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UPDATE**

NATIONAL NEWS

INTERNATIONAL



PEOPLE IN NEWS



FEBRUARY 2020 SET-4

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National News

1. First anniversary of National War Memorial being observed

The first anniversary of the iconic National War Memorial was observed on 25 February 2020.

The memorial is a fitting tribute to those heroes who sacrificed their lives in the line of duty during various wars and internal security challenges since Independence. The monument was dedicated to the nation by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 25th February last year. The memorial was built in the memory of those who had laid down their lives for the country.

The National War Memorial commemorates the soldiers who made supreme sacrifice during the Counter Insurgency Operations and Peace Keeping Missions. More than 25 thousand soldiers of the Indian Armed Forces have laid down their lives to defend the country's sovereignty and integrity. For the first time Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid homage to the fallen soldiers at National War Memorial instead of the Amar Jawan Jyoti on Republic Day this year. The memorial helps in strengthening the sense of high moral values, sacrifice and national pride in the citizens. Over the last one year, more than 21 lakh people including dignitaries, both domestic and foreign, have visited the memorial.

2. Delhi paired with Sikkim under Ek Bharat Shreshth Bharat programme

To celebrate and strengthen this identity, Ek Bharat shreshth Bharat abhiyan focused campaign is underway in the country. National Capital Delhi has been paired with Sikkim under Ek Bharat Shreshth Bharat programme. Since 2017, selected Students and Teachers of both states are visiting each other under the programme. With people to people contact, the Ek Bharat Shreshth Bharat initiative has strengthened the bond between Delhi and Sikkim a sense of oneness in the country.

3. Govt. approves constitution of 22nd Law Commission

Government has formally announced the constitution of the 22nd Law Commission. The law panel advises the government on complex legal issues and has a term of three years. With the president giving his nod for the creation of the Law Commission, government will now appoint a chairperson to head the panel and other members.

The chairperson usually is a retired Supreme Court judge or a retired chief justice of a high court. The term of the previous commission had ended on August 31, 2018. Union Cabinet had last week given its nod to reconstitute the panel.

4. Namaste Trump: All you need to know about US President's India visit

The US President Donald Trump will be accompanied by the First Lady Melania Trump, for the two day State visit from February 24-25. Hardeep Singh Puri, Minister of Civil Aviation of India has been appointed as the Minister in Waiting during the entire visit. It is a three legs visit with the first stopover in Ahmedabad, Agra and final leg is in New Delhi.

According to officials, it will be on the lines of landmark “Howdy, Modi!” event which was hosted by the Indian-American community. It was in honour of Prime Minister Modi when he had visited Houston in September 2019, where the US President had also participated. India’s rich and diverse culture and heritage will be highlighted for the visiting President, which has few parallels in India or elsewhere.

5. Melania Trump attends 'happiness class' with students at Delhi govt school

The First Lady of the US Melania Trump visited the Sarvodaya Co-Ed Senior Secondary school in Nanakpura, Delhi. She spent about an hour at the school and witnessed a 'happiness class'. The FLOTUS also interacted with the students and teachers at the school in South Moti Bagh.

Melania Trump was welcomed by students with flowers. They also waved the Indian and American flags as they greeted her. She was welcomed with an arti and was given a tilak. A young student gave the First Lady a bouquet to welcome her. The school also underwent beautification work ahead of the US First Lady's visit.

Delhi government started the Happiness Classes for students studying in classes I-VIII in the year 2018. Under this programme, students are taught several activities such as meditation, storytelling, question answer sessions to reduce anxiety and stress levels among children.

6. BHU team unearths 4,000-yr-old crafts village in Varanasi

BHUA nearly 4,000-year-old urban settlement has been unearthed in Varanasi by a team of surveyors from the Banaras Hindu University (BHU). Experts say, this could be one of the craft villages mentioned in ancient texts. The university's Department of Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology, did the preliminary survey of the site in Babhaniyav village, 13 kilometres away from Varanasi. It found remnants of one of the settlements mentioned in ancient literature about the holy city. The survey found a temple dating back to the 5th century through 8th century, potteries which are 4,000-year-old and walls which are 2,000-year-old.

7. Centre Launches Mobile App to Broaden Reach of PM-Kisan Scheme

On the first anniversary of Centre’s ambitious Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana on 24th February 2020, Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar launched a mobile app in order to broaden the reach of the scheme that aims to provide Rs 6,000 per year to each eligible farmer. PM-Kisan scheme was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 24th February 2019 in Uttar Pradesh. It is important to mention that all the states have implemented the PM-Kisan scheme, except for West Bengal. The National Informatics Centre under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology has developed and designed the mobile app.

8. PM to lay foundation stone for Bundelkhand Expressway, launch 10,000 FPOs in UP

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will launch 10,000 Farmers Producer Organisations (FPOs) all over the country in Chitrakoot, Uttar Pradesh. Nearly 86 per cent of farmers are small and marginal with average land holdings in the country being less than 1.1 hectares. These small, marginal and landless farmers face tremendous challenges during agriculture production phase such as for access to technology, quality seed, fertilizers and pesticides including requisite finances. FPOs help in the collectivisation of such small, marginal and landless farmers in order to give them the collective strength to deal with such issues.

Launched on February 24 last year, the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) is an income support scheme for farmers to enable them to take care of expenses related to agriculture and allied activities as well as domestic needs. Under this, the benefit is provided to the eligible beneficiary to the tune of Rs.6000 per year. It is payable in three four-monthly instalments of ₹2000 each. The payment is made online directly into the bank accounts of the eligible beneficiaries under Direct Benefit Transfer mode. The Prime Minister will also be launching a saturation drive for distribution of Kisan Credit Cards (KCC) to all the beneficiaries under the PM-KISAN Scheme. Over 6.5 crore of the approximately 8.5 crore beneficiaries under PM-KISAN scheme possess the Kisan Credit Cards. The saturation drive shall ensure that the remaining about two crore PM-KISAN beneficiaries are also distributed the Kisan Credit Cards. In Chitrakoot, Prime Minister Modi is scheduled to lay the foundation stone of the Bundelkhand Expressway at Chitrakoot. The 296-kilometre long Expressway will provide a four-lane access-controlled route in Uttar Pradesh. The Expressway will be supplementing the nodes of the Uttar Pradesh Defence Industrial Corridor announced by the Government of India in February 2018.

9. Cabinet gives its nod to order on adopting central laws in concurrent list for J&K

Cabinet gave its nod to order on adopting central laws in Concurrent List for Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir. It has approved issuance of an order for adaptation of Central Acts in Jammu and Kashmir under Section 96 of the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019 by the central government.

10. CBSE launches exam centre locator app for Class 10, 12 students

Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has been doing its bit for the convenience of the students who are appearing for Class 10 and 12 board exams. In a new initiative, the board has launched 'CBSE Centre Locator App' so that students can easily locate their examination centres.

The app, which is available on Google PlayStore, helps students by providing images and geo-location of the centres on Google map. Apart from launching the locator app, CBSE has released question bank for Class 10 students. The question bank contains over 2,000 questions and their step-by-step solution. The board has also put out model answer sheets of toppers of Class 10 in 2019. This move has been aimed at providing candidates a sense of what a good answer looks like.

11. MP becomes 1st state to launch unified vehicle registration card

Madhya Pradesh has become the 1st state in the country to introduce the unified vehicle registration card and the 2nd state to launch the unified driving license after Uttar Pradesh. The new cards will have more exhaustive information printed on both sides of the cards. It will also bear a unique number recognized across the country. The unified smart cards for the driving license and vehicle registration will each have a QR code that will help in verifying the authenticity of the data printed on the cards. The unified driving license card will also have information about the ability of the driver to drive in hilly and dangerous areas and an emergency contact number. Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) had issued the guidelines to bring uniformity in driving licenses and vehicle registration cards across the country in March last year. These cards are being issued in compliance with these guidelines.

12. NMCG signs agreement to develop ghats in Badrinath

The National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG), State Program Management Group-Uttarakhand (SPMG-UK) and Indorama Charitable Trust (ICT) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the upgradation and development of Ghats and Crematoria in Uttarakhand's Badrinath. The MoU was signed in presence of Union Minister of Jal Shakti, Gajendra Singh Shekhawat. The total cost of the development project is Rs 26.64 crore. Ganga River holds a great significance the life of millions of people in the country as it passes through five states of India.

13. Bihar announces Rs 1000-Rs 50,000 reward for reporting cases of bribery

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar-led Cabinet approved a proposal that seeks to curb corruption, asking people to report cases of bribery and get rewards ranging between Rs 1,000 to Rs 50,000.

The state government will reward people who report cases of employees and officials who demand bribes. The state government will also set up a prize fund, which will take care of expenses of to and fro travel to court, court expenses of the complainant as well as an additional Rs 200 to take care of food and drink. The complainant's identity will be kept confidential.

14. PM Modi Among Special Guests Invited for Bangladesh Centenary, Says UK envoy

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is among the special guests invited for the centenary celebrations of Bangladesh founder Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in Dhaka next month because India played an intrinsic role in the country's liberation, according to Bangladesh High Commissioner to the UK Saida Muna Tasneem. The envoy said the celebrations on March 17, which coincide with the 100th birth anniversary of Sheikh Mujib -- referred to as "Bangabandhu" or the father of the Bengali Nation -- will kick off a year-long series of events in Bangladesh as well as the UK.

"Prime Minister Modi is among the special guests invited to the centenary, which also has intrinsic links with Bangabandhu's homecoming in 1971," Tasneem told PTI in an interview.

15. PM Modi distributes assistive aids, devices to senior citizens, differently-abled at camp in Prayagraj

Prime Minister Narendra Modi distributed Assistive Aids and Devices to senior citizens and differently-abled at a camp in Uttar Pradesh's Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh. The Prime Minister was seen interacting with the differently-abled and senior citizens on the occasion.

In the mega camp over 56,000 Assistive Aids and Devices of different types were distributed free of cost to over 26,000 beneficiaries under the Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana and Divyangjans under the scheme of Assistance to Disabled Persons for aids and appliances (ADIP). The cost of the aids and devices is over 19 crore. The objective is to provide assistance through these aids and devices to the daily living and socio-economic development of the Divyangjan and the senior citizens.

16. PM Modi pays tribute to Morarji Desai on his birth anniversary

Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid tribute to former PM Morarji Desai on his 124th birth anniversary, recalling his principle-based politics. The former prime minister was born on February 29, his birth anniversary is celebrated every four years. Born in Bulsar district of Gujarat in 1896, Desai was the prime minister of India between March 1977 and July 1979. Janata Party leader Desai had succeeded Indira Gandhi as the prime minister.

17. Passport Not Mandatory To Apply For Indian Citizenship: Calcutta High Court

Foreigners can apply for Indian citizenship without a valid passport if they can furnish proper reasons for not possessing one, the Calcutta High Court has ruled. The court noted that Clause 9 of Form III of the citizenship application requires the passport particulars of the applicant to be filled in and the documents to be attached with the application includes a valid foreign passport. Passing the order, the court observed that although the rule "contemplates that an application shall not be entertained unless the application is made in Form III, such provision does not make the availability of a passport a mandatory requirement". The court said that under such circumstances, it cannot be held that the provision of producing a passport and its particulars are mandatory in nature and there has to be a relaxation in such requirement in case the petitioner is able to satisfy the appropriate authorities the reasons for non-availability of such passport. The court further said that unless such liberty is given to applicants, genuine persons who have been residing in India for a long time and married a resident of India would also be unable to apply for Indian Citizenship, despite having contributed to the economy and diverse culture of this country. The high court said that this would be "contradictory to the spirit of Article 14 of the Constitution of India". The requirement of having a passport has to be read as optional and the authorities are deemed to have the power to relax such requirement, Justice Bhattacharyya said in the order passed earlier this week.

18. Suposhit Maa Abhiyan: Om Birla launches campaign to create malnutrition-free India

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla recently launched a national campaign from Kota, Rajasthan on March 1, 2020, to create malnutrition-free India. Om Birla launched "Suposhit Maa Abhiyan" will support adolescent girls and pregnant women in the country. The main objective of this campaign is to keep pregnant women and newborn health. It has been launched from Kota but it will cover entire India. About 1000 kits of 17 kg balanced diet were provided to 1,000 pregnant women in the first phase of the campaign.

Suposhit Maa Abhiyan is a campaign to preserve the health of our future generations. Lok Sabha speaker said on this occasion that such programmes have to be made a mass movement to fulfill dreams of 130 crore Indians. According to the plan, 1000 women will be given food for 1 month for 12 months. At the same time, the health of the child, including medical examination, blood, medicine, delivery, will be taken care of. It is nutritional support for pregnant mothers and girls. The campaign will not only look after pregnant women but also newborn babies will be part of this scheme.

In the first phase of this campaign, about 1000 pregnant women will be benefited. Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla launched this scheme from his constituency Kota. Suposhit Maa Abhiyan will include one pregnant woman from a family. The Suposhit Maa Abhiyan will also ensure new born's health. Nutrition kit given per month for 9 months will be 17 kg. This will include wheat, gram, maize, and millet flour, jaggery, oatmeal, lentils, large soybean, ghee, groundnut, roasted gram, dates, and rice.

International News

1. Conservatives claim victory in Iranian Parliamentary elections

In Iran, conservatives have claimed victory in a general election marked by the lowest turnout since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Interior Ministry announced results of 95 per cent of the 208 constituencies in Friday's election. It declared the names of the winning candidates but without specifying their political affiliation. Conservative candidates have secured at least 219 seats in the 290-strong parliament, also known as the Majlis. 17 women were elected, the same number as in the outgoing 290-seat parliament.

2. Sri Lanka withdraws from UNHRC resolution on war crimes

The Government of Sri Lanka formally notified the United Nations on February 26, 2020 that it is withdrawing from a United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) resolution for investigating alleged war crimes. The case was dealing with a decade-old clash with Tamil separatists.

The government will not abide by a 2015 resolution anymore that calls for accountability for alleged excesses carried out by Sri Lankan forces and reparations for victims. Sri Lanka and 11 other countries co-sponsored the UNHRC resolution for the investigation of wartime violence by Tamil Tiger rebels and Government forces. Tamil Tiger rebels were demanding a separate homeland. Tamil Tigers were claiming that they are ethnic Tamil minority and deserve a separate homeland for their entire community. Earlier, the US government has imposed a travel ban on Sri Lanka's army commander, Shavendra Silva (along with family) for alleged human rights violations during the civil war in 2009.

Sri Lankan forces defeated Tamil Tigers in 2009 but other right groups of Sri Lanka accused the state forces of killing thousands of Tamil people in the final stages of Sri Lankan civil war. The Sri Lankan government ended the war on May 18, 2009 by killing Velupillai Prabhakaran, the head of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), in a coastal village in Mullaitivu. This civil war was mainly fought in the northern and eastern regions of Sri Lanka. At least 1,00,000 people were killed in the conflict lasting more than three decades.

3. US-Taliban peace deal: Countdown begins as India, 30 other countries invited to witness landmark signing

Besides India, thirty other countries have been sent invites for witnessing the signing of the landmark peace deal between the US and the Afghan Taliban in Doha. NATO member countries, as well as members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), are amongst the 30 invited countries to witness the agreement signing event. Once the deal is officially signed it will be fulfilling President Donald Trump's 2016 election promise of withdrawing troops from Afghanistan. It is estimated that over the last 19 years, the US has lost more than 2,400 soldiers in Afghanistan.

US-Taliban Agreement will be signed by the US special envoy for Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad and Taliban representatives. This agreement is expected to lead to a permanent cease-fire.

It will be signed in Doha in the presence of representatives for around 30 countries including India. The deal envisions guarantees from the Taliban that Afghanistan will not be used to attack the US or its allies. Once the agreement is inked then Intra-Afghan negotiations will start and this will be one of the major step towards

delivering a comprehensive and permanent ceasefire in the neighbouring country and will also pave the way for future political road map.

4. Coronavirus: India temporarily suspends visa on arrival for Japanese, Korean nationals

India has temporarily suspended visa on arrival services for nationals of Japan and South Korea in view of the surge in the number of coronavirus cases in the two countries. The development comes a day after India evacuated 119 Indians and 5 foreigners who were on board the coronavirus-hit cruise ship, Diamond Princess, moored off the Japanese coast. Out of the 3,711 people on board the ship, over 700 people tested positive for the disease. Elsewhere in the country, over 160 people have been found to be infected with the disease. With COVID-19 cases surpassing 2,000, South Korea has become the biggest cluster to have the infections outside China. A total of 13 people have died of the virus in the country.

5. Trump sends Pompeo to sign US-Taliban peace deal in Qatar

President Trump said he was sending Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to Qatar Saturday to sign a US-Taliban peace deal that he predicted could mean the end of the 19-year-old war and that American troops could come home. Secretary of Defense Mark Esper will issue a joint declaration with the government of Afghanistan. The deal expected to be signed in Doha is meant to set the stage for a US troop withdrawal and to usher in talks among Afghans on both sides of the conflict about their country's future.

6. UN chief urges Syria cease-fire but Russia and China oppose

Secretary-General Antonio Guterres again called for an immediate cease-fire in northwestern Syria on 28 Feb "Before the situation gets entirely out of control,". 13 of the 15 nations on the U.N. Security Council supported his appeal at an emergency meeting - but not Syria's closest ally Russia and China. The U.N. chief made the appeal after airstrikes in the last opposition stronghold in Idlib killed at least 33 Turkish troops on 27 Feb.

7. New Zealand recognizes India as one of the fastest growing economies

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of New Zealand Winston Peters said that his country recognizes India as one of the fastest growing economies with second largest population. Peters and New Zealand Minister of Trade and Export Growth David Parker chaired the New Zealand-India Trade for All session at Bombay Stock Exchange in Mumbai on 28 Feb. He also said that New Zealand is committed to invest more in its relationship with India.

8. Saudi Arabia Bars Gulf Citizens From Mecca, Medina Over Coronavirus Fears

Saudi Arabia barred citizens from the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council from entering two of Islam's holiest cities amid fears over the new coronavirus, the foreign ministry said.

The foreign ministry announced in a statement "the temporary suspension of entry of the Council's citizens to the cities of Mecca and Medina." The GCC states are comprised of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar.

The decision excludes "GCC citizens who have been in the kingdom for 14 consecutive days and did not show signs of coronavirus infection". The decision comes a day after the kingdom suspended visas for the year-round

"umrah" pilgrimage, an unprecedented move that has left tens of thousands of pilgrims in limbo. GCC citizens can enter the kingdom with their national identity document, but citizens of other countries require a visa. Saudi Arabia has so far reported no coronavirus cases but there are mounting concerns over a spike in infections elsewhere in the Middle East.

The kingdom, which hosts millions of pilgrims every year in the cities of Mecca and Medina, on Thursday also suspended visas for tourists from countries affected by the virus as fears of a pandemic deepen. In particular, electronic tourist visas for people arriving from seven countries, including China, Italy, Japan, South Korea and Kazakhstan, have been suspended. Saudi Arabia said the suspensions were temporary, but it provided no timeframe for when they will be lifted.

Economy, Defence and Business News

1. US beats China to become India's top trading partner

The US has surpassed China to become India's top trading partner, showing greater economic ties between the two countries. According to the data of the commerce ministry, in 2018-19, the bilateral trade between the US and India stood at USD 87.95 billion. During the period, India's two-way commerce with China aggregated at USD 87.07 billion. Similarly, during April-December 2019-20, the bilateral trade between the US and India stood at USD 68 billion. It stood at USD 64.96 billion with China in the same period. Trade experts believe that the trend will continue in the coming years also as New Delhi and Washington are engaged in further deepening the economic ties. America is one of the few countries with which India has a trade surplus. On the other hand, India has a huge trade deficit with China. In 2018-19, India has a trade surplus of USD 16.85 billion with America, while it has a deficit of USD 53.56 billion with the neighbouring country. China was India's top trading partner since 2013-14 till 2017-18. Before China, UAE was the country's largest trading nation.

2. Government permits Wifi on Flights

Government has permitted airlines operating in India to provide in-flight Wi-Fi services to passengers. The Pilot-in-Command may permit the access of Internet services by passengers on board an aircraft in flight, through Wi-Fi on board, when laptop, smartphone, tablet, smartwatch, e-reader or a point of sale device is used in flight mode or airplane mode.

3. NPCI launches 'UPI Chalega' campaign for payment mode to gain currency

The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) is keen to further popularise its flagship Unified Payments Interface (UPI), which has clocked over 100 crore transactions per month. This will target everyone who has a smartphone or a bank account to switch to UPI transactions, from cash. The campaign is aimed to guide users towards the right use of UPI and help create a habitual change, to use UPI in their daily lives.

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4. Government Considering Stress Fund For Distressed Telcos

The government is considering the possibility of setting up a stress fund for the telecom sector that could lend to companies such as Vodafone Idea to help them meet AGR dues as part of a comprehensive relief package. Other measures being discussed include a deferment of licence fee and spectrum usage charge (SUC) payments. These points came up at recent meetings between top telco executives with govt functionaries to solve the AGR payment crisis.

5. **Telangana, MedTech Connect launch 'Project Tej'**

IT services firm Cyient and the state have joined forces to collaborate and encourage entrepreneurs to test their ideas in the field of medical technology. An agreement was signed at the 17th edition of BioAsia 2020. As per the pact between MedTechConnect, a platform founded by Cyient and Xynteo's India2022, and the State government's Research and Innovation Circle of Hyderabad (RICH), a new initiative called Project Tej will be launched to accelerate and support the indigenous innovation in medical technologies. Through Project Tej, medical technology innovators and device manufacturers can validate the usability of their devices in public health settings and gain access to public health channels. Project Tej testbeds will complement state's infrastructure projects, including the Telangana MedTech Park and ensure Telangana becomes a favourable destination for MedTech investments.

6. **Jio-Microsoft partnership will define this decade: Mukesh Ambani**

Reliance Industries' partnership with Microsoft will be the defining partnership of the decade. In August 2019, Reliance Jio had entered into a long-term alliance with Microsoft to accelerate digital transformation with the launch of new cloud data centres. On the Jio-Microsoft alliance, Ambani had said Jio would set up a network of large world-class data centres across India powered by Microsoft's Azure cloud platform.

7. **SPICE+ Web form, new rules for company incorporation & DIN launched by MCA Secy**

Injeti Srinivas, Secretary, Ministry of Corporate Affairs, inaugurated the 'SPICE+' Web Form. As part of the Government of India's Ease of Doing Business (EODB) initiatives, the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) has notified a new web form christened 'SPICE+' (pronounced 'SPICE Plus') replacing the existing SPICE form. SPICE+ will offer 10 services by 3 Central Govt Ministries & Departments (Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Ministry of Labour, and Department of Revenue in the Ministry of Finance) and one State Government (Maharashtra).

The MCA stated in a Press communication that this will save procedure, time, and cost for starting a business in India and will be applicable for all new company incorporations.

SPICE+ would be an integrated Web Form and have two parts. viz. Part A, for name reservation for new companies; and Part B, offering a bouquet of services viz. The MCA stated the new web form will facilitate on-screen filing and real time data validation for seamless incorporation of companies. For ensuring ease while filing, SPICE+ has been structured into various sections. Information once entered can be saved and modified. Registration for EPFO and ESIC shall be mandatory for all new companies to be incorporated through SPICE+ and no EPFO & ESIC registration nos. shall be separately issued by the respective agencies. Registration for Profession Tax shall also be mandatory for all new companies to be incorporated in the State of Maharashtra through SPICE+.

All new companies incorporated through SPICE+ will also be required to apply for opening the company's Bank account through the AGILE-PRO linked web form.

8. **NABARD sanctions Rs 400 crore for infrastructure projects in J&K**

The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) has sanctioned funds to the tune of Rs 400.64 crore to the union territory of Jammu and Kashmir for the current financial year. Against the normative

allocation of Rs 500 crore for the current fiscal, Rs 400.64 crore was sanctioned for various projects of Public Works Department (PWD), Public Health Engineering (PHE) and animal husbandry, thus registering a cumulative achievement of 95.95 percent.

The projects worth Rs 99.08 crore have already been sent for sanctioning to NABARD. These include five of horticulture (fruit and vegetable market), six for extending the agriculture extension facilities, and eight for minor irrigation and flood control works.

9. Trump in India: \$2 billion helicopter deal cleared; missile shield LoA received

India has cleared a \$2-billion deal to acquire the naval multirole helicopters while the US has moved ahead on its offer for a missile shield system to protect the national capital. The deal for 24 advanced MH 60 'Romeo' choppers from the US in a direct govt purchase has been a priority for the Navy, given that some of its newer ships don't have a capable integral chopper.

10. GISAT-1-ISRO's first satellite of 2020

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is set to launch a geo imaging satellite GISAT-1 on March 5 from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre located in Sriharikota in Andhra Pradesh. The state-of-the-art earth observation satellite will operate from a geostationary orbit or a fixed spot and provide near to real-time observation data on the Indian subcontinent at frequent intervals under cloud-free conditions. GISAT-1 is the first of two earth observation satellites planned for launch. GISAT-2 will be launched soon as well. While GISAT-1 is the first ISRO satellite to be launched in 2020, ISRO is planning the launch of 10 more satellites which would boost space and border surveillance, and crack down on terrorist infiltration.

This GSLV flight will have a four-metre diameter ogive-shaped payload fairing for the first time. A payload fairing is a nose cone used by a spacecraft for protection against dynamic pressure and aerodynamic heating during launch. After the launch, the earth observation satellite will use its onboard propulsion system to reach its final geostationary transfer orbit of around 36,000 km. All Indian earth observation satellites have been placed somewhere around 600 km orbits so far and circle the earth pole to pole.

GISAT carries a high resolution camera. The imaging payload consists of multi-spectral (visible, near infra-red and thermal), multi-resolution from 50 m to 1.5 km. This means that GISAT-1 will be able to send a selected sector-wise image every 5 minutes and an image of the entire Indian landmass every 30 minutes at 50 m spatial resolution. The GISAT-1 has a lifespan of 7 years. The earth observation satellite weighs 2,275 kg.

11. IAF flight delivers more than 15 tons of relief assistance to china

A Goodwill Flight from India has delivered 15 tonnes of Emergency Medical Assistance comprising masks, gloves & other emergency medical equipments to novel coronavirus hit China. Indian Air Force flight which went to the epicentre of the outbreak Wuhan on 26 Feb to deliver the indian assistance. It also brought back 76 Indians & 36 foreign nationals including from some of our neighboring countries.

12. Defence Minister inaugurates new Light Combat Helicopter production Hangar at HAL Complex

The Centre has adopted Prime Minister Narendra Modi's mantra of "Make in India', for India and the world" to build strong defence and security infrastructure in the country, said Defence Minister Rajnath Singh after inaugurating the new Light Combat Helicopter Production Hangar at Helicopter Division in Hindustan

Aeronautics Limited (HAL) Complex. LCH is a 5.5-tonne class combat helicopter designed and developed by HAL. It is powered by two Shakti engines and inherits many technical features of the Advanced Light Helicopter. LCH has the distinction of being the first attack helicopter to land in Forward Bases at Siachen, 4,700 mts above sea level with 500kg load.

13. ARCI sets up 500 KW rooftop solar energy plant in Telangana

The International Advanced Research Centre for Powder Metallurgy & New Materials (ARCI), an autonomous R&D Centre of the Department of Science and Technology (DST), has set up a rooftop solar (RTS) photovoltaic plant of 500-kilowatt peak (KWp) capacity. The move is expected to promote best practices of clean energy implementation in scientific institutions.

The total plant capacity of 500 KWp has been connected to the power grid provided by Telangana State Southern Power Distribution Company Limited (TSSPDCL). Established across three shadow-free building rooftops, it covers an approximate area of 5,000 sq m with 300 KWp of monocrystalline silicon and 200 KWp of polycrystalline silicon solar panels. By harnessing renewable energy sources, International Advanced Research Centre for Powder Metallurgy & New Materials (ARCI), an autonomous R&D Centre of Department of Science and Technology (DST), has not only aimed at reduction of expenditure on energy but also joined the National Action Plan on Climate Change.

14. Andhra CM launches 'Jagananna Vasathi Deevana' scheme

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy launched 'Jagananna Vasathi Deevana' scheme here, which shall provide financial assistance for the hostel and mess charges the students studying in ITIs, polytechnic, and degree colleges. The Education Department will give Rs 10,000 for ITI students, Rs 15,000 for polytechnic students, Rs 20,000 for degree students every year under this scheme in two equal instalments in February and July. As many as 53,720 ITI students will get Rs 26.86 crore, 86,896 polytechnic students Rs 65.17 crore and 10,47,288 degree and PG students will get Rs 1,047.12 crore under the first instalment of the scheme.

15. Atal Innovation Mission, NITI Aayog join hands with NASSCOM to roll out Artificial Intelligence Modules in Indian schools

With an imperative to empower the youngest minds of the country with the latest technologies, NITI Aayog, Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) in collaboration with the National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM) launched an AI based Module rolled out for students in Indian schools.

The AI-Base Module has been introduced with an objective for students to leverage the full potential of AIM's Atal Tinkering Lab (ATL) and further empowers them to innovate and create valuable solutions benefiting societies at large. The module contains activities, videos and experiments that enable students to work through and learn the various concepts of AI. Sharing his thoughts, CEO, NITI Aayog Amitabh Kant said that India can add 1.3% to its GDP on an annual basis through the use of machine learning and artificial intelligence.

Atal Innovation Mission housed at NITI Aayog is the Government of India's flagship initiative to promote a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship. At the school level, AIM is establishing ATLs in all districts across India. As of today, AIM has selected a total of 14,916 schools across the country spread across 33 different states and union territories, for the establishment of ATLs.

NASSCOM acknowledges the role played by AI and other emerging technologies, as an imperative to build a digitally powered tomorrow. By inculcating AI and a 'learning by doing' culture in schools, huge opportunities are bound to arise for the overall industries at global scale. To achieve this, NASSCOM and AIM have worked in collaboration with industry members and universities to develop the special modules on Artificial Intelligence learning.

Promoting digital talent for nation building has been one of the consistent efforts laid out by the IT-ITeS Sector Skills Council, NASSCOM. For this important initiative and many such programs, the IT-ITeS Sector Skills Council has been a key pillar for NASSCOM to catalyse the skill development ecosystem in the country and build industry ready talent for the IT sector in India.

The AI Base Module is ready to be introduced to the ATL students on February 27th. Additionally, an AI Step-up Module is under development which will be the next step, that builds on the base module.

16. Airtel Payments Bank rolls out Aadhaar-enabled payment system

Airtel Payments Bank has launched Aadhaar-enabled payment system (AePS) at over 250,000 banking points across India. Customers of any bank with Aadhaar-linked bank accounts can now make financial transactions at the designated banking points of Airtel Payments Bank.

Customers of Airtel Payments Bank can also do financial transactions at any AePS enabled bank. Airtel Payments Bank COO Ganesh Ananthanarayanan said AePS allows them to service customers of any bank who have an Aadhaar-enabled bank account.

"The AePS platform offers an ease of secured banking to everyone by using only their Aadhaar. AePS roll-out is one more step by Airtel Payments Bank to contribute towards the Government of India's vision of financial inclusion," Ananthanarayanan said.

AePS allows customers to carry out financial transactions like withdrawals, balance enquiries and requesting mini-statements on a micro-ATM by using their Aadhaar number or virtual ID to access their Aadhaar-linked bank account. Transactions will be authenticated only if the customer's Aadhaar number and fingerprint match the records.

Airtel said AePS will increase the security layer of the banking processes at Airtel Payments Bank as customers complete their banking transactions with just their Aadhaar number without revealing their bank account or debit card details to anyone.

17. NTPC signs MoU with CPCB to set up air quality monitoring stations

The NTPC Ltd has signed an agreement with the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB). According to an agreement, NTPC Ltd will provide financial support of Rs 80 Crore for installation and commissioning of Continuous Ambient Air Quality Monitoring Stations (CAAQMS). A total of 25 Air Quality Monitoring Stations will be installed across six states and three Union Territories. The states include Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Tamil Nadu. The three Union Territories includes Daman & Diu, Dadar & Nagar Haveli and Andaman & Nicobar Islands. The Air Quality Index will be evaluated for the respective cities with the help of data collected from these air quality monitoring stations.

18. Finance Secretary launches Baroda Startup Banking in 15 cities

Finance Secretary Rajiv Kumar inaugurated Baroda Startup Banking, an initiative aimed at making the bank a preferred banking partner for the start-up community and establishing connect with at least 2,000 start-ups over the next two years. The initiative was launched simultaneously across 15 cities in the country. It will include 15 Baroda Startup branches that will offer a bouquet of tailor-made banking products and services that have been designed keeping in mind the unique and specialized banking requirements of start-ups. The products include customised current accounts, state-of-the-art payments gateways, corporate credit cards, corporate salary accounts and credit facilities apart from other existing products of the bank, he said.

19. NITI Aayog selects Jammu and Kashmir for pilot project on UNDP SDGs

NITI Aayog has selected the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir for the first pilot project on Sustained Developmental Goals during which the J&K administration would get a chance to work with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

20. RaIDer-X: DRDO unveils new explosive detection device

Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and IISc Bangalore recently unveiled a new explosive detection device. A new explosive detection device – RaIDer-X was recently showcased during the National Workshop on Explosive Detection (NWED-2020 on March 01, 2020. RaIDer-X can detect an explosive from a specific stand-off distance. It can also expand its capability to detect various explosives at a time in a pure form as well as with contaminated objects.

DRDO's new explosive detection device RaIDer-X can detect explosives from a specific range and inform the operator. It can also detect bulk explosives located in a hidden place. The device has been developed by DRDO and IISc's High Energy Materials Research Laboratory.

RaIDer-X is a portable device that can be taken to any place along with the military contingent. This device will also help security agencies to work efficiently and safely. DRDO said that RaIDer-X will help Indian Security Agencies to save people from anti-social elements. RaiDer-X will also enhance the Indian Army's power in the field to work more efficiently.

21. Tripura Govt and AAI sign MoU for construction of 6 equipment hiring centers

Tripura State Government and Airport Authority of India has signed a memorandum of understanding for the construction of six equipment hiring centers in Manu Block under the Dhalai District of Tripura. The project has been taken as part of its Corporate Social Responsibility scheme. Manu Block is a tribal populated remote area.

22. Training of Nepal's Judicial Officers begins in India

The Judicial Officers from Supreme Court of Nepal has started their training programme at the National Law University, Jodhpur in Rajasthan. The first batch of 30 Judicial Officers will be trained on "Case Management and Court Management". This course has been specially designed at the request of Government of Nepal to improve the capability of participating officers to effectively tackle the issues which are related to Case and Court

management. It will also make these officers effective in using the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in the administration of Justice.

The course on “Case Management and Court Management” tailored for the Nepalese judicial officers is fully backed by the Government of India under Ministry of External Affairs’ Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme. While keeping in view of India’s commitment for capacity building in Nepal, Indian embassy is providing training to officers of Nepal in India’s prestigious training institutions like Indian Institute of Mass Communication, New Delhi; Gujarat Forensic Sciences University, Gandhinagar; Indian Institute of Remote Sensing, Dehradun; IIT-Roorkee etc.

23. IAF & Savitribai Phule Pune University to establish ‘Chair of Excellence’

The Indian Air Force and Savitribai Phule Pune University has signed an MoU to establish a “Chair of Excellence”. The “Chair of Excellence” has been planned to be established at Department of Defence & Strategic Studies under this unique initiative of Indian Air Force. The IAF & Savitribai Phule Pune University has entered into an academic collaboration for the establishment of “Chair of Excellence” which will be named as “Marshal of the Air Force Arjan Singh Chair of Excellence“. The name has been chosen to pay tribute to the legend and commemorate the centenary birth year of the Marshal of the Indian Air Force Arjan Singh.

The Chair of Excellence will enable the Air Force officers to pursue Doctoral Research and higher studies in Defence & Strategic Studies as well as in allied fields. It will also enable the research and higher studies in the domain of National Defence and allied fields of Air Force officers along with inculcating a strategic outlook and building a pool of strategic thinkers.

24. Establishment of Defence Corridors at Tamil Nadu

In pursuance to the Union Budget announcement (2018-19), it has been decided to set up two Defence Industrial Corridors in the Country, one in Uttar Pradesh and another in Tamil Nadu. Subsequently, five nodes for Tamil Nadu Defence Industrial Corridor, viz. Chennai, Coimbatore, Hosur, Salem and Tiruchirapalli have been identified. Investments of approximately Rs. 3100 crore were announced by Ordnance Factory Board (OFB)/Defence Public Sector Undertaking (DPSUs) & Private Industries in Tamil Nadu Corridor.

Till date, six consultation meetings of stakeholders in Tamil Nadu were organized across its various nodes. Further, Government has also appointed a consultant for the preparation of Detailed Project Report for these two Defence Corridors.

Setting up of Tamil Nadu Defence Industrial Corridor would catalyse indigenous production of defence and aerospace related items, thereby reducing our reliance on imports and promoting export of these items to other countries. This will lead to generation of direct & indirect employment opportunities and growth of private domestic manufacturers including Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and start-ups.

25. India outshines Russia, Poland to bag USD 40 million defence deal in Armenia

In a big boost to Make in India’ defence goals, India has managed to secure a deal in Armenia to supply four weapon locating radars beating the competing bids from Russia and Poland. The contract worth over USD 40 million to supply four Swathi weapon locating radars has been signed with Armenia and supplies have also

started. This would be a big boost for Make in India as the Prime Minister has declared a target of increasing exports to Rs 35,000 crore in next five years. The contract is for four Swathi weapon locating radars which provide fast, automatic and accurate location of enemy weapons like mortars, shells and rockets in a 50 km range. The radar can simultaneously handle multiple projectiles fired from different weapons at different locations. The Indian Army is also using the same radars for its operations along the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir where this system is used to trace the source of attack by Pakistani positions. The system was handed to the Indian Army on a trial basis in 2018. The Armenians also carried out trials of Russian and Polish systems which were found to be good but they finally chose the Indian system for acquisition, said sources.

26. ADB sanctions 4 million USD to members countries to contain Corona Virus

Asian Development Bank (ADB) will provide a total of USD 4 million (about ₹29 crores) to help developing countries in Asia and Pacific to fight the outbreak of novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

It has approved a further USD 2 million to help developing countries in Asia and the Pacific contain the outbreak of the novel coronavirus and improve resilience to this and other communicable diseases. The funds will be available for all ADB developing member countries in updating and implementing their pandemic response plans.

The work will be conducted in close collaboration with the World Health Organization. ADB's funding will help countries catalyze efforts to mitigate further damage to the health of families and economies and position them to better respond to the current and future outbreaks. The first tranche assistance was to strengthen the immediate response capacity in Cambodia, China, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam.

ADB also provided a private sector loan of up to CNY 130 million (USD 18.6 million) to Wuhan, PRC-based Jointown Pharmaceutical Group Co Ltd to enhance the distribution and supply of essential medicines and protective equipment.

People in News

1. USIBC appoints Vijay Advani as new Chair of Global Board

The US-India Business Council has appointed Vijay Advani as new Chair of its Global Board of Directors. Advani has taken the charge as Board Chair at a time of significant growth in US-India bilateral trade, which reached USD 160 billion in 2019. Prior to assuming his current role as Executive Chairman in January 2020, Advani served as the CEO of Nuveen. Earlier, he was also Co-President of Franklin Templeton Investments.

2. President of Myanmar arrives on a 4-day state visit to India

President of Myanmar U Win Myint arrived in New Delhi on a four day state visit to India. Mr. U Win Myint is accompanied by the First Lady Daw Cho Cho. He will hold talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The President of Myanmar is scheduled to visit Bodh Gaya and Agra during his tour.

Sports News

1. Ladakh all set to host first-ever Khelo India Winter Games

The Union Territory of Ladakh is all set to host the first-ever Khelo India Winter Games. In the presence of Ladakh Lieutenant Governor R K Mathur, Union Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports Kiren Rijiju will inaugurate the games on 25th Feb at NDS Indoor Ice Hockey Rink in Leh. About 1,700 athletes of different ages, from Leh and Kargil districts of Ladakh, will compete in the Khelo India Ladakh Winter Games at 10 blocks, district and then at UT level.

2. India to host Commonwealth shooting, archery competitions, medals will be added to CWG tally

India will host the Commonwealth shooting and archery championships in January 2022 and the medals from the two events will be counted for "ranking of competing nations" at the Birmingham Games. However the medals will be added to the final tally one week after the conclusion of the Games.

The Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF) announced the decision after its Executive Board meeting here from February 21 to 23.

The decision can be considered a big win for India after it threatened to boycott the 2022 Birmingham Games for dropping shooting from the roster.

3. FC Goa create history, become 1st Indian club to book AFC Champions League ticket

FC Goa scripted history by becoming the first-ever Indian club to secure a spot in the AFC Champions League group stage following a 5-0 win against Jamshedpur FC in their final Hero Indian Super League group stage clash. Ferran Corominas (11'), Hugo Boumous (70', 90'), Jackichand Singh (84') and Mourtada Fall (87') made it a five-star affair for Goa as they also became the first-ever side to record 50 ISL league wins. They also broke their own record and ended the league stage with 46 goals - an all-time high. The win ensured that Goa finished the league stage as toppers with 39 points from 18 matches, claiming the Hero ISL League Winners Shield in the process. Jamshedpur finished their season eighth with 18 points.

4. India's 13-year old Grandmaster D Gukesh wins 34th Cannes Open

FIDE - International Chess Federation In Chess, India's 13-year old Grandmaster D Gukesh emerged champion in the 34th Cannes Open in France. Gukesh defeated Harutyun Bargseghyan of the host nation in the final round to end with 7.5 points. Gukesh, who last year became the world's second youngest Grandmaster ever, beat the Frenchman in 50 moves to emerge clear winner. He remained unbeaten in the tournament and posted wins over top-seeded Chongsheng Zeng of China and Bargseghyan among others.

5. Maria Sharapova says goodbye to tennis

Maria Sharapova, the five-time Grand Slam champion who became one of the highest paid sportswomen in the world, announced her retirement at the age of 32.

Florida-based Sharapova, hailing from Russia, whose Wimbledon victory in 2004 at the age of 17, propelled her to superstardom, broke the news in an article for Vanity Fair. Her decision is hardly a major surprise as she has struggled with injuries and poor form since returning from a 15-month drugs ban in 2017, the result of testing positive for meldonium at the 2016 Australian Open.

The former world No. 1 has played only two matches this year, losing in the first round of the Australian Open, with her ranking sliding to 373.

Events

1. Madhya Pradesh: Chilli Festival begins in Khargone district

In Madhya Pradesh unique Chilli Festival begins at Kasrawad in Khargone district. Chilli Festival is a big business opportunity for traders, investors and exporters. It will also help in fulfilling the Central Government's goal of doubling the income of farmers.

Nimar and Malwa regions are the highest chilli producing regions of the state. The red chillies of these regions are exported to China, Pakistan, Malaysia and Saudi Arabia. This year too, 5 lakh 41 thousand 740 MT of green chillies and more than 63 thousand MT of red chillies have been produced in Dhar district.