

AWARDS & HONOURS

The 70th **British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) Awards** were conferred for the outstanding performances in films and documentaries screened at British Cinemas in 2016. Winners in the top categories are:-

- **Best Film:** La La Land
- **Best Director:** Damien Chazelle (La La Land)
- **Best Actor:** Casey Affleck (Manchester by the Sea)
- **Best Actress:** Emma Stone (La La Land)
- **Best Supporting Actor:** Dev Patel (Lion)
- **Best Supporting Actress:** Viola Davis (Fences)
- **Best Original Music:** La La Land
- **Best Original Screenplay:** Manchester by the Sea

Dr P Raghu Ram, president of Association of Breast Surgeons of India, won the prestigious **Dr B C Roy national award** for 'outstanding service in the field of socio medical relief' for 2016. The award is the highest recognition for medical practitioners in India.

The 59th Annual **Grammy Awards** were announced by National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences (NARAS) of the United States. British singer Adele won the most awards in 5 different categories. She also created history by becoming first artist to win the top three categories twice. Winners in the top categories are :

- **Album of the year :** 25 – Adele
- **Record of the year :** Hello – Adele
- **Song of the year :** Hello – Adele
- **Best rap album :** Chance the Rapper – Coloring Book
- **Best rock song :** Blackstar – David Bowie

BUSINESS & CORPORATE

Arun Kumar, who was assistant commerce secretary in the Obama administration, was appointed as the new chairman and CEO of **KPMG** India. Kumar succeeded Richard Rekhy who resigned last November after being the CEO of the audit firm for four years. Kumar's appointment is for five years, beginning February 5. KPMG, one of the world's leading professional services firms, started its India office in September 1993 and has seen its operations grow. In the last four years, it doubled its India workforce strength to 14,000 people and inducted over 70 partners.

BILLS / ACTS / COMMITTEES / SCHEMES / POLICIES

- The Union Cabinet approved the signing of Air Services Agreement between India and Rwanda. The Agreement has the potential to spur greater trade, investment, tourism and cultural exchange between India and Rwanda, bringing it in tune with developments in the civil aviation sector.
- The Union Cabinet approved 'Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan' (PMGDISHA) to make 6 crore rural households digitally literate. The outlay for this project is Rs.2,351.38 crore to usher in digital literacy in rural India by March, 2019. This is in line with the announcement made by Finance Minister in the Union Budget 2016-17. PMGDISHA is expected to be one of the largest digital literacy programmes in the world. Under the scheme, 25 lakh candidates will be trained in the FY 2016-17; 275 lakh in the FY 2017-18; and 300 lakh in the FY 2018-19. To ensure equitable geographical reach, each of the 250,000 Gram Panchayats would be expected to register an average of 200-300 candidates.
- The Union Cabinet gave its approval for signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and Senegal in the field of Health and Medicine.
- A committee comprising 33 members was constituted for the speedy completion of the Sagarmala Project in Andhra Pradesh. The project aims to improve the state's coastline and inland waterways. The committee will be chaired by the state's Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu.

ECONOMY & FINANCE

- The Union Cabinet approved the acquisition by the State Bank of India of its subsidiary banks namely State Bank of Bikaner and Jaipur, State Bank of Hyderabad, State Bank of Mysore, State Bank of Patiala and State Bank of Travancore. The merger is likely to result in recurring savings, estimated at more than Rs. 1,000 crore in the first year, through a combination of enhanced operational efficiency and reduced cost of funds. Existing customers of subsidiary banks will benefit from access to SBI's global network. The merger will also lead to better management of high value credit exposures through focused monitoring and control over cash flows instead of separate monitoring by six different banks. It will create improved operational efficiency and economies of scale. It will also result in improved risk management and unified treasury operations. The acquisition of subsidiary banks of State Bank is an important step towards strengthening the banking sector through consolidation of public sector banks. It is in pursuance of the Indradhanush action plan of the Government and it is expected to strengthen the banking sector and improve its efficiency and profitability.
- The government announced its intention to come out with 'Indradhanush 2.0', a comprehensive plan for recapitalisation of public sector lenders, with a view to make sure they remain solvent and fully comply with the global capital adequacy norms, Basel-III. 'Indradhanush 2.0' will be finalised after completion of the Asset Quality Review (AQR) by the Reserve Bank. The review is likely to be completed by the end of March 2017.
- In a bid to strengthen cyber security system, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) decided to set up an inter-disciplinary panel on cyber security to examine various threats and suggest measures to deal with it. The panel will review the threats inherent in the existing or emerging technology on an ongoing basis. Besides, it will also study adoption of various security standards/protocols and also act as interface with stakeholders.
- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced to set up separate Enforcement Department to effectively monitor banks in case they violate regulations and speed up regulatory compliance. The department will be operational from April 1, 2017 and will mainly deal with the penalties imposed on banks for violation of norms.
- The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) headed by RBI Governor Urjit Patel kept the key policy rates unchanged. It was central bank's sixth bi-monthly and last policy for the financial year 2016-17 and overall the third by the MPC. All six members of the MPC voted in favour of holding rates. Besides, RBI also changed its stance from accommodative to neutral. It also lowered GDP growth forecast for the current fiscal to 6.9%. However the apex bank expects a rebound in GDP growth to 7.4% in 2017-18. Policy Rates:-
 - ❖ **Repo rate under the liquidity adjustment facility (LAF):** Unchanged at 6.25 percent.
 - ❖ **Reverse repo rate under the LAF:** Unchanged at 5.75 per cent.
 - ❖ **Marginal standing facility (MSF):** Unchanged at 6.75 per cent.
 - ❖ **Bank Rate:** Unchanged at 6.75 per cent.

- ❖ **Reserve Ratios Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR) of scheduled banks:** Unchanged at 4.0 per cent of net demand and time liability (NDTL).
- ❖ **Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR):** Unchanged 20.50 per cent.
- India ranked abysmally at 43rd out of 45 countries in the 5th annual International IP Index 'The Roots of Innovation' by the US Chambers of Commerce's Global Intellectual Property Center (GIPC). According to the report the country's "anaemic" intellectual property rights (IPR) policy and patent act as challenges to innovation. India has an 8.4 score as against America's 32.6 which tops the list of 45 countries. The United States is followed by the United Kingdom (32.4), Germany (31.9), Japan (31.3) and Sweden (31). China has 14.83 points. Neighbouring Pakistan ranks 44th with an 8.37 score.
- The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) announced signing of four more unilateral Advance Pricing Agreements (APAs). The four APAs signed pertain to the manufacturing, financial and Information Technology sectors of the economy. The international transactions covered in these agreements include contract manufacturing, IT enabled services and software development services. With this, the total number of APAs entered into by the CBDT has reached 130. This includes eight bilateral APAs and 122 Unilateral APAs. In the current financial year, a total of 66 APAs (five bilateral APAs and 61 unilateral APAs) have already been entered into. The APA scheme was introduced in the Income-tax Act in 2012 and the "rollback" provisions were introduced in 2014. The scheme endeavors to provide certainty to taxpayers in the domain of transfer pricing by specifying the methods of pricing and determining the prices of international transactions in advance.
- NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant launched "India Innovation Index", the nation's first online innovation index portal which will rank states based on their innovations. It will be a "first-of-its-kind online platform" where Global Innovation Index (GII) indicators and India-centric data from various states will be updated periodically. Data collated on this portal will not only be used to ameliorate current data gaps with respect to the GII, but be the prime source for the India Innovation Index. The index was launched in collaboration with Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP) and Confederation of Indian Industry (CII). India currently ranks 66th out of 128 countries on the GII 2016.
- The Union Budget 2017-18 announced that Government would set up five Special Tourism Zones in partnership with States. These will be anchored as Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs). The government allocated Rs. 1,840.77 crore to the Tourism Ministry in the Budget, including Rs. 959.91 crore for the Integrated Development of Tourist Circuits around specific themes (Swadesh Darshan scheme). The Ministry will be receiving a little over Rs. 250 crore more in the 2017-18 fiscal compared to the ongoing financial year, according to the budget document. Another Rs. 100 crore has been allocated for Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation Drive (PRASAD). Significantly, as much as Rs. 412 crore has been provided for promotion and publicity of the Tourism Ministry's various programmes and schemes. Under Swadesh Darshan, 13 thematic circuits have been identified for development, namely North-East India Circuit, Buddhist Circuit, Himalayan Circuit, Coastal Circuit, Krishna Circuit, Desert Circuit, Tribal Circuit, Eco Circuit, Wildlife Circuit, Rural Circuit, Spiritual Circuit, Ramayana Circuit and Heritage Circuit. On the other hand, 13 cities — Ajmer, Amritsar, Amravati, Dwarka, Gaya, Kamakhya, Kancheepuram, Kedarnath, Mathura, Patna, Puri, Varanasi and Velankanni — have been identified for development under PRASAD by the Tourism Ministry.

PEOPLE IN NEWS

Senior IAS officer **Ajay Tyagi** (58) was appointed as the new chairman of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI). Mr. Tyagi will have tenure of 5 years or till the age of 65 years or until further orders. He will succeed UK Sinha whose term ends on March 1, 2017.

Seven-time Grammy winner **Al Jarreau** died at the age of 76. Jarreau was one of those rare artistes to win a Grammy in jazz, pop and R&B categories. He had continuously managed to reach new audiences by seamlessly merging these genres of music and through television.

Renowned Pakistani Urdu novelist and playwright **Bano Qudsia** passed away at the age of 88. She was awarded Sitara-i-Imtiaz in 2003 and Hilal-i-Imtiaz in 2010.

Germany's parliamentary assembly elected **Frank-Walter Steinmeier**, a Social Democrat, as the country's president. The position of president in Germany is largely ceremonial, because the chancellor is the official head of government and has a higher profile on the world stage.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres announced the appointment of **Jean-Pierre Lacroix** of France to head UN peacekeeping for a year. Lacroix, 56, will replace Herve Ladsous who steps down in March after six years in the top job. Currently director for the United Nations at the French foreign ministry, Lacroix will take over UN peacekeeping as it struggles to overcome a scandal over mounting cases of sexual abuse by troops serving in peace missions.

Former CBI director **Joginder Singh** passed away after prolonged illness. An IPS officer, Singh was the CBI director between 1996-97. Singh, who joined Police Service at the age of 20, rose to take charge of CBI in July 1996 when it was probing a large number of sensitive cases including Bofors, fodder scam, securities scam, the JMM MPs bribery scandal, Rs 133 crore urea scam, telecom deals by the then Union minister Sukh Ram, among others. Back in 2012, he faced allegations of financial irregularities in his own group housing society called Nav Sansad Vihar Cooperative Group Housing Society in Dwarka area of New Delhi. He was unceremoniously removed from the post of president. He was also rebuked by the apex court for hobnobbing with politicians involved in hawala cases.

Enforcement Directorate chief **Karnal Singh**, who was due to retire in August this year, was given a fixed tenure of two years following a Supreme Court directive to set right the anomaly and to make it compliant with the CVC Act.

Celebrations erupted on the streets of Somalia after parliamentarians elected a new president. The election of **Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed**, a 55-year-old former prime minister and dual US-Somali national with a reputation for independence and competence, has raised the hopes of millions of people in the poor and violent east African state.

Racharla Samrajyam, a veteran freedom fighter, passed away at the age of 98.

President-elect Donald J. Trump officially selected **Rex W. Tillerson**, the chief executive of Exxon Mobil, to be his secretary of state.

Renowned physicist and Nobel laureate **Sir Peter Mansfield** passed away at 83. Mansfield, along with Paul Lauterbur, had won the 2003 Nobel Prize for Physiology or Medicine for developing magnetic resonance imaging (MRI).

Pakistan appointed its permanent representative to the UN, **Tehmina Janjua**, as the country's new foreign secretary. With this she became Pakistan's first woman foreign secretary.

SPORTS

Adam Voges, Australian batsman, announced his retirement from international cricket. He is credited with a batting average of 61.87 from 31 innings, which is the second highest till date.

India will host two international events in 2017: the **FIBA Women's Asia Cup** and FIBA Under-16 Women's Asian Championship, the Basketball Federation of India (BFI) announced. The FIBA Women's Asia Cup will be held from July 23 to 29 in Bengaluru while the FIBA U-16 Women's Asian Championship will be held from October 22 to 28 in Hyderabad. This will be the first time since 2009 that India will host a major International Basketball Federation(FIBA) event.

As a step in the direction of fulfilling PM Narendra Modi's vision of making **football** the sport of choice in India, Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Sports Shri Vijay Goel launched the Mission XI Million. Mission XI Million is an ambitious program which is touted as being the biggest school sport outreach programme in the country. Mission XI Million, a unique initiative, is launched to encourage school children to play football. As part of the programme, Government will motivate and incentivize school principals and sports teachers to promote football games in school on a regular basis. The Programme vies to reach out to over 37 cities and 12,000 schools across all 29 states of India. The initiative will focus on games which can be adapted to different field sizes and conditions, with special emphasis to small sided games (4 vs. 4 and 5 vs. 5). It is divided into three phases. In the first phase seminars for teacher and educators will be conducted, second phase will deal with in-school activities and in third phase football festivals will be conducted, which will run up to September 2017.

Defending champions **India** defeated Pakistan by nine wickets in the final of the T20 World Cup for Blind to lift their second straight title.

Young Indian racer **Jehan Daruvala** won the New Zealand Grand Prix.

Rituparna Das won the Women's Singles title in the 81st Senior National Badminton Championships tournament when she defeated Reshma Karthik in the final match.

Sourabh Verma won the Men's singles title in the 81st Senior National Badminton Championships tournament when he defeated Lakshya Sen in the final match.

The official mascot of the **U-17 football World Cup**, starting October 6, was unveiled - a clouded leopard called Kheleo, which is a wild cat whose habitat extends from the Himalayan foothills to mainland Southeast Asia.

MISCELLANEOUS

World

- The US and Thailand commenced the 36th iteration of their annual multinational military training exercise, Cobra Gold 2017 in Thailand.
- The unmanned orbiter Hope, designed by the United Arab Emirates' (UAE) Space Agency, will be sent to Mars in July 2020 from Japan, becoming the first mission to Mars from an Arab country

India

- The Haryana government notified that no person shall consume liquor at a place which has not been licensed or authorised under the Punjab Excise Act, 1914, except at one's dwelling.
- The Supreme Court convicted Sasikala Natarajan, the AIADMK General Secretary, in the high-profile disproportionate assets case. The court took just eight minutes to pronounce their order in the case, which dashed Sasikala's hopes to be the next chief minister of Tamil Nadu.
- The three-day National Women's Parliament, with the theme of 'Empowering Women - Strengthening Democracy', was organized in the state capital region Amaravati.
- Gujarat became the first state to establish cashless system for distribution of food grains.

AWARDS & HONOURS

The 89th Academy Awards commonly referred to as **Oscars** were presented in 24 categories by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS), honouring best films of 2016. Musical drama La La Land won the most number of awards totaling to six. Winners of select categories are:-

- **Best Picture:** Moonlight.
- **Best Actress:** Emma Stone (La La Land).
- **Best Actor:** Casey Affleck (Manchester By The Sea).
- **Best Director:** Damien Chazelle (La La Land).
- **Best Supporting Actress:** Viola Davis (Fences).
- **Best Supporting Actor:** Mahershala Ali (Moonlight).
- **Best Original Screenplay:** Kenneth Lonergan (Manchester By The Sea).
- **Best Foreign Language Film:** The Salesman (Iran).

Indian actor Om Puri was also remembered and honoured at the Oscars.

Noted Hindi Scholar, litterateur and playwright Surendra Verma was selected for the prestigious **Vyas Samman 2016** for his novel 'Kaatna Shami Ka Vriksha : Padma Pankhuri Ki Dhar Se'.

BUSINESS & CORPORATE

Air India inducted the first Airbus 320 neo aircraft, that burns less fuel, into its fleet and plans to lease 13 more such planes this year. Air India is the third one after IndiGo and GoAir to induct A320 neo aircraft. With the latest induction, Air India Group's fleet size now stands at 138 planes.

Oriental Bank of Commerce launched five new products to mark its 75th Foundation Day.

With a new joint venture announced last year with French aerospace giant Dassault Aviation, Anil Ambani's **Reliance Group** announced to get a big slice of the Rafale fighter jet deal and will target business worth Rs 30,000 crore as part of the offsets for the contract.

Tata Motors and software major Microsoft entered into a strategic partnership wherein the Indian automaker will leverage latter's connected vehicle technologies. These technologies bring together artificial intelligence (AI), advanced machine learning, and the Internet of Things (IoT) capabilities on the global hyper-scale Azure cloud, to create a safer driving experience.

BILLS / ACTS / COMMITTEES / SCHEMES / POLICIES

- Union Cabinet approved the signing of Air Services Agreement (ASA) between India and Greece to spur greater trade, investment, tourism and cultural exchange between the two countries bringing it in tune with the developments in the civil aviation sector.
- The Union Cabinet approved the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and Australia for promotion and development of cooperation in civil aviation security. The MoU will provide an opportunity to Indian aviation security authorities to share the expertise of their Australian counterparts and enhance the overall aviation security environment in India.
- The Union Cabinet gave its approval for signing of an Agreement between India and Poland on cooperation in the field of agriculture and allied sectors.
- India and Germany ratified the Social Security Agreement (SSA), which will come into force from May 1 this year, to help promote more investment flows between the two countries. The SSA will also integrate the provisions of the 2008 social insurance pact that exempts detached workers of the two countries from making social security contributions in either countries so long as they were making such contributions in their respective countries.
- India and Bangladesh signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the sustainable development of Sylhet, a metropolitan city in northeastern Bangladesh with financial aid from India.
- The Government of India and the State of Sikkim signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) under the Scheme Ujwal DISCOM Assurance Yojana (UDAY), for operational improvement of the State's Power Distribution Department. With the signing of MoU, the total number of States covered under UDAY reached twenty-two. Sikkim would derive an Overall Net Benefit of approximately Rs. 207 crores through UDAY by way of cheaper funds, reduction in AT&C and transmission losses, interventions in energy efficiency, etc. during the period of turnaround.

ECONOMY & FINANCE

- Foreign direct investment (FDI) in India grew 18 per cent during 2016 to touch \$46 billion, as per data released by the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP). The country attracted FDI of \$39.32 billion in 2015. The main sectors which attracted the highest foreign inflows include services, telecom, trading, computer hardware and software and automobile. Bulk of the FDI came in from Singapore, Mauritius, the Netherlands and Japan. The government announced several steps to attract foreign inflows. The measures include liberalisation of FDI policy and improvement in business climate.
- India ranked a dismal 143rd in an annual index of economic freedom by a top American thinktank, behind its several South Asian neighbours including Pakistan, as progress on market-oriented reforms has been “uneven”. The Heritage Foundation in its Index of Economic Freedom report said despite India sustaining an average annual growth of about 7 per cent over the past five years, growth is not deeply rooted in policies that preserve economic freedom. Hong Kong, Singapore and New Zealand topped the index. Among South Asian countries, only Afghanistan (163) and Maldives (157) were ranked below India. Nepal (125), Sri Lanka (112), Pakistan (141), Bhutan (107), and Bangladesh (128) surpassed India in economic freedom.
- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) set up of an inter-disciplinary standing committee on cyber security to review the threats inherent in the existing and emerging technology. The 11-member committee will be headed by Meena Hemchandra, RBI Executive Director.
- In order to provide more choices of investors to Indian entities issuing rupee denominated bonds abroad Reserve Bank of India permitted multilateral financial institutions to invest in rupee denominated bonds popularly known as ‘masala bonds’ issued by Indian entities. The Masala bonds refer to rupee-denominated bonds through which Indian entities can raise money from foreign markets in rupee, and not in foreign currency and are basically debt instruments that are typically used by corporates to raise money from investors.
- India and Asian Development Bank (ADB) signed \$375 million pact for loans and grants to develop 800 km Visakhapatnam-Chennai Industrial Corridor - the first phase of a planned 2,500-km East Coast Economic Corridor.
- The WTO's trade facilitation agreement (TFA), which seeks to ease customs norms, came into effect with its two-thirds members ratifying the pact. The TFA, which has been ratified by India, will give a boost to the global trade, which has been impacted due to slowdown in the world economy.
- The government announced an ambitious scheme to double solar power generation capacity under the solar parks scheme to 40,000 megawatts (MW) by fiscal 2020. The centre proposes to extend Rs8,100 crore in assistance to fund 30% of the initial project cost of developers. India had solar capacity of 9,012.69MW as of 31 December. The move, which comes in the backdrop of solar power tariffs hitting a record low of Rs2.97 per kilowatt-hour (kWh), is an important step in creating an ecosystem which will enable the scaling of solar power in the country to achieve the target of generating 100GW of solar power by 2022. This is because a solar park will provide the building blocks—land and grid connectivity—to set up big solar projects.

- India's Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs announced approved investment for the generation component of the 900-MW Arun 3 hydropower project on Arun River in Sankhuwasabha district of eastern Nepal, for an estimated Rs. 5723.72 crore (US\$854.4 million). The project is expected to be completed within five years from the date of financial closure, which according to the Cabinet, is planned for September 2017. Annually, the facility is expected to generate about 3,685 GWh and power from the project will be exported from Dhalkebar in Nepal, to Muzaffarpur in India.
- The government launched an initiative in digital payments called Bharat QR—a QR code based payment system. With Bharat QR, merchants can accept digital payments even without a card swiping machine. The customer just needs to be on the mobile app of one of the banks and will have to scan the QR code displayed at merchant outlet. The payment system has been jointly developed by Mastercard, Visa and Rupay.
- Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, launched the SAATHIYA Resource Kit including 'Saathiya Salah' Mobile App for adolescents, as part of the Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram (RKSK) program. One of the key interventions under the programme is introduction of the Peer Educators (Saathiyas) who act as a catalyst for generating demand for the adolescent health services and imparting age appropriate knowledge on key adolescent health issues to their peer groups. In order to equip the Saathiyas in doing so, the Health Ministry launched the Saathiya Resource Kit (including 'Saathiya Salah' Mobile App).
- The government announced the expansion of rotavirus vaccine in five additional states under its Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP). They are Assam, Tripura, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu. The announcement came after 38 lakh children were vaccinated in four states - Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha when the vaccine was first introduced. The rotavirus is one of the most common causes of severe diarrhoea in children less than 2 years of age - one of the biggest killers in children in India.

PEOPLE IN NEWS

Justice **Abhay Manohar Sapre** was appointed the chairman of Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal (CWDT). The post fell vacant following the resignation of Justice Balbir Singh Chauhan. Last December, the Union Cabinet cleared a proposal to set up a single, permanent Tribunal to adjudicate all inter-state river water disputes subsuming existing tribunals.

Asian Hockey Federation (AHF) appointed **Abhijit Sarkar** as its new Vice Chairman and also the chief of AHF Commercial and TV Committee. Sarkar, who has been associated with the Sahara India Pariwar since 2004, had led the group in promoting various sports in India by sponsoring both the Indian National Cricket Team as well as the Indian National Hockey Team.

Former chief justice of India **Altamas Kabir** died at the age of 68. Kabir, who hailed from Kolkata, had served as the CJI for a brief period of nine months between September 2012 and July 2013 and was the 39th Chief Justice of India.

Chandra Shekhar Azad, the Indian revolutionary freedom fighter was in news on 27 February 2017. He came in news on his 86th martyrdom day.

Edappadi K Palaniswamy was sworn in as the 13th chief minister of Tamil Nadu. He is a senior leader of the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK). He was elected as the leader of AIADMK Legislature Party after incumbent V. K. Sasikala was convicted by the Supreme Court in the 20-year old disproportionate assets case.

President Trump appointed Lt. Gen. **H. R. McMaster** as his new national security adviser, picking a widely respected military strategist known for challenging conventional thinking and helping to turn around the Iraq war in its darkest days.

Sightsavers, a global development organization to combat avoidable blindness, roped in internationally acclaimed actor and director, **Kabir Bedi** as its brand ambassador. Sightsavers is a global development organization working in India since 1966 to eliminate avoidable blindness and to ensure that people who are irreversibly blind are supported adequately to lead lives of independence and dignity.

Senior tribal leader from Chhattisgarh and ex-parliamentarian **Nand Kumar Sai** (71) took charge as Chairperson of National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST).

Shurhozelie Liezitsu (81) was sworn-in as the 17th Chief Minister of Nagaland to succeed TR Zeliang, who had resigned as the Chief Minister following widespread protests over reservation to women in local body elections.

External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson **Vikas Swarup**, who is credited with expanding the MEA's (Ministry of External Affairs) social media outreach and dealing with sensitive issues deftly, was appointed India's High Commissioner to Canada. Swarup, a 1986-batch IFS officer whose debut novel Q & A was made into Oscar-winning movie "Slumdog Millionaire", had helmed the high-profile office since April 2015 when India's external engagement witnessed a major traction.

SPORTS

The world's first robot table tennis tutor in Japan set a new Guinness World Record for its uncanny ability of being able to play the game better than most humans. **FORPHEUS** (Future Omron Robotics Technology for Exploring Possibility of Harmonised automation with Sinic Theoretics) was officially given the Guinness title for its unique technological intelligence and educational capabilities.

Olympic silver medallist **John-John Dohmen** of Belgium and retiring Netherlands star Naomi Van As were named the male and female Players of the Year for 2016, respectively, by the International Hockey Federation (FIH). Britain's Olympic gold medallist Maddie Hinch was adjudged the female Goalkeeper of the Year while David Harte of Ireland was crowned the best goalkeeper in the world for the second year in a row among the men.

France's **Jo-Wilfried Tsonga** defeated David Goffin to win the ABN AMRO World Tennis Tournament final.

Kalinga Lancers defeated Dabang Mumbai in a keenly-contested summit clash to win their maiden Hockey India League.

Norman Isaac became the first Indian ever to be promoted by the International Basketball Federation (FIBA) as Technical Delegate (TD).

Legendary Pakistan all-rounder **Shahid Afridi** announced his retirement from international cricket, ending an illustrious and sometimes controversial 21-year career. The 36-year-old star had already quit Test and ODI cricket but still skippered the Pakistan Twenty20 team at the 2016 world championships in India. Afridi had been a fan favourite since he burst onto the scene in 1996, striking a 37-ball century against Sri Lanka in only his second match to set a world record that was unbeaten for 17 years. Afridi finishes his international career having played just 27 Test matches which yielded 1,176 runs with a highest score of 156 and 48 wickets. He played 398 one-day internationals with 8,064 runs, a highest score of 124 while taking 395 wickets with his leg spin.

India Test skipper **Virat Kohli** was named as the 'Captain of the Year' at the 10th annual ESPNcricinfo Awards. Kohli led India to nine wins out of 12 Tests in the year gone-by. Englishman Ben Stokes won the Test Batting Performance of the Year for his incredible counterattacking innings of 258 runs off 198 balls against South Africa in Cape Town.

MISCELLANEOUS

World

- Canada announced plans to accept 1,200 Yazidi refugees fleeing persecution by the Islamic State militant group in Iraq, following a resolution last year to resettle members of the beleaguered minority group.
- Having scaled the heights of Earth with the world's tallest building, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) announced its plans to set up Mars' first mini city. The UAE said it will build the city by 2117, as part of its 100-year national programme to better understand the red planet. Mars is the fourth planet from the Sun and the second-smallest planet in the Solar system, with a diameter half the length of Earth. The average temperature on Mars is -63 degrees Celsius. A year on Mars is equivalent to 687 Earth days.

India

- The National Science Day (NSD) i.e. Rashtriya Vigyan Diwas was celebrated on February 28 with the theme "Science and Technology for Specially Abled Persons". This day marks the discovery of Raman Effect by Indian physicist CV Raman on February 28, 1928, which was awarded with the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1930.
- India's first integrated heliport was inaugurated at Rohini in North Delhi. This heliport has been developed by Pawan Hans Limited.
- Indian Railways unveiled Antyodaya Express, a new train for unreserved passengers. The first Antyodaya Express is set to start between Mumbai (Maharashtra) and Tatanagar (Jharkhand).