

GK DIGEST – JANUARY 2016

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GK Digest – January 2016

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International

Cabinet of Somalia agreed on Election Model outlined by Mogadishu Declaration 2015

Cabinet of Somalia on 28 January 2016 agreed on Election Model outlined by the Mogadishu Declaration. The declaration, which was adopted in December 2015, calls for the electoral process in Somalia to establish a new, bicameral Federal Parliament in 2016, based on inclusivity and representation.

- The new electoral model envisioned a 275-member lower house which maintains a power-sharing formula among clans and a 54-member upper house based on equal representation of existing, emerging and prospective federal states plus additional seats for Puntland and Somaliland.
- It also requires that a minimum of 30 percent of seats be reserved for women.

Iran, Airbus signed deal to buy 118 Airbus planes

Iran and Airbus on 28 January 2016 signed two agreements covering new aircraft orders and a comprehensive civil aviation co-operation package. The agreement includes purchase of 118 new Airbus aircrafts.

- The agreement for 118 new aircraft includes 21 A320ceo family, 24 A320neo family, 27 A330ceo family, 18 A330neo (-900), 16 A350-1000 and 12 A380.
- The agreements were signed at the Elysee Palace, Paris, during Iranian President Hassan Rouhani's official visit to France with French President Francois Hollande.
- Iran Air and Airbus signed an agreement for the acquisition of the full range of new Airbus airliners (73 wide-bodied and 45 single aisles). This includes pilot and maintenance training and support

services to help the entry into service and efficient operations of these new aircraft.

International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust observed

International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust was observed on 27 January 2016 across the world. The day was proclaimed so by the United Nations General Assembly.

- The theme for the Holocaust remembrance and education activities in the year 2016 including the Holocaust Memorial Ceremony is The Holocaust and Human Dignity.

Denmark is the world's least corrupt country

Denmark has emerged as the least corrupt country in the world for a fourth consecutive year, according to the non-governmental organisation Transparency International.

- It scored 91 points out of a possible 100 while North Korea and Somalia remained at the bottom with unchanged scores of 8.
- Finland and Sweden ranked second and third respectively on the 2015 Corruption Perceptions Index, while North Korea and Somalia were named the most corrupt out of 196 nations.
- India took the 76th spot on the list.

6th National Voters' Day observed with theme Inclusive and Qualitative Participation

6th National Voters' Day (NVD) was observed across the country on 25 January 2016 by the Election Commission of India. The theme for the 6th National Voters' Day is 'Inclusive and Qualitative Participation'.

- The Commission's objective through NVD is to increase enrolment of voters, especially of the newly eligible ones. The National function of the NVD was held in New Delhi and presided over by President of India, Pranab Mukherjee.
- On the occasion, the Chief Election Commissioner Dr. Nasim Zaidi also released a book titled, 'Belief in the Ballot' and presented it's the first copy to the President.
- To celebrate and recognise the contribution of Government department/Agencies to the efforts of ECI for enhancing electoral participation, the election commission has introduced awards. Six newly eligible electors were given their EPICs by President of India.
- 25 January is the foundation day of the Commission, which came into being on this day in 1950.

India to build satellite tracking station in Vietnam

India will set up a satellite tracking and imaging centre in southern Vietnam that will give Hanoi access to pictures from Indian earth observation satellites that cover the region, including China and the South China Sea, Indian officials said.

- The move, which could irritate Beijing, deepens ties between India and Vietnam, who both have long-running territorial disputes with China.
- Hanoi especially has been looking for advanced intelligence, surveillance and

reconnaissance technologies as tensions rise with China over the disputed South China Sea, they said.

First Ministerial Meeting of Arab-India Cooperation Forum held at Manama

The first Ministerial Meeting of Arab-India Cooperation Forum was held Manama, capital city of Bahrain.

- The meeting was inaugurated by Bahrain's Foreign Minister Khalid bin Ahmed Al Khalifa and was attended by representatives of 22 Arab League nations. Indian side was represented by Union External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj and also Foreign Secretary S Jaishankar.

Germany the 'best country in the world'

Germany is the best country in the world, according to new analysis unveiled at the World Economic Forum in Davos..

- The United States is the most powerful country in the world, with India the leading up-and-coming economy.
- Italy is the country with the richest tradition and Brazil is the top nation to visit. Canada tops the list of countries with the best quality of life.

Tunisia imposes curfew as unrest grows over lack of jobs

Tunisia has imposed a nationwide overnight curfew after protests and violence against rising unemployment spread across the country.

- The curfew was announced after skirmishes between police and protesters in the early hours of Friday in the impoverished suburbs of Tunis. The capital is braced for mass protests this weekend.
- The violence followed a week of unrest across the country, which police said had injured 59 officers and 40 protesters. The protests carry echoes of Tunisia's Arab spring revolution in December 2010, which saw the downfall of the former president Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali.

WHO declared West Africa Free from Ebola outbreak

WHO has declared the end of the most recent outbreak of Ebola virus disease in Liberia and says all known chains of transmission have been stopped in West Africa.

- Liberia was first declared free of Ebola transmission in May 2015, but Ebola outbreaks twice till November. This announcement has come 42 days (two 21-day incubation cycles of the virus) after the last confirmed patient in Liberia tested negative for the disease 2 times.

After 25 years, Saudi Embassy officially reopens in Baghdad

Saudi Arabia has reopened its embassy in Baghdad after a closure that lasted 25 years and the kingdom's ambassador submitted his credentials at the Foreign Ministry.

- The Shiite-led government in Baghdad relies on Iranian help to battle the extremist Islamic State group, but is also trying to repair ties to oil-rich Saudi Arabia.
- The kingdom closed the embassy in 1990, after Saddam Hussein ordered an invasion of Saudi ally Kuwait.
- Iraqi Foreign Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari on Thursday accepted the credentials of Ambassador Thamir al-Sabhan.

Tsai Ing-wen elected Taiwan's first female president

Tsai Ing-wen has been elected Taiwan's first female president. Ms Tsai, 59, leads the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) that wants independence from China.

- In her victory speech, she vowed to preserve the status quo in relations with China, adding Beijing must respect Taiwan's democracy and both sides must ensure there are no provocations.
- China sees the island as a breakaway province - which it has threatened to take back by force if necessary.
- Mr Chu congratulated Tsai Ing-wen and announced he was quitting as KMT head. Taiwan's Premier Mao Chi-kuo also resigned.

PM Modi Second most popular world leader on FB

According to a study by PR firm Burson-Marsteller, PM Narendra Modi has over 31 million fans on his personal Narendra Modi page.

- As far as fan following on Facebook is concerned, US President Barack Obama is the most popular leader in the world. The US President has over 46 million likes on his Facebook page.

Sri Lankan parliament begins process to adopt new Constitution

Sri Lankan parliament began a process to formulate a new constitution with Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe presenting a resolution to set up Constitutional Assembly of all members for the purpose.

- “We will have the whole parliament formulating the constitution unlike the previous instances when the constitutions were drafted outside parliament,” he said. The new constitution will replace the current executive president headed constitution adopted in 1978.
- President Maithripala Sirisena in his address said the time has come to formulate a new constitution in keeping with the demands of the 21st century. He warned that extremist elements both in the south and the north may try to scuttle the process.

Nepal elected as Unicef’s executive board member

Nepal has been elected to the Unicef executive board, representing the group of Asia-Pacific countries for the term 2016-2018.

- Nepal's ambassador and permanent representative to the UN Durga Prasad Bhattarai, has also been unanimously elected as vice-president to the bureau of the executive board on Saturday, according to Nepal's Permanent Mission to the UN in New York.
- With its election to the United Nations Children's Fund, Nepal has got another chance to contribute to the work of the UN, this time in providing strategic

guidance to its agency specialising in the children's causes, Kathmandu Post reported today.

- Nepal will help ensure, among other things that Unicef activities are responsive to the needs and priorities of the recipient countries, particularly from the perspective of a country emerging from conflict and reeling under the humanitarian crisis as a result of natural disasters and the vulnerabilities of being least developed and land-locked country, it reported.
- Nepal recently completed its terms as a member of the UN economic and social council (ECOSOC) for 2013-2015 and as vice-president from Asia-Pacific region at the executive board of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS for the year 2015.
- Nepal had contributed to the Unicef by remaining in the executive board in different times including 1982 to 1985, 1992 to 1995 and 2002 to 2004.

11th World Hindi Day observed on 10 January

The 11th World Hindi Day was celebrated on 10 January 2016. To mark the occasion, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) through its missions/posts abroad and the Department of Official Language (Rajbhasha) conducted special events to spread the greatness of the language.

- The day was first observed on 10 January 2006. And, it is in addition to the National Hindi Divas that is being celebrated annually on 14 September.
- National Hindi Divas is celebrated to mark the day, 14 September 1949, on which the Constituent Assembly adopted Hindi written in Devanagari script as the Official Language of the Union.

Indra Nooyi becomes ‘most generous graduate’ of Yale School of Management

The prestigious Yale School of Management will name its deanship in honour of PepsiCo’s India-born CEO Indra Nooyi as she gifted an undisclosed amount to her alma mater, becoming the school’s biggest alumni donor and the first woman to endow a deanship at a top b-school.

- Yale did not disclose the amount gifted by Nooyi but said her “landmark gift” to endow the deanship of the school and inaugurate an innovation fund has made her the “most generous graduate” of Yale School of Management in terms of lifetime giving to the school. She is also the first woman to endow the deanship at a top business school, the school said in a statement yesterday.
- The PepsiCo chairman, who graduated from the school in 1980, credited her experience at the school for “forever” altering “the course of my life” and said her gift “pales in comparison with the gift that Yale gave me the fundamental understanding that leadership requires an expansive worldview and a deep appreciation of the many points of intersection between business and society.”

Israelis vote for Putin as their person of 2015

An Israeli poll has named Russian President Vladimir Putin as their person of the year for 2015. Putin was the clear winner with almost 30 percent of the vote, ahead of German Chancellor Angela Merkel in second place.

- The survey was carried out by the Jerusalem Post and its sister Hebrew-

language publication Ma’ariv Sof Hashavua. It polled a total of 527 Jewish adults on Tuesday, while there was an error margin of 4.3 percent.

- The results certainly showed that President Putin has made an impact on the people of Israel during 2015. He received 29 percent of the vote as the respondents were asked to choose their person of the year.
- Sixteen percent opted for Chancellor Merkel, who had been previously chosen as TIME magazine’s Person of the Year for 2015. Benjamin Netanyahu received 15 percent of the vote, while Islamic State’s leader Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi had 3 percent of voters thinking he was their person of the year.

World Braille Day observed on 4 January

World Braille Day was observed across the world on 4 January 2016 to commemorate the birth anniversary of Louis Braille.

- To mark this occasion, NGOs, as well as other organizations came together to raise awareness about the apathy towards visually impaired people and to help them be equal with the rest of the people.
- Louis Braille, who was born in France on 4 January 1809, is credited for inventing the Braille script. The script helps the visually impaired people to read as well as write.

India-Nepal Bus Service resumed after 27 years

India-Nepal Bus Service on 4 January 2016 resumed after a gap of 27 years. The service was suspended 27 years ago in the wake of the Indo-Nepal Trade and Transit Treaty.

- The service runs between Kanchanpur in Nepal, which is close to Banbasa border in

Champavat district of Uttarakhand, and Anand Vihar ISBT in Delhi.

Forbes released 2016 30 Under 30 List; 45 Indian-origin people featured

Forbes on 4 January 2016 released the 2016 30 Under 30 List featuring 600 men and women who achieved remarkable professional success before attaining 30 years of age. They were chosen from an initial screening list of more than 15000 representing a gamut of 20 segments that include art & style, finance, sports, education, etc.

- The list includes John Boyega (Hollywood & Entertainment category), Shawn

Mendes (Music), Emerson Spartz (Media) among others.

- Further, 45 Indians and Indian-origin people figured in the annual compilation for their entrepreneurial spirit and breakout talents.

World's largest blue star sapphire discovered in Sri Lanka

The world's largest blue star sapphire that weighs 1404.49 carats was discovered in a mine in Sri Lanka. The sapphire was found in August 2015 near Ratnapura city in the South of Sri Lanka.

- The stone is worth at an estimated cost of 100 million US dollars but could be valued up to 165 million US dollars.

National

Uttar Pradesh joins UDAY scheme

Uttar Pradesh became the fourth state to join the Centre's scheme to revive state electricity distribution utilities on Saturday. The state government signed a memorandum of understanding with the Centre and the Uttar Pradesh Power Corporation Ltd, the holding company of the various electricity distribution utilities in the state.

- The four states – Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh – which have signed MoUs for joining UDAY, account for about 35 per cent of the outstanding loans of state electricity distribution utilities in the country.

Puducherry Lt Governor AK Singh launched MITRA app for women safety

Lt Governor of Puducherry AK Singh on 28 January 2016 launched the MITRA mobile application to ensure safety and security of women in the Union Territory. The app was launched in the presence of the Chief Minister N Rangasamy in Puducherry.

- The Android based application can send emergency SOS messages when in danger or emergency.
- At present, it is available only in smart phones.

Commemorative Coin of 150 rupees & Circulation Coin of 10 rupees on Lala Lajpat Rai released

Ministry of Culture on 28 January 2016 released a commemorative coin of 150 rupees and a circulation coin of 10 rupees on Lala Lajpat Rai.

- The Commemorative Coin of 150 rupees is made of Quaternary alloy with diameter of 44 mm and weight of 35 grams.
- The Circulation coin of 10 rupees is made of bi-metallic material with diameter of 27 mm and weight of 7.71 grams. The coin was released by Dr Mahesh Sharma, Minister of state (Independent charge) Minister of Tourism & Culture at New Delhi on the occasion of 150th birth anniversary of Lala Lajpat Rai.

Kerala to host global skill summit

Kerala will host a three-day 'Nypunyam International Skill Summit and Skill Fiesta 2016' next month with a view to bridging the gap between the job market requirement and the skill level of available workforce.

- The event will unfold on February 5, according to Tom Jose, Additional Chief Secretary, Department of Labour and Skills, Kerala. The focus will be on improving the skill levels and bringing them up to world standards in tune with the Prime Minister's initiative for skilling 500 million young people by 2020.
- The skill summit will gather an array of top industry leaders, key government officials, policy makers and analysts functioning in the sector.

Union Government launched National Job Portal for Persons with Disabilities

The Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment Thaawarchand Gehlot on 27 January 2016 launched the National level Job portal www.disabilityjobs.gov.in for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs).

- The Ministry aims to carry out skill training programme for 5 lakh Persons with Disabilities in next 3 years.

CERT-In inks cyber security agreements with 3 nations

Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) has signed cybersecurity agreement with its counterparts in Malaysia, Singapore and Japan.

- In this regard, the Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi has apprised the Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) signed between CERT-In and 3 nations.

Rajasthan Govt inks MoU to join UDAY Scheme

Rajasthan Government along with its power distribution companies (DISCOMS) has signed a MoU to join UDAY (Ujwal Discom Assurance Yojana) Scheme.

- State DISCOMS part of this MoU are Jaipur Vidyut Vitran Nigam Limited (JVNL), Jodhpur Vidyut Vitran Nigam Limited (JVNL) and Ajmer Vidyut Vitran Nigam Limited (AVNL).

India successfully test fired Akash missile at Chandipur

India on 28 January 2016 test fired its indigenously-built surface-to-air Akash missile from complex-3 of the Integrated Test Range (ITR).at Chandipuri in Odisha. It was as part of a user trial mission.

- Three rounds of test were carried out by Indian Air Force (IAF) personnel aiming at para-barrel targets.

IPS officer Aparna Kumar became India's first civil servant to scale Mount Vinson Massif

Aparna Kumar, IPS officer of Uttar Pradesh cadre, became India's first civil servant to scale Mount Vinson Massif, the highest peak in the Antarctica.

- She hoisted the Tricolour and the flag of the Uttar Pradesh Police Service on Mount Vinson Massif.
- She set out on the Antarctic expedition on 5 January 2016, accompanied by a 10-member team of mountaineers from various countries.

Govt. releases list of 20 smart cities

The Union government today announced the names of the first 20 urban areas that will be developed as smart cities.

- “Implementation of smart cities plan will showcase integrated planning. The investment of Rs 50,802 crores has been proposed in selected smart cities and towns during the five-year period,” said minister of urban development Venkaiah Naidu, while announcing the list.
- There are five capital cities among the 20 smart cities chosen which are as follows –

- Bhubaneswar
- Pune
- Jaipur
- Surat
- Kochi
- Ahmedabad
- Jabalpur
- Vishakapatnam
- Sholapur
- Davangere
- Indore
- New Delhi (New Delhi municipal council area)
- Coimbatore

- Kakinada
- Belagavi
- Udaipur
- Guwahati
- Chennai
- Ludhiana
- Bhopal

UP launches helpline number for journalists

Uttar Pradesh CM Akhilesh Yadav launched a dedicated helpline for journalists with number 1800-1800-303.

- Managed by the state’s Information and Public Relation Department, the helpline will help and assist the media persons.
- He also launched a computerised file-tracking system to track the development of a file and ensure its time-bound disposal.

Cabinet approves raising of 17 Indian Reserve Battalions by J&K and LWE States

The Union Cabinet under the Chairmanship of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has approved the raising of 17 India Reserve Battalions (IR Bns) by Jammu & Kashmir and Left Wing Extremism (LWE) affected States.

- It includes five IR Bns in the state of J&K, four IR Bns in Chhattisgarh, three IR Bns in Jharkhand, three IR Bns in Odisha and two IR Bns in Maharashtra.

President rule imposed in Arunachal Pradesh

President rule has been imposed in Arunachal Pradesh after President Pranab Mukherjee on Tuesday gave his assent to Union Cabinet's recommendation.

- Justifying the Centre's move, minister of state for home Kiran Rijju had earlier said the Cabinet was forced to take the decision because of a Constitutional breakdown as six months had lapsed between two sessions of the state assembly.
- On Monday, President Pranab Mukherjee had called home minister Rajnath Singh and put some queries to him on the need for the imposition of President's rule.

Andhra tops in implementing MGNREGA for 2014-15

Andhra Pradesh has topped in the country in implementing the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act for the 2014-2015 in category of transparency and accountability.

- Ayyanna Patrudu, Andhra Pradesh Minister for Panchayat Raj and MGNREGA, said that the award will be given in New Delhi on 2nd of February.

AP Govt. launched Giriputrika Kalyana Pathakam Scheme for tribal people

The Andhra Pradesh Government launched Giriputrika Kalyana Pathakam Scheme to support the tribal women in their quest for livelihood.

- The scheme was launched by Andhra Pradesh Minister for Social Welfare Ravela Kishore Babu.

- To avail the benefits of this scheme, each beneficiary would have to fulfil some mandatory conditions like submission of marriage certificate, income certificate, etc.

BEPS guidelines of OECD to be implemented in India from 1 April 2016

The term BEPS is an acronym of Base Erosion and Profit Shifting and it was in news in the third week of January 2016 as India decided to implement these guidelines.

- These norms were announced by Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in October 2015 to close tax loopholes that it estimated cost countries upwards of 100 billion US dollars a year.
- With the implementation of these guidelines, it will become mandatory for Indian multinationals to make country-by-country reporting to follow guidelines from the financial year that begins on 1 April 2016.

PM declassifies 100 files relating to Netaji

Prime Minister Narendra Modi today made public digital copies of 100 secret files relating to Subhas Chandra Bose on his 119th birth anniversary, which could throw some light on the controversy over his death.

- The files were declassified and put on digital display at the National Archives of India (NAI) here by the Prime Minister, who pressed a button in the presence of Bose family members and Union Ministers Mahesh Sharma and Babul Supriyo.
- Later, Modi and his ministerial colleagues went around glancing at the declassified files, spending over half an hour at the National Archives. He also spoke to the

members of the Bose family. The NAI also plans to release digital copies of 25 declassified files on Bose in the public domain every month.

- The first lot of 33 files were declassified by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and handed over to the NAI on December 4, last year. Subsequently, the Ministries of Home Affairs and External Affairs too initiated the process of declassification of files relating to Bose in their respective collection which were then transferred over to the NAI, it added.

India, Japan conduct joint exercise 'Sahyog-Kaijin' off Chennai coast

The 15th edition of bilateral exercise by the Indian Coast Guard and its Japanese counterpart titled 'Sahyog-Kaijin 2016' has begun off the coast of Chennai, Tamil Nadu in the Bay of Bengal.

- Sahyog-Kaijin bilateral exercise is a part of the cooperative arrangements between two Coast Guards for the last 15 years and held once in two years and the venue would shift in both countries on alternate occasions.

Nag anti-tank missile Successfully Test fired

The indigenously-built anti-tank missile Nag was successfully test fired at Mahajan Field Firing Range in Rajasthan.

- It is developed by the DRDO under the Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme (IGMDP). It is fire-and-forget anti-tank missile. HeliNa is a helicopter-launched version of Nag missile.
- It has operational range of upto 4km (Land version) and upto 10 km (Air-launched).

India's Grid-linked solar generation capacity crosses 5,000 MW mark

Union Ministry of New and Renewable Energy has announced that India's grid-connected solar power generation capacity has crossed the 5,000 Mega Watt (MW) mark.

- The Central Govt. has increased the target of solar power generation capacity by five times from 20,000 MW to 100 GW by 2022.

Metro Train will be started in Kochi

Kochi will be the eighth city of India where Metro train becomes operational. Trial run will begin on 23rd January in the presence of Oommen Chandy, the chief Minister of Kerala.

15th January: Indian Army Day celebrated

Indian Army Day is being observed every year on 15 January in India.

- This year it will be the 68th Indian Army Day.

First 'Mahila Squad' Commissioned For High-Altitude Posts Of India-China Border

A freshly-trained contingent of 500 women personnel will become the first 'mahila' squad to be deployed in high-altitude posts along the India-China border. The squad was commissioned into the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) today in Panchkula.

- The women, in the rank of constable, were inducted in the border-guarding force after 44-weeks of training in battle craft and mountain survival and will now be sent to frontier areas for final acclimatisation before being deployed at ITBP posts along the 3,488-km Sino-India Line of Actual Control (LAC).
- These 'mahila' contingents are expected to be posted by March this year at about 20 forward locations of the ITBP situated at heights of between 8,000-14,000 feet, including at the 'Mana pass' border post, the last village on the Indian side in Uttarakhand.
- ITBP Director General Krishna Chaudhary, after reviewing the 'passing out parade' of the new personnel, asked them to exhibit the best skills that they have learnt during training to discharge their duties in some of the most difficult locations in the Himalayan ranges.
- This is the first time that India is deploying women troops right at the front, one which is considered to be the most arduous and tricky given the harsh climatic conditions and extreme mountainous terrain along the India-China border.
- ITBP, raised in the aftermath of the 1962 Chinese aggression, has also begun creating logistical and residential facilities for its women personnel at these posts and it is expected to be completed by early March. The force plans to have women personnel make up at least 40 per cent of its strength at these forward posts.

Bihar commercial Tax dept. and DGFT signed MoU to share Foreign Money statistics

The Commercial tax department of Bihar has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)

with Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) for sharing of foreign exchange realization data.

- Smt. Sujata Chaturvedi, Commissioner cum Principal Secretary, Commercial Taxes Department represented Government of Bihar while Shri D. K. Singh, Additional DGFT represented DGFT. The ceremony was presided over by DGFT Shri Anup Wadhawan.
- The foreign exchange realization data is an important economic indicator as it quantifies transaction level export earnings. This is also known as eBRC (Electronic Bank Realization Certificate) data. BRC can be used by state government departments for ensuring refund of VAT to eligible exporters.
- So far, Commercial Tax Departments of 13 states have signed MoU with DGFT for receiving e-BRC data for VAT refund purposes. These are: (i) Maharashtra, (ii) Delhi, (iii) Andhra Pradesh, (iv) Odisha, (v) Chhattisgarh, (vi) Haryana, (vii) Tamil Nadu, (viii) Karnataka, (ix) Gujarat, (x) Uttar Pradesh, (xi) Madhya Pradesh, (xii) Kerala, (xiii) Goa.
- In addition, Ministry of Finance, Enforcement Directorate and Agricultural & Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) have also signed MoU with DGFT for receiving e-BRC data.

Madhya Pradesh inks pact with IFC to set up world's largest solar plant

The Madhya Pradesh government has inked a pact with IFC, member of the World Bank Group, to set up the world's largest solar energy plant with a capacity of 750 MW.

- The Rewa Ultra-Mega Solar Power Project will be set up in Gurh tehsil of Rewa district over an area of 1,500 hectares at an estimated cost of Rs 4,500 crore.
- The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between Madhya Pradesh Renewable Energy Development Corporation and IFC.

World's largest Tricolour to be hoisted in Ranchi

Ranchi is all going to beat a record set by a flag in Faridabad, Haryana in March 2015 by getting the world's largest Tricolour flying atop the country's tallest flagpole at the Pahari temple in Ranchi.

- The 99 by 66 feet measuring flag will be hoisted from a height of 293 feet.

Dr. Jitendra Singh inaugurates 'Hall of Nuclear Power' in Delhi

The Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER), MoS PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances, Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space, Dr. Jitendra Singh inaugurated the "Hall of Nuclear Power" here today.

- This is Northern India's first permanent exhibition on nuclear power, built in the national capital which is going to be opened to the public at National Science Centre (NSC).
- The gallery has been set up at a cost of Rs. 2.5 crore at NSC, Delhi, a unit of NCSM, the apex organisation engaged in popularisation of science through its science centres spread all over the country.
- The gallery has been set up in technical and financial collaboration with NPCIL.

India has 2.36 lakh millionaires: report

India is home to the fourth largest population of millionaires in the Asia-Pacific region, with 2.36 lakh such high net worth individuals, while Japan topped the list with 12.60 lakh people, a report says.

- According to the Asia Pacific 2016 Wealth Report, by New World Wealth, India was ranked among the top five Asia-Pacific countries in terms of the number of high net worth individuals (HNWIs).
- HNWIs (millionaires) were defined as individuals with net assets of \$1 million or more.
- At the end of 2015, there were 12,60,000 millionaires in Japan, while China ranked second with 654,000 HNWIs and Australia was at the third place had 290,000.
- Others in the top 10 in terms of number of HNWIs in the Asia-Pacific include, Singapore at the fifth place with 224,000 millionaires, Hong Kong (sixth, 215,000), South Korea (seventh, 125,000), Taiwan (eighth, 98,200), New Zealand (9th, 89,000) and Indonesia (10th, 48,500).

India slips to 89th rank in global talent competitiveness: Report

India has slipped 11 places to rank 89th on a global index of talent competitiveness, a list which has been topped by Switzerland.

- India's ranking is worst among the five BRICS countries, with China leading the pack with a global rank of 48.

Ministry of Shipping initiates Project Green Port

Weighing in the environmental perspective for sustained growth, the Ministry of Shipping has started 'Project Green Ports' which will help in making the Major Ports across India cleaner and greener.

- ‘Project Green Ports’ will have two verticals - one is ‘Green Ports Initiatives’ related to environmental issues and second is ‘Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan’.
- The Green Port Initiatives include twelve initiatives which will be implemented under strict time bound fashion in order to achieve the targets.

Jayalithaa launches Amma Call Centre

In an initiative aimed at quick delivery of government services, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister J Jayalithaa today launched a round-the-clock call centre for ensuring fast response to grievances. The ‘Amma Call Centre’, which will work all through the year, was launched by the Chief Minister here through video-conferencing.

- Jayalithaa is fondly addressed as ‘Amma’ (mother) by her supporters and her government is already running many initiatives named after her, including the hugely popular ‘Amma Canteens’ which provide subsidised food, and ‘Amma Mineral Water’, among others.

International Kolkata Book Fair on Jan 25

The 40th edition of the International Kolkata Book Fair – the world’s largest non-trade fair, starting from Jan 25 – is all set to bring to life a slice of history.

- Bolivia will be theme country while Vietnam will be the guest country in the fair.
- Incidentally, the fair is also expected to go hi-tech this year. An application (mobile app) that can be downloaded on smartphones to locate the book stalls. Around 600 (book) stalls and 200 ‘little magazines’ will be there in the 40th edition of the fair. This apart, special shuttle buses will ply to

and from the fair grounds to the nearest point in central Kolkata.

Bihar Cabinet approved 35 % reservation for women in govt. jobs

The Bihar Cabinet formally approved 35 percent reservation for women in all government jobs in the state. The decision was taken in the cabinet meeting presided by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar.

- The 35 percent reservation for women will be applicable to in all government jobs including reserved and unreserved category.
- The Bihar Government is already providing 35 percent reservation for women in recruitment as police constables and sub-inspectors and 50 percent reservation as primary school teachers and in the Panchayati Raj system.

Cabinet approves new power tariff policy

The Cabinet today approved a new power tariff policy that aims at promoting clean energy, better regulation of discoms, and faster roll-out of investments.

- The Union Cabinet today approved a new power tariff policy which will promote clean energy, support the Swachh Bharat programme, better regulation for discoms, and encourage faster roll-out of investments in the sector.
- Under the policy, the power plants will have to use processed municipal waste water available in their vicinity (in 100 km radius). The proposed policy will bring in several unique aspects which have not

been touched in the past. It will allow distribution companies to buy any amount of power produced from the waste.

Light combat aircraft, Tejas to fly at Bahrain Air

Show

Country's own fighter aircraft light combat aircraft (LCA), Tejas, will take part in the three-day Bahrain International Airshow starting from Thursday (January 21 to 23).

- "Two limited series production (LSP) aircraft will take part in the Bahrain International Air Show to enthrall the visitors from various countries during the flying display through a series of aerobatic manoeuvres such as 8-g pull, vertical loop, slow fly past, barrel roll", said T Suvarna Raju, CMD, HAL.
- Tejas is a single engine, light weight, highly agile, multi-role supersonic fighter. The Tejas light combat aircraft is a 4.5 generation aircraft with supersonic capability at all altitudes. It has the fly by wire, state of the art open architecture computer for avionics and better weapon and combat capability. With the advanced avionics, the pilot load is also reduced.

PSLV-C31 successfully launched IRNSS-1E satellite

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) on 20 January 2016 successfully launched the Indian Regional Navigational Satellite System (IRNSS) 1-E satellite. The satellite will provide navigation, tracking and mapping services to the Indian sub continent.

- The satellite is the fifth of the IRNSS constellation. It was launched from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SHAR), Sriharikota in Andhra Pradesh on-board

the PSLV-C31. The Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV)-C31 was the 32nd consecutively successful mission of the PSLV. The 'XL' configuration of PSLV was used for this mission.

Govt Announces National Award For The Most 'Film-Friendly' State In India

In a move to encourage states to promote and embrace films from various genres, the information and broadcasting ministry has decided to introduce a new category at the National Awards and it will be for the 'Most Film-Friendly State/UT'.

- Sunil Arora, secretary of information and broadcasting said that the award will be conferred for the first time at the 63rd National Film Awards to be in Delhi on 3 May 2016. The statement was issued by the Press Information Bureau on their official website.
- Film Facilitation Office was to be set up at the National Film Development Corporation of India (NFDC) under the supervision of the Ministry of I&B.

Wattan Ko Jano initiative: A programme that aims to expose youth from J&K to rest of India

Wattan Ko Jano, an initiative being carried out by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs in coordination with the Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) Government, was in news on 6 January 2016. The initiative came in news after more than 240 youth in the age-group of 15 to 24 from J&K met with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi.

- Watan Ko Jano initiative was conceived by the J&K State Rehabilitation Council in 2011. It essentially is a Youth Exchange

Programme under which the children of militancy-hit victims, orphanages, and weaker sections of society are identified by Jammu and Kashmir State Rehabilitation Council as beneficiaries under the programme in the state.

- The initiative aims at exposing youth from the state to the vibrant development and vitality of culture of people residing in other states of the country. Earlier on 29 December 2015, a group of 250 such youngsters participated in the Watan Ko Jano tour and met Home Minister Rajnath Singh.

Paramilitary forces to have 33% reservation for women in constable level position

Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh has approved 33% reservation for women in Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) at constable-level positions.

- There will be 33% reservation for women at constable-level posts in Central Reserve Police Force and Central Industrial Security Force, and 14-15% reservation at the constable level in border guarding forces i.e. Border Security Force, Sashastra Seema Bal and Indo Tibetan Border Police, starting immediately, according to an official statement released by the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Gadkari launches India's first River Information System

Union Shipping Minister Nitin Gadkari on Wednesday inaugurated the River Information System (RIS) - the first of its kind in India - to facilitate safe and accurate navigation on National Waterway-1 (the Ganga River).

- Phase-II of the system from Farakka to Patna and Phase-III from Patna to Varanasi

will be undertaken on priority, the statement said.

- "River Information Systems are combination of modern tracking equipment related hardware and software designed to optimise traffic and transport processes in inland navigation.

Union Government allowed traditional bull-taming sports Jallikattu in Tamil Nadu

The Union Government on 8 January 2016 allowed the conduct of the traditional bull-taming sports, Jallikattu, in Tamil Nadu.

- The ban on the sports was lifted few days before the traditional harvest festival will begin in Tamil Nadu. Jallikattu is celebrated around pongal in southern state of Tamil Nadu.
- The Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change issued a gazette notification with regard to holding traditional sports that use bulls as performing animals including Jallikattu across India.
- The notification said that bulls can be exhibited and trained as performing animal at different events of different states as per the customs or tradition of any community. The notification also specifies that bullock cart race shall be organised on a proper track, which shall not exceed two kilometers. On the other hand, in case of Jallikattu, the moment the bull leaves the enclosure it shall be tamed within a radial distance of 15 metre.

Overseas Indian Affairs Ministry, MEA merged

In order to avoid duplication of work and to improve efficiency, the government merged the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA) with the Ministry of External Affairs. Announcing the

merger, External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj tweeted on Thursday, “As Minister of External Affairs and Overseas Indian Affairs, I realised that a substantial work of MOIA is done through our missions abroad. Therefore, I proposed to Hon’ble Prime Minister that MOIA should be merged with the Ministry of External Affairs.”

- Sources, however, indicated that the decision to merge MOIA with MEA was taken as senior diplomats wanted officials dealing with foreign workers-related issues and emergencies to have better diplomatic back-up and coordination.

Indo-French military exercise Shakti-2016 started

India and France on 8 January 2016 started their eight-day counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency joint exercise Shakti-2016 in Rajasthan. This is the third edition in the series of bilateral exercises under this banner and is being held in Mahajan Field Firing Ranges in Rajasthan's Bikaner.

- The exercise will be focused on counter terrorism operations in backdrop of semi-urban terrain under United Nations Mandate. It is an important step for the armies to train together and gain from each other's rich operational experience.
- The Indian contingent to participate in the exercise will be the 2nd Battalion of Garhwal Rifles, part of the Sapta Shakti Command. Both countries have troops deployed in counter-insurgency and counter-terrorist operations and therefore sharing each other's military experiences will pay meaningful dividends.

Ganga Gram Yojana launched

As a major initiative towards fast track implementation of Namami Gange Programme the first company of Ganga Task force Battalion was deployed at Garhmu kteshwar yesterday. Speaking on the occasion Union Minister of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation Sushri Uma Bharti said that three such companies will be deployed soon at Kanpur, Varanasi and Allahabad.

- In the first phase of the programme 200 villages have been selected. In these villages open drains falling into river Ganga will be diverted and alternative arrangements for sewage treatment will be made. The villages will have toilets in every house hold.
- It is proposed to incur and expenditure of Rs. One crore on every village.

French soldiers to march down Rajpath on Republic Day 2016 along with Indian troops

The French soldiers will march down the Rajpath on Republic Day along with Indian troops in the presence of President Francois Hollande. Hollande is the Chief Guest for 26 January 2016 celebrations. This is the first time that a foreign army will participate in the 26th January Parade, since 1950.

- A French contingent, comprising 56 personnel of 35th Infantry Regiment of 7th Armoured Brigade, is already in the country to take part in a joint exercise, Shakti 2016, which began in Rajasthan on 8 January 2016. Some soldiers will also fly down from France to form a proper marching contingent.
- Earlier similar event occurred in France when Indian troops drawn from the three

services (Indian Army, Indian Navy and Indian Air Force) marched down the Champs Elysees in Paris along with French Army on the Bastille Day. The event was held on 14 July 2009 and saw participation of the Maratha light infantry, which is one of the oldest regiments of Indian Army.

- Bastille Day (French National Day) is celebrated on 14 July each year. The French National Day commemorates the Storming of the Bastille on 14 July 1789, an important event in Paris that was the symbolic start of French revolution.

Modi to be chief guest at sustainable agriculture meet in Gangtok

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be the chief guest at the National Conference on Sustainable Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare being held in Gangtok on January 17-18, the Agriculture Ministry said in a statement.

- The conference is being held in Sikkim, which has taken the lead on organic farming, Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh, said, adding that the conference will be attended by State government representatives, scientists, academics, bankers, experts and practitioners.
- Jitendra Singh, Minister for Development of North East (Independent charge), said the green field airport at Pakyong near Gangtok is expected to be complete and become functional by 2017.
- He said there are also plans to connect Sikkim with the country's rail network, which would be the third North-Eastern State after Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh to be brought on the rail map of India.

- Singh also referred to the plan for constructing alternative road highway to Gangtok in Sikkim via West Bengal and two ropeways that will serve the purpose of both tourism as well as transport.

Smriti Irani inaugurates 43rd New Delhi World Book Fair

Human Resource Minister Smriti Irani inaugurated the 43rd edition of the New Delhi World Book Fair which commenced here with China as the guest of honour country and a theme presentation of the cultural heritage of India.

- The nine-day fair, touted as the largest in Asia, is hosting about 30 countries in which a series of programmes including panel discussions, dramas, classical and folk dances, workshops, discussions, authors' meets, conferences, seminars and cultural programmes will be held.
- Talking about the Chinese participation, Irani said, "I believe that 50 publishing houses and 9 eminent authors bring with them to this World Book Fair around 5,000 titles so that through this exchange our people across both nations can be enriched."
- China was invited to be the guest country after the visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping here last year where he signed a memorandum of understanding with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- This year the fair has introduced a special 'Navlekhan' programme which seeks to promote and publish young authors under the age of 40 writing in Indian languages. Referring to the same Irani said, while this year they are being published in 6 regional languages by next year she assured that books in 22 languages recognised by the Constitution of India will be published.

Oil Ministry launches e-initiative to improve LPG customer service

The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas has launched an online initiative to seek suggestions from LPG consumers across the country, which will help in providing efficient and friendly service.

- Two online discussion forums - Citizen-Friendly Services and Increasing LPG Coverage in the Country - have been launched and are available on myGov.in and mylpg.in, an official press statement said.
- The initiative is part of steps being taken to observe 2016 as the 'Year of LPG Consumers'.
- "LPG consumers/ citizens are requested to participate and share their thoughts on the respective forums online. Valuable suggestions/ comments are welcome and will be considered for improving the customer oriented services related to LPG coverage and delivery," it said.

After Delhi, now odd-even formula for Rohtak, Haryana

Odd even formula will be next applied in Rohtak, Haryana to check rising level of pollution in the city.

- In Haryana, unlike Delhi, the formula will be applied only on auto rickshaws on trial basis. The Haryana government discussed about implementation of the scheme with auto organizations and has reportedly received a nod for it.

Governor's rule imposed in Jammu and Kashmir

Jammu and Kashmir on Saturday came under governor's rule as process of new government formation following the death of chief minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed will take some time.

- The President cleared the recommendation of the Union home ministry for imposing governor's rule on the basis of a recommendation from J-K governor N N Vohra.
- Governor's rule had to be imposed in view of the reluctance of Mufti's daughter Mehbooba to take oath during the mourning period though her party has already conveyed to the governor that 28 MLAs of the PDP legislature party backed her for the chief minister's post.
- Sayeed died on Thursday after a brief illness and since then there is a constitutional vacuum. PDP's coalition ally BJP has also indicated that it would take a decision on new government formation once the four-day mourning period is over on Sunday.

14th Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas held in New Delhi

The 14th Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas (PBD) was held in New Delhi. The event was inaugurated by the External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj and attended by Priti Patel, MoS for Employment, United Kingdom.

- Apart from the main event in New Delhi, the day was celebrated by the MEA, across the world, through its missions/posts abroad.
- On this occasion, Sushma Swaraj announced that the government is considering Aadhaar cards to non-resident Indians (NRIs) and allowing women workers to Gulf countries only through the government agencies to ensure they were not duped by recruiting agents or firms.

International Kite festival started in Ahmedabad

Gujarat Chief Minister Anandiben Patel on 10 January 2016 inaugurated the 28th edition of International Kite Festival at Sabarmati River front in Ahmedabad, Gujarat. The Kite festival of Gujarat marks Uttarayan, the day when winter begins to turn into summer, according to the Indian calendar.

- The five-day annual event saw participation of about 98 foreign kite flyers from 28 different nations and 55 participants from 8 different states and 28 kite flyers from Gujarat.
- While inaugurating the festival, Chief Minister Patel claimed that the festival has boosted the kite-making industry along with attracting foreign tourists in Gujarat. She also said that in last one decade the business of kite making has grown from 100 crore rupees to 750 crore rupees.
- The international kite festival is simultaneously organized in other cities of the state including Surat, Vadodara, Rajkot, Porbandar, Mandvi, Botad, Surendra nagar, and Modhera.

President of India inaugurates 88th Annual Conference of Nikhil Bharat Banga Sahitya Sammelan

The President of India, Shri Pranab Mukherjee inaugurated the three day long 88th annual conference of Nikhil Bharat Banga Sahitya Sammelanon January 10, 2016 at Ranchi, Jharkhand.

- Speaking on the occasion, the President said the great traditions of Bengali literature, language and culture originated from the period of 'Charyapada' a Bengali compilation that was discovered by the

noted scholar, Haraprasad Shastri in Nepal in 1907.

Telangana became first State to make gender education compulsory at graduate level

Telangana became the first State in India to introduce compulsory gender education at the graduate level. In this regard, the state in second week of January 2016 introduced a bilingual textbook titled, Towards a World of Equals. The book was introduced on a pilot basis in engineering colleges affiliated to the Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University (JNTU-Hyderabad).

- The book discusses gender in its composite form without limiting itself to crime against women. The book attempts to cover information on unacknowledged women writers of Telangana to problems of sex selection and women's work in politics and economics.
- The book is coupled with a collection of visual teaching tools which include documentary films. The book is being taught over 14 weeks in a semester at the rate of two classes per week.

Union Railway Ministry inaugurated Implementation of E-enabled Track Management System

Union Railway Minister Suresh Prabhakar Prabhu on 11 January 2016 inaugurated implementation of E-enabled Track Management System (TMS) and Mobile Application of TMS on Indian Railway at Rail Bhawan in New Delhi.

- Along with these two initiatives, the minister also inaugurated pilot implementation of Track Inventory Management System on Northern Railway to track materials inventory, construction and track machines organization in entire 225 units of Northern Railway.
- It is an important milestone in promoting e-working in civil engineering department of Indian Railways. It is implemented on all the 68 divisions of Indian Railways. With the implementation of this system, various activities of Track Inspection, Monitoring and Maintenance came on IT platform. It is the first of its kind Organization Wide Asset Management IT Application.

Kullu's Folk Dance Finds Place in Guinness Book of World Records

The colourful Kullu folk dance (Nati), which saw participation of 20,000 dancers during Kullu Dussehra festival on October 26 last year, has entered the Guinness book of world records.

- In the Nati, 9892 women attired in traditional Kullu dress performed at Dhalpur Ground during Kullu Dussehra festival on October 26 last year.

Kerala Declared First State to Attain Total Primary Education

Vice President Hamid Ansari today declared Kerala as the first state in the country to attain 'Total Primary Education', and described the achievement as 'historic.' "I believe that the date today is as historic for Kerala as April 18, 1991, the day Kerala was declared to be a fully literate state," he said.

- Noting that the achievement was another feather to the state's educational cap, he said the state was marking the successful

culmination of its 'Athulyam' programme aimed at ensuring Total Primary Education in Kerala -- equivalent to Standard IV of formal education.

National Institute of Visual Science inaugurated

The K.R. Narayanan National Institute of Visual Science and Arts was inaugurated by Vice-President M. Hamid Ansari at Thekkumthala, 27 km off Kottayam, on 11 January.

- Speaking on the occasion, Chief Minister Oommen Chandy said that the Government is taking necessary steps to make the institute a deemed university. He also said that the institute is planning to create a film hub linking the nearby tourist spots Munnar, Vagamon, Kuttikanam and Kumarakom. The institute will hold cultural exchange programmes with foreign universities.

20th National Youth Festival inaugurated in Naya Raipur

The 20th National Youth Festival was on 12 January 2016 inaugurated by Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari at Rajyostav Sthal in Naya Raipur, Chhattisgarh to mark the National Youth Day.

- The five day long annual festival is celebrated by the Union Government in partnership with a state government on the occasion of the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda. For the 20th National Youth Festival, Chhattisgarh was chosen as the partner state with the theme India Youth for Skill, Development and Harmony.

Union Govt unveils National Biotechnology Development Strategy 2015-2020

Union Government has unveiled National Biotechnology Development Strategy (NBDS) 2015-2020 to establish India as a world-class bio-manufacturing hub.

- It was unveiled by the Union Science and Technology Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan in New Delhi.

Union Cabinet approves Raptor MoU for conservation of migratory birds of prey

The Union Cabinet has given its approval to sign Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) on the Conservation of Migratory Birds of Prey in Africa and Eurasia.

- With signing it, India will become the 54th signatory to the MoU. The Raptors MoU extends its coverage to 76 species of birds of prey out and an action plan has been formulated that envisages the conservation action for Raptor species.
- It is an agreement under Article IV paragraph 4 of the Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS) and is not legally binding on signatory parties.
- The MoU seeks willingness of the signatory states for working for conservation of the raptor species and their habitats.

Union government and the World Bank signed a \$50-million credit agreement

The Union government and the World Bank signed a \$50-million credit agreement for a project aimed at helping young people from minority communities complete their education and improve their employment opportunities named NaiManzil Scheme.

- The NaiManzil Scheme is designed as an integrated education and training programme that provides youth from minority communities skills needed for different tasks in a rapidly changing world.
- The agreement was signed by Mr. Kumar and Michael Haney, the World Bank's Operations Adviser in India.

Ambitious odd-even scheme of Delhi government started off in New Delhi

The ambitious odd-even scheme of Delhi government, a first such intervention in the country to combat spiralling air pollution, got off to a decent start on new year with volume of cars on the city roads coming down significantly amid deployment of thousands of policemen and moderately augmented public transport.

- As the clock struck eight, the vehicular restriction policy came into effect with thousands of volunteers carrying roses also taking to the streets to assist traffic police in enforcing the pilot plan that will stay in force till January 15.
- Under the scheme, cars bearing odd-numbered registration plates shall ply on city roads while those with even number plates, if taken out, will attract a penalty of Rs 2,000 under relevant sections of the Motor Vehicles Act. It will be vice-versa on Saturday. Also, 25 categories of people are being given exemptions including the VIPs.

LRSAM test-fired from INS Kolkata

Long Range Surface-to-Air Missile (LRSAM), the missile co-developed by India and Israel, was successfully test-fired on the Western Sea Board. The missile was fired from INS Kolkata and it successfully intercepted an aerial target at extended ranges.

- The test-fire was jointly carried out by the Indian Navy, Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and Israel Aerospace Industries.
- This was the first test for LRSAM or BARAK 8 missile in India. Earlier, on 11 November 2015, it was successfully test-fired from a range in Israel.
- The missile was developed by the DRDL, Hyderabad in collaboration with Israel Aerospace Industries. It has been manufactured by M/s Bharat Dynamics Limited, India.

Pakistan's Singer Adnan Sami gets Indian Citizenship

The Union Home Ministry cleared the proposal to grant Adnan Sami the citizenship of India. Mr Sami, who has been staying in India since 2011, will now have to fill a citizenship form at the Home Ministry's office in Delhi.

- Lahore-born Sami first arrived in India on March 13, 2001 on a visitor's visa with a validity of one year. It was issued by the Indian High Commission in Islamabad.

Eight states to implement DBT in kerosene from April 1

Eight states have agreed to implement direct benefit of transfer in kerosene in 26 districts, the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas said on Friday. The scheme will be implemented from April 1, 2016 and till then state governments will be consulted in the run up to the scheme.

- The scheme will be implemented in three districts of Chhattisgarh, two in Haryana, three in Himachal Pradesh, six in Jharkhand, four in Madhya Pradesh, two in Maharashtra, three in Punjab and three in Rajasthan.

- Kerosene subsidy outgo for the financial year 2014-15 was 24,799 crore. The government expects DBT in kerosene to ensure that genuine beneficiaries get the subsidy benefit while preventing illegal diversion.

Telangana become first state to accept e-motor insurance policies

Electronic motor insurance policies are legally accepted by the police and transport authorities in Telangana from today, making it the first state in the country to do so. The e-Vahan Bima, an electronic motor insurance policy issued in digital form with Quick Response (QR) code, has been formally launched here by the Minister for IT, K T Ramarao.

- "The launch of e-Vahan Bima and digital acceptance will help the poor accident victims in the state and also ensure better compliance," Ramarao said after formally launch of the initiative here on Saturday. Going forward, registration certificates of vehicles and driving licences should be verified electronically, he added. The initiative was a joint effort by the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority (IRDA) of India, Department of Information Technology, police and transport departments of the state.

NABARD, NRSC signed MoU for monitoring Watershed Projects

The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) on 1 January 2016 signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC) for web-based monitoring of Indo-German Watershed Development projects.

- The web-based monitoring of Indo-German Watershed Development projects will happen in three states- Gujarat, Rajasthan and Telangana.

India successfully test-fired indigenously developed MBRL Pinaka II at Pokhran

Amament Research and Development Establishment (ARDE) in the last week of December 2015 successfully test-fired Pinaka II multi barrel rocket launcher (MBRL) System. The three-day long user assisted trials were conducted at Pokhran in Rajasthan.

- Pinaka is an unguided rocket system and capable of neutralising large areas with rapid salvos. Range of Pinaka II is 20 km more than the Pinaka I version, which has a 40 km range and has already been inducted into the forces.
- The system acts as a force-multiplier while supplementing the artillery guns of the armed forces. It is capable to incorporate several types of warheads, which make the weapon deadly for the enemy as it can even destroy solid structures and bunkers. The system proved its mettle during Kargil war while neutralising the mountain peaks off the enemy. They are developed at a very low cost vis-a-vis other such rocket systems in the world bestowed with shoot and scoot capabilities. The Pinaka MBRL System has been indigenously developed by the ARDE, Pune.

LIC offers longer cover under 'Jeevan Labh'

LIC is offering a 'New Year gift' to the public in the form of a limited-premium, non-linked and with-profit endowment assurance plan 'Jeevan Labh' from Monday. The highlight of the plan is that

premium is payable for a limited period while risk is covered for the whole policy term.

- The plan is available from ages 8 to 59 years with a choice of policy term of 16, 21 and 25 years and premium-paying terms of 10, 15 and 16 years respectively.
- The maximum age at maturity is 75 years, said Shaji M Shankar, Senior Divisional Manager, LIC, Thiruvananthapuram Division.

Arunima Sinha scaled Mount Aconcagua in Argentina

Arunima Sinha, the amputee mountaineer who set a record by climbing the Mount Everest on 25 December 2015, conquered Mount Aconcagua in Argentina. Arunima started her mission on the morning of 12 December 2015 and hoisted the Indian tricolour on 25 December 2015.

- With this, Arunima has successfully completed the 5th summit of the Mission 7 Summits and also became the first female amputee to climb 5 Mountains of the World. The four other peaks conquered by her include Everest in Asia, Kilimanjaro in Africa, Elbrus in Europe, and Kosizko, Australia, as the world's four highest peaks.
- Arunima who lost her left leg in a train accident in 2011 surprised the world by climbing Mt. Everest on 21 May 2013. She was awarded the Padmashree for her achievement.

Toilets made mandatory to contest Panchayat polls in Bihar

State election commissioner (SEC) Ashok Kumar Chauhan on 4 January 2016 announced that toilets will be mandatory requirement for eligibility to contest panchayat elections. This

declaration means that no one can contest the Bihar panchayat elections scheduled in 2016 without having a toilet at their home.

- SEC said that candidates have to give an undertaking regarding status of toilet by 1 January 2016 in their home. He also said to ensure free and fair polling the elections will be held in 10 phases. The notification of the elections and dates will be issued on 15 February 2016.

PM Narendra Modi inaugurates Indian Science Congress in Mysuru

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the annual Indian Science Congress (ISC) at University of Mysore campus in Karnataka on Sunday. Theme of this edition (103rd) of the ISC is "Science & Technology for Indigenous Development in India". The Congress will continue till January 7.

- Over 100 eminent scientists from different universities and research institutions will deliver plenary talks on subjects like Nano Science, Space Science, Technology & Applications, Diabetes, Evolution: The Frontiers, Atomic Energy, Safe water and sanitation, Diseases and drug development, Public-Private partnership for the Swachh Bharat Mission initiative during the five-day meet.
- As part of Indian Science Congress, the Children Science Congress will be inaugurated by Nobel Laureate John B Gurdon (Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 2012) on January 4 at the amphitheatre, Manasagangothri inside the University campus.

Jharkhand Government inaugurated land bank web portal jharbhoom.nic.in

Jharkhand Chief Minister Raghubar Das on 4 January 2016 inaugurated the state's land bank web portal, jharbhoom.nic.in, that will help investors know land-related information.

- With this, one would be able to get information about the land which is available at the district and the circle area level with a click of a mouse. This land bank will help investors get information through district-wise nodal officers.
- For this purpose, district wise nodal officers have been appointed whose mobile numbers and email ids will also be available on the website.

Cabinet okays India-Singapore MoU on civil aviation

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday gave its ex-post facto approval for a memorandum of understanding (MoU) that was signed with Singapore in the field of civil aviation.

- The objective of this MoU is to establish mutual cooperation in the field of civil aviation, which will cover, to begin with, the airports of Jaipur and Ahmedabad. This cooperation will be extended to other airports with mutual consent.
- This MoU was signed in November 2015 between the Airports Authority of India (on behalf of the Government of India) and Singapore Cooperation Enterprise (on behalf of the Government of Singapore) during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Singapore.

Trade/Business

Karnataka Vikas Grameen Bank sets up cell to monitor govt schemes

The Dharwad-headquartered Karnataka Vikas Grameen Bank (KVGB) has set up a separate cell for monitoring progress under all the government-sponsored schemes, according to Ashok Reddy, Chairman of the bank.

- According to a press release from the bank here on Saturday, Reddy received the 'runner-up' award of the 'ASSOCHAM Social Banking Excellence Award 2015' under the 'regional rural banks' category in Mumbai on Friday. The Minister of State for Finance, Jayant Sinha, gave away the award to Reddy.

Goa launches project tracking portal

Goa Chief Minister Laxmikant Parsekar today launched Goa e-Suvidha Portal, an online project tracking mechanism to fast track projects.

- It aims at resolving a variety of issues in setting up infrastructure and other large projects, both in the public and private sectors, with targeted investment between 50 crore and 1,000 crore.

Cognizant acquires KBACE Technologies

United States (US) based software services exporter Cognizant Technology Solutions (CTS) has acquired cloud-based computing firm KBACE Technologies.

- This acquisition will help Cognizant to strength and expands its digital capabilities from its critical business applications to cloud-based IT infrastructures.
- As part of the acquisition, KBACE Technologies' 400 consultants and implementation experts will become part of Cognizant.

3 Indians Make It To The List Of 50 Richest People In The World

A study done by Wealthx in partnership with Business Insider reveals the top 50 richest people in the world.

- While Microsoft founder and renowned philanthropist Bill Gates retains his spot as the richest person in the world with a net worth of US\$87.4 billion, there are some new names on the list.
- Reliance group chairman Mukesh Ambani is the richest Indian and 27th richest man in the world with a net worth of \$24.8 billion. Wipro founder Azim Premji and Dilip Shanghvi, founder of Sun pharma, were ranked at the 43rd and 44th place with assets worth \$16.5 billion and \$16.4 billion respectively. This also makes them the top 3 richest Indians.

India, Armenia sign protocol amending DTAC

India and Armenia signed Protocol amending the India-Armenia Double Taxation Avoidance Convention in New Delhi.

- The Protocol amends the Article on exchange of information for tax purposes to bring it in line with the updated provisions in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, OECD Model.
- It will enable the two countries to exchange information related to financial and banking transactions and facilitate them in addressing tax evasion.

- It is also expected to further strengthen India's efforts to curb generation of black money.

HCL Tech acquires P2P, HCLTSS for Rs 101 crore

HCL Technologies, one of the leading software exporters, announced has acquired 100 percent stake in Point to Point and Point to Point Products (jointly referred to as P2P) and HCL Training and Staffing Services (HCLTSS) for a consideration of approx Rs 101 crore.

- The company has acquired P2P for approx Rs 77.98 crore (GBP 8 million) and HCLTSS for Rs 23.

RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan joins WEF task force

Reserve Bank of India Governor Raghuram Rajan has joined a World Economic Forum task force to examine the future of the global financial system.

- The task force also includes Bank of England Governor Mark Carney, along with bankers and policymakers from across the world.
- The task force will continue to explore these themes and others throughout 2016, with the ultimate objective of publishing a more comprehensive suite of recommendations and actions during the Annual Meeting 2017 in Davos," the WEF said.

Ratan Tata invests in start-up Teabox

Ratan Tata has invested in specialty tea firm Teabox, thereby continuing his long series of investments in various start-ups globally in the recent past.

- Teabox Founder and CEO Kaushal Dugar said: "We have grown up admiring and respecting his (Tata's) vision and business acumen on scaling the Tata group to a global level. His direct guidance and experience in the tea industry will surely help us grow Teabox to be the first global premium tea brand from India."
- Founded in 2012, Teabox delivers teas from Darjeeling, Assam, Nilgiri and Nepal to the entire world. Within three years of its existence, Teabox claims to have delivered over 30 million cups worth of tea to customers in 93 countries.

India-France inked 16 pacts including chopper venture

India and France on 24 January 2016 inked 16 agreements at the India-France Business Summit in Chandigarh. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) covered a wide range of sectors like urban development, urban transport, water and waste treatment and solar energy.

- The agreements were signed in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and French President Francois Hollande, who began his three-day visit to India.
- Hollande is the Chief Guest at the 67th India's Republic Day (26 January 2016) celebrations. He is the fifth French leader to be a chief guest at India's Republic Day celebrations, maximum number from any country so far.

Airbus Group & Mahindra to manufacture helicopters

As part of 'Make in India' initiative, an agreement was signed between Airbus Group and Mahindra to manufacture helicopters.

- The deal was signed in presence of Francois Hollande and Narendra Modi.

France to assist India to develop 3 smart cities

Three MoUs were signed under the 'Smart city' theme for city-specific urban development between French Development Agency with the state governments for the cities of Chandigarh, Nagpur and Puducherry.

India, France sign Rafale fighter plane accord

India signed an inter-governmental agreement today to buy 36 French-built Rafale fighter planes at Hyderabad House in Delhi.

- The deal, worth an estimated \$9 billion, was to have been the centrepiece of a visit to India by French President Francois Hollande, invited as guest of honour for Tuesday's Republic Day parade.
- India had scaled back the original plan to buy 126 Rafale jets to meet its air force's urgent needs, but Modi and Hollande had to step into the deal after commercial negotiations between plane-maker Dassault Aviation and Indian officials collapsed.

Now, you can pay online for LPG refills

Now, LPG users can pay online for their cylinder refills on the website www.mylpg.in soon after booking their refill for delivery. This is the latest part of the online refill booking facilities that the three public sector oil marketing companies have introduced in the past two years.

- The facility was launched here on Sunday by Dharmendra Pradhan, Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas. Pradhan said his ministry is also considering creating an EMI payment model for new gas connections bought by non-bpl customers.
- The ministry is already running a pilot programme that gives a 50 per cent government rebate to below poverty line families when they buy their first gas connection.

TranServ launches India's first social mobile wallet Udio

India's digital payment startup company TranServ has launched country's first Social Mobile Wallet named Udio.

It enables users to do squaring of dues, sharing dinner bills or a cab ride and also to pay electricity and gas bills and make DTH & mobile recharges.

MSDE, DoT signed MoU to develop National Action Plan for Skill Development in Telecom Sector

The Union Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) and Department of Telecommunication (DoT) on 22 January 2016 signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to develop and implement National Action Plan for Skill Development in Telecom Sector.

- The MoU was signed by Secretaries of the Union Ministry of Communications and Information and Union Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship.
- MSDE and DoT together have agreed to make concerted joint efforts towards skill development by facilitating mobilization of financial support under the National Ecosystem for Development of Telecom Skills. They will suggest PSUs under DOT to utilize at least 20 percent of their CSR funds for skilling purposes.

- The two ministries will also to make coordinated efforts to utilize old telephone exchanges which are no longer in use for skill development initiatives and upgrade the same on need basis. National Institute for Policy Research Innovation and Training (NTIPRT) will be developed for training and skill up gradation in Telecom Sector by leveraging the infrastructure and facilities.

Govt. mobilises 900 kg of gold under monetisation scheme

The government on Saturday said it had netted a hefty 900 kg of idle household and temple gold under the monetisation scheme and is hopeful that the number would rise further in future.

- Under the monetisation scheme, launched on November 5, banks were authorised to collect gold for up to 15 years to auction them off or lend to jewellers from time to time.
- Depositors will earn up to 2.50 per cent interest per annum, a rate lower than savings bank deposits.

Jan Dhan accounts deposits cross Rs. 30,000 cr

Deposits in accounts opened under the government's flagship financial inclusion programme Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) have crossed the Rs. 30,000 crore mark.

- As many as 20.38 crore bank accounts were opened under the PMJDY as on the January 20, as per the latest data available. These bank accounts had deposits of Rs. 30,638.29 crore (about \$4.5 billion).
- The accounts that can be opened under PMJDY are Basic Savings Bank Deposit Accounts (BSBDA) which can be of zero balance, as per RBI guidelines. As per the

trends available, the percentage of accounts with 'Zero Balance' have actually shown a significant decline.

- Accounts with no balance in them were as high as 76.81 per cent of the total opened under the scheme as on September 30, 2015. They have come down to just about 32 per cent at the end of December.
- The Finance Ministry data further showed that 8.74 crore of the accounts were seeded with Aadhaar and 17.14 crore account holders were issued RuPay cards.

Union Government signed a loan agreement with World Bank for Neeranchal National Watershed Project

Union Government on 14 January 2016 signed a loan agreement with World Bank in New Delhi for the Neeranchal National Watershed Project.

- All 28 states which implement the watershed projects will benefit from this project. However, the nine states, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujrat, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan and Telangana will benefit more from the project as they are implementation of large number of watershed schemes in their states.
- The project was approved by the Union Cabinet in October 2015 with a total budget of 2142 crore rupees in which India would bear 1071 crore rupees and the rest 50 percent cost will be borne by the World Bank. It will be implemented by the Ministry of Rural Development over a six-year period (2016-21).
- Around 12 percent of the area of wasteland will be targeted through this project to make about 336 lakh hectares of land arable. The Minister said that the

effective implementation of the scheme will go a long way in strengthening the economic conditions of the farming community.

Madhya Pradesh Government signed four MoUs with Singapore

Madhya Pradesh (MP) Government on 14 January 2016 signed four MOUs with Singapore to collaborate in urban planning, skill development, clean energy and food processing.

- The MoUs were signed in Singapore in the presence of MP Chief Minister Shivraj Chouhan, who was on four day visit from 12 January 2016
- The MoU on setting up 1000 megawatt wind energy plant in western part of the state was signed between the Department of New & Renewable Energy and Singapore corporation unit, Sembcorp Green Infra Ltd. It was the biggest of the investment proposals.
- The MoU covering urban planning was signed between the Directorate of Town & Country Planning and Singapore Cooperation Enterprise. The MoU on capacity building and skill training was signed between the Department of Technical Education and Skill Development and ITE Education Services of Singapore
- The MoU covering food processing was signed between India's LT Food Ltd and Singapore-based DSM Nutritional Products.
- Earlier, Chief Minister Shivraj Chouhan was awarded with Lee Kuan Yew Exchange Fellowship for his contribution in development and international harmony. It was by awarded Fellowship Chairman Mr. Eddie Teo in Singapore on 13 January 2016.

- He is the fourth Indian to receive this fellowship. Previously, former vice-chairman of Planning Commission Montek Singh Ahluwalia, former union minister for investments Arun Shourie and chief minister of undivided Andhra Pradesh Chandra Babu Naidu had received this fellowship.

SBI launched India's first start-up focused bank branch SBI InCube

India's largest bank, State Bank of India (SBI), on 14 January 2016 launched and inaugurated India's first start-up focused bank branch called SBI InCube in Bangalore, Karnataka. The specialized branch aims to understand and address banking needs of a Start-up Business.

- The bank also launched the wealth management service **SBI Exclusive**, which is targeted at the fast-growing affluent segment in the country.
- The SBI InCube branch will work towards fulfilling the specific financial needs of the start-ups. The service will provide advisory services to the budding entrepreneurs under one roof. It will assist start-ups in cash management, regulations, taxation, mentoring, foreign exchange and remittances and other financial services.
- The branch, in its current form, will not fund start-ups i.e. it will not provide loans. However, it will give them loans when they turn more mature.

Chinese President Xi formally launched Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank

China-backed Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), in which India and 56 countries have joined as founding members, was formally opened here today by Chinese President Xi Jinping.

- The bank was formally established in Beijing on December 25, 2015. Chinese Finance Minister, Lou Jiwei, was elected as the first Chairman of the AIIB council. China's former Finance Minister, Jin Liqun, was elected the first AIIB president.

World Bank to be main investor in Rail Development Fund

The World Bank would be the anchor investor in the new Railway Development Fund, which would be used to fund the modernisation of Indian Railways, Railway Minister Suresh Prabhu has said.

- He also said the World Bank leadership has realised that based on the performance in the past one year, Indian Railways is in the "right direction". However, Prabhu did not divulge the size of the fund, but indicated that it would be the largest ever provided by the World Bank to the Indian Railways. Prabhu is here to attend a World Bank meeting on transportation. During his stay in the US capital, he also met officials of the International Finance Corporation, the US Transportation Secretary Anthony Renard Foxx, and some of the think-tanks.
- During his meeting with Secretary Foxx, the two leaders decided to create an umbrella agreement with the Department of Transportation about the transportation sector in general. "Today we also agreed to make a Railways-specific umbrella agreement with the Transport Department, which would help to work on many things," Prabhu said.

Flipkart ties-up with Mahindra for KUV100 online bookings

Online marketplace Flipkart has tied up with auto major Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd to exclusively launch the latter's newest SUV- KUV100. Consumers can book the SUV on Flipkart from January 18th, 2016.

- Anil Goteti, Vice President - Business, Flipkart said, "Online today is a must have strategy for all players to respond to the growing demand of their customers who are spread across different cities and towns in the country. First time in the automobile category, this exclusive tie-up will allow Mahindra access Flipkart's extensive reach and network to connect with their customers and provide them the ease to book Mahindra KUV100 online."
- Flipkart launched Automobiles as a category last month with a vision to change the way vehicles are bought in India. The association with Mahindra is another step in that direction. The two entities have come together to deliver superior customer experience with assured in-a-month delivery. Flipkart currently also offers a wide range of automotive accessories as part of its endeavour to become a destination for all automotive needs.

World Bank released report titled World Development Report 2016: Digital Dividends

The World Bank on 14 January 2016 released a report titled World Development Report 2016: Digital Dividends in Washington DC, the USA. The report explored the impact of the internet, mobile phones, and related technologies on economic development across the world including India.

- Further, it concluded that potential gains from digital technologies are high, but often remain unrealized and proposed policies to expand connectivity, accelerate complementary reforms in sectors beyond information and communication technology (ICT), and address global coordination problems.
- The world's offline population is mainly in India and China, but more than 120 million people are still offline in North America and the digital divide within countries can be as high as that between countries.

NITI Aayog collaborated with IDFC for Enterprise Survey of Manufacturing Firms

The National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog on 17 January 2016 announced that it collaborated with the IDFC Bank Ltd to conduct an enterprise survey of manufacturing firms.

- The primary objective of this Survey is to assess the business regulatory environment in each State and Union Territories (UTs) and identify policy and regulatory hurdles faced by businesses in the States/UTs.

Iran sanctions lifted, India can import oil freely

With international nuclear sanctions on Iran being lifted on Sunday, India will resume its unrestricted import of oil from the Persian Gulf nation.

- Iran is expected to increase its export of 1.1 million barrels of oil per day by 500,000 soon, followed by a further 500,000 bpd thereafter.

SBT launches online platform for KSEB bill payments

State Bank of Travancore (SBT) has teamed up with the Kerala State Electricity Board (KSEB) to provide customers of the state utility online facility for remittance of electricity charges. Jeevandas Narayan, Managing Director, SBT, and M Shivasankar, Chairman, KSEB, jointly announced the launch of the facility at a function here.

- The online system facilitates immediate credit of remittance through the SBT internet banking platform free of any additional charges, a spokesman for SBT said.
- This will enable consumers to pay their monthly bills without going to the KSEB offices. They will get confirmation of the remittance from the bank as well as KSEB.

Exim Bank inks MoU with AP Govt for promoting exports

Exim Bank of India and the Government of Andhra Pradesh have entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for promotion of exports from the state.

- The MoU was signed by Yaduvendra Mathur, Chairman and Managing Director of the bank, and Shamsheer Singh Rawat, Secretary and Commissioner for Industrial Promotion, Government of Andhra Pradesh.
- Exim Bank seeks to support exporters having operations in Andhra Pradesh in achieving higher exports by facilitation of market linkages through its market advisory services, which will assist in identifying suitable partners.

Somnath Temple to invest in Gold Monetisation Scheme

The Somnath Temple is all set to become Gujarat's first temple to deposit its idle gold in the Gold Monetisation Scheme as its trustees including Prime Minister Narendra Modi have given their nod to invest the yellow metal reserves in the scheme.

- The trust has around 35 kg of gold and will deposit the gold which is not in day-to-day use of the temple. The decision was taken during the recently held meeting of trustees at Modi's residence in Delhi on January 12, said the trust secretary P K Lahiri, who is also one of the trustees of the Somnath Temple, situated in the Gir-Somnath district.
- "During the meeting, all the trustees have agreed to the proposal of depositing the gold, which is not in day-to-day use of the temple, in the Gold Monetisation Scheme," said Lahiri. According to him, the trust is having around 35 kg of gold, which is either in the form of pure gold or ornaments.
- Other trustees of the Somnath Temple trust include former Gujarat Chief Minister Keshubhai Patel, who is also the chairman of the trust, veteran BJP leader L K Advani, Harshvardhan Neotia and JD Parmar. All these six trustees were present during the meet.

French President declared economic emergency

French President Francois Hollande has declared what he called "a state of economic emergency" and says it's time to redefine France's economic and social model.

- The first measures he proposed are relatively modest, and he said they would

not "put into question" the 35-hour workweek. He did not seek to assume any new emergency powers.

- The measures included a loosening of some worker-friendly measures to encourage companies to hire, and new training for half a million workers.

IMF cuts global growth forecast as China slows

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) cut its global growth forecasts for the third time in less than a year, as new figures from Beijing showed that the Chinese economy grew at its slowest rate in a quarter of a century in 2015.

- The Fund forecast that the world economy would grow at 3.4 per cent in 2016 and 3.6 per cent in 2017, both years down 0.2 percentage points from the previous estimates made last October.
- The IMF projected 7.3 per cent GDP growth for India in 2015-16 and 7.5 per cent in 2016-17, levels unchanged from its outlook released in October. In 2014-15, it estimates, GDP grew 7.3 per cent.
- The IMF maintained its previous China growth forecasts of 6.3 per cent in 2016 and 6.0 per cent in 2017, which represent sharp slowdowns from 2015.

Draft report of R V Easwar Committee to simplify Income-tax Act, 1961 released

Union Ministry of Finance on 18 January 2016 released the draft report of Justice R V Easwar (Retd) Committee to simplify the provisions of Income-tax Act, 1961.

- The draft recommendations of the 10-member committee contain 27 suggestions for amendments under the

Income-tax Act, 1961 and 8 recommendations for reform through administrative instructions.

- Amendment to Section 255(3) to enhance the monetary limit for Single Member Bench (SMC) cases before the Tribunal to rupees one crore from the present rupees 15 lakhs. Amendment to Section 254(2) to reduce the time-limit for rectification of orders of the Tribunal from the present four years to 120 days. Deletion of section 143(1D) – Avoiding undesirable delay in issue of refunds

Eko launches Indo-Nepal remittance service with Prabhu Money

Eko, a mobile-based Financial technology company, today announced the launch of Indo-Nepal remittance services in partnership with Nepal's Prabhu Money Group.

- Citizens of both the countries can use the service in the form of cash-to-cash, cash-to-bank account, cash-to-co-operative bank account and through top-up remittance cards.
- The service will benefit 50 Lakh Nepali migrants living across India," the company said.

UNWTO released World Tourism Barometer

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) on 18 January 2016 released the World Tourism Barometer, which reviewed trends in tourism at the regional and global level for 2015 and enumerated prospects for 2016.

- As per the publication, international tourist arrivals grew by 4.4 percent in 2015 to reach a total of 1184 million in 2015. In numbers, around 50 million more travelers were recorded in 2015 compared to that 2014.

World Bank to for reconstructing Indira Gandhi Zoological Park

In a global first, the World Bank in third week of January 2016 decided to extend an assistance of 20 million US dollar to help reconstruct the Indira Gandhi Zoological Park (IGZP).

- It got devastated during cyclone Hudhud in October 2014, in Visakhapatnam.
- The funding is a part of the 370 million US dollar Andhra Pradesh Disaster Recovery Project for which the bank is extending assistance of 250 million US dollars from 2015-2020.

SBI offers loans for women entrepreneurs under MUDRA scheme

The 'MUDRA' loan for women entrepreneurs or Boutique Finance for Women Entrepreneurs – a special loan scheme under Prime Minister MUDRA Yojana – has been launched for catering to the financial needs of women entrepreneurs.

- Under the scheme, State Bank of India too has come forward to participate and provide loans to help women entrepreneurs in West Bengal who are engaged in various handicraft activities. One such camp was organised by the bank, earlier this month., according to a release issued by the bank.

Union Government sanctioned 33000 crore rupees for infrastructure projects in Tamilnadu

Union Government on 19 January 2016 sanctioned 33000 crore rupees for the development of infrastructure projects in Tamilnadu.

- Union Road Transport, Highways and Shipping Minister Nitin Gadkari announced the sanctioned amount and at his discretion, he announced additional 17000 crore rupees. With this, the total amount sanctioned was raised to 50000 crore rupees.

ICICI Bank opens its first branch in South Africa

ICICI Bank inaugurated its first full service branch at Sandton in Johannesburg becoming the first Indian private sector bank to open a branch in the African continent.

- The branch was inaugurated by President of ICICI Bank, Vijay Chandok.
- ICICI Bank's Johannesburg branch is an authorised financial services provider in South Africa licensed by the South African Reserve Bank, the bank said in a statement.

India among top 5 most promising markets globally

According to the annual Global CEO survey of consultancy giant PwC, India has emerged as one of the five most promising markets for businesses globally as it offers one of the best opportunities for both domestic as well as global companies.

- The top five markets considered as most important for overall growth prospects by the respondents are USA, China, Germany, the UK and India.

MRF becomes global partner for ICC

MRF Ltd has become a global partner for International Cricket Council (ICC) by signing a four-deal with the council that includes this year's ICC World Twenty 20 in India, next year's ICC Champions Trophy and ICC Cricket World Cup in 2019.

- As a global partner, MRF will have multiple branding opportunities at all match venues during the ICC World Twenty 20 and future ICC events.
- Other global partners for ICC include Emirates, Oppo and Nissan, he told newsmen on the announcement of the partnership.

Quikr acquired online real estate portal Commonfloor.com

Quikr on 7 January 2016 announced acquisition of the property search website Commonfloor.com for an undisclosed amount in a majority stock-swap transaction. Quikr bought the website in a distress sale orchestrated by Tiger Global Management Llc.

- After the deal, Quikr will be valued at about 1.5 billion US dollars based on the share-swap ratio. The merger is expected to be completed over the next two to three months.

Miguel Tabuena won Hilton Asian Tour Golfer of the Month

The Philippines' Miguel Tabuena on 7 January 2016 was voted as the Hilton Asian Tour Golfer of the Month for December 2015.

- Tabuena won the award ahead of Thailand's Phachara Khongwatmai and India's Himmat Rai. The trio were nominated by a selection panel before going into a voting process.
- Born on 13 October 1994, Miguel Tabuena is a Filipino professional golfer. As an amateur golfer, he won the events in Malaysia and Singapore and won the silver medal at the 2010 Asian Games in the men's individual event.
- He turned professional in 2011. He has played on the Asian Tour since 2011 and picked up his first win at the 2015 Philippine Open.
- He became the first Filipino to win his National Open since 2008.

ICC announces Money Gram as Event Partner; signs 8-year deal

The ICC and Money Gram International, a leading global provider of money transfer services, today announced an eight-year deal which confirms Money Gram as an event partner for ICC events from 2016-2023.

- A media release by ICC stated, "The ICC and Money Gram recently completed a successful five-year partnership, which began with the ICC World Twenty 20 West Indies 2010, concluding with the ICC Cricket World Cup 2015.
- "In the current eight-year cycle, the alliance promises to reach greater heights, as the ICC will stage an impressive 17 tournaments, including six majors — two ICC World Twenty 20 tournaments, two editions of the ICC Champions Trophy and two ICC Cricket World Cups."

ADB to fund \$840-m corridor between Vizag, Chennai

The Asian Development Bank will extend a \$625 million loan to the proposed \$840 million Visakhapatnam-Chennai Industrial Corridor, according to Teresa Kho, Country Director – India, ADB. She said the industrial corridor, meant to boost manufacturing activity and help economic growth of the hinterland, will have four nodes: Visakhapatnam, Kakinada, Gannavaram-Kankipadu, and Yerpedu-Srikalahasti.

- The VCIC would be part of the proposed East Coast Economic Corridor, from Kolkata in West Bengal to Tuticorin in Tamil Nadu, Kho said, addressing a plenary session, 'Sunrise Andhra Pradesh: turning aspirations into reality', at the CII Partnership Summit now underway here.
- He said that it's a part of PM's Act east scheme. It will create 1.1 Crore jobs in next 30 years.

RINL inked MoU with Andhra Pradesh Government for investment of 38500 crore rupees

Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Limited (RINL), the corporate entity of Visakhapatnam Steel Plant, on 11 January 2016 signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Andhra Pradesh government.

- The MoU envisages investment of around 38500 crore rupees to take up various projects at Visakhapatnam. The deal was signed during the 22nd CII Partnership Summit & 1st Sunrise AP Investment Meet, which is being held in Visakhapatnam.

Illumina, Bill Gates & Jeff Bezos launched startup GRAIL to develop blood-based cancer tests

Illumina, the world's largest DNA sequencing company, on 10 January 2015 announced the launch of the startup named GRAIL to develop blood-based cancer tests. The company was launched in association with Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates, Amazon CEO Jeff Bezo's venture fund Bezos Expeditions and Arch Venture Partners.

- The company will develop blood tests that cost 1000 US dollars or less for detecting many types of cancer before symptoms arise. The test, which is also called as liquid biopsy, will use high-speed DNA sequencing machines to scour a person's blood for fragments of DNA released by cancer cells.
- All the partners in the startup raised around 100 million US dollars among themselves, in which Illumina will have the majority stake holder. The newly developed tests are expected to reach the market by 2019. GRAIL will operate from San Diego in California, the USA.

Union Cabinet gives nod for India-Australia Civil Nuclear Cooperation deal

The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi approved the India-Australia Civil Nuclear Cooperation deal that came into force on November 13, 2015.

- The deal along with the administrative arrangement for implementing the accord will bolster India's energy security by supporting the expansion of nuclear power in the country.

- India and Australia had started talks on the Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement in 2012 after Australia had lifted the long-standing ban on selling uranium to energy-starved India.
- India-Australia Nuclear Cooperation deal follows similar agreements signed by India with the US and France after western sanctions were lifted in 2008.

RBI asked the banks to open banks in villages with a population of more than 5000.

India's central bank has asked the lenders to open more brick and mortar branches in villages with no banking facilities and with a population of more than 5,000. The banking regulator has asked banks to submit a roadmap on how many branches they will be opening by 31 March 2017. Banks have to submit the roadmap by end of January 2016.

- RBI observed that coverage of banking services in unbanked villages is skewed towards the BC model and the ratio of branches to BC is very low. Therefore, it has been decided to focus on villages with population above 5,000 without a bank branch of a scheduled commercial bank.
- This will also enable banks to provide quality financial services and timely support to BC outlets that would help in sustaining and strengthening the services provided through BCs and also ensure close supervision of BC operations.

Iran's leading banks will soon open branches in India

Iran's leading banks will open branches in India to energise commercial ties between New Delhi and Tehran. The decision was amongst a slew of

commercial measures taken by the India-Iran Joint Commission that met for the first time.

- After the meeting led by External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj and Iranian Finance Minister Ali Tayebnia, India decided to allow the Pasargad Bank and Parsian Bank of Iran to set up branches in New Delhi and Mumbai.
- A major beneficiary of normalisation of banking channels between two sides will be India which has just begun settling more than \$6.5 billion energy-related pending payment, with Iran.

CCI cleared Reliance Capital-Goldman Sachs deal

The Competition Commission of India (CCI) on 5 January 2016 gave its approval to Reliance Capital Asset Management's proposed acquisition of Goldman Sachs' mutual fund business in India for 243 crore rupees. CCI approved the acquisition as the deal may not have an adverse impact on competition in the country.

- RCAM had announced the acquisition in October 2015. Under the deal, the company will acquire all 12 onshore mutual fund schemes of Goldman Sachs Asset Management India with total asset under management of 7132 crore rupees.
- The deal will also make Reliance MF the exclusive fund manager for the government's ambitious Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSE) Exchange

Appointments

JS Deepak replaces Garg as Telecom Secretary

Amid the high-decibel debate around Net neutrality, call drops and the upcoming mega spectrum auction, Telecom Secretary Rakesh Garg on Friday was moved to the low-profile Minority Affairs Ministry, as part of a bureaucratic reshuffle.

- JS Deepak, a UP cadre officer from the 1982 batch, who is currently Secretary, Department of IT (DeitY), will replace Garg. This will be Deepak's second innings in the Department of Communications (DoT).

Leslie Berland appointed as Chief Marketing Officer of Twitter Inc

Leslie Berland was on 26 January 2016 appointed as the Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) of Twitter Inc, an online social networking site. Before Berland's appointment, the marketing operations was overseen by the Twitter's CFO Anthony Noto.

- Prior to this appointment, she was working at American Express (AmEx) as an executive vice-president of global advertising, marketing and digital partnerships.

Gurdeep Singh appointed as CMD of NTPC

Gurdeep Singh on 28 January 2016 was appointed as the Chairman and Managing Director (CMD) of NTPC Ltd. Singh will be the first person to be appointed to the top job at a Maharatna company through a search committee route.

- Gurdeep Singh is currently serving as the managing director of Gujarat State Electricity Company Limited (GESC). He started his career in NTPC in 1987.

- He was earlier associated with Calcutta Electric Supply Corporation, Powergen and IDFC Projects in different capacities.
- During his tenure at GESC, Singh spearheaded several key reforms in Gujarat, the major being innovative solar power programmes such as the solar power plant over the Sardar Sarovar canal.

SC Appoints Justice Sanjay Mishra as UP

Lokayukta

The Supreme Court on Thursday appointed Justice Sanjay Mishra, a former judge of the Allahabad High Court, as the Lokayukta of Uttar Pradesh.

- The apex court bench comprising Justice Ranjan Gogoi and Justice Prafulla C. Pant appointed Mishra as the Lokayukta and recalled the December 16, 2015, order appointing Justice Virendra Singh for the post.
- Recalling the sequence of events leading to the appointment of Virendra Singh as the Lokayukta on December 16, 2015, the court regretted that constitutional authorities -- the chief minister, Leader of Opposition (LoP), and the chief justice of the Allahabad High Court -- despite prolonged meetings could not decide on a simple issue of the appointment of the Lokayukta.

Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa won Presidential

Election of Portugal

Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa on 24 January 2016 won the Presidential election of Portugal. Sousa, a

centre-right Social Democrats candidate and a former journalist, won the election by securing 52 percent of votes.

- The outcome is likely to help maintain political balance after the inconclusive parliamentary ballot in October 2015. His closest rival, Socialist Antonio Sampaio da Novoa, conceded defeat after picking up around 23 percent of the vote. Left Bloc candidate Marisa Matias had 10 percent.
- Sousa, popularly known as 'Professor Marcelo' and aged 67 is the one-time leader of the center-right Social Democrats. He will succeed President Anibal Cavaco Silva.
- Earlier in October 2015 presidential election, a centre-right coalition won the most votes but lost its overall majority in November 2015. It was replaced by an alliance of left-wing parties that rejected its austerity programme in parliament.

Alice Vaidyan, new CMD of GIC Re

Alice Vaidyan has been appointed Chairman and Managing Director of General Insurance Corporation of India (GIC Re), the National Reinsurer. She will hold office till July 31, 2019.

- GIC Re is the 14th largest reinsurer globally and is presently the only reinsurance company in India.

Amit Shah re-elected BJP president

BJP chief Amit Shah became the party President again today. Top party leaders led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, a bevy of Union ministers and chief ministers of BJP-ruled states proposed his name for the party president's post during the nomination process.

- Among others who have proposed Mr. Shah's name are Union minister Rajnath Singh, Anant Kumar and J.P. Nadda, M. Venkaiah Naidu, besides BJP chief

ministers Vasundhara Raje, Raghubar Das, Shivraj Singh Chauhan and others.

Paranjay Thakurta appointed EPW Editor

The Sameeksha Trust, which runs the Economic and Political Weekly has appointed senior journalist Paranjay Guha Thakurta editor of the journal from April 1. This follows the resignation of Rammanohar Reddy from the post early this month.

- The *EPW*, headquartered in Mumbai, is widely recognised as a unique journal-cum- magazine that combines popular commentary with academic research articles in the social sciences.

Mindtree appoints Ravanan as CEO, Natarajan as executive chairman

Mindtree has appointed Rostow Ravanan as the CEO and managing director, and Krishnakumar Natarajan as the executive chairman of the company. Subroto Bagchi has stepped down as executive chairman but will continue on the Board as a non-executive director. All the changes will be effective April 1.

- Ravanan, 44, is a member of Institute of Chartered Accountants of India, Institute of Company Secretaries of India and alumni of Harvard Business School. In April 2014, he stepped out of his role as chief financial officer and took over as head for Europe, service lines and key accounts.

PayU appoints Laurent Le Moal as new global CEO

PayU, one of the world's largest payment services platforms, announced the appointment of Laurent Le Moal as its new global CEO.

- PayU has operations in 16 countries and is part of the leading global media and internet group, Naspers. LeMoal would be reporting directly to Naspers' Group CEO, Bob Van Dijk.
- Le Moal joins the team with an 11 year experience with rival company PayPal and would be building the company's position in growing markets around the world and developing payment solutions which meet market needs for both consumers and merchants.

Halo Source appoints Tamal Chaudhuri as India head

Halo Source Inc., a clean water technology solutions company trading on London's Alternative Investment Market, has appointed Tamal Chaudhuri as General Manager, heading up the company's India operations.

- India is a key geographic region for the company, where it has a long-standing relationship with Eureka Forbes and most recently signed a supply agreement with Panasonic India Pvt Ltd. He will be responsible for driving all aspects of the company's business in the region.

Guenter Butschek appointed as CEO and MD of Tata Motors

Guenter Butschek was on 18 January 2016 appointed as Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director of India's biggest auto maker Tata Motors' Group.

- He joins Tata Motors after his stint as the Chief Operating Officer at Airbus and

Member of the Group Executive Committee. Prior to Airbus, He worked at Daimler AG in international automotive management for more than 25 years.

- He was appointed after post of Managing Director of Tata Motors was vacant for two years since the death of Karl Slym on 26 January 2014.

Housing.com appoints co-founder Snehil Buxy as its chief product officer

Housing.com, an online real estate platform has appointed co-founder Snehil Buxy as its new chief product officer.

- Since the company's inception, he has played key roles, including leading the front-end team and spearheading product development, while also overseeing and driving different aspects of the business.

Mamta Binani elected President of ICSI

Mamta Binani has been elected President of the Institute of Company Secretaries of India (ICSI) for 2016. She took charge on January 19.

- Binani was also the first CS to be conferred the 'Bharat Nirman Awards' in 2010.

J P Alex takes over as Airports Authority of India executive director

The Airports Authority of India (AAI) today said J P Alex has taken over as executive director of operations.

- He has more than three decades of experience in diverse areas of aviation, including air traffic management and airport design & planning.
- He holds an MBA in Airport & Aviation Management and has done International

Executive Diploma from George Washington University in Project Management, among others.

Achyuta Samanta elected as General President of 105th Indian Science Congress

Dr. Achyuta Samanta was on 6 January 2016 elected as the General President of the 105th Indian Science Congress Association (ISCA) that is scheduled for 2017-18. Samanta is also currently serving as member of Executive Council of Indian Science Congress Association (ISCA).

- Samanta has set up institutions like Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT) University and Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS), Bhubaneswar.
- He has been the member of Executive Council of ISCA since 2011. He has also been the member of many prestigious educational and other national level apex bodies, including UGC (2008-2014), AICTE, National Coir Board, CAPART and NCTE.

Sam Pitroda appointed as Odisha Government's Technical Advisor

Satyanarayan Gangaram Pitroda, popularly known as Sam Pitroda, on 6 January 2016 was appointed Technology Advisor to the Odisha Government. Pitroda was appointed as the technology adviser for development of telecom, electronics, IT, ITES sectors of the state.

- Pitroda will have a key role in Vision 2036 for Odisha @100, as the state government is making a vision document for 2036 to celebrate the 100 years of state's formation. Born on 4 May 1942 in Titilagarh, Odisha, Sam Pitroda is a telecom

engineer, inventor, entrepreneur and policymaker. In 1964, he travelled to Chicago to study electrical engineering.

Pavan Kapoor To Be India's Ambassador To Israel

Senior diplomat Pavan Kapoor has been appointed India's ambassador to strategically important Israel, where he will succeed Jaideep Sarkar. Mr. Kapoor, a 1990 batch Indian Foreign Service Officer, is currently India's High Commissioner in Mozambique capital Maputo. "He is expected to take up his assignment shortly," the External Affairs Ministry said in a statement.

- The appointment assumes significance as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is likely to visit India this year. Prime Minister Narendra Modi may also pay a return visit to Tel Aviv. India's relations with Israel are on an upswing. President Pranab Mukherjee had visited Tel Aviv in October last year, becoming the first Indian Head of State to visit the Jewish nation.

Chauhan took charge as FTII Chairman

Seething discontent, frenzied protests and lathicharges marred TV actor and BJP hack Gajendra Chauhan's first day as Chairman of the prestigious Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) even as 40 student protestors were allegedly manhandled and detained by police.

- The protestors were being held at the Shivajinagar police station as the first meeting of the new FTII society got

underway almost six months after its reconstitution.

Sailesh appointed new Registrar General, Census Commissioner

Senior IAS officer Sailesh was today appointed as Registrar General and Census Commissioner.

- Sailesh, a 1985 batch IAS officer of Assam-Meghalaya cadre, is presently Additional Secretary in Home Ministry. The Appointments Committee of Cabinet has approved the appointment of Sailesh as Registrar General and Census Commissioner for a period till July 28, 2017, an order issued by Department of Personnel and Training said.
- He has been appointed in place of C Chandramouli, who has completed his tenure.

Devender Kumar Sikri appointed as Chairman of Competition Commission of India

Devender Kumar Sikri was on 7 January 2016 appointed as Chairman of fair-trade regulator Competition Commission of India (CCI). He succeeds Ashok Chawla, whose tenure as the Chairman of CCI ended on 7 January 2016 itself.

- Sikri will have a tenure of about two and half years, i.e. till he attains the age of 65 years.
- Sikri is a former Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer of Gujarat cadre. He has held various positions in Centre as well as in his cadre state Gujarat. He superannuated as Secretary, Department of Justice on 31 July 2013.

Bhanumurthy is new COO of Wipro

The Bengaluru-head quartered company has elevated company veteran Bhanumurthy B M as its chief operating officer (COO) and president apart from handing over a new role to G K Prasanna, who is presently heading Global Infrastructure Services as president and chief executive.

- Under the new structure, Prasanna would head a newly created business unit, marketing, innovations and technology (MIT) as the president. MIT will comprise of the offices of the chief technology officer, chief information officer, marketing, strategic engagements (Advisor Relations and sales enablement functions) among others.

Urjit Patel re-appointed as RBI Deputy Governor for Three Years

Union Government on 8 January 2016 re-appointed Dr. Urjit R Patel, as Deputy Governor of Reserve Bank of India (RBI), for a second three-year term.

- Patel who joined RBI on 11 January 11, 2013 had headed a committee that paved the way for the proposed monetary policy committee. Patel, a doctorate from Yale University, also had a stint at IMF.
- The re-appointment of Patel assumes significance as in recent past, none of the deputy governors got a second term.

Ashish Saraf appointed as Airbus Group's vice president

Airbus Group on 11 January 2016 announced the appointment of Ashish Saraf as Vice-President - Industry Development, Strategic Partnerships and Offsets.

- Saraf will look over the Group's existing Make in India initiatives and conceive new ones for all the businesses of Airbus Group India with the aim to increase their industrial footprint in the country. The move comes close on the heels of Airbus Group uniting its Divisions in India under a single company.
- Ashish Saraf holds an extensive experience in offsets, industrial relations, green field start-up development and strategic partnerships. Prior to joining Airbus Group, he was the India head of the Tata Sikorsky joint venture since 2010. He led Sikorsky's industrialisation and strategic partnerships in India.

Binny Bansal appointed as CEO of Flipkart

India's biggest e-commerce company, Flipkart, on 11 January 2016 announced the promotion of current Chief Operating Officer Binny Bansal to the post of Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

- On the other hand, Sachin Bansal, who has been the CEO since inception, will now take on the newly-created role of Executive Chairman.

PMO sets up panel to fast-track bullet trains

The Prime Minister's Office has constituted a committee under Arvind Panagariya, vice-chairman of the NITI Aayog, to hasten the Mumbai-Ahmedabad High-Speed Rail Corridor, meant for bullet trains between the two cities.

- The panel will interact with the Japanese counterpart for taking the next step in implementation. The Railway Board chairman, secretary in the department of expenditure, foreign secretary and secretary (industrial policy) will be part of the panel.

Dr Gyanendra D Bandgaiyan appointed DG of National Centre for Good Governance

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) on 30 December 2015 approved the appointment of Dr Gyanendra D Bandgaiyan as the Director General of the National Centre for Good Governance.

- He will be in the office for a period of three years which is extendable by another two years or up to 60 years of age, whichever is earlier.
- The 54-year-old Bandgaiyan is a former IAS officer of the Union Territories cadre. He hails from Madhya Pradesh.

Bjorn Isberg named as Tournament Director of 2016 Hockey India League

Sweden's Bjorn Isberg on 30 December 2015 was appointed as the Tournament Director of Coal India Hockey India League (HIL), the premier league for hockey in India.

- On the other hand, Muthukumar Balakrisnan from Malaysia was given the role of the Assistant Tournament Director in the 4th edition of the Coal India Hockey India League.
- Andy Mair from Scotland was named as the umpire's manager for the league.

D.K.Hota to be the new CMD of defence PSU BEML Ltd

The Public Enterprises Selection Board has recommended D.K.Hota to be the new CMD of defence PSU BEML Ltd. He is currently Director (HR) of the Bengaluru-based BEML. He has been on deputation at BEML from oil marketing major HPCL for the past two years.

Government constitute Kamlesh Chandra Committee to study wage structure of Gramin Dak Sevaks

The Union Government has constituted a committee to examine the wage structure, service conditions of the Gramin Dak Sevaks (GDS) in the Department of Posts (DoP). It is one member committee comprising of Kamlesh Chandra, Retired Member of Postal Services Board.

- The Committee will be assisted by Senior Administrative Grade Officer T.Q. Mohammad who will act as Secretary to the GDS Committee. The Committee will go into the service conditions of GDS and suggest changes as considered necessary. Examine the present system of Branch Post Offices, engagement conditions and existing structure of wage and enrolments paid to the GDS and recommend necessary changes.

CMPDI Chairman assumes charge

Shekhar Saran has taken over as Chairman-cum-Managing Director of Ranchi-based Central Mine Planning & Design Institute Ltd (CMPDI) from this month. Prior to this, he served as the Director (Technical) of CMPDI.

- A mining engineer and MBA, he started his career in the coal industry from Sohagpur area of South Eastern Coalfields Ltd (SECL) in 1981.

Film-maker ShyamBenegal to head panel on Censor Board revamp

To put an end to recent controversies surrounding the Censor Board, the Centre has set up a Committee headed by noted film-maker Shyam Benegal to work out a revamp plan and submit its report within two months.

- The other members of the Committee are Hindi film director Rakesh Omprakash Mehra, adman Piyush Pandey, film critic Bhawana Somaaya, Nina Lath Gupta of National Film Development Corporation and Joint Secretary (Films).
- Among other things, the committee would be expected to take note of the “best practices in various parts of the world, especially where the film industry is given sufficient and adequate space for creative and aesthetic expression.”
- The committee will also look into the staffing pattern of Central Board of Film Certification, known as the Censor Board, and recommend a framework to provide efficient/transparent user-friendly services.

Atul Sobti took charge as CMD of Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited

Atul Sobti on 1 January 2016 took charge as Chairman and Managing Director (CMD) of state-owned power equipment maker Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) for a period of five years. His appointment as CMD of BHEL was approved by the Union Government in September 2015.

- Prior to this appointment, Sobti was the Director on the board of BHEL, where he headed two crucial portfolios of Power and Finance. He also held Additional Charge of the post of Director (Engineering, Research and Development).

Wipro management changes, T K Kurien elevated as Vice Chairman, COO becomes CEO

India's third largest IT services exporter – Wipro has announced major management changes with the elevation of the chief executive officer (CEO) T K Kurien as the executive vice-chairman and chief operating officer Abidali Neemuchwala as the new CEO and member of the board.

- Kurien who took over the role of CEO in February, 2011 will hold the executive vice chairman position.
- He will hold this position until March 31, 2017.

LinkedIn names Akshay Kothari as India Country Manager

Professional networking platform LinkedIn today appointed Akshay Kothari as Country Manager for India, with immediate effect. India has one of the largest userbase for LinkedIn, which has more than 400 million members globally.

- Kothari replaces Nishant Rao, who quit the company in October last year to join cloud-based customer support software firm Freshdesk as its Chief Operating Officer. Kothari will report to Olivier Legrand, LinkedIn's Managing Director for the Asia Pacific (APAC) region, and join the company's APAC senior management team, LinkedIn said in a statement.
- India has the second largest base of LinkedIn members globally, after the US. Over the past six years, the member base in India saw a ten-fold increase (which translates to a compound annual growth rate of 46 per cent) to more than 33 million.

Mary Barra elected as Chairman of General Motors Board of Directors

Mary Barra was on 4 January 2016 elected as Chairman of General Motors (GM) Board of Directors with immediate effect. Barra succeeds Theodore Solso, who will continue serving as the Lead Independent Director of the Board.

- Earlier, Barra was serving as Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of GM since January 2014. In August 2013, Barra was named as Executive Vice President, Global Product Development, Purchasing & Supply Chain.

Filippo Grandi takes helm as UN High Commissioner for Refugees

Filippo Grandi, a UN official who has worked in refugee and political affairs in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia, began his five-year term as UN High Commissioner for Refugees on January 1,

- He will Succeed António Guterres whose more than 10 years in office ended last week.
- High Commissioner Grandi, who arrived at UNHCR's headquarters office in Geneva

earlier on Monday (January 4), takes up the position at a time of unprecedented displacement challenges. Record numbers of people globally are forced to flee war and persecution, including more than one million refugees and migrants who crossed the Mediterranean to Europe during the past year.

Sachin appointed as brand ambassador for Novo Nordisk's diabetes campaign

Danish pharmaceutical company Novo Nordisk today announced Indian cricket star Sachin Tendulkar as brand ambassador for the disease awareness campaign 'Changing Diabetes' initiated by it in India.

- Addressing a press conference here on Monday, Sachin Tendulkar advised people to hit the gym or go for a long walk to keep away from diabetes.
- In India 69.2 million people have diabetes and by 2035, it is estimated that 123.5 million people will have diabetes. The alarming fact is that almost half of the existing diabetes patients are unaware that they have diabetes, according to the company.

Sports

Angelique Kerber stuns Serena Williams to win Australian Open

Angelique Kerber became the first German to win a Grand Slam title since her childhood idol Steffi Graf in 1999 when she upset world number one Serena Williams 6-4 3-6 6-4 to clinch the Australian Open on Saturday.

- The 34-year-old American had been seeking her seventh Melbourne Park title

and 22nd overall, which would have moved her into a tie with Graf for the most Grand Slam singles titles in the Open era.

Sania Mirza, Martina Hingis won 2016 Australian Open women's doubles tennis title

Sania Mirza and her Swiss partner Martina Hingis on 29 January 2016 won the 2016 Australian Open title of tennis in the women's doubles category.

- To win the title, the top seeded Indo-Swiss pair defeated seventh seeded Czech duo Andrea Hlavackova and Lucie Hradecka 7-6, 6-3 at the Rod Laver Arena in Melbourne, Australia. With the win over the Czech duo, they extended their unbeaten run to 36.
- For Sania-Hingis pair, it was their maiden Australian Open title and the third successive Grand Slam doubles title after their victories in the 2015 Wimbledon and US Open.

Ishika Shah won 12th Sub-Junior National Snooker championship title

14-year old Ishika Shah won the 12th Sub-Junior National Snooker championship title in Indore, Madhya Pradesh.

- To win the title, she defeated Anushi Seth by 50-2, 50-33 in the final match.
- To reach the finals, she defeated the defending champion Doyal Dey in the semi-final. Incidentally, Ishika lost the title to Doyal in the summit clash held in Kolkata in 2015.

Pakistan Cricketer Imran Farhat retired from International Cricket

Pakistan Opener Imran Farhat retired from international cricket. He made the announcement after getting No-Objection Certificate from Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB).

- With this, he would be eligible to play a T20 tournament for retired cricketers called Masters Champions League (MCL).
- It is the PCB's policy that players who sign for the MCL have to completely retire from International Cricket. However, they can play the domestic cricket.

Izumo Takuto and Zhu Chengzhu won ITTF

World Junior Circuit Finals

Japan's Izumo Takuto and Hong Kong's Zhu Chengzhu on 24 January 2016 became champions in the boys' and girls' categories, respectively, in the 11Even Sports 2015 ITTF World Junior Circuit Finals at the Abhay Prashal Stadium, Indore, Madhya Pradesh.

- The three-day event came to its conclusion when Takuto hardly dropped a sweat beating Carlos Vedriel from Spain 4-0 in a one-sided final while Zhu overcame stiff resistance to beat Park Seri of Korea 4-2. Each winner took home 3800 US dollars while the runners-up received 2100 US dollars each.
- The International Table Tennis Federation is the governing body for all international table tennis associations. The role of the ITTF includes overseeing rules and regulations and seeking technological improvement for the sport of table tennis.

PV Sindhu wins Malaysia Masters Grand Prix Gold Badminton title

India's Ace Shuttler, PV Sindhu has won the Malaysia Masters Grand Prix Gold Badminton title.

- She defeated Scotland's Kirsty Gilmour 21-15, 21-9 in the final at Penang this afternoon.
- Sindhu had an easy final where she dominated right from the start to seal the match in straight games. This is Sindhu's Fifth career Grand prix gold and first title of the year 2016.

Australia clinched bilateral odi cricket series against series

Australia has thrashed India by 4-1 in 5 match one day international series played in Australia.

- Indian batsman Rohit Sharma was declared man of the series for scoring 441 runs including two centuries.

Sania Mirza-Martina Hingis won Sydney International title

Sania Mirza and Martina Hingis won their second trophy of the season with the WTA Apia International title after clinching their 30th win a row, in Sydney on Friday.

- They defeated Caroline Garcia and Kristina Mladenovic

ICC Rankings: India become No. 1 Test side in the world

South Africa's 0-2 defeat in their home series against England has pushed them off the top of the ICC Test Rankings. Now India, with 110 rating points, are at No. 1, with Australia one rating point shy in second place.

- It has been over a year since South Africa last won a Test match and that was against the eighth-ranked West Indies. Even if they beat England in the fourth Test in Centurion, they won't be able to improve on their current third position. Since January 2015, South Africa have lost five out of nine games, besides accumulating four draws.

WWE returns to India after 14 years

Former World Kabbadi League Champion, Lovepreet Sangha and two-time Kushti National Heavyweight Champion, Satender Ved Pal will make their in-ring World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) debuts when the premier sports entertainment professional wrestling returns to India after 13 years on January 15.

- Hosts of WWE superstars will showcase their acting-wrestling skills in front an expected packed crowd with the two new Indian inductees featuring prominently. WWE's own world champion Roman Reigns, Big Show, Kane and Charlotte are some of the big names to enthrall Delhi crowd.
- Lovepreet, 6 feet, 225 pounds, was one of the top raiders in the World Kabaddi League in 2014 and was a member of the United Singhs team that won the league championship.

Virat Kohli fastest to reach 7000 runs, 24 centuries in ODI cricket

Virat Kohli added another feather to his hat as he became the fastest man to score 7000 one-day international (ODI) runs and the fastest to reach 24 centuries in the format.

- Kohli reached the milestone during the course of India's third ODI against Australia

at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on Sunday.

- Coming into this match, he needed only 19 to overtake South Africa's AB de Villiers. While the South African captain needed nearly a decade to get to 7000 ODI runs, Kohli did it in less than eight years.
- The 27-year-old achieved the landmark in his 169th match and in his 161st innings, breaking the previous record set by De Villiers, who achieved it in his 166th innings and in his 172nd match.

Delhi Acers defeated Mumbai Rockets to clinch Premier Badminton League title

Delhi Acers on 17 January 2016 emerged victorious over Mumbai Rockets by 4-3 in the summit clash to clinch the Premier Badminton League (PBL) title. The match was held at the Siri Fort Sports Complex in New Delhi.

- Tommy Sugiar to, men's doubles pair of Koo Kien Keat and Tan Boon Heong, and Rajiv Ouseph won their respective matches as Delhi grabbed the trophy and a winner's cheque of 3 crores rupees.
- Bollywood actor Akshay Kumar is the brand ambassador of the league.

BCCI imposes life ban on Ajit Chandila

Haryana off-spinner Ajit Chandila was slapped with a life ban for his involvement in the 2013 IPL spot-fixing scandal, while Mumbai batsman Hiken Shah was handed a five-year suspension for making a corrupt approach to a fellow player as the BCCI disciplinary committee sealed their fate after a meeting here on Monday.

- However, the committee, headed by BCCI President Shashan Manohar and comprising Jyotiraditya Scindia and Niranjana Shah, deferred a decision on

Chandila's co-accused Pakistani umpire Asad Rauf till February 12, giving him a final deadline of February 9 to file his reply.

- The 32-year-old Chandila, an off-spinner who was found guilty of spot-fixing during his stint with Rajasthan Royals, was handed a tougher punishment for violating the codes pertaining to accepting bribes, fixing, underperforming, trying to induce a fellow player and betting.

Ronnie O'Sullivan defeated Barry Hawkins to win sixth Snooker Masters title

Ronnie O'Sullivan on 17 January 2016 won his sixth Snooker Masters title after defeating Barry Hawkins 10-1 in the final at the Alexandra Palace in London.

- O'Sullivan had previously won the event in 1995, 2005, 2007, 2009 and 2014, equalling the record set by Stephen Hendry.

Chris Gayle equals Yuvraj Singh's T20 record; scores fifty in 12 balls

Chris Gayle signed off from this year's Big Bash by equalling the all-time record for the world's quickest Twenty-20 half-century. Gayle smashed his way past 50 from just 12 balls in Melbourne.

- He achieved the feat against the Adelaide Renegades.
- West Indies opener Gayle hit seven sixes and two fours on the way to 56 at the top of the order, and joined Yuvraj Singh as scorer of the sprint format's fastest half-century - the India all-rounder's innings at the 2007 World Twenty20 having included six sixes in one over off England's Stuart Broad.

ICC launches Cricket for Good & Team Swachh campaign in partnership with UNICEF and BCCI

The International Cricket Council (ICC) has reaffirmed its commitment to the Spirit of Cricket and bringing about positive social change through the sport, by launching Cricket for Good, its CSR Programme, in association with UNICEF.

- Team Swachh is the first of a series of collaborations between the ICC and UNICEF under the aegis of Cricket for Good with the aim of leveraging the vast reach and power of cricket. This visionary collaboration aims to build a social movement for sanitation and toilet use, thereby leading to an open defecation-free India.
- The five-year global partnership was announced in October 2015 in New York and will be used as the ICC's platform to advocate for children in India and other countries where cricket is a popular sport.

Indian driver Jehan Daruvala won Lady Wigram Trophy motor race

Sahara Force India Academy racer Jehan Daruvala on 16 January 2016 won one of New Zealand's most prestigious events, the Lady Wigram Trophy.

- It was Daruvala's maiden victory in Formula cars since making the switch from karting in 2015.
- In August 2015, Daruvala won Rookie of the Year at the Formula Renault 2.0 NEC series championships in the Netherlands.

Indian shuttler Siril Verma ranked world No 1 junior

India's Siril Verma is badminton's new junior world No. 1. The 16-year-old climbed a whopping 11 rungs to occupy the number one spot in the junior men's singles category of the Badminton World Federation (BWF) rankings on Thursday.

- A finalist at the current World Junior Championships, and regarded as the next big thing in Indian badminton, Verma is ahead of second-placed Toma Junior Popov of France, while Chirag Sen, another Indian, occupies the No 3 ranking.
- Meanwhile, star Indian women's shuttler and London Olympics bronze medallist Saina Nehwal continues to occupy the No 2 ranking, behind Carolina Marin of Spain, while Li Xuerei of China is third.
- Saina's compatriot and two-time world championship bronze medallist PV Sindhu remained static at No 12.
- In the men's singles category, Kidambi Srikanth is the only Indian shuttler in the top 10, at No 9.
- Glasgow Commonwealth Games gold medallist Parupalli Kashyap, who is back after an injury lay-off, is ranked No 15, ahead of H S Prannoy (20) and Ajay Jayaram (21).
- The 2011 World Championships bronze medallist pair of Jwala Gutta and Ashwini Ponappa is at No 14 in the women's doubles rankings, while the men's doubles pair of Manu Attri and Sumeeth Reddy occupy the 17th spot.

National TT: PSPB men retain title, women regain crown

The formidable Petroleum Sports Promotion Board (PSPB) men trounced Haryana 3-1 to extend their reign over the Barna Ballack Cup for yet another year.

- Their women regained the Jayalakshmi Cup after beating West Bengal 3-0 in the team finals of the 77th Senior National Table Tennis Championship at the Hyderabad.

Sania Mirza-Martina Hingis clinch Brisbane International title

Sania Mirza and Martina Hingis carried the dominance of 2015 into the new season, winning their sixth consecutive title by lifting the WTA Brisbane trophy, here on Saturday. The top seeds quelled the challenge of German wildcards Angelique Kerber and Andrea Petkovic 7-5, 6-1 in mere 69 minutes.

- Sania and Martina, the world number one team, have now stitched a 26-match winning streak together, which has brought them six titles in a row at the US Open, Guangzhou, Wuhan, Beijing, WTA Finals and now here.

Raonic beats Federer to win Brisbane title

Milos Raonic got one back on Roger Federer to start the new season. After losing coach Ivan Ljubicic to the Federer camp leading into 2016, Raonic achieved something nobody else born in the 1990s has managed to do against the 17-time major winner beat him twice.

- The 25-year-old Canadian broke Federer's serve once in each set of a 6-4, 6-4 win on Sunday night in the Brisbane International decider, reversing the outcome of their meeting in last year's final at the Australian Open warmup tournament.

Wawrinka thumps Coric to win 4th Chennai Open title

Star Swiss player Stansilas Wawrinka won his fourth title at the Chennai Open today, after comprehensively thumping Croatian Borna Coric 6-3, 7-5 in straight sets.

- It was the fourth title in five finals for 30-year-old Wawrinka, who had finished runner-up in 2010 and won his first title in 2011 at the hard court venue. He also won in 2014 and 2015.

Ashwin is ICC's No. 1 Test bowler, first Indian since Bedi's feat in 1973

Star India off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin has ended 2015 as the No. 1 Test bowler in the ICC rankings on the back of his strong showing against South Africa in the recent home series. Ashwin, who took 62 wickets in nine Tests this year including 31 scalps in the four matches against South Africa, became the first India bowler since Bishen Bedi in 1973 to achieve the milestone of finishing the year on top.

- Bedi, an ICC Hall of Famer, is the only India bowler to ever top the Test bowling table. Australian captain Steven Smith is on top in Batting Chart.

Magnus Carlsen won the Qatar Masters Open chess tournament

World champion Magnus Carlsen of Norway won the Qatar Masters Open chess tournament, billed as the strongest Open in history. The top seed had finished with seven points, the same as Yu Yangyi of China, seeded 11th. He drew his 10th and final round encounter with former World champion Vladimir Kramnik of Russia, while Yu defeated Wesley So of the United States.

- Surya Shekhar Ganguly was the best-placed Indian, at 10th.

Laxmi Ratan Shukla announced his retirement

Former India player and Bengal captain Laxmi Ratan Shukla announced his retirement from cricket. Shukla, who failed to make it to the Bengal Ranji squad for most of the current season after making a comeback from injury, was included in the team that played its last league match against Assam earlier this month. But the player choose to call it quits as he was not getting enough “motivation” to continue.

- The feisty all-rounder played 137 First Class matches and accumulated 6217 runs and 143 wickets.

India beat Afghanistan 2-1 to lift SAFF Cup title for 7th time

India exacted sweet revenge of their last edition defeat as they beat defending champions Afghanistan 2-1 in the summit clash in a dominating display to lift the South Asian Football Federation Cup for the seventh time on Sunday.

- India, who had lost to Afghanistan 0-2 in the final of 2013 edition in Kathmandu, were clearly the better side in the final match between the two best teams of the regional tournament though they had to come back from one goal deficit and had to settle the match in the extra time.
- India, who were playing in the 10th final out of 11 SAFF Cup editions on Sunday, re-established their dominance in the regional tournament and are also likely to make a jump in the FIFA rankings which will come out on Thursday.

Lodha panel proposes drastic reforms for BCCI, IPL CEO given clean chit

The Supreme Court-appointed Lodha Committee today recommended sweeping reforms for the controversy-ridden BCCI, suggesting a bar on ministers from occupying positions, putting a cap on the age and tenure of the office-bearers and legalising betting.

- In a series of drastic reforms, the three-member panel, headed by Justice (Retd) R M Lodha, also suggested one unit should represent one state, while taking away the voting rights of institutional and city-based units. The committee also suggested the restructuring of the BCCI’s administrative set-up, proposing the position of a CEO accountable to a nine-member apex council.
- “Regarding the IPL, the recommendation is that the chief governing body will be known as the Governing Council, which will comprise nine members. The Secretary and the Treasurer of the BCCI will be ex-officio members of this IPL governing council,” Justice Lodha said.
- “The Governing Council of IPL will be entitled to take all decisions concerning IPL, which includes decisions relating to financial matters. However, the Governing Council will be answerable to the general body of the BCCI. So limited autonomy is proposed for the IPL GC,” he added.

ONGC won 26th LalBahadurShastri Hockey tournament

Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) on 3 January 2015 won the 26th Lal Bahadur Shastri Hockey tournament. To win the title, the ONGC defeated Indian Railways 3-0 on penalties in the final match held at the Shivaji Stadium in New Delhi.

- At the end of the stipulated time both the teams stood at 2 points each. In the

shootout, Sumit Kumar, Gurjant Singh and Vikramjit Singh scored for ONGC while the Railways players could not score a single goal.

Pranav Dhanawade creates record, scores 1009 runs in single innings

Mumbai school cricketer Pranav Dhanawade became the first player to score 1000 runs in a single innings. Batting for Smt KC Gandhi School, Kalyan, the opening batsman resumed the day from his overnight score of 652 runs and crossed the 1000-run mark after lunch.

- His school declared the innings at 1465/3 with Pranav unbeaten at 1009 which he scored off 323 balls and at a strike-rate of 312.38. He played for a total of 395 minutes. He broke Arthur Collins's 117 years old record.

Australia pulled out of U-19 World Cup in Bangladesh due to safety concerns

Australia on 5 January 2016 withdrew from the Under-19 World Cup Tournament in Bangladesh. It pulled-out citing security reasons. The decision was announced by Cricket Australia CEO James Sutherland who said the decision was taken after monitoring the security situation in Bangladesh.

- The tournament is scheduled to happen from 22 January to 14 February 2016. ICC announced that Australia will be replaced by Ireland team – the runners-up in the qualifying tournament in Kuala Lumpur in October 2015.
- Earlier in October 2015, Cricket Australia had cancelled senior men's Test tour of Bangladesh for similar reasons. It seems that the decision was made after a series of militant violent attacks in the country since September 2015, including the

shooting of three foreigners, two of whom died.

Wayne Rooney named 2015 England Player of the Year

Manchester United striker Wayne Rooney has been voted 2015 England Player of the Year for the fourth time after breaking his country's scoring record, the Football Association announced on Tuesday, January 5.

- Rooney, England's captain, received 37 percent of the votes in a poll of England Supporters Club members. He previously won the award in 2008, 2009 and 2014. "To win this award is always a huge honour and to win it for a fourth time is something I'm very proud of," Rooney said on his personal website.
- Stoke City goalkeeper Jack Butland, who has produced some impressive performances this season, was elected the Under-21s Player of the Year. Rooney and Butland, 22, will be presented with their awards prior to England's friendly against Germany in Berlin on March 26.

Apurvi Chandela sets a world record to win gold at Swedish Grand Prix

Indian shooter Apurvi Chandela broke the world record on way to winning gold in the women's 10 metre air rifle event at the Swedish Cup Grand Prix. Chandela shot 211.2 in the event held on Tuesday to surpass the feat of Chinese Olympic gold medallist Yi Siling, who held the record with 211.

- The result marked a positive start for Chandela, who has already won an Olympic quota place for the Rio Olympics. The silver and bronze went to Swedish

shooters Astrid Steffensen (207.6) and Stine Nielsen (185.0).

- An elated Chandela said: "This gold at Sweden has further strengthened my resolve to bag a medal at the Rio Olympics this year. The support, encouragement and wishes received from my well-wishers

from Rajasthan has stood me in good stead in various international tournaments."

- Chandela had won the gold at the National Championships in the Capital last month. She had won an Olympic quota place for India after winning a bronze at the ISSF World Cup in Changwon, South Korea, in April.

Awards

Social justice award for Nitish Kumar

Nitish Kumar has been chosen for the K Veeramani Award for Social Justice 2015 for his contribution towards social justice as Chief Minister. The award is given away by Periyar International, a Chicago-based voluntary organisation.

- The date and venue of the award function are yet to be decided. During his visit to Delhi in the first week of February, Nitish would meet some members of the award committee and take a call on the venue, from among Patna, Delhi and Chennai.

Prince Mahidol Award 2015 conferred in Bangkok

Prince Mahidol Award 2015 was conferred upon Professor Morton Mower and Sir Michael Marmot

for outstanding achievements in medicine and public health worldwide.

- The award was presented on 29 January 2016 at the Grand Palace in Bangkok by the Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn on behalf of the King of Thailand Bhumibol Adulyadej, who couldn't attend the ceremony due to ill health.
- Mahidol Award was established in 1992 to commemorate the 100th birthday anniversary of Prince Mahidol of Songkla.

Nisid Hajari won 2016 William E. Colby Award for Best Military Book

Nisid Hajari on 28 January 2016 won the 2016 William E. Colby Award for his book, *Midnight's Furies: The Deadly Legacy of India's Partition*.

- Hajari will be presented with the award and honorarium at Norwich University, the USA in April 2016.

- The Midnight's Furies: The Deadly Legacy of India's Partition covers the 1947 partition of India and the violence that surrounded that event. Hajari oversees Asia coverage for Bloomberg View, the editorial page of Bloomberg News.

Naresh Bedi has been honoured with V Shantaram Life Time Achievement Award

Wildlife film maker & Padma Shri awardee Naresh Bedi has been honoured with V Shantaram Life Time Achievement Award during the inauguration of 14th edition of Mumbai International Festival for Documentary, Short and Animation Films – MIFF 2016.

- The award was presented by Maharashtra CM Devendra Fadnavis and MoS for Information & Broadcasting Rajyavardhan Rathore
- The award is instituted in memory of legendary film maker V Shantaram, who was head of the Films Division in the past. It is comprised of a trophy, shawl and a cash prize of Rs 5 lakhs.

Henri Tiphagne selected for Amnesty International Human Rights Award 2016

Indian lawyer and human rights defender Henri Tiphagne selected for the 8th Human Rights Award by Amnesty International Germany. The award is a recognition of Tiphagne's exceptional commitment to human rights.

- He will be conferred with the award at an official ceremony on 25 April 2016 at the Maxim Gorki Theatre in Berlin, Germany.
- He is the founder of the organization People's Watch, one of the most notable human rights organizations in India.
- People's Watch has been researching and documenting human rights violations, as well as providing legal representation to those affected, for over 20 years. The organization also actively supports human rights education.

David Warner wins Allan Border Medal 2016

Australian batsman David Warner defeated captain Steve Smith for the prestigious Allan Border Medal for 2016.

- Warner polled 240 votes from players, umpires and media representatives to beat 2015 winner and skipper Steve Smith on 219. Pace bowler Mitchell Starc was third on 183 votes.
- Warner also won the Test Player of the Year Award with 30 votes ahead of Smith on 24.

Chennupati Jagadish awarded Australia's highest civilian honour

Australia has awarded its highest civilian honour, the Companion of the Order of Australia (AC) to India-origin scientist and professor Chennupati Jagadish.

- Professor Jagadish is currently the head of the Semiconductor Optoelectronics and Nanotechnology Group at the Australian

National University. He was given the award in recognition for his service to physics and engineering.

- Professor Jagadish's projects include a new class of lasers that can help in telecommunications and "new lightweight solar cells with increased efficiency".

Rekha conferred with Yash Chopra Memorial award

Veteran actress Rekha was honoured with the Yash Chopra Memorial Award on Monday evening in Mumbai for her contribution to the film industry.

- The award was presented by Maharashtra Governor C. Vidyasagar.
- Rekha, 61, who worked with Chopra in 1981 romance "Silsila", will be given the honour on February 2 next year by the Governor of Maharashtra in a glittering ceremony in Mumbai.
- Previous recipients include Melody Queen Lata Mangeshkar and megastar Amitabh Bachchan.

Padma Vibhushan for Rajinikanth, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar

Actor Rajinikanth, media baron Ramoji Rao, former J&K Governor Jagmohan and spiritual guru Sri Sri Ravi Shankar awarded Padma Vibhushan.

- Former CAG Vinod Rai, Bollywood actor Anupam Kher and singer Udit Narayan awarded Padma Bhushan.
- Former US Ambassador to India Robert D Blackwill, sportspersons Saina Nehwal and Sania Mirza and Indu Jain of Bennett Coleman & Co get Padma Bhushan.

- Senior lawyer Ujjwal Nikam, actors Ajay Devgn and Priyanka Chopra get Padma Shri.
- Reliance Industries founder late Dhirubhai Ambani awarded Padma Vibhushan.

Marat Safin inducted into International Tennis Hall of Fame

The Russian Tennis Federation on 14 January 2016 announced that former World No.1 tennis player Marat Safin joined the International Tennis Hall of Fame.

- The official ceremony to induct Safin has been scheduled for 16 July 2016.
- The Russian tennis player was announced as a candidate for the induction into the Hall of Fame in October 2015 together with Belgium's Justine Henin, a former women's singles No.1 and seven-time major champion, and Helena Sukova from the Czech Republic, who won 14 major titles in doubles and mixed doubles.

MP bags Krishi Karman award for fourth year in row

Madhya Pradesh has bagged the Krishi Karman award instituted by the Centre for the fourth consecutive year in recognition of the growth in overall agricultural production in the state.

- Madhya Pradesh has chalked out roadmap for even more enthusiastic participation by farmers in agriculture.
- The award was initiated in 2010-11.

Ranveer Singh, Deepika Padukone win big at Filmfare Awards

At the Filmfare Awards held in Mumbai, Deepika won the Best actor in female category for her film 'Piku', while Ranveer won for 'Bajirao Mastani'.

- Amitabh Bachchan and Priyanka Chopra were among other winners.
- Here is the list of winners at the 61st Filmfare Awards__

Award	Winner
Best Actor	Ranveer Singh
Best Actress	Deepika Padukone
Best Film	Bajirao Mastani
Best Director	Sanjay Leela Bhansali
Best Actor Debut	Sooraj Pancholi
Best Actress Debut	Bhumi Pednekar
Critics' Choice Best Film	Piku
Critics' Choice Best Actor	Amitabh Bachchan
Critics' Choice Best Actress	Kangna Ranaut
Lifetime Achievement Award	Moushumi Chatterjee

Indian author Anuradha Roy wins DSC Prize for 'Sleeping on Jupiter'

Anuradha Roy has been announced the winner of the prestigious DSC Prize for South Asian Literature 2016 for her novel 'Sleeping on Jupiter' at the Fairway Galle Literary Festival in Sri Lanka.

- Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe, who was the chief guest on the occasion, awarded 50,000 dollars as DSC Prize along with a unique trophy to the winner, reports the Lanka Page.
- Wickremesinghe also commented on the importance of South Asian literature and the crucial role it plays to improve the lives of the people in this region.

Rajannamed as The Banker's central banker of the year

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Raghuram Rajan was named The Banker magazine's Global and Asia-Pacific Central Bank Governor of the Year 2015, for stabilising the Indian rupee, initiating key reforms to attract much needed foreign capital in the country and reining in a runaway price appreciation.

- The RBI governor has been named central bank governor of the year several times by other international magazines. In October 2014, Euromoney and in January 2015, Central Banking awarded him the best central banker award for his contribution in stabilising the Indian economy. After he took over in September 2013, the first priority for the RBI governor was to stabilise the local currency, which hit a record low of 68.87 a dollar on August 28.
- The Banker is a prestigious monthly magazine of the Financial Times Group.

Tata Steel bags PM's trophy

Tata Steel has been declared as the winner of Prime Minister's Trophy for being the 'Best Performing Integrated Steel Plant' in the country for the performance year 2013 – 2014.

- This Award has been conferred on the Company for the eighth time.
- The Company went through three rounds of rigorous assessment, adjudged by a panel of distinguished judges. The enthusiasm and involvement of its employees including the Union Leadership team was highly appreciated by the panel of judges for the Prime Minister's Trophy, reaffirming the core strength of Tata Steel

– its skilled and motivated workforce that has a will to excel.

Leonardo DiCaprio wins Golden Globe for film drama actor

Leonardo DiCaprio won the Golden Globe award for best dramatic actor in *The Revenant*. DiCaprio was saluted with a standing ovation at the Beverly Hilton hotel. He beat out Bryan Cranston of *Trumbo*, Michael Fassbender of *Steve Jobs*, Eddie Redmayne of *The Danish Girl*, and Will Smith of *Concussion*.

- The 41-year-old actor born in Hollywood earned his third career Golden Globe. His earlier wins came two years ago for *The Wolf of Wall Street* and in 2005 for *The Aviator*.
- Awards At a glance:

Winner	Category
Leonardo DiCaprio	Best actor in <i>The Revenant</i> .
Brie Larson	Best actress
<i>The Revenant</i>	Best motion picture
Kate Winslet	Best supporting actress
Sylvester Stallone	Best supporting actor

Author Balkrishna Garg awarded H K Devsare Baalsahitya award

Veteran poet Balkrishna Garg was today honoured with the second Hari Krishna Devsare Baalsahitya Award 2015 for his collection of poems for children, titled *Baal Geet*.

- Sahitya Akademi President Vishwanath Prasad Tiwari and National Book Trust Chairman Baldeo Bhai Sharma conferred the award comprising a cash prize of Rs 75,000, a shawl and a citation on Garg at a function here.

Barcelona superstar Lionel Messi wins Ballon d'Or award for world's best player for fifth time

The Barcelona and Argentina forward finished ahead of Ronaldo and Brazil forward Neymar as he scooped the award for the fifth time overall, having previously won it four years in a row from 2009 to 2012. Messi helped Barcelona to a Spanish league, domestic cup and Champions League treble plus the Club World Cup and also led Argentina to the Copa America final, where they lost to Germany.

- He defeated three time winner Ronaldo and Neymar in the race to clinch the award.

Employees Provident Fund Organization won the National Award on e-Governance 2015-16

The Employees' Provident Fund Organization won the National Award on e-Governance 2015-16 for launching the Universal Account Number (UAN).

- UAN is an e-initiative of EPFO, launched in July 2014. In this initiative, all active employees are provided a universal number which can be linked to various provident fund account numbers provided to them while working in different organizations.
- The EPFO bagged the national award in the 'innovative use of technology in e-governance' category and the retirement body will get a cash prize of 200000 rupees.

Amitabh Bachchan made honorary life member of Mohammedan Sporting

Bollywood actor Amitabh Bachchan on 12 January 2016 was bestowed honorary life membership of Kolkata's soccer outfit Mohammedan Sporting.

- Sporting president Sultan Ahmed handed over the club's life membership to Bachchan.
- Bachchan was also invited to be the chief guest of the club's 125th anniversary gala event to be held later in 2016.
- Mohammedan Sporting along with Mohun Bagan A.C. and East Bengal F.C. are tagged as the Big Three.

Subhashini Vasanth honoured with Neerja

Bhanot Award

Bengaluru-based activist Subhashini Vasanth on 13 January 2016 was honoured with Neerja Bhanot Award. She was presented the award for her endeavour to help people in distress and for empowering widows of martyrs and their families across the country. Bollywood actor Sonam Kapoor presented the award to Vasanth at a ceremony held in Chandigarh.

- She started the Vasantharatna Foundation in memory of her husband. The foundation provides education scholarships, conducted empowerment programmes and outbound learning programmes for women and children.

BCCI's top award for Kohli

India's Test captain Virat Kohli has won the Cricketer-of-the-Year 2015 award. The award is named after former India captain and all-rounder Polly Umrigar. Kohli will receive the award at the BCCI annual awards function here on January 5.

- The Karnataka State Cricket Association (KSCA) which won the Ranji Trophy, Zallrani Cup and Vijay Hazare Trophy in the 2014-15 season has been declared the best team.

Other award winners

1. Syed Kirmani, C.K. Naydu Lifetime Achievement Award
2. Jalaj Saxena, Madhya Pradesh (Lala Amarnath award, best all-rounder in the Ranji Trophy)
3. Deepak Hooda, Baroda (Lala Amarnath award, best all-rounder domestic limited over competitions)
4. Robin Uthappa, Karnataka (Madhavrao Scindia award, highest scorer in Ranji Trophy)
5. R. Vinay Kumar, Karnataka and Shardul Thakur, Mumbai (Madhavrao Scindia award, highest wicket-takers in Ranji Trophy)
6. Almas Shaukat, Uttar Pradesh (M.A. Chidambaram Trophy, best u-23 cricketer),
7. Anmolpreet Singh, Punjab (M.A. Chidambaram Trophy, best u-19 cricketer)
8. Shubman Gill, Punjab (M.A. Chidambaram Trophy, best u-16 cricketer)
9. Mithali Raj, Railways (M.A. Chidambaram Trophy, best woman cricketer)
10. Devika Vaidya, Maharashtra (M.A. Chidambaram Trophy, best Jr. woman cricketer)
11. O. Nandan (best umpire in domestic cricket).

Harpal Singh Kumar received Knighthood from

Queen Elizabeth II

An Indian-origin cancer research expert Harpal Singh Kumar received a Knighthood from Queen Elizabeth II for his influential work on prevention and treatment of cancer. His name appeared in the annual New Year's Honours list that includes several other Indian-origin individuals.

- Among the Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (OBE) list were Kala Patel, managing director of Kiddycare

Ltd Nurseries, for services to childcare business and Daljit Lally, deputy chief executive of Northumberland Country Council, for services to integrated care.

DAVA project bags 2015 eASIA award for trade facilitation

The Drug Authentication and Verification Application (DAVA) project of The Department of Commerce has won the 2015 eASIA Award under Trade Facilitation category. The award was announced by Asia Pacific Council for Trade Facilitation (APCTF) and Tehran based (Iran) Electronic Business.

- The eASIA award is administered by AFACT which aims to development and promotion of trade facilitation, electronic business policies and activities in the Asia Pacific region.
- DAVA project was launched by Union Government in June 2015. It seeks to create an integrated platform for implementation of the Track and Trace system for exporters and domestic markets of Drugs and Pharmaceuticals. The project aims to cover all the drugs manufactured in India and contribute

considerably in enhancing the brand image of our pharmaceutical exporters.

- It will also provide simpler platform for the regulatory agencies and consumer for establishing drug authentication. Under this project, the DAVA application has been incorporated with value-added features like availability of stocks for a drug in an area/retailers/ wholesalers at a point of time.
- Using it drugs can easily be identified and recalled due to traceability of stocks which in turn helps in prevention of black marketing which especially arises during epidemics.

Kate Atkinson wins Costa novel prize for A God in Ruins

The pressure might have been too much for some writers but not Kate Atkinson: just two years after winning the Costa novel award for Life After Life, a major bestseller hailed as “astonishing” by judges at the time, the novelist has landed the prize again for her follow-up, A God in Ruins.

- Described as a “utterly magnificent and in a class of its own. A genius book” by the judges, A God in Ruins tells the story of the second world war bomber pilot.

Death

Former Army Chief Gen K V Krishna Rao passes away

Former Army Chief General K V Krishna Rao, who played a key role in the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War, died here today at the military hospital following a cardiac arrest. He was 92.

Rao also served as the Governor of Jammu and Kashmir at a time when militancy was at its peak in the state.

- Rao was the 14th Chief of the Army Staff of Indian Army and had an illustrious career spanning over four decades in the force. He was commissioned into the Army on August 9, 1942. As a young officer, he had

served in Burma, North West Frontier and Baluchistan during the Second World War.

was best known for her comic roles in South Indian films.

Arindam Sen Gupta passed away

Arindam Sen Gupta, managing editor of The Times of India, passed away early on Thursday after a brief but brave battle against cancer. Sen Gupta had a long and distinguished association with the TOI group, which he rejoined in 1991 after a previous stint from 1988 to 1990. He joined The Economic Times as coordinating editor

Malayalam actor Kalpana passes away in Hyderabad

National award-winning actress Kalpana, who appeared in 300 films including recent superhit “Charlie”, died this morning in Hyderabad due to a heart attack. She was 51. Kalpana Ranjani was in Hyderabad to shoot a Telugu film and was scheduled to leave for Kerala later today.

- She was declared brought dead at a hospital around 7 am, sources told PTI. Kalpana had received the National award for best supporting actress for her performance in “Thanichala Njan” (2012).
- Sister of actors Urvashi and Kalaranjini, Kalpana forayed into Malayalam films as a child actor in “Vidaranne Mottukul” in 1977. Among her other Malayalam hits are “Ennum Eppuzhum”, “Karnavar”, “Dolfins”, “Bangalore Days” and “Spirit”. “Kakki Sattai”, “Idhaya Thiruda”, “Sathi Leelavathi” and “Chinna Veedu” are among her Tamil films.
- Malayalam actors K P A C Lalitha, Kaviyoor Ponnamma and Innocent, MP, expressed shock at the demise of the actress, who

Former Deputy Speaker of Gujarat Assembly

Nirmala Gajwani died

Former Deputy Speaker of Gujarat Assembly and Social Activist Nirmala Gajwani passed away on 21 January 2016 in Rajkot, Gujarat. She was 87.

- Gajwani was the first lady Deputy Speaker of Gujarat legislative Assembly.

British Actor Alan Rickman passed away

Actor Alan Rickman, known for films including Harry Potter, Die Hard and Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves, died of cancer on 14 January 2016 in London, England.

- He had been conferred with Golden Globe Award, an Emmy Award and a Screen Actors Guild Award.

Lagaan actor Rajesh Vivek Upadhyay died

Bollywood actor Rajesh Vivek Upadhyay died on 14 January 2016 due to a heart attack in Hyderabad. He was 66. Rajesh was mainly known for his roles in films like Lagaan and Swades.

- He is also noted for his roles in the historic TV series Bharat Ek Khoj. His best acting was seen in the TV Serial Aghori which is his horror best.

Former Sikkim Governor Ventrapragada Rama Rao passed away

Veteran Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader and former Sikkim Governor Ventrapragada Rama Rao passed away on 17 January 2016 in Hyderabad after prolonged illness. He was 80.

- Born on 12 December 1935, Rao was a lawyer by profession and practised at the Andhra Pradesh High Court.
- In October 2002, he was appointed by President of India as the Governor of Sikkim. He served as Governor of Sikkim from 2002 to 2007.

World's oldest man dies at 112 in Japan

The world's oldest man, Yasutaro Koide, died today at the age of 112 in central Japan, a local official said. Koide, born just months before the Wright brothers made their first successful flight, died in hospital in the central Japanese city of Nagoya, where he had lived for many years, said the city official.

- The super-centenarian, recognised as the world's oldest male at 112 last year, died of heart failure and pneumonia, the official added.
- Koide, a former tailor who was born on March 13, 1903 in Fukui prefecture, northwest of Tokyo, received a certificate from Guinness World Records confirming the achievement after another Japanese man who was just a month older died in July.

The Eagles' guitarist Glenn Frey passed away

Glenn Frey, a founding member and guitarist of the Eagles, one of the most popular and commercially successful artists of the 1970s, passed away on 18 January 2016 in New York, the USA. He was 67.

- At the end of the 20th century, two of their albums, Their Greatest Hits and Hotel California, were ranked among the 20 best-selling albums in the United States.
- Hotel California is ranked 37th in Rolling Stone's list of The 500 Greatest Albums of

All Time. The band was ranked number 75 on the magazine's 2004 list of the 100 Greatest Artists of All Time.

Renowned film-maker Lakshman Rao Mohite alias Geethapriya died

Renowned Kannada lyricist and film-maker Geethapriya died of cardiac arrest on 17 January 2016 in Bengaluru. He was 84 and survived by wife, son and two daughters.

- Lakshman Rao Mohite was born on 15 June 1931 and became famous his pen-name Geethapriya. He penned lyrics for over 250 songs in Kannada and directed 40 films including one Hindi film.

Filmmaker Anil Ganguly passed away

Noted filmmaker Anil Ganguly passed away today at his residence here after a brief illness. He was 82.

- Ganguly is a noted director and screenwriter, who worked in Hindi cinema from 1970s to the 90s.
- He is best known for Jaya Bhaduri starrer, "Kora Kagaz" and "Tapasya" both of which won National Award.

Veteran journalist Aroon Tikekar passed away

Senior journalist and scholar Aroon Tikekar passed away on 19 January 2016 in Mumbai. He was 72. Tikekar, who has written over 20 books, passed away due to breathing-related complications.

- Aroon Tikekar worked as a college teacher for some years. Then, he became the

Language and Literature Expert and Acquisitions Specialist at the US Library of Congress Office in New Delhi.

Hindi writer Ravindra Kalia passes away

Noted Hindi writer and journalist Ravindra Kalia passed away at a private hospital. He was 78.

- Kalia had been suffering from liver cirrhosis, according to family sources.
- Known for his works like 'Nau Saal Chotti Patni' and 'Ghalib Chutti Sharab', the former Bharatiya Jnanpith director was also the editor of several literary magazines, including Naya Gyanodaya.

Formula 1: First female driver Maria Teresa de

Filippis dies age 89

Maria Teresa de Filippis, the first woman to race in a Formula 1 grand prix, has died aged 89.

- The Italian started three grands prix for the Maserati team in 1958 with a best finish of 10th at Spa in Belgium. She also failed to qualify for the 1958 Monaco Grand Prix along with F1 boss Bernie Ecclestone.

British singer David Bowie dies at 69

British singer-songwriter David Bowie has died at the age of 69 after battling cancer for 18 months.

- “David Bowie died peacefully today surrounded by his family after a courageous 18 month battle with cancer. While many of you will share in this loss, we ask that you respect the family’s privacy during their time of grief,” read a statement posted on the singer’s official social media accounts.

- One of the most influence musical artistes of his generation, Bowie is known for his camelion-like qualities as a performer that often blurred the lines between genders in an illustrious career that spanned four decades.

1971 Bangladesh Liberation War Hero

Lieutenant General J.F.R. Jacob Died

Lieutenant General J.F.R. Jacob (retired), hero of 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War and former Governor of Goa and Punjab, died on 13 January 2016 after prolonged illness. He was 92.

- Jacob, who negotiated the surrender of Pakistani troops in Dhaka, was best known for his role in India's victory in the 1971 war.
- During the war, He served as the Chief of Staff of the Indian Army's Eastern Command by being the Major General.

Veteran CPI leader AB Bardhan passed away

Veteran Communist Party of India (CPI) leader Ardhendu Bhushan Bardhan passed away on 2 January 2016 after a long illness. He was 92.

- He was the former general secretary of the CPI, which is one of the oldest political parties in India.
- He won an election just once, to the Maharashtra Assembly, in 1957 as an Independent.

Grammy-winning singer Natalie Cole passed

away

Grammy-winning singer Natalie Cole passed away on 31 December 2015 due to congestive heart

failure following complications from a kidney transplant in Los Angeles. She was 65.

- Cole, daughter of late jazz legend Nat King Cole, was known for carving out her own success with R&B hits like *Our Love* and *This Will Be*. Cole broke out into the singing world in 1975 with the hit *This Will Be*, which won the Grammy Award for best R&B female performance and also earned her the Grammy Award for Best New Artist.

Former Chief Justice of India Sarosh Homi Kapadia died

Ex-Chief Justice of India Sarosh Homi Kapadia passed away on 4 January 2016 in Mumbai. He was 68. Kapadia is survived by wife and a son and a daughter.

- Born on 29 September 1947, Kapadia graduated from Government Law College, Mumbai. He was enrolled as an advocate at the Bombay High Court in 1974. In 1991, he was elevated to the Bench as an Additional Judge of the Bombay High

Court, and in 1993, he was appointed as a Permanent Judge.

- In 2003, he was transferred to the Uttarakhand High Court, where he served a short stint as Chief Justice. On 18 December 2003, he was appointed as a judge of the Supreme Court. On 12 May 2010, he was sworn in as the 38th Chief Justice of India by the President Pratibha Patil.

J&K Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed dies

Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed passed away of multiple organ failure in New Delhi on Thursday morning after nearly a week long hospitalisation. He was 78.

- Mr Sayeed, a two time chief minister of the state had started his second tenure on March 1st, 2015 in alliance with the BJP, after having led the state government between 2003-05 previously.

Books

BJP leader Shatrughan Sinha's book launch

A function to launch actor-MP Shatrughan Sinha's biography *Anything but Khamosh* ended up showcasing the lines along which the Bihar defeat has divided leaders in the BJP. The party's most prominent critics within — L K Advani, Yashwant Sinha, Kirti Azad — attended the event. Two Union ministers, Harsh Vardhan and V K Singh, were

present, as were CPM general secretary Sitaram Yechury, Amar Singh and Congress leader Randeep Surjewala.

- In the book, Shatrughan Sinha tells the biographer, Bharathi S Pradhan, of "notable exceptions" to the rule of not granting a third term in the Upper House: "Many party leaders like Arun Jaitley, and

my friends Ravi Shankar Prasad and Venkaiah Naidu were given a third term in the Rajya Sabha.”

‘Azad Bachpan Ki Aur’ Chronicles Kailash

Satyarthi’s Journey

The 2014 Nobel Peace laureate’s first book in Hindi *Azad Bachpan Ki Aur* was launched on January 7.

- The book is a selection of articles penned by Satyarthi on landmark movements, judgments, events and prominent policy intervention in his three-decade-long struggle for child rights.
- Since the 1980s, the activist has been fighting various issues related to children and their rights. The book talks about issues of child labour, rescue operations, trafficking, child slavery, sexual abuse against children and illiteracy.

Book titled MARU BHARAT SARU BHARAT

authored by Jain Acharya Maharaj released

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 10 January 2016 released a book titled “MARU BHARAT SARU BHARAT “. This is the 300th book of Ratnasundersuriswar ji Maharaj. The book release function was organized by Sahitya Satkar Samiti of Ratnatrayee Trust in Mumbai.

- The book, My India, Nobel India, will be available in four languages - English, Hindi, Gujarati and Marathi.
- The author through his book has highlighted various social evils, deficiencies prevailing at individual level, and also expressed his anger about those evils.

Book titled Jawaharlal Nehru and The Indian

Polity in Perspective released by Hamid Ansari

The book titled Jawaharlal Nehru and The Indian Polity in Perspective was released by Hamid Ansari on 12 January 2016 by the Vice President of India Hamid Ansari at Thiruvananthapuram in Kerala. The book was edited by Prof Alexander and with contributions from eminent persons like Justice K T Thomas, Dr. Rajan Kurukkal, Dr B Vivekanandan, M G Radhakrishnan and others.

- The focus of the book is on the role of Jawaharlal Nehru, India’s first Prime Minister, on shaping the polity of modern India. It was published by T M Varghese Foundation.

Book named ‘Turbulent years’ released

The second part of President Pranab Mukherjee’s biography ‘Turbulent years’ was released yesterday.

- He has shared his political experiences in this book.