which are used currently. It is made using extremely hard boron carbide ceramics (used for first time in India for making jackets), hot-pressed with carbon nano-tubes and composite polymer. It weighs just 6.6 kg in comparison to the 17-kg jackets in use.
• LCA Tejas has achieved another milestone towards FOC certification, after the launch on 27th April 2018, piloted by Wg Cdr Siddharth Singh from the firing range off the coast of Goa. The missile was launched from LCA Tejas. Tejas, the Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) successfully fired Derby Air-to-Air beyond Visual Range Missile to expand the firing envelope.

ENVIRONMENT

• Indian researchers have discovered world’s smallest land fern in the Ahwa forests of the Western Ghats in Gujarat’s Dang district. The new Malvi’s adder’s-tongue fern Ophioglossum malvae is just one centimetre in size. However, the most similar adder’s-tongue fern is 10 cm tall.
• Chinese entomologists have discovered a giant mosquito belonging to Holorusia Mikado species, with a wing size of 11.15 cm in Sichuan province of China. These mosquitoes do not feed on blood.
They feed mainly on nectar. The adults have a life span of a few days. It is also known as the crane fly and are mainly found in the Chengdu plain of the western parts of Sichuan.

- ‘Fejervarya goemchi’, a large-sized brown frog, measuring 41 to 46mm, has been discovered in Goa. It has been named after the state Goa, where it was discovered. It has been discovered by scientists of Zoological Survey of India (ZSI), Pune. It was discovered in Surla, Goa.

- Australian researchers have said that, the world’s oldest known spider named “Number 16” has died at the age of 43 in Australia.

**SPORTS**

- On 21st April 2018, Barcelona defeated Sevilla 5-0 to and won its fourth straight and 30th overall Copa del Rey title at the Wanda Metropolitano, Madrid. Two goals were scored by Luis Suarez and a goal each by Lionel Messi, Andres Iniesta and Philippe.

- On 22nd April 2018, Rafael Nadal won his 31st Masters title by defeating Japan’s Kei Nishikori in the Monte Carlo Masters final in Monaco. He defeated Japan’s Kei Nishikori by 6-3, 6-2 in the Monte Carlo Masters final. This Nadal’s 11th Monte Carlo Masters title in 14 years. This will also help Rafael Nadal to retain his world number one spot. Kei Nishikori is ranked World No. 36. He was playing for his first ever Masters title.

- On 21st April 2018, Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao announced two per cent reservation in Telangana state government jobs for sportspersons.

- 8th South Asian Judo Championship was held in Lalitpur near Kathmandu, Nepal from 21st-23rd April, 2018. Six countries – India, Nepal, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Bhutan – competed in this Championship. The 13-player Indian contingent won 10 golds and three bronze medals in individual categories.

- Mohamed Salah, an Egyptian professional footballer who plays for English club Liverpool and the Egypt national team was named the PFA Player of the Year on April 22, 2018. Mohamed Salah is the first Egyptian to win this award.

- German tennis player Alexander Zverev improved to the third spot in the latest ATP men’s singles rankings released on 23rd April 2018. The latest ATP top 3 are as follows: 1. Rafael Nadal, 2. Roger Federer, 3. Alexander Zverev.

- On 24th April 2018, National Muaythai Federation Cup, a martial arts competition, ended at the Indoor Stadium, Srinagar. It was organised by Jammu and Kashmir Muaythai Association with the support of Muaythai India National Federation together with Jammu and Kashmir State Sports Council. It is also known as ‘the art of eight limbs’ as it involves the combined use of fists, elbows, knees and shins.

- India’s Jeremy Lalrinnunga (56 kg) won a silver and a bronze medal and broke two national records at the Asian Youth and Junior Weightlifting Championship at Urgench, Uzbekistan. Jeremy Lalrinnunga gave his best total of 250 kg and won the silver in youth section and a bronze medal in the junior section.

- 56th edition of Belgrade International Boxing Championship was held at Belgrade in Serbia from 24th to 28th April, 2018. Indian boxers won three gold, five silver and five bronze medals at this championship. Gold medal winners, Sumit Sangwan (91 kg), Indian woman boxer Nikhat Zareen (51 kg), Himanshu Sharma (49 kg).

- On 29th April 2018, Prajnesh Gunneswaran won his first singles title on the ATP Challenger circuit in the Kunming Open in Anning, China. He is currently ranked 260th. He is expected to enter the top-200 with the 125 ATP points obtained from the title.

- On 29th April 2018, Rafael Nadal won the Barcelona Open tennis title for the 11th time in Barcelona, Spain. Rafael Nadal won the Barcelona Open tennis title by defeating Greece’s Stefanos Tsitsipas 6-
Stefanos Tsitsipas is 19 years old. He is the second-youngest player in the ATP top 100.

On 28th April 2018, India's CA Bhavani Devi won a silver medal in the sabre event of the Tournoi World Cup Satellite Fencing Championship in Reykjavik, Iceland.

**BOOKS & AUTHORS**

On 26th April 2018, Ashwini Kumar Choubey, Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare released a Handbook on Prevention of Accidents and Awareness of First Aid on the occasion of ‘Road Safety Week’ at an event in New Delhi. He stressed on the importance of giving medical trauma care to the injured during the first hour of the accident, known as the golden hour.


**OBITUARY**

On 25th April 2018, Tony Daniel, the technical committee chairman of the Athletics Federation of India (AFI) and the executive vice-president of Kerala State Athletics Association (KSAA), passed away in Kochi, Kerala. He was the Deputy Competition Manager during the Commonwealth Games, Delhi 2010 and Competition Director (Athletics) in South Asian Games, Guwahati 2016.

**IMPORTANT DAYS**

Every year 23 April is celebrated as World Book and Copyright Day. On 23 April 1616 Cervantes, Shakespeare and Inca Garcilaso de la Vega all died. World Book Capital for 2018: Athens, Greece. The 2018 edition of World Book and Copyright Day is entitled: “READING, it's my right!”.

English Language Day is celebrated on 23 April every year. It is observed as both the birthday and date of death of William Shakespeare. UN's language days aim to celebrate multilingualism and cultural diversity and to promote equal use of all six official languages.

On 23rd April 2018, Union Road Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari inaugurated the 29th Road Safety Week at Vigyan Bhawan in New Delhi. He released a short story collection on road safety theme named “Have a safe journey”. He released a paper on road safety by Indian Road Safety Campaign (IRSC). IRSC organizes an annual road safety championship called Safer India Challenge in collaboration with the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways. The Safer India Challenge’18 was also launched at the event.

On 24th April 2018, World Lab Animals Day was observed all over the world. It was declared in 1979 by the British National Anti-Vivisection Society (NAVS). It marks the birthday of former NAVS president Hugh Dowding. This day highlights the efforts to end the suffering of animals in laboratories and their replacement with advanced scientific non-animal techniques.

On 25th April 2018, World Malaria Day and Italy Liberation Day were observed. The theme for World Malaria Day 2018 is: Ready to beat malaria. Italy's Liberation Day also known as the Anniversary of the Liberation, Anniversary of the Resistance is a national Italian holiday. It commemorates the end of the Italian Civil War and the end of Nazi occupation of Italy during World War II.

On 23rd April 2018, Khongjom Day was observed in Manipur by paying floral tributes to the martyrs of 1891 at the historic Khongjom War memorial site at Kheba hillock. Manipur Governor Dr Najma Heptulla and Chief Minister Nongthombam Biren Singh led the public in paying tributes to the martyrs.

On 26th April 2018, World Intellectual Property Day was observed all over the world. To create awareness on the role that intellectual property rights (patents, trademarks, industrial designs,
The theme for World Intellectual Property Day 2018 is - Powering change: Women in innovation and creativity.

- On 28th April 2018, the World Day for Safety and Health at Work was observed all over the world. It has been observed by the International Labour Organization (ILO) since 2003. The theme for World Day for Safety and Health at Work 2018 is: Occupational safety health (OSH) vulnerability of young workers.
- On 29th April 2018, International Dance Day was celebrated all over the world. It was founded in 1982 by the Dance Committee of ITI (International Theatre Institute). It is celebrated every year on 29th April, which marks the birthday of Jean-Georges Noverre, the creator of modern ballet.
- On 30th April 2018, International Jazz Day was celebrated all over the world. International Jazz Day is chaired and led by the UNESCO Director General Audrey Azoulay and jazz pianist and composer Herbie Hancock. Herbie Hancock is UNESCO Ambassador for Intercultural Dialogue and Chairman of the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz. Saint Petersburg, Russia is the Global Host City for International Jazz Day 2018.