

AWARDS & HONOURS

Morocco born French Director Robin Campillo's drama film '120 BPM' or '120 Beats Per Minute' won the coveted **Golden Peacock Award** at the 48th International Film Festival of India (IFFI), which concluded in Goa. The film, set in France in the 1990s deals about homosexuality and the AIDS epidemic. Chinese director Vivian Qu won the Best Director Award for her 2017 film 'Angels Wear White'. The Best Actor (Male) Award went to Nahuel Perez Biscaryat and the Best Actor (Female) went to Parvathy T K.

Mohamad Al Jounde from Syria was honoured with the **International Children's Peace Prize 2017** for his efforts to ensure the rights of Syrian refugee children.

Time magazine named as **Person of the Year** "the silence breakers" who triggered a national reckoning by revealing the pervasiveness of sexual harassment, assault and abuse in US life. President Donald Trump was runner-up in the prestigious ranking, ahead of his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping.

Noted Hindi writer, Mamta Kalia was conferred with the **Vyas Samman, 2017** for her novel "Dukkhām Sukkhām". She had earlier received Yashpal Katha Samman, Sahitya Bhushan Samman and Manohar Lohia Samman.

BUSINESS & CORPORATE

UN Women in collaboration with **Facebook** inaugurated a two-day event in Mumbai titled 'We The Women' to empower and recognise the magnificent contribution of women in our society.

The Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry signed an agreement with German firm **GIZ** for technical cooperation in the implementation of transport projects in Coimbatore, Bhubaneswar and Kochi.

Salil S Parekh was appointed as the new Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Managing Director (MD) of **Infosys**, with effect from January 2, 2018. He comes from Capgemini, where he was a member of the Group Executive Board.

OBOPAY, the global mobile payment solutions company based in US, announced that the company secured a licence for Prepaid Payment Instrument (PPI) from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to operate a semi-closed loop wallet in the country. The company said it would also be using the licence to increase business in its B2B (business-to-business) operations by co-branding the prepaid instrument with a partner brand.

Asian Development Bank (ADB) approved debt financing and partial risk guarantees totaling \$583 million to develop the 750 MW power plant and LNG terminal project of **Reliance Power** in Bangladesh.

BILLS / ACTS / COMMITTEES / SCHEMES / POLICIES

- NITI Aayog's Atal Innovation Mission launched the Atal Tinkering Lab's Community Day in the national capital on 15th December, 2017. The day marked the Community Drive Initiative in which 25 young Mentors engaged with more than 200 students not enrolled in the formal education system. The Atal Tinkering Lab Community Drive Initiative is aimed at maximizing the impact of Atal Tinkering Labs by extending innovation to children in the community who do not have access to formal educational institutions. The purpose of this initiative is to provide these children with the same educational tools as the students in Atal Tinkering Labs to enable them to become problem solvers. The NGOs participating in these interactions include organizations working with disabled children, street and working children, and girls from the weaker sections of society.
- In order to strengthen the ecosystem for government services, Karnataka state government announced that it would be soon launching a digital platform to address the issues of the common citizen.
- The Bihar government launched Safe City Surveillance Scheme for keeping the crimes against women in check. The scheme aims to bring all major public places under a strict watch of close-circuit television (CCTV) cameras and improve the overall crime control in the state.
- Union Health Minister JP Nadda launched new initiatives including 'Laqshya-A Labour Room Quality Improvement Initiative' and safe delivery application on the occasion of Universal Health Coverage Day (December 12).
- A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MoHFW) and Rotary India. The MoU will provide support and accelerate the efforts under Polio Eradication Programme, Routine Immunization including Mission Indradhanush, Intensified Mission Indradhanush.
- India and Italy signed a new Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for cooperation in Agriculture and Phytosanitary issues.
- The National Commission for Minorities (NCM) set up a three-member committee to study the matter to give minority status to Hindus in 7 states and 1 union territory where their population is less than 50 per cent. The committee will be led by NCM's Vice Chairman George Kurien and has been given three months to submit its report.
- India and Cuba signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for enhanced cooperation in the health sector.
- The Rajasthan government will soon introduce 'Guru-Shishya' programme in all districts, under which college students can raise discuss with their teachers the issues and problems related to their institutes.
- The Madhya Pradesh state assembly unanimously passed a bill aimed at amending the Indian Penal Code (IPC) to impose the death penalty on those found guilty of raping girls aged 12 and below.

ECONOMY & FINANCE

- A Financing Agreement for IBRD loan of USD 250 million (equivalent) for the "Skills Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood Promotion (SANKALP) Project" was signed between India and the World Bank. The Objective of the project is to enhance institutional mechanisms for skills development and increase access to quality and market-relevant training for the work force.
- According to 'World Economic Situation and Prospects 2018' report, the Indian economy will grow at 7.2% in 2018 (as compared to 6.7% in 2017) and accelerate to 7.4% in the following year as a result of robust private consumption, public investment and structural reforms, but it still faces the risk of sudden capital withdrawal on account of monetary policy normalization in developed countries.
- The Union Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology approved Andhra Pradesh government's proposal to set up a Greenfield Electronics Manufacturing Cluster (EMC) at Vikruthamala village in Chittoor district. The EMC will be developed over 501.40 acre at a cost of Rs. 339.80 crore. The proposed EMC is expected to generate nearly one lakh jobs.
- India joined the Wassenaar Arrangement (WA), becoming the arrangement's 42nd participating State. The membership will facilitate high-technology tie-ups for country's defence and space programmes. India's entry into the export control regime would enhance its credentials in the field of non-proliferation despite not being a signatory to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). The Wassenaar Arrangement plays a significant role in promoting transparency and greater responsibility in transfers of conventional arms and dual-use goods and technologies. Its member countries are required to ensure that transfers of these items do not contribute to the development or enhancement of military capabilities which undermine these goals. The aim is also to prevent the acquisition of these items by terrorists.
- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) kept the repo rate unchanged at 6% and reverse repo at 5.75% in its fifth bi-monthly monetary policy review for the year 2017-18. The Marginal Standing Facility (MSF) rate and the Bank Rate remained at 6.25%.

PEOPLE IN NEWS

Noted South Indian music director, **Adithyan**, passed away in Hyderabad at age 63. He has scored music for many Telugu and Malayalam movies.

Buddhist monk **Dhammapiya** from Tripura was elected as the new secretary general of the International Buddhist Confederation (IBC).

Giriraj Singh, the Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for MSME, launched a Public Procurement Portal 'MSME Sambandh' to monitor the implementation of the Public Procurement from MSEs by Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs).

Lucknow boy **Jitesh Singh Deo** bagged the coveted title of Peter England Mr. India 2017. While Jitesh bagged the top spot, Prathamesh Maulingkar won the title of Peter England Mr. India Supranational 2017.

Lalji Singh, a noted scientist and the father of DNA fingerprinting in India, passed away.

The Minister of State for Culture (Independent Charge) and Environment, Forest & Climate Change, Dr. **Mahesh Sharma** led the Indian delegation to the second UN World Tourism Organization/UNESCO World Conference on Tourism and Culture, with focus on sustainable development, which was held in Muscat, Capital city of Oman.

Minister of State for Culture (Independent Charge) Dr. **Mahesh Sharma** inaugurated the three day 'Bodhi Parva: BIMSTEC Festival of Buddhist Heritage' in New Delhi.

Romania's former King **Michael I**, a onetime boy monarch who later engineered the ouster of pro-Nazi strongman Gen. Ion Antonescu during World War II, only to be forced at gunpoint to abdicate by a communist-led postwar government, died at age 96.

Television ratings agency Broadcast Audience Research Council (Barc) India elected **Nakul Chopra** as its new chairman. Chopra is currently the president of Advertising Agencies Association of India (AAAI) and the senior advisor at Publicis Communications.

Bollywood actor, writer and director, **Neeraj Vora**, known for films such as "Satya", "Phir Hera Pheri" and "Daud", passed away at age 54.

Ram Naik, the Governor of Uttar Pradesh, officially launched the new multi-coloured logo for the Allahabad Kumbh Mela 2019 in Lucknow

Ravi Shankar Prasad, Minister of Law & Justice and Electronics & Information Technology inaugurated the "NIC-CERT", a setup of National Informatics Centre, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology. NIC-CERT has been setup with the objective of creating a comprehensive framework that integrates world class security components and inbuilt threat intelligence for detection, prevention and incident response.

Saraswati Tripathy, the prominent Gandhian and freedom fighter, passed away at age 89.

Snehlata Shrivastava, a 1982 batch IAS officer, was appointed as the new Secretary-General of Lok Sabha.

Veteran journalist **Sukharanjan Sengupta** died at age 85. Sengupta had worked for Bengali dailies 'Jugantar' and 'Ananda Bazar Patrika' in his long career spanning over six decades.

The 11th Ministerial conference of the 164-member World Trade Organization (WTO) started in Buenos Aires, Argentina on December 10, 2017. At the meeting, India was represented by Union Commerce and Industry Minister **Suresh Prabhu**.

Uhuru Kenyatta was sworn-in for a second and final five-year term for the post of President of Republic of Kenya.

Uma Shankar was appointed as the new Executive Director of Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

SPORTS

Australia defeated Argentina in the final of the Hockey World League Final to win gold at Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar, Odisha.

Cristiano Ronaldo, the Real Madrid and Portugal superstar, won the 2017 Ballon d'Or award for the year's best player in Paris, France.

Deepika Kumari from India won bronze at the Indoor Archery World Cup Stage 2 that concluded in Bangkok, Thailand.

Gurdeep Singh created three new senior national records in +105kg weight category in the recently concluded IWF World Weightlifting Championships at Anaheim in USA.

Minister of State (I/C) for Youth Affairs & Sports Col. Rajyavardhan Rathore felicitated former Captain of Indian Football Team **Gurdev Singh Gill** for his outstanding contribution to Indian Football.

India won the first-ever South Asian Regional Badminton Team Championship by defeating Nepal in the final match.

Indian national hockey team secured the bronze medal at the Hockey World League tournament by defeating Germany.

Pistol aces **Jitu Rai** and Heena Sidhu bagged a bronze each to continue India's medal charge at the 10th Asian Championship 10m Rifle/Pistol in Wako City, Japan.

Kanchanmala Pande from Nagpur, the visually impaired swimmer, became the first Indian to win gold at the World Para Swimming Championship in Mexico.

Mehuli Ghosh and Tushar Mane became the first Indian shooters to secure the women's and men's quota places for the 2018 Youth Olympic Games (YOG) by winning a gold and bronze each at the 10th Asian Championship 10M Rifle/Pistol at Wako City, Japan.

The man behind India's best ever medal haul at the recently-concluded AIBA Women's Youth Boxing Championship, Italian coach **Raffaele Bergamasco**, was elevated to the position of Performance Director for senior women pugilists.

The first International Conference on Sports Medicine & Sports Sciences "**SAICON 2017**" was inaugurated by the Minister of State (I/C) Youth Affairs and Sports Col. Rajyavardhan Rathore in New Delhi.

Saurabh Chaudhary and Manu Bhaker booked quota places for the 2018 Youth Olympic Games (YOG) by winning a gold and a silver each at the 10th Asian Championship 10m Rifle/Pistol at Wako City, Japan.

Wrestler **Sushil Kumar** and Boxer M C Mary C. Kom submitted their resignation as National Sports Observers, as both are still active in their respective fields.

Indian cricketer **Yuvraj Singh** launched the UNICEF-ICC's adolescent campaign "Power of Sports to Shape the Future of Adolescents" in Colombo, Sri Lanka to promote a UNICEF sports initiative for youngsters in South Asia.

MISCELLANEOUS

World

- Vice-President Venkaiah Naidu inaugurated the World conference on Vedas "Vishwa Ved Sammelan" in New Delhi.
- Norway became the first country in the world to shut down its entire FM (Frequency Modulation) radio network and replace it with digital radio.
- The 54th meeting of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) programming committee was held at Kathmandu.
- The World Human Rights Day (WHRD) was observed on December 10 with the theme 'Let's stand up for equality, justice and human dignity'.
- United States officially recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel thus becoming the first country to move its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, which is claimed by both Israelis and Palestinians.
- The World Soil Day (WSD) was observed on December 5 with the theme "Caring for the Planet starts from the Ground".
- The US informed the UN that it was ending its participation in the Global Compact on Migration, a world group started in September 2016 with the adoption of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants by the 193-member UN General Assembly to promote "safe, orderly and regular migration". Under Donald Trump and his "America First" policies, the United States has withdrawn from several global commitments made under the administration of president Barack Obama, including the Paris climate deal.
- Amid a severe social and economic crisis, Venezuelan president Nicolas Maduro said his government would launch the "petro," a crypto currency backed by oil, gas, that would help Venezuela advance in issues of monetary sovereignty, to make financial transactions and overcome the financial blockade.
- South Korea and the United States launched their largest-ever joint aerial drill exercise "Vigilant Ace-2017".
- The International Day of Persons with Disabilities was observed on December 3 with the theme "Transformation towards sustainable and resilient society for all".
- The World AIDS Day was observed on December 1 with the theme "Right to health."

India

- The third edition of World Telugu Conference was formally inaugurated by Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu in Hyderabad, Telangana.
- The National Energy Conservation Day (NECD) was celebrated in India by Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), under Ministry of Power, on December 14.

- India was ranked 100th out of 149 countries at the 11th edition of Legatum Prosperity Index (LPI-2017)- the world's leading global measure of economic and social well-being. The list was topped by Norway, followed by New Zealand, and Finland.
- Rajasthan became India's first state to offer free e-mail address in Hindi to its residents.
- The Rajasthan Cabinet decided to accord those detained under the Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA) and Defence of India Rules during Emergency during 1975-77 outside the state the status of fighters for democracy. The detainees, most of them Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh leaders, will now be entitled to pension and other allowances after getting the status of 'Loktantra Rakshak Sainani'.
- Alappuzha, in Kerala, is among five places in the world that have been recognised by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) as success stories in fighting the problem of solid waste. Besides Alappuzha, the other cities on the list includes Osaka (Japan), Ljubljana (Slovenia), Penang (Malaysia) and Cajicá (Colombia).
- India has been declared free from trachoma, a contagious bacterial infection of the eye common among children. An announcement to this effect was made by Indian Health Minister Jagat Prakash Nadda.
- The Union Government sanctioned Rs. 75 crore for setting up a Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) bottling plant in Meghalaya - the only state in the region which has no bottling plant.
- Kacheguda railway station in Hyderabad became India's first Energy-Efficient 'A1 Category' Railway Station.
- The two-day Adivasi Mahotsav was held in Raipur, Chhattisgarh to display the rich and diverse tribal traditions of the State.
- India's 'first' mobile food testing laboratory, which will enable on-the-spot food safety tests to be conducted in Goa, was launched by Chief Minister Manohar Parrikar.
- The Taj Mahal, a mausoleum crafted in ivory-white marble, located in Uttar Pradesh's Agra, is the second best UNESCO world heritage site in the world, according to a new survey by a travel portal Trip Advisor. It is rated after Cambodia's Angkor Wat.
- The Armed Forces Flag Day was observed in India on December 7.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the BR Ambedkar International Centre in New Delhi to encourage research and original thinking among the youth.
- Uttar Pradesh became the first State to endorse the Central government's draft bill that makes instant triple talaq a cognisable and non-bailable offence.
- The 6th International Tourism Mart 2017 was held in Guwahati, Assam.
- The Shamli district of Uttar Pradesh was included in the National Capital Region (NCR), taking the total number of districts in the NCR to 23.

- India's largest floating solar power plant became operational at the Banasura Sagar dam in Wayanad, Kerala.
- The first International exhibition and Conference on AYUSH and Wellness sector- AROGYA 2017 was held in New Delhi.
- The Indian Navy Day (IND) was observed on 4th December.
- India's first Madame Tussauds wax museum was officially opened in New Delhi.
- The World Telugu Conference was held in Hyderabad, with focus on ways to preserve, protect and enrich Telugu in the Telangana region.
- The Andhra Pradesh assembly passed the Kapu reservation bill to provide 5% quota to Kapu community under the Backward Castes (BC) 'F' Category in education and employment in the state.
- The Telangana State Government announced to set up the world's first IT Campus for differently-abled persons.
- India was re-elected to the Council of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) at an assembly of the organisation at its headquarters in London.
- The 14-day long Combined Military exercise 'Ajeya Warrior- 2017' between India and the United Kingdom (UK) was held in Rajasthan.

AWARDS & HONOURS

Noted writer Ramendra Kumar, whose stories feature in Sri Lankan text books, was felicitated in Sri Lanka for his **contribution to children's literature**. Kumar is an award-winning writer with 32 books to his credit. His writings have been translated into 14 Indian and 13 foreign languages.

The Joda East Iron Mine (JEIM) of Tata Steel was honored with the prestigious **Golden Peacock Innovation Management Award** for the year 2017 for driving innovation in mines.

Veteran singer K S Chitra was selected for the prestigious 2017 **Harivarasanam award**, instituted by the Kerala government.

Noted Bengali poet Joy Goswami was chosen for the 31st **Moortidevi Award** for the year 2017 for his poetry collection titled "Du Dondo Phowara Matro".

G. Satheesh Reddy, Scientific Adviser to Raksha Mantri and Director General, Missiles and Strategic Systems, was conferred with the prestigious **National Design Award**.

Bollywood actress Anushka Sharma was named **PETA's Person of the Year 2017** for her efforts to help protect dogs from fireworks. PETA stands for People for Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA).

Itanagar-based author and journalist Mamang Dai won the **Sahitya Akademi Award** for her 2014 novel The Black Hill. Dai, a Padma Shri recipient, was among 24 novelists, poets and short story writers who received the coveted literature award for major Indian languages.

Ramesh Kuntal Megh was conferred with the 2017 **Sahitya Akademi Award** for Hindi literature for his book of literary criticism "Vishw Mithak Sarit Sagar".

BUSINESS & CORPORATE

The government of Andhra Pradesh entered into an agreement with the moonshot factory of **Alphabet** (earlier Google) - **X** - to bring the breakthrough Free Space Optical Communication (FSOC) technology in order to provide internet through the government Fibergrid project.

The government engaged private lender **ICICI** Bank to enable online payments at 470 mandis integrated with national portal of electronic National Agriculture Market (e-NAM).

The Union Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship signed an agreement with **Maruti Suzuki Ltd** to impart training to youth and enhance their employment potential.

Smartphone manufacturer **Samsung** launched its 'Bill Payments' on its flagship payments service, Samsung Pay in partnership with Axis Bank. The new feature launched by the company will enable users to pay their utility bills seamlessly via Samsung Pay's secure and convenient platform.

The **United Kingdom** (UK) topped the Forbes' rankings of best countries in the world for business in 2018. The list ranks 153 countries on 15 factors including property rights, innovation, taxes and red tape. New Zealand ranked second overall for the third straight year, followed by Sweden and Canada. India was ranked 62nd on the list.

BILLS / ACTS / COMMITTEES / SCHEMES / POLICIES

- In a significant step to combat climate change, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change approved a regional project on 'Climate Resilience Building among Farmers through Crop Residue Management' under the National Adaptation Fund for Climate Change (NAFCC). The first phase of the project has been approved at a cost of approximately Rs. 100 Crore for the States of Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan. The project will leverage approximately three times the approved amount with contribution from the States as well as farmers.
- The Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region, Dr Jitendra Singh launched the electronic-Human Resource Management System (e-HRMS) during the observance of Good Governance Day by the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions.
- The 2018 ASEAN-India Pravasi Bharatiya Divas will be held in Singapore on 6-7 January, 2018 to celebrate 25 years of strategic partnership between India and ASEAN.
- Uttar Pradesh launched a free household power connection scheme for the poor in the state to mark former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's birth anniversary. The government has a target of covering 16 million by 2018-end, driven by Yogi Adityanath government's motto 'Prakash hai to vikas hai' (the barometer of development is light). As against the target of 4 crore under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Saubhagya scheme, the state so far has provided 25 lakh household connections.
- The Uttar Pradesh government signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with South Korea to enhance cooperation in the field of tourism, skill development, culture and farming.
- To enhance standards of cleanliness on beaches, the environment ministry launched a pilot project for its clean-up and development.
- The Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation formally launched the Ganga Gram Project under the Namami Gange Programme, for holistic sanitation development in villages on the banks of River Ganga.
- Manoj Sinha, the union minister of communications, launched project "DARPAN – The Digital Advancement of Rural Post Office for A New India" in New Delhi. The project has an outlay of Rs 1400 crore and intends to provide a low power technology solution to each Branch Postmaster (BPM). This will enable each of approximately 1.29 lakhs branch post offices to improve service delivery. DARPAN offers core banking services to the account holders.
- India and Myanmar signed a MoU on restoration of normalcy and development of the Rakhine State, from where thousands of Rohingya Muslims recently fled to Bangladesh following incidents of violence against the community.
- The Assam government signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Isha Foundation for the conservation and rejuvenation of rivers in Assam. Assam became the sixth state in the country to sign a MoU with the non-profit, spiritual organization.
- The Government of India and the World Bank signed a \$125 million credit agreement for the Skills Strengthening for Industrial Value Enhancement Operation (STRIVE), which is aimed at improving the quality of long-term vocational training provided in Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) and apprenticeship.
- India and Morocco signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for enhanced cooperation in the health sector in New Delhi.

ECONOMY & FINANCE

- Cryptocurrency dealer Pluto Exchange announced the launch of India's first mobile application for transacting in virtual currencies. Pluto Exchange founder and Chief Executive Bharat Verma said his company was all set to launch the country's first app-based wallet that enabled bitcoin transactions using a mobile number.
- Bank of Baroda signed a MoU with POORTI (Platform for Online Ordering & Rural Transformation of India) Agri Services Pvt. Ltd to enable the farmers to purchase agricultural inputs such as fertilizers, pesticides, seeds etc. provided by POORTI.
- India signed a loan agreement worth \$40 million with the World Bank for "UP Pro-Poor Tourism Development Project" aimed at increasing tourism-related benefits for local communities in Uttar Pradesh. The total project_cost is around \$57.14 million, out of which \$40 million will be financed by the World Bank, and the remaining amount will be funded out of the state budget.
- At 9.9 per cent ratio, India was ranked fifth on the list of countries with highest Non-Performing Assets (NPAs), and was on top spot among the BRICS nations, a recent report by CARE Ratings revealed. The country is reeling under a huge NPA burden of over Rs 7.33 lakh crore as of June 2017. The NPA list is topped by countries known as PIIGS (Portugal, Italy, Ireland, Greece and Spain), excluding Spain that is ranked at 7th spot below India and Russia. India's NPA ratio is 400 points higher than that of Spain's. Greece has the highest NPA of 36.4 in the world. Its economy is in tatters with around 50 per cent of registered unemployed people without a regular job for over one and half year. Other countries like Italy (NPAs 16.4 per cent), Portugal (15.5), Ireland (11.9), Russia (9.7) and Spain (5.3) are also facing huge NPA crisis.
- As per a report published by the Centre for Economics and Business Research (CEBR), an economics consultancy based in Britain, India will overtake the United Kingdom and France in 2018 to become the world's fifth-largest economy in terms of the US dollar.
- The Government of India, the Government of Tamil Nadu and the World Bank signed a \$318 million loan agreement for the Tamil Nadu Irrigated Agriculture Modernization Project to promote climate resilient agriculture technologies, improve water management practices, and increase market opportunities for small and marginal farmers. About 500,000 farmers, of which a majority are small and marginal, are expected to benefit from improved and modernized tank irrigation systems. The project will rehabilitate and modernize about 4,800 irrigation tanks and 477 check dams, spread across 66 sub-basins, in delivering bulk water to irrigation systems.
- In a move aimed at combating black money stashed abroad, India signed an agreement with Switzerland that would allow automatic sharing of tax-related information from 1 January, 2018.
- According to recently released UN World Migration Report (2018), published by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), India has largest diaspora in the world with more than 15.6 million people from India living overseas.

PEOPLE IN NEWS

Senior IPS officer **Abhay** was appointed Director General of Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB).

Amardeep Singh Bhatia, a 1993 batch IAS officer of Nagaland cadre, was appointed as director, Serious Fraud Investigation Office (SFIO), under the Ministry of Corporate Affairs. He is at present joint secretary in the ministry.

Lieutenant General **B S Sahrawat** took charge as the new Director General (DG) of National Cadet Corps (NCC).

Ex-football superstar **George Weah** was elected as the new president of Liberia after beating Vice President Joseph Boakai.

In a generational shift in the politics of Himachal Pradesh, **Jai Ram Thakur** – five time member of legislative assembly (MLA) from the Seraj constituency in Mandi district - was sworn in as the 14th chief minister of the state after the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) wrested power in the assembly elections.

Jatilshwar Mukhopadhyay, the noted Bengali singer s passed at age 82. The state government had conferred him with the Sangeet Samman award in 2012.

M. Subbarayudu, an Indian Foreign Service officer of the 1994 batch, was appointed as the new Ambassador of India to the Republic of Peru.

Mukhmeet Singh Bhatia, a 1990 batch IAS officer of Jharkhand cadre, was given charge for the post of Joint Secretary in Fifteenth Finance Commission under the Department of Economic Affairs for tenure of five years.

Veteran actor **Partha Mukhopadhyay**, who had acted in many Bengali classics, died of cardiac arrest at age 70.

Robbie Malinga, the legendary South African musician, passed away at age 49.

Sebastián Piñera won Chile's presidency, with his centre-left opponent Alejandro Guillier conceding the election as Chile followed other South American nations in a political turn to the right.

Shree Saini, a student at the University of Washington, was crowned Miss India USA 2017.

Sue Grafton, a best-selling crime novelist whose popular "alphabet" mysteries featuring Southern California detective Kinsey Millhone sold millions of copies worldwide, died at age 77.

Sumita Misra, a 1990 batch IAS officer of Haryana cadre, was appointed joint secretary in the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council (PMEAC) for five years. The Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council, set up in September, is mandated to analyse all critical issues, economic or otherwise, referred to it by the prime minister and advising him thereon.

Justice **Umesh Dattatraya Salvi** was appointed acting chairperson of National Green Tribunal (NGT) following the superannuation of Justice Swatanter Kumar.

Vinay Sahasrabuddhe, BJP leader and Rajya Sabha MP from Maharashtra, was appointed new President of the Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR). ICCR was founded in 1950 by India's first Education Minister Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, who also served as its first President.

SPORTS

Anisa Sayyed from Haryana won the women's 25m pistol gold with a new record at the 61st National Shooting Championship Competitions at Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala.

Birmingham was selected to host the Commonwealth Games in 2022, the biggest sporting event to be awarded to an English city since the London Olympics in 2012

Real Madrid star **Cristiano Ronaldo** was named Globe Soccer's Best Player for the second year in a row and the fourth time overall. The Portuguese international also won the prize, organised by the EFAA (European Association of Football Agents) and ECA (European Clubs Association) in 2011, 2014 and 2016.

Ace Indian marksman **Jitu Rai** won the men's 50m pistol national title at the 61st National Shooting Championship.

Indian boxers dominated the ring at the Galym Zharylgapov Boxing Tournament in Karaganda, Kazakhstan, claiming three gold, a silver, and a bronze medal at the event. Three-time King's Cup gold-medallist and a reigning national champion from the Railways **K Shyam Kumar** (49kg), world youth championships' bronze-medallist Naman Tanwar (91 kg) and Asian Games bronze-medallist Satish Kumar (+91 kg) claimed gold medals

Sir **Mohamed Muktar Jama** "Mo" Farah, who is Britain's most successful-ever distance runner, won the 2017 BBC Sports Personality of the Year Award. Farah, a four-time Olympic champion, won his third successive world 10,000m gold medal in London in August 2017.

Union Sports Minister Col Rajyavardhan Rathore sanctioned ex-gratia assistance of Rs. 5 lakh to the family of **Nitisha Negi**, the teenage footballer who drowned in the sea at Glenelg beach in Adelaide, Australia, in September 2017.

P V Sindhu won silver medal at the 2017 women's singles Dubai World Badminton Super Series tournament after losing to World No. 2 Akane Yamaguchi of Japan.

Saba Karim, the former wicketkeeper of India, was appointed as the new General Manager (GM) of Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI).

Sushil Kumar defeated New Zealand's Akash Khullar in the final of the 74kg freestyle category to clinch a gold medal at the Commonwealth Wrestling Championships at Johannesburg in South Africa.

Viswanathan Anand, Indian chess Grand Master and five time World Champion, won bronze in the 2017 World Blitz Chess Championship at Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Indian chess champion **Viswanathan Anand** won the 2017 World Rapid Chess Championship by beating Russia's Vladimir Fedoseev in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Winter Dream was unveiled as the official emblem for Beijing 2022 Olympic Winter Games.

MISCELLANEOUS

World

- Israel formally notified the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) of its withdrawal from the organisation, two months after it announced it would follow the US by walking out over resolutions critical of the Jewish state.
- The world's longest glass bridge was opened to the public. It is located in Shijiazhuang, Hebei province near Beijing, the capital of China. The bridge stretches 488 meters long and two meters wide.
- China launched the world's largest amphibious aircraft "AG600".
- The 2017 bilateral naval exercise "Naseem-Al-Bahr" (or Sea Breeze) started between Indian Navy and Oman Navy at Said Bin Sultan Naval Base, Wudam.
- The parliament of France approved a law banning all exploration and production of oil and natural gas by 2040 within the country and its overseas territories.
- The World Health Organization (WHO) officially declared Gabon a "polio-free country" because of lack of new reported or suspected cases in the central African country.
- The 8th edition of bilateral military exercise "EKUVERIN 2017" was conducted between India and Maldives in Belagavi, Karnataka.

India

- President Ram Nath Kovind participated in the 22nd Annual Convocation of the National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences "NIMHANS" in Bengaluru. It is the apex centre for mental health and neuroscience education in the country, and operates autonomously under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
- On 30th December 2017, Andaman and Nicobar Islands commemorated the 74th anniversary of first tri-colour hoisting by Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose in A & N Islands in the year 1943, four years before India's Independence.
- The 78th session of the Indian History Congress (IHC) was held at the Jadavpur University campus in Kolkata, West Bengal.
- The 25th edition of the 5 day National Children Science Congress started at Science city in Ahmedabad, Gujarat.
- Union Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Minister Radha Mohan Singh launched Livestock Disease Forewarning –Mobile Application (LDF-Mobile App), developed by ICAR-National Institute of Veterinary Epidemiology and Disease Informatics (ICAR-NIVEDI), Bengaluru, in New Delhi.
- India's first-ever broad gauge air-conditioned AC EMU suburban train was flagged off from Borivali station on western railway in Mumbai, Maharashtra.

- The Siddaramaiah government unveiled a brand logo for Bengaluru. With this initiative of the Karnataka government, Bengaluru joins New York City, Melbourne, Singapore, and other global cities to have its own tourism logo. With universal appeal, the logo, 'Be U', is a mix of typography in English and Kannada. The first part of the logo is in English and the rest in Kannada. The uniqueness of the logo is that every one can associate with it, pronounce it easily, and also various gift-articles can be crated out of it.
- India's first home-grown high purity gold reference standard – the Bharatiya Nirdeshak Dravya (BND-4201) – was launched at the India Government Mint, Mumbai. BND-4201, which is the reference material for gold of '9999' fineness (gold that is 99.99 per cent pure), will be beneficial to the consumers and public at large to ensure purity of gold.
- The Good Governance Day (GGD) was celebrated in India on December 25 to mark the birthday anniversary of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.
- The 2nd edition of the Iranshah Udvada Utsav, a cultural festival of Parsi community, was held in Gujarat.
- The National Mathematics Day was celebrated in India on December 22 to commemorate the birth anniversary of great mathematical genius Srinivasa Ramanujan.
- The National Farmer's Day , most popularly known as Kisan Diwas, was celebrated in India on Dec 23 to acknowledge the role of farmers in India's socio-economic development, and to mark the birth anniversary of 5th Prime Minister Late Chaudhary Charan Singh.
- India's first and only Design University - World University of Deisgn opened it campus at Sonipat, Haryana. It is promoted by Om Parkash Bansal Educational and Social Welfare Trust of Mandi Gobindgarh.
- The Union Cabinet approved the Ministry of Railways' transformative initiative to set up the first ever National Rail and Transport University (NRTU) in Vadodara to skill its human resources and build capability.
- Delhi was ranked 7th in most expensive office locations list in the world, according to latest JLL India Report 2017. Hong Kong topped the list followed by London, New York, Beijing and Tokyo.
- The Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) signed an agreement, on deposit terms basis, with Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) for the implementation of the 14.5 km Swami Samarth Nagar-Jogeshwari-Vikhroli metro-6 corridor.
- Meghalaya became India's first state to operationalise a law that makes social audit of government programmes and schemes a part of government practice.
- The Vijay Diwas was commemorated on December 16 to mark India's victory over Pakistan in the 1971 war, which had led to the creation of Bangladesh.