

AWARDS & HONOURS

The 64th **National Film Awards** were announced on April 7, 2017. Sonam Kapoor and Akshay Kumar were among the big winners. While Sonam's Neerja was declared the Best Hindi Film of 2016, Rustom won Akshay Kumar the Best Actor award. Following is the complete list of winners at the 64th National Film Awards for 2016:-

- **Best Feature Film** - Kasaav (Marathi).
- **Non-Feature Film** - Fireflies in the Abyss.
- **Best Popular Film Providing Wholesome Entertainment** - Sathamanam Bhavathi
- **Best stunt choreography** - Peter Hein (Pulimurugan)
- **Best Children's Film** - Dhanak (Hindi)
- **Best Film on social issue** - Pink
- **Best Direction** - Rajesh (Ventilator)
- **Best Actor** - Akshay Kumar (Rustom)
- **Best Actress** - Surabhi Lakshmi (Minnaminungu)
- **Best Supporting Actress** - Zaira Wasim (Dangal)
- **Best Child Artist** - Adhish Praveen (Kunju Daivam), Saj (Noor Islam), Manohara (Railway Children)
- **Best Male Playback Singer** - Sundara Iyer (Joker)
- **Best Female Playback Singer** - Thume jaake
- **Best Screenplay (original)** - Syam Pushkaran (Maheshinte Prathikaram)
- **Best Screenplay (adapted)** - Sanjay Krishnaji patel (Dashakriya)
- **Best Editing** - Rameshwar Ventilator
- **Sound designer** - Jayadevan (Kaadu Pookunna Neram)
- **Best production design** - 24
- **Best Costume Designer** - Sachin (Marathi film)
- **Best Environmental film including agriculture** - The Tiger who crossed the line
- **Best Make-up Artist** - MK Ramakrishna
- **Best Music Direction** - Babu Padmanabha (Kannada Lama)
- **Special Mention** - Kadvi Hawa Mukthi bhava (Hindi)
- Special Jury award for Mohanlal for Pulimurugan, Janatha Garage and Munthirivallikal Thalirkkumbol

The Underground Railroad, an inventive and searing take on slavery in 1850s Georgia, won the **Pulitzer Prize** for fiction, adding to author Colson Whitehead's list of accolades and bolstering the case for the book to be included in the pantheon of Great American Novels. The complete list of winners is as under:-

➤ **Letters, Drama & Music**

- ❖ **Fiction:** *The Underground Railroad* by Colson Whitehead. Drama: *Sweat* by Lynn Nottage.
- ❖ **History:** *Blood in the Water: The Attica Prison Uprising of 1971 and Its Legacy*, by Heather Ann Thompson.
- ❖ **Biography or Autobiography:** *The Return: Fathers, Sons and the Land in Between*, by Hisham Matar.
- ❖ **Poetry:** *Olio*, by Tyehimba Jess (Wave Books)
- ❖ **General Nonfiction:** *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*, by Matthew Desmond.
- ❖ **Music:** *Angel's Bone*, by Du Yun.

➤ **Journalism**

- ❖ **Public Service:** New York Daily News and ProPublica
- ❖ **Breaking News Reporting:** Staff of East Bay Times, Oakland.
- ❖ **Investigative Reporting:** Eric Eyre of Charleston Gazette-Mail, Charleston
- ❖ **Explanatory Reporting:** International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, McClatchy and Miami Herald
- ❖ **Local Reporting:** The Salt Lake Tribune Staff
- ❖ **National Reporting:** David A. Fahrenthold of The Washington Post
- ❖ **International Reporting:** The New York Times Staff
- ❖ **Feature Writing:** C. J. Chivers of The New York Times
- ❖ **Commentary:** Peggy Noonan of The Wall Street Journal
- ❖ **Criticism:** Hilton Als of The New Yorker
- ❖ **Editorial Writing:** Art Cullen of The Storm Lake Times, Storm Lake.
- ❖ **Editorial Cartooning:** Jim Morin of Miami Herald
- ❖ **Breaking News Photography:** Daniel Berehulak, freelance photographer
- ❖ **Feature Photography:** Jason Wambsgans of Chicago Tribune

This is the 101st year of the prestigious Pulitzers, which is an annual award for achievements in newspaper, magazine and online journalism, literature, and musical composition in the United States.

Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai was appointed a **UN Messenger of Peace** to promote girls' education, more than four years after a Taliban gunman shot her in the head. At 19, Yousafzai is the youngest Messenger of Peace, the highest honour given by the UN for an initial period of two years. She was also the youngest person to win the Nobel peace prize in 2014 when she was 17.

Dawit Isaak, an imprisoned Eritrean-Swedish journalist, was chosen to receive the 2017 **UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize**. Mr. Isaak was arrested in a crackdown on the media that occurred in September 2001. The last time he was heard from was in 2005. His present location is unknown.

BUSINESS & CORPORATE

Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) commissioned a 800 MW supercritical thermal power plant in Raichur District of Karnataka. This is the second unit of the 2*800 MW Yeramarus Thermal Power Station, the first unit of which was successfully commissioned in early March 2017.

India's largest e-commerce firm **Flipkart** raised \$1.4 billion led by China's internet giant Tencent, with participation from the online auction site eBay and Microsoft, valuing the Bengaluru-based company at \$11.6 billion, post the investment. This marked the largest capital infusion for any privately-held Indian internet venture and surpassed the earlier high set by Flipkart itself when in July 2014 it picked up \$1 billion and set the stage for a funding boom in the local startup ecosystem. As part of this transaction, eBay Inc put \$500 million in Flipkart and sold its India business to the Bengaluru firm.

Grasim Industries received approval from its shareholders to merge its Group company Aditya Birla Nuvo with itself.

Nokia, the Finnish giant, signed MoUs with Indian telecom giants Airtel and BSNL to expand its collaborative technology partnership to work on 5G technology standard and management of connected devices.

Reliance Jio launched a new offer, named Jio Dhan Dhana Dhan, to provide customers with free services for three months. The new offer came soon after the company agreed to withdraw the Jio Summer Surprise offer after a TRAI order asked for it be cancelled. The new Jio Dhan Dhana Dhan offer is open to new and existing customers, and provides unlimited data, free SMSs, Jio apps subscription, and of course free voice calls.

Anil Agarwal's **Vedanta Ltd** concluded the merger of Cairn India with itself. According to an official statement, the merged company will have a larger proforma market cap of \$15.6 billion.

Indian billionaire Anil Agarwal became the second largest shareholder in Anglo American after acquiring 11.44 per cent of the British mining group. The **Volcan Holdings investment company** owned by Agarwal's family now owns 11.44 per cent of the group's capital and voting rights following the share purchase. It is now the second largest shareholder behind South Africa's Public Investment Corporation, which owns more than 13 per cent.

BILLS / ACTS / COMMITTEES / SCHEMES / POLICIES

- The Union Cabinet approved the signing of the Air Services Agreement (ASA) between India and Georgia. The Agreement between the two countries is based on latest International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) template keeping in view of developments in Civil Aviation sector and with an objective to improve the air connectivity between the two countries. Presently there is no Air Services Agreement between these two countries. ASA is the basic legal framework for any air operation between the two countries.
- The Union Cabinet approved closure of the Mahatma Gandhi Pravasi Suraksha Yojana (MGPSY) which was set up in 2012 to address the social security-related issues of the Emigration Check Required (ECR)-category workers going abroad for employment to ECR countries.
- The Union Cabinet approved signing of MoU between India and Bangladesh in the field of judicial sector cooperation. It is aimed at developing, promoting and strengthening mutual cooperation between the judiciaries of the two countries.
- The Union Cabinet approved the MoU on Cooperation in the field of Mass Media between India and Bangladesh.
- The Union Cabinet approved the MoU between India and Australia on cooperation in the field of Health and Medicine. The main areas of cooperation include the following:
 1. Communicable diseases such as Malaria and TB;
 2. Mental Health and Non-Communicable Diseases;
 3. Anti-Microbial Resistance and responding to public health emergencies;
 4. Regulation of Pharmaceuticals, vaccines and medical devices;
 5. Digital Health;
 6. Tobacco Control
- India and Israel inked mega defence deals worth over \$2 billion for advanced surface-to-air missile (SAM) systems, which are designed to destroy hostile aircraft, missiles and drones at a range of 70-km, to further tighten the bilateral strategic partnership.

ECONOMY & FINANCE

- The Union Cabinet gave its approval for the following:-
 - ❖ Setting up of a Special Purpose Vehicle to be called Government e-Marketplace (GeM SPV) as the National Public Procurement Portal as Section 8 Company registered under the Companies Act, 2013, for providing procurement of goods & services required by Central & State Government organizations. GeM SPV shall provide an end-to-end online Marketplace for Central and State Government Ministries / Departments, Central & State Public Sector Undertakings (CPSUs & SPSUs), Autonomous institutions and Local bodies, for procurement of common use goods & services in a transparent and efficient manner.
 - ❖ DGS&D shall be wound up and cease its functions by 31st October, 2017. In case it is not possible to wind up DGS&D by 31st October, 2017, the Department may extend the date of closure with proper justification latest upto 31st March, 2018.
- The Union Cabinet approved measures to increase oil palm area and production in India, including relaxation of land ceiling limit for oil palm cultivation under NMOOP (National Mission on Oilseeds and Oil Palm). This will encourage oil palm plantation on large scale by corporate bodies and to utilize wastelands. By relaxing restrictions under NMOOP, private entrepreneurs/cooperative bodies/joint ventures will show their interest in investment in oil palm plantation and availing the NMOOP support. Oil Palm is one of the world's most efficient crop in terms of yield of vegetable oil per ha and today it is largest source of vegetable oil in the world. Government of India is promoting oil palm by implementing several programmes since 1986-87 and from 2014-15 through NMOOP. NMOOP aims to bring an additional area of 1.25 lakh hectare under oil palm cultivation by the end of 2016-17.
- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said capital, asset quality and profitability would be the basis of the Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) framework on which the banks would be monitored and defined three kinds of risk thresholds. In a notification issued by RBI, the mandatory action that would be taken when a bank breaches the risk threshold includes restriction on dividend payment/remittance of profits, restriction on branch expansion, higher provisions, restriction on management compensation and director's fees.
- India was ranked 40th among 136 economies of the world in 2017 Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI) released by the World Economic Forum (WEF). Spain, France and Germany were the top three in descending order.
- India ranked ninth among 41 countries in bribery and corrupt practices in businesses, as per the EY Europe, Middle East, India and Africa (EMEIA) Fraud Survey 2017. India ranked behind Ukraine, Cyprus, Greece, Slovenia, Croatia, Kenya, South Africa and Hungary, in the perception survey. The ranking improved marginally from the survey findings in 2015 when India was at the sixth position, owing to better regulatory scrutiny and emphasis on transparency and governance.
- The Union Cabinet gave its approval for signing of the Collaborative Agreement with French National Research Agency (ANR), France for supporting the Belmont Forum Secretariat from January, 2015 to December, 2017 at a total estimated expenditure of Euro 40,000. The Cabinet also approved continued financial support to Belmont Forum Secretariat beyond 2017. The Belmont Forum, created in 2009, is a high level group of the world's major and emerging funders of global environmental change research and

international science councils. It provides an opportunity to identify study and deliver international environmental research priorities, for the society, in an accelerated way through trans-national research collaboration between natural and social scientists and alignment of international resources.

- RBI governor Urjit Patel-led Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) kept the key repo rate unchanged in the first monetary policy review of 2017 and after Budget 2017. The policy rates in the policy were as under :-
 - ❖ Repo rate: 6.25%
 - ❖ Reverse Repo Rate: 6%
 - ❖ Marginal Standing Facility (MSF) Rate : 6.5%.
 - ❖ Bank Rate : 6.5%.
 - ❖ Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR): 4%.
 - ❖ Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR): 20.50%.

PEOPLE IN NEWS

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres appointed **Achim Steiner** of Germany as the new Administrator of UNDP for a term of four years. Mr. Steiner succeeds Helen Clark of New Zealand. A highly effective communicator and champion of development, environmental protection, democratic governance and institutional reform, she has advocated for the rights of the poor and marginalized, particularly women, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and/or intersex persons, refugees and migrants, and people with HIV/AIDS.

Congress leader and former Union Minister **Akhilesh Das Gupta** passed away. Akhilesh Das had been Minister of State for Steel in UPA-I, served as a mayor of Lucknow and held many posts in the Congress for nearly two decades. Akhilesh was the son of former UP chief minister Banarasi Das.

B.P. Kanungo, a long-serving official with India's central bank, took over as a deputy governor of the Reserve Bank of India for a three-year term, overseeing a portfolio including currency management, debt management, and payment and settlements.

Former Governor of Jammu and Kashmir **Girish Chandra Saxena** passed away at the age of 90. An Indian Police Service officer of the 1950 batch from the Uttar Pradesh cadre, he served two terms as the governor of Jammu and Kashmir.

Justice **Gita Mittal**, the senior-most judge of Delhi High Court, was appointed as the acting Chief justice of Delhi High Court with effect from April 14.

Justice **Indira Banerjee**, currently a judge of the Delhi High Court, was appointed by the President as the Chief Justice of Madras High Court. Ms. Justice Banerjee would be the second woman after Justice Kanta Kumari Bhatnagar to head the chartered court.

Padma Vibhushan recipient classical singer **Kishori Amonkar** passed away at the age of 84. One of the finest Hindustani classical singers, Amonkar was a recipient of the Rashtrapati Award, Sangeet Natak Akademi Award and Sangeet Samragini Award, among others.

Pakistan announced death sentence to Indian 'spy' **Kulbhushan Jadhav**, arrested in March 2016, for espionage and waging war against Islamabad. India reacted angrily, saying Jadhav had been sentenced to die "without observing basic norms of law and justice" and if this was carried out, it would amount to "premeditated murder".

McGill University virologist **Mark Wainberg**, a pioneering HIV researcher whose research contributed to the discovery of the antiviral drug lamivudine, died unexpectedly.

Mukta Dutta Tomar was appointed as India's new Ambassador to Germany. Tomar, a 1984 batch IFS officer is presently working as the Additional Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).

The National Association of Software and Services Companies (Nasscom) appointed **Raman Roy** as its chairman for 2017-2018. Roy, Chairman and Managing Director of Quattro, has been a member of Nasscom's Executive Council and was the vice-chairman for 2016-17. He will take over from CP Gurnani (Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of Tech Mahindra).

Diplomat **Vipul**, a 1998 batch Indian Foreign Service officer, took charge as the new Consul General of Dubai. Dubai is recognized as the commercial capital and tourism center of the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

SPORTS

India and **Australia** launched India-Australia Sports Partnership (IASP) with a vision of increasing cooperation in sports.

India was ranked third for the third year in a row in a doping violation report published by World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) for 2015 with 117 athletes from the country being punished after testing positive for banned substances. India followed Russian Federation (176) and Italy (129) at third spot in the doping violation chart released by the WADA, the same position as in the reports of 2013 and 2014.

The **International Cricket Council** (ICC) named eight stellar players of international cricket as the Champion Ambassadors for the Champions Trophy that will be held in the UK from June 1-18. Shahid Afridi of Pakistan, Bangladesh's Habibul Bashar, Ian Bell of England, Shane Bond of New Zealand, Australia's Mike Hussey, India's Harbhajan Singh, Kumar Sangakkara of Sri Lanka and Graeme Smith of South Africa were honoured as ambassadors.

Lewis Hamilton beat Sebastian Vettel in the Chinese Grand Prix to take his first win of the 2017 F1 season.

Rio Olympic silver medallist Shuttler **P V Sindhu** reached her career best world rankings, grabbing the number two position in the latest Badminton World Federation (BWF) rankings. The rankings are led by Tai Tzu Ying of China.

Roger Federer defeated Rafael Nadal to win the 2017 Miami Open.

Indian captain **Virat Kohli** was named Wisden's Leading Cricketer in the World for 2016. Kohli amassed 1215 Test runs at a stupendous average of 75.93 last year. Ten ODI appearances fetched him 739 runs at 92.37, while he scored 641 T20 International runs at 106.83. Only six batsmen have ever scored more international runs in a calendar year than Kohli but none of them have come close to the Indian captain's average.

MISCELLANEOUS

World

- The United States dropped the “mother of all bombs” — the most powerful conventional bomb in the American arsenal — on an Islamic State cave complex in Afghanistan.
- Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi has declared a three-month state of emergency after suicide bombers targeted two Coptic churches, killing at least 44 people and injuring dozens more in the run-up to Easter.
- Japan officially recognized bitcoin and digital currencies as legal money along the lines of other fiat currencies with effect from April 1, 2017.

India

- Himachal Pradesh celebrated 70th Himachal Day function in Chamba. Himachal Pradesh came into existence by merging 30 odd princely states in 1948.
- Punjab government prohibited the inclusion of names of the government functionaries, including ministers and MLAs, on foundation stones and inaugural plaques so as to build a stronger connect with the people by thinning the VIP culture.
- Haryana government launched ‘Operation Durga’ to ensure women safety in the state.
- Jharkhand Police initiated Tare Zameen Par programme to enlighten children in Naxal-affected areas in the Palamau district of Jharkhand.

AWARDS & HONOURS

Renowned filmmaker and actor Kasinadhuni Viswanath, best known for his award-winning movies in Telugu, Tamil and Hindi, won the **Dadasaheb Phalke award** for the year 2016 for his outstanding contribution to the film industry.

Dr. Paduru Gururaja Bhat Award 2017 was conferred upon Prof. A.V. Narasimha Murthy, for his contribution to Indian Archaeology.

State-owned Gujarat Narmada Valley Fertilisers and Chemicals Ltd (GNFC) won the prestigious **Golden Globe Tigers Award for Excellence and Leadership in CSR** in the category of 'E-Payment Leadership' for the implementation of digital transactions in its township at Bharuch, Gujarat. The award recognises "Tigers" in marketing, branding CSR and social innovation, education and academic across leadership levels in an individual and organization. This is the second award for GNFC in this category. Earlier it had won the Golden Peacock Award in the category of Innovative Product/Service for its cashless innovation.

UNESCO named Giuseppina Nicolini, Mayor of Lampedusa (Italy) and the non-governmental organisation SOS Méditerranée (France) as the winners of **Felix Houphouet-Boigny Peace Prize 2017** "for their work to save the lives of refugees and migrants and welcome them with dignity".

Produced by Manish Mundra and directed by Amit Vasurkar, 'Newton' won the **Jury Prize for the Best Film** at the 41st Hong Kong Film Festival 2017. The film had its Asia Premiere at the festival where it was screened in the Young Cinema Competition category. The jury awarded the film "*For the intelligent and human presentation of a political situation in a country. The film balances the humour, disillusion and – against all odds – a steadfast belief in the meaning of democracy*".

The Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare selected Tripura for the **Krishi Karman Award 2015-16** for commendable increase in food grain production in small category states (less than 1 million tonnes). Tamil Nadu got the award in large category (production more than 10 million tonnes) and Himachal Pradesh in medium category (1 to 10 million tonnes).

National Safety Council Awards 2016 were given to 70 Organisations under four categories: SarvaShreshtha Suraksha Puraskar, Shreshtha Suraksha Puraskar, Suraksha Puraskar PrashansaPatra. Indian Oil, National Fertilizers, L&T and Godrej & Boyce were among those that won the top National Safety Council (NSC) award – Sarva Shreshtha Suraksha Puraskar. The National Safety Council is a self-supporting non- profit autonomous society, set up by the Ministry of Labour and Employment in 1966.

Bhubaneswar, the capital city of the Odisha, became the first Indian city to win the elusive **Pierre L'enfant International Planning excellence award** 2017. The award is given out by the American Planning Association (APA) for good and advanced town planning and engaging its residents in the planning process.

Social activist **Prafulla Samantra** was announced one of the six winners of the Goldman Environmental Prize. Mr. Samantra was one of the key leaders responsible for rallying tribes, indigenous to Odisha's Niyamgiri region, and using legal provisions to thwart mining-to-metals conglomerate, Vedanta. The company has been forced to suspend plans to mine bauxite. The annual prize honours grassroots environmentalists, who undergo risk to their lives, to protect the environment and empower those who have most to lose from industrial projects threatening their traditional livelihood. Other winners this year include Mark Lopez, United States; Uroš Macerl, Slovenia; Rodrigo Tot, Guatemala; Rodrigue Katembo, Democratic Republic of Congo; and Wendy Bowman, Australia. Since 1990 when the awards were first instituted, five Indians — Medha Patkar, M.C. Mehta, Rasheeda Bi, Champaran Shukla and Ramesh Agrawal — have won the prize. Mr. Samantra is the sixth.

BUSINESS & CORPORATE

Etihad Airways, the flag carrier of Emirates of Abu Dhabi, appointed Robin Kamark as chief executive officer for the airlines, in which it is a strategic investment partner.

On the occasion of Akshaya Tritiya, Indian e-wallet giant, **Paytm** announced its collaboration with MMTC-PAMP to launch Digital Gold, enabling users to buy gold online and store it in MMTC-PAMP's vault free of charge. This new service will enable users to request their gold to be delivered at their home in the form of minted coins.

State Bank of India (SBI) surpassed Oil & Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) to become the country's most valued state-owned company in terms of market valuation. Among the top-10 most valued companies list, SBI is at the fifth position, while ONGC is seventh. IT major Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) is the most-valued Indian company with a market cap of Rs. 4,54,902.85 crore, followed by Reliance Industries Limited (Rs. 4,45,578.92 crore), HDFC Bank (Rs. 3,70,480.05 crore), ITC (Rs. 3,38,851.25 crore), State Bank of India, HDFC (Rs. 2,35,122.56 crore), ONGC, Infosys (Rs. 2,11,870.18 crore), Hindustan Unilever (Rs. 1,97,464.44 crore) and Maruti Suzuki India (Rs. 1,85,235.49 crore).

TAL Manufacturing Solutions, a wholly owned subsidiary of **Tata Motors** launched India's first industrial-articulated robot by the name "BRABO". The robot is indigenously developed for micro, small and medium enterprises in India. BRABO is meant to complement the human workforce and perform repetitive, high volume, dangerous and time-consuming tasks from raw material handling to packaging of finished products. The company said it can increase productivity by 15-30 percent, with a payback period of 15 to 18 months. The robot is available in payloads of 2 kilos and 10 kilos and is priced competitively between Rs 5 to 7 lakh.

Jimmy Wales, the co-founder of **Wikipedia**, announced launching a new online publication which will aim to fight fake news by pairing professional journalists with an army of volunteer community contributors.

BILLS / ACTS / COMMITTEES / SCHEMES / POLICIES

- The Union Cabinet gave its approval for signing of a Protocol amending the Convention between India and Portugal for avoidance of double taxation. The Protocol will also ensure prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income. Once the Protocol enters into force, both India and Portugal would be able to exchange tax related information, which will help tax authorities of both countries to curb tax evasion.
- Prime Minister Narendra launched regional connectivity scheme 'UDAN' (*Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik*) on April 27 from Shimla Airport. According to the ministry, it is committed to providing air connectivity to currently underserved and unserved airports through the UDAN air connectivity scheme. An under-served airport is defined as an airport which has no more than seven scheduled commercial flight departures per week, whereas an un-served airport or airstrip is the one which has not even received a single scheduled commercial service during the last two flight schedules. UDAN scheme is a first-of-its-kind scheme globally to stimulate regional connectivity through a market-based mechanism. The UDAN Scheme is a key component of the National Civil Aviation Policy (NCAP) which was released on 15th June, 2016. Airfare for a one hour journey of appx. 500 km on a fixed wing aircraft or for 30 minute journey on a helicopter would be capped at Rs 2,500.
- To give farmers more freedom to sell their produce, the agriculture ministry unveiled a model Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) Act which defines each state/UT as a single unified market area. The move will curb the role of APMC mandis. The new Act also proposes to cap mandi taxes at 1% for foodgrain and 2% for fruits and vegetables while pegging arthia or commission agent's levy at 2% of the total transaction cost. With the exception of Bihar, all other states/UTs have agreed to adopt the model Act.
- Union Health Minister launched the Test and Treat policy for Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) patients. As per this new policy, anyone who is tested and found positive will get the necessary treatment free of cost and will be provided with ART (Anti- Retroviral Therapy). The scheme will be a centrally sponsored scheme.
- Mahatma Gandhi NREGS reached a new milestone today by geotagging one Crore assets and putting them in public domain. The scale of rural assets created under MGNREGA is very large. Since the inception of the programme in financial year 2006-07, about 2.82 Crore assets have been created under the programme. GeoMGNREGA is a unique endeavor of the Ministry of Rural Development in association with National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC), ISRO and National Informatics Centre. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed by Ministry of Rural Development with NRSC in June 2016 for geotagging the assets created under MGNREGS in each gram panchayat.
- The Ministry of Women and Child Development in collaboration with the Ministry of Panchayati Raj launched a nationwide programme for capacity building of Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) of Panchayats and a training program for Trainers of women panchayat leaders at Ranchi, Jharkhand.

ECONOMY & FINANCE

- According to figures released by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), India became world's fifth largest military spender after the expenditure grew around 8.5 per cent to \$55.9 billion in 2016., India spent in 2016. US remains the world's largest military spender with a growth of 1.7 per cent between 2015 and 2016 increasing the expenditure to \$611 billion.
- The Central Government successfully divested 9.2% of paid-up capital in National Aluminum Company Ltd. (NALCO) to raise Rs. 1,200 crore. Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM), Ministry of Finance, Government of India has set a record target of realizing Rs. 72,500 crore through disinvestment. This follows an all-time high achievement of Rs. 46,247 crore during 2016-17.
- India's import of total finished steel fell 36 per cent to 7.4 million tonnes (MT) and exports jumped 102 per cent to 8.2 MT in 2016-17, according to Joint Plant Committee's annual report on the sector for 2016-17. The production of crude steel was 97.385 MT during this period. India is the third largest producer of crude steel after China and Japan and is aiming to become the second largest in the near term.
- The IMF projected the world economy to grow at a pace of 3.5 per cent in 2017, up from 3.1 per cent last year, and 3.6 per cent in 2018. The IMF's new projection for 2017 is marginally higher than what they expected in its last update. This improvement comes primarily from good economic news for Europe and Asia, and within Asia, notably for China and Japan.
- A tripartite Memorandum of Understanding was signed among BBNL, Department of Posts and BSNL for providing broadband connectivity of BharatNet to Post Offices in rural areas. The MoU is the first tri-partite agreement to provide broadband connectivity to about 1.3 lakh, post offices in rural areas and 25,000 sub-post offices for high speed internet connectivity to the rural masses.
- India toppled Japan as the world's second-largest importer of liquefied petroleum gas as Prime Minister Narendra Modi's pledge to provide cooking gas cylinders to the poor and wean them off polluting fuels drove up consumption. Imports of LPG, mostly used as cooking fuel, soared 23 percent during the financial year that ended March 31 to 11 million tons, according to data from oil ministry's Petroleum Planning & Analysis Cell. Japan's imports slipped 3.2 percent during the same period to 10.6 million tons, according to its finance ministry. China remains the world's top importer.
- The World Bank approved a loan of \$375 million for capacity augmentation of National Waterway-1 (NW-1) between Haldia in West Bengal and Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh on the river Ganga under the Jal Marg Vikas Project (JMVP).

PEOPLE IN NEWS

Allan Holdsworth, hailed by his peers as one of the most technically gifted guitarists of his time, died at the age of 70.

Devendra Kumar Sharma, managing director of Himachal Pradesh Power Corporation Limited, was appointed as the new chairman of the Bhakra Beas Management Board (BBMB). The BBMB manages the release of water in Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan as it controls Bhakra, Pong and other dams.

The world's oldest person, **Emma Morano**, died in Italy at the age of 117, She was born on 29 November 1899 in Italy and was officially the last person born in the 1800s still living. Her life not only spanned three centuries but also survived an abusive marriage, the loss of her only son, two World Wars and more than 90 Italian governments.

Filmmaker **Jonathan Demme**, whose Oscar-winning thriller "The Silence of the Lambs" terrified audiences and introduced one of the most indelible villains in movie history, died at the age of 73.

India's first woman International Olympic Committee member **Nita Ambani** made it to two important commissions of the global sports governing body, including the prestigious Olympic channel, thus becoming one of the 16 members of the Olympic Channel Commission headed by United States Olympic Committee Chairman Lawrence Francis Probst. Besides the Olympic Channel, the 53-year-old Ambani was also made a member of Olympic education Commission for 2017.

Astronaut **Peggy Whitson** set a new space record for 'most days in space by a US astronaut', breaking the previous record set by Jeff Williams who had spent a total of 534 days in space.

IPS officer **Rajiv Rai Bhatnagar** was appointed as the Director-General of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF). The CRPF was functioning without a head after the retirement of K. Durga Prasad on February 28, 2017.

President Donald Trump announced the appointment of **Randolph Alles** as the director of the U.S. Secret Service.

One of the founding fathers of the internet, **Robert Taylor**, died at the age of 85. While working at the Pentagon in the 1960s, he instigated the creation of Arpanet - a computer network that initially linked together four US research centres, and later evolved into the internet. At Xerox, he later oversaw the first computer with desktop-inspired icons and a word processor that formed the basis of Microsoft Word.

Bengaluru-based 31 years old **Sagar Baheti** became the first visually impaired Indian runner to complete the historic Boston Marathon.

Adding yet another first to his huge repertoire of firsts, Bollywood superstar **Shah Rukh Khan** addressed the audience in a conference at TED Talks (Technology, Entertainment and Design talks) in Canada, thus becoming the first Bollywood actor to grace the stage delivering TED talks.

Srishti Kaur from India was crowned Miss Teen Universe 2017, beating out 25 other contestants from around the world in the annual beauty pageant.

Veteran Bollywood actor **Vinod Khanna**, who was sitting Bharatiya Janata Party member of the Lok Sabha from the Gurdaspur constituency in Punjab passed away at the age of 70. He had starred in more than 100 films in a career spanning over five decades. At the height of his popularity, Khanna surprised his fans when he took a break from acting for five years to join Osho Rajneesh at his ashram in Pune in 1982. But he returned to cinema in the late eighties, and courted success again. He was last seen in the Shah Rukh Khan-starrer "Dilwale" in 2015.

SPORTS

Haryana emerged champion beating Kerala at the National Youth Athletics Meet with 166.5 points.

Kerala conducted the country's first-ever transgender one-day athletic meet in Thiruvananthapuram, with 132 participants.

Indian shot putter **Manpreet Kaur** clinched a gold in the first leg of the Asian Grand Prix Athletics Meet with a national record and world season-leading effort. With this performance, Manpreet also qualified for the IAAF World Championships to be held in August in London.

Rio Olympics silver medallist **PV Sindhu** climbed up two places to be at No. 3 in the latest BWF ranking released, on the basis of making the quarterfinals of the recently-concluded Singapore Open Super Series.

Rafael Nadal won the Monte Carlo Masters for a record 10th time after defeating Albert Ramos-Vinolas, thus becoming the first man in the Open era to win the same event 10 times.

Video gaming will be featured as a full sport at the 2022 Asian Games, with competitors in electronic sports set to receive medals for their digital prowess.

MISCELLANEOUS

World

- US President Donald Trump unveiled one of the biggest tax cuts in American history, through drastically reducing tax rates both in the business and individual categories, fulfilling one of its major election promises. For individuals, the Trump administration proposed to reduce the existing seven tax brackets to three tax brackets of 10 per cent, 25 per cent and 35 per cent; doubling the standard deduction and provide tax relief for families with child and dependent care expenses. The income tax rates were slashed from 39.6% to 35%. The new plan also proposed for a 15% corporate tax rate which is a sharp drop from the existing 35%.
- Cuba and Morocco signed an agreement to re-establish diplomatic ties after a time period of 37 years.
- Five prominent Madhesi parties in Nepal united to form a new united party named the Rastriya Janata Party, which will be the fifth largest party in Nepal's Parliament.
- Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull made drastic changes to Citizenship laws unveiling tighter requirements for new applicants, following the recent scrapping of the 457 visa program for foreign workers, which was used majorly by the Indians.
- India contributed USD 2,50,000 to the UN Election Assistance Division to help other countries to hold elections and develop their electoral systems.
- The International Road federation (IRF) announced India to be the host of the 18th World Road Meeting (WRM 2017) to be held in November 2017. The theme of this year's WRM is 'Safe Roads and Smart Mobility: The Engines of Economic Growth'.

India

- The government announced the names of ten new Iconic places under the Phase II of Swachh Iconic Places initiative, which is an initiative of Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation under Swachh Bharat Mission. The ten new iconic places that will be undertaken in Phase II of Swachh Iconic Places initiative are: Gangotri, Yamunotri, Mahakaleshwar Temple (Ujjain), Char Minar (Hyderabad), Church and Convent of St. Francis of Assisi (Goa), Adi Shankaracharya's abode Kaladi in Ernakulam, Gomateshwar in Shravanbelgola, Baijnath Dham (Devghar), Gaya Tirth (Bihar) and Somnath temple in Gujarat.
- April 24th was celebrated in India as National Panchayati Raj Diwas. The day marks the passing of the Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992 that came into force with effect from 24 April 1993.
- The Union Cabinet put a ban on the use of red beacons atop VIP cars. Only three categories were exempted from the ban- the President, Vice-President and Chief Justice of India. Fire brigade, ambulance services, police vehicles and other emergency services will be allowed to use the blue beacon. The decision will come into force from May 1, 2017.
- The Uttarakhand Forest Department deployed three drones for real-time monitoring of the forest fires, thus making it the first State to use drones to monitor forest fires in India.
- The Telangana legislature passed the Telangana Backward Classes, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes Bill, 2017, that seeks to increase the reservation for socially and educationally backward Muslims from the existing 4% to 12% and for Scheduled Tribes from 6% to 10% taking the total quotas in government jobs and educational institutions in the state much beyond the 50 % ceiling set by the Supreme Court. The total quota in the state will now increase to 62%.