

**CURRENTAFFAIRS SNIPPETS: MARCH 2018****BUSINESS & TRADE****India's first HeliTaxi service launched in Bengaluru**

India's first helicopter shuttle service (HeliTaxi) was launched in IT capital Bengaluru, Karnataka in a bid to provide last-mile connectivity. The maiden trip of helitaxi was between Electronic City and Kempegowda International Airport in Bengaluru. It was provided by Thumbay Aviation.

**CCI imposes Rs. 54 crore fine on 3 airlines for unfair business practices**

The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has imposed fine of more than Rs. 54 crore on Jet Airways, InterGlobe Aviation and SpiceJet for unfair business practices with respect to fixing fuel surcharge on cargo transport. The CCI order comes on complaint filed by Express Industry Council of India (EICI) against airlines alleging cartelisation. It has directed three airlines to cease and desist from anti-competitive practices..

**Government scraps export duty on sugar**

The Central Board of Excise and Customs (CBEC) under Ministry of Finance has scrapped export duty of 20% on raw and refined sugar to boost shipments. The removal of export duty will help to export excess sugar output in India for sugar season 2017-18. This will also prevent further price erosion of the domestic sugar prices.

**CCEA approves bulk export of all edible oils**

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has approved for removal of prohibition on export of all varieties of edible oils except mustard oil. The proposal was forwarded by Ministry of Commerce & Industry. The CCEA has also approved empowering Committee, chaired by Secretary, Department of Food & Public Distribution to review the export and import policy on all varieties of edible oils.

**GOVERNMENT****Shakti Sthala: World's largest solar park launched in Karnataka**

The first phase Shakti Sthala solar park having total capacity of 2,000 megawatts (MW) was inaugurated in drought-prone Pavagada region of Tumkur district, Karnataka. It is claimed to be world's largest solar park. The park ties in with the Central Government's scheme to generate 100 gigawatts (GW) of solar power by 2020. It has been executed within record time of two years, with zero land acquisition

**Cabinet approves Fugitive Economic Offenders Bill, 2018.**

The Union Cabinet has approved introduction of Fugitive Economic Offenders Bill, 2018 in Parliament. The bill proposed by Finance Ministry aims to curb practice of evading criminal prosecution by economic offenders (wilful defaulters) who flee from country to evade clutches Indian law by remaining outside jurisdiction of Indian courts.

**Sukhad Yatra App and Toll-free Emergency number for Highway users launched**

Ministry of Road Transport & Highways (MoRTH) has launched Sukhad Yatra mobile application and 1033 Toll-free Emergency number for highway users. It also launched scheme for District Driving Training Centres and will provide grant of financial assistance for Road Safety Advocacy and awards for outstanding work in Road Safety.

**Government launches Udyam Sakhi Portal for Women Entrepreneurs**

The Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises launched Udyam Sakhi Portal ([www.udyamsakhi.org](http://www.udyamsakhi.org)) for women entrepreneurs on the occasion of International Women's Day. It was unveiled by Minister of State (Independent

Charge) of MSME, Giriraj Singh, in a program held at Ambedkar International Centre, New Delhi.

### **SUVIDHA: Government launches 100% Oxo-biodegradable Sanitary Napkin under Janaushadhi Pariyojana**

The Union Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers has launched 'Suvridha', a 100% Oxo-biodegradable Sanitary Napkin, under Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP). It was launched by Union Minister for Chemicals & Fertilizers and Parliamentary Affairs Ananthkumar on the occasion of International Woman's day.

### **Karnataka Government approves state flag proposal**

Karnataka Government has decided to accept state flag proposed and designed by 9-member committee constituted by state Kannada and Culture department. It will be official flag in place of an unofficial red and yellow flag that is currently used in the state to signify local pride.

### **Diu becomes first Union Territory to run 100% on solar power**

Diu has become the first and only Union Territory in the country to be fully run on solar energy. The UT generates total of 13 megawatts (MW) of electricity from solar power generating facilities daily. Of this, 3 MW is generated by rooftop solar plants and 10 MW by its other solar power plants.

### **India attracts \$209 billion FDI in 2014-2017: Government**

India has attracted reaching US \$208.99 billion foreign direct investment (FDI) during April 2014 to December 2017 period. The main sectors that received maximum FDI include services, computer software and hardware, telecommunications, construction, trading and automobile.

### **Government forms Tribunal to solve Mahanadi Water dispute between Odisha & Chhattisgarh**

The Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation has constituted Mahanadi Water Dispute Tribunal for adjudication of longstanding disputes between Odisha and Chhattisgarh over sharing of Mahanadi

river water. The tribunal was formed under Section 4 of Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956 following directives of Supreme Court on January 2018.

### **LaQshya program launched to improve quality of maternity care**

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare launched LaQshya program aimed at improving quality of maternity care in labour room and maternity Operation Theatre (OT). It is being implemented to 'fast-track' interventions for achieving tangible results.

### **Maharashtra Government bans use of plastic**

Maharashtra Government has banned use of plastic in time-bound manner, citing environmental and public health concerns. The decision was taken at cabinet meeting led by Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis. The ban will include plastic bags, thermocol, disposable cups and plates, cutlery, non-woven polypropylene bags, plastic pouches and packaging.

### **Prime Minister inaugurates 105th Indian Science Congress**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated 105th session of Indian Science Congress (ISC) at Manipur Central University in Imphal. The focal theme of 5-day ISC is "Reaching the Unreached Through Science & Technology". The ISC 2018 was organised by the Indian Science Congress Association (ISCA), a premier scientific organisation of India.

### **NITI Aayog releases SATH-E Roadmaps**

NITI Aayog has released comprehensive roadmaps and detailed timelines for its initiative Sustainable Action for Transforming Human Capital in Education (SATH-E) project to introduce system-wide Governance Transformation in school education.

### **National Cultural Audiovisual Archives becomes world's first Trusted Digital Repository**

The National Cultural Audiovisual Archives (NCAA) project of Ministry of Culture was certified as world's first Trusted Digital Repository

as per ISO 16363:2012 standard. The certification was granted by Primary Trustworthy Digital Repository Authorisation Body Ltd. (PTAB), United Kingdom.

### **Government to set up Plastic Park in Jharkhand's Deoghar District**

The Union Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers has approved proposal of setting up of Plastic Park in Deoghar District, Jharkhand. The project will be set up at cost of Rs.120 crores in an area of 150 acres. Moreover, it will also set up Central Institute for Plastic Engineering & Technology (CIPET) and Plastic Recycling unit at Deoghar.

### **Cabinet approves Ayushman Bharat-National Health Protection Mission**

The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved launch of Ayushman Bharat-National Health Protection Mission (AB-NHPM). The scheme will integrate two on-going centrally sponsored schemes viz. Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY) and Senior Citizen Health Insurance Scheme (SCHIS).

### **India's first sign language dictionary of 3000 words launched**

The Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment has launched India's first Sign Language Dictionary of 3000. The dictionary has been developed by Indian Sign Language Research & Training Centre (ISLR & TC) under Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD). This dictionary is available in both print and video formats. It will help to bring uniformity in sign languages which are used by differently abled people especially people with hearing or speech impairment.

### **India's first insect museum opened in Tamil Nadu**

India's first insect museum with state-of-the-art amenities was unveiled at Tamil Nadu Agricultural University campus in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu. It was inaugurated by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister K Palaniswamy.

### **Skill India partners with Ministry of Power for implementation of Saubhagya Scheme**

The Ministry of Power has partnered with Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship to train the manpower in six states for speedy implementation of its Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojna (Saubhagya Scheme). These six states are Assam, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Odisha and Uttar Pradesh.

### **Hindon Elevated Road: India's longest elevated road inaugurated in Uttar Pradesh**

Hindon Elevated Road, India's longest elevated road was inaugurated in Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. It connects UP Gate to Rajnagar Extension and will make it easier to commute between Delhi and Ghaziabad.

### **Lok Sabha passes Payment of Gratuity (Amendment) Bill, 2017**

The Lok Sabha has passed Payment of Gratuity (Amendment) Bill, 2017 to empower government to fix period of maternity leave and tax-free gratuity amount with an executive order. The Bill seeks to amend the Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972.

### **Parliament passes Payment of Gratuity (Amendment) Bill, 2017**

The Parliament has passed Payment of Gratuity (Amendment) Bill, 2017 to empower government to fix period of maternity leave and tax-free gratuity amount with an executive order. The Bill seeks to amend Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972 on two issues related to maternity leave and ceiling of gratuity payable to an employee.

### **Supreme Court allows passive euthanasia, living will**

The Supreme Court (SC) allowed passive euthanasia and right to give advance medical directives or 'Living Wills', stating that human beings have the right to die with dignity as part of fundamental right, but made sure to set out strict guidelines that will govern when it is permitted. The ruling was given by five-judge Constitution Bench led by Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra. Passive euthanasia is act of withdrawing or withholding medical support to dying patient who has no hope for revival or cure.

## INDIA'S GLOBAL RANKINGS

### **India 12th largest overseas holder of US securities in 2017**

According to recent figures compiled by US Treasury Department, India is 12th largest overseas holder of US government securities. India's exposure to it has risen sharply to high of US \$144.7 billion at end of 2017. The preliminary data from June 2017 benchmark survey of foreign portfolio holdings of US securities showed that total value of such holding was \$18.44 trillion. Out of the total, \$7.19 trillion was in equities, \$10.29 trillion in long-term debt securities and \$954 billion in short-term debt securities.

### **World Happiness Index 2018: India ranks 133**

India was ranked 133rd among 156 countries in World Happiness Index 2018, recently released by the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network. The index ranked 156 countries based on factors (parameters) such as inequality, life expectancy, GDP per capita, social freedom, generosity, public trust (i.e. a lack of corruption in government and business) and social support. Together these parameters are used to generate a happiness score of country on a scale from 1 to 10. This year it is sixth such list released since it was first published in 2012. The 2018 report, for the first time ranked happiness of foreign-born immigrants in 117 countries.

### **India ranks 78th on WEF Energy Transition Index**

India was ranked at 78th among 114 countries on World Economic Forum's (WEF) Energy Transition Index (ETI) released as part of report titled Fostering Effective Energy Transition. The index ranks countries on how well they are able to balance energy security and access with environmental sustainability and affordability.

## INTERNATIONAL

### **India, Russia, Bangladesh sign pact for Rooppur atomic plant**

India, Bangladesh and Russia have signed tripartite memorandum of understanding (MoU) for cooperation in construction of Rooppur nuclear

power plant near Dhaka, Bangladesh. It is first initiative under India-Russia nuclear deal to undertake atomic energy projects in third countries. It will also be India's first atomic energy venture abroad.

### **Marshall Islands to launch world-first digital legal tender**

Marshall Islands in Pacific Ocean is set to become first country in world to recognize cryptocurrency as its legal tender and adopt transparent crypto monetary system. The parliament of island has passed law to create the digital currency called "Sovereign" with symbol SOV to raise some hard cash to pay bills and boost economy.

### **Iraq overtakes Saudi Arabia as India's biggest Oil Supplier**

Iraq has overtaken Saudi Arabia to become India's top crude oil supplier by supplying 38.9 million tonnes (MT) crude oil in the current financial year. It was fifth of the India's oil needs. India is 80% dependent on imports to meet its oil needs. India had imported 184.4 MT of crude oil during April-January period of 2017-18 period as compared to 213.9 MT in the entire 2016-17 fiscal, and 202.8 MT in 2015-16.

### **First Indo-French Knowledge Summit held in New Delhi.**

The first Indo-French Knowledge Summit for university, scientific and technology cooperation was successfully held in New Delhi. The two-day summit was organized by the French Embassy in India and co-hosted by Ministry of Human Resource Development.

### **India, France co-host International Solar Alliance summit**

India, France co-hosted first International Solar Alliance (ISA) Summit at Rashtrapati Bhavan Convention Centre in New Delhi. The aim of the summit was to deliberate on finance mechanism for promotion of solar energy in member countries, crowd-funding and technology transfer.

### **Samvedna 2018: IAF's first multilateral HADR air exercise in South Asia**

Samvedna 2018, the first multilateral Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) exercise of Indian Air Force (IAF) in association with South Asian Region nations was held off the coast of Kerala. The multilateral exercise was spearheaded by IAF and conducted by Southern Air Command (SAC) and involved representatives from air forces of Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal and UAE.

### **Bidya Devi Bhandari: Nepal's 1st woman President re-elected for 2nd term**

Nepal's first woman President Bidya Devi Bhandari (56) was re-elected for second term in office. In the presidential election, she defeated Nepali Congress (NC) leader Kumari Laxmi Rai with overwhelming majority. Ms. Bhandari was elected with more than a two-thirds majority after she secured 39,275 votes while the Nepali Congress's Ms. Rai garnered 11,730 votes.

### **Earth Hour 2018 observed across the world**

The twelfth edition of Earth Hour was observed across the world on 24 March 2018 to take a global call on climate change. To mark this day, cities worldwide turned their lights off for one hour from 8:30 pm to 9:30 pm local time.

## SCIENCE TECHNOLOGY, AEROSPACE & DEFENCE

### **Paschim Lehar: Tri-service maritime exercise concludes**

Tri-service maritime exercise Paschim Lehar conducted by Indian Navy concluded off western coast in Arabian Sea. The objective of the exercise was to build interoperability between Indian Navy, Indian Army, Indian Air Force and Coast Guard

### **Saposhi: Threat of new malware looms over cyberspace**

Cybersecurity agencies have detected a new malware called Saposhi that can take over electronic devices and use them for Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attacks. Saposhi Malware is capable of taking over electronic devices and turning them into bots (device taken over by malware) which can then be used for any purpose,

including DDoS attacks which, with enough firepower, can cripple entire industries.

### **MILES-18: First ever multi-nation naval exercise at sea held in Andaman**

The MILES-18, first-ever multi-nation naval exercise at sea was held at the Andaman sea. The three days exercise was conducted as part of 10th edition of MILAN 2018. Milan 2018, a multi-national mega event was organised by Andaman Nicobar naval command with theme 'Friendship Across the Seas' to expand regional cooperation and combat unlawful activities in critical sea lanes.

### **Sach-Gaurav: India's first cloned Assamese buffalo born**

The Central Institute for Research on Buffaloes (CIRB) has claimed that India's first cloned Assamese buffalo male calf named Sach-Gaurav was born in Hisar, Haryana. It was born to Murrah buffalo, at Hi Tech Sach Dairy Farm, 100 kms from cloning laboratory, making it first buffalo calf to be born in field.

### **Varuna 2018: Indian Navy hosts bilateral naval exercise with French Navy**

The Indo-French joint naval exercise Varuna-18 was held in Arabian Sea off Goa coast. It was aimed to explore measures to facilitate operational-level interactions between their armed forces and increase mutual cooperation, considering the common global threats.

### **BrahMos missile with indigenous seeker successfully test-fired for first time**

Supersonic cruise missile BrahMos was successfully flight-tested for first time with indigenously developed seeker at Pokhran test range, Rajasthan. So far, seeker, a critical technology in missiles was imported from Russia. During the test missile with India-made seeker flew in its designated trajectory and target with pin-point accuracy.

### **InSight Mission: NASA's first mission to explore deep interior of Mars**

NASA will send first-ever mission named as InSight (Interior Exploration using Seismic

Investigations, Geodesy and Heat Transport) dedicated to exploring the deep interior of Mars. InSight will be stationary lander that will be launched in May 2018. It will be first NASA mission since the Apollo moon landings to place seismometer, a device that measures quakes on the soil of another planet.

### **ISRO successfully launches GSAT-6A satellite**

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) successfully launched GSAT 6A communication satellite on board of GSLV-F08 rocket from Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh. This was overall 12th GSLV flight (and fifth successful) and sixth flight with indigenously built cryogenic upper stage engine.

### **Interstitial: Scientists discover new organ in human body**

Scientists have discovered new organ in human body and have named it as 'interstitium'. It will be the 80th organ in the human body. It might be also the biggest organ in human body. It was discovered while doctors were investigating patient's bile duct, searching for signs of cancer. They had noticed cavities of this organ that did not match any previously known human anatomy. The discovery of interstitium will help to explain how cancer spreads in body and pave way for new ways to detect and treat the disease.

### **ISRO-BHEL tie up for Production of Space Grade Lithium-Ion Cells**

Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has entered into Technology Transfer Agreement (TTA) with Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) to transfer technology for manufacturing space grade Lithium-Ion (Li-Ion) cells. The technology transfer will enable BHEL to produce space grade Li-Ion cells which can meet country's space programme requirements. It can also be adopted to cater Li-Ion cell requirement for other national needs.

## SPORTS

### **Navjot Kaur: First Indian woman to win gold medal at Asian Wrestling Championships**

Ace wrestler Navjot Kaur won gold medal in the 65kg freestyle wrestling category of Senior Asian Championships held in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. With this, she created history by becoming first Indian woman wrestler to win gold medal in Senior Asian Championships. This was also India's first gold in the ongoing championships. In the final match the women's 65kg freestyle wrestling category, Navjot defeated Japan's Miya Imai by 9-1 score.

### **Australia wins 2018 Sultan Azlan Shah Cup**

World champions Australia won 27th edition of the Sultan Azlan Shah cup 2018 for record 10th time. In the final match held in Ipoh, Malaysia, Australia defeated defending champion England by narrow 2-1 goal margin. Earlier, in the classification match for third place, Argentina defeated host Malaysia by 3-2 goals.

### **India B wins Deodhar Trophy 2018**

India B won 45th edition of the Deodhar Trophy 2018 by defeating Karnataka in final match by 6 wickets at the Himachal Pradesh Cricket Association Stadium in Dharamsala.

### **Pankaj Advani won the 2018 Asian Billiards Championships**

Pankaj Advani has defended his Asian Billiards Championships title. In the summit clash at Yangon in Myanmar, Advani defeated his practice partner B Bhaskar 6-1 on March 24, 2018. With this win, Advani remains the reigning Indian, Asian and world champion in billiards for 2017-18. This is Advani's 11th gold medal at the Asian level of cue sports.

### **8th edition of Theatre Olympics inaugurated**

The 8th edition of Theatre Olympics was inaugurated by Vice president Venkaih Naidu in New Delhi. The event was organised by National School of Drama (NSD) under Ministry of Culture. The theme of the festival is – "Flag of Friendship". 51-day long nationwide theatre extravaganza was held in various cities. It featured Indian and international theatre groups, eminent theatre

personalities along with their performances. 30 countries participated in the festival from across the globe.

### AWARDS & HONORS

#### **90th Academy Awards (Oscars 2018)**

The 90th Academy Awards commonly referred to as Oscars was held at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood, Los Angeles, California (US). The award presented in 24 categories by Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS), honouring best films of year 2017. The Shape of Water won the most number of awards totaling to four at the ceremony after it was nominated into highest 13 categories. It was followed by Dunkirk, nominated for eight categories and Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri, nominated for seven categories.

#### **Balkrishna Doshi wins Pritzker Prize**

Legendary Indian architect Balkrishna Doshi (90), a pioneer of low-cost housing design has won the prestigious Pritzker Prize, considered architecture field's Nobel. He is 45th Pritzker laureate and first from India to receive it.

#### **India wins Best Exhibitor Award at ITB – Berlin**

India won Best Exhibitor Award at ITB–Berlin World Tourist Meet convened at Berlin, Germany. More than 100 countries had participated in the mega meet with their respective Tourism Ministers.

#### **Canadian mathematician Robert P. Langlands wins Abel Prize 2018.**

Canadian mathematician Robert P. Langlands (81) has won prestigious Abel Prize 2018 for his visionary programme connecting representation theory to number theory. He will receive the award from Norway's King Harald V at an award ceremony in Oslo in May 2018.

### PERSONALITIES

#### **Bihar Governor Satya Pal Malik given additional charge as Governor of Odisha**

President Ram Nath Kovind has given Bihar Governor Satya Pal Malik (72) additional charge of Odisha until regular arrangements are made. He was given additional charge after incumbent governor S C Jamir completed his five-year tenure. The five-time Chief Minister of Nagaland S C Jamir had taken over as Odisha governor in March 2013 after serving as governor of Goa and Maharashtra. He had also been given additional charge of Gujarat in 2009.

#### **Chandra Bhushan Kumar appointed as Deputy Election Commissioner**

Government has appointed senior bureaucrat Chandra Bhushan Kumar as Deputy Election Commissioner. He will have tenure of five years. Bhushan is 1995 batch IAS officer of Union Territories Cadre.

#### **Stephen Hawking, the legendary theoretical physicist has passed away.**

Stephen Hawking (76), the legendary British theoretical physicist, has passed away in Cambridge, United Kingdom on March 14, 2018. Known for his unique way of speaking while living his life in a wheelchair, Hawking became an emblem of human determination and curiosity. He is known for his groundbreaking work with black holes and relativity.