

National

India ranks 76 in Corruption Perception Index

The Berlin-based corruption watchdog Transparency International (TI) has put India at rank 76 out of 168 countries in its latest Corruption Perception Index.

- While Nordic countries — Denmark, Finland and Sweden — topped the chart with their clean public sectors as in previous years, strife-torn or repressive states — Afghanistan, North Korea and Somalia — form the bottom rung of the CPI ladder.
- The country's 2015 corruption perception score remains the same as last year's — 38/100 — showing lack of improvement. India shares its rank along with six other countries: Brazil, Burkina Faso, Thailand, Tunisia and Zambia. China fared worse than India and Brazil at rank 83 with a score of 37. TI has also noted that Pakistan is the only country among the SAARC countries, to have improved its score this year, though its rank remains poor at 117.

HCL Tech acquires P2P, HCLTSS for Rs 1.01 bn

HCL Technologies, one of the leading software exporters, announced has acquired 100% stake in Point to Point and Point to Point Products (jointly referred to as P2P) and HCL Training and Staffing Services (HCLTSS) for a consideration of approx Rs 1.01 billion.

- The company has acquired P2P for approx Rs 779.83 million (GBP 8 million) and HCLTSS for Rs 235 million.
- The company said, 'The acquisition enables HCL to take advantage of rapidly growing virtualization space as there is a global shift to desktop virtualization and as per a market report global market is pegged at USD 6

billion and is expected to grow at 7.5% CAGR from 2013-2018.'

- The company further said, 'Workplace services is one of HCL's fastest growing service lines within the infrastructure services division, and the acquisition of P2P will enable it to further accelerate this rapid growth.'
- P2P is incorporated in UK, and is a niche provider of complex workplace engineering services. HCLTSS is incorporated in India and engaged in the business of rendering of training in the field of IT and ITES.

Cabinet approves raising of 17 Indian Reserve Battalions by J&K and LWE States

The Union Cabinet under the Chairmanship of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has approved the raising of 17 India Reserve Battalions (IR Bns) by Jammu & Kashmir and Left Wing Extremism (LWE) affected States.

- It includes five IR Bns in the state of J&K, four IR Bns in Chhattisgarh, three IR Bns in Jharkhand, three IR Bns in Odisha and two IR Bns in Maharashtra.

EF creates task force with Mark Carney & Raghuram Rajan

The World Economic Forum (WEF) has created a new task force with Bank of England Governor Mark Carney and his counterpart at the Reserve Bank of India, Raghuram Rajan, to study how rapid changes in technology affect financial stability and growth.

- The group, formed partly at the request of Carney, includes Bank of America Chairman and CEO Brian Moynihan and HSBC Chairman Douglas Flint.

Apollo Munich ties up with Axis Bank for policy distribution

Apollo Munich today announced its partnership with Axis Bank for offering bank customers customised insurance policies.

- This is the fourth bancassurance tie-up that the company has entered, the sales through banking channel are contributing over 10 per cent to the topline.

CERT-In inks cyber security agreements with 3 nations

Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) has signed cybersecurity agreement with its counterparts in Malaysia, Singapore and Japan.

In this regard, the Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi has apprised the Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) signed between CERT-In and 3 nations.

Malaysia: MoU between CERT-In and its Malaysian counterpart was signed in Kuala Lumpur in November, 2015 during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Malaysia.

Singapore: MoU between CERT-In and Singapore Computer Emergency Response Team (SingCERT), Cyber Security Agency (CSA) was signed in November, 2015 during Prime Minister's visit to Singapore.

Japan: MoU between CERT-In and Japan Computer Emergency Response Team Coordination Center (JPCERT/CC) was signed in December, 2015 through diplomatic exchange.

India overtakes Thailand as World's largest Rice exporter

India has overtaken Thailand as the world's largest rice exporter in the year 2015 by shipping (exporting) 10.23 million tonnes of rice.

It was announced by the Bangkok based Thai Rice Exporters Association Chairman Charoen Laodhammatas.

Thailand: The south-east Asian country ranked second on the list of the world's largest rice exporting countries

150th birth anniversary of Lala Lajpat Rai

150th birth anniversary of great freedom fighter Lala Lajpat Rai, also known as Punjab Kesri is being celebrated 28th January 2016.

To celebrate this occasion a state level function has been organised in Punjab and special event will be held at village Dhudi Ke, the birth place of Lala Lajpat Rai in Moga district. State government also has organised various seminars and symposia at many places in Punjab to remember Lala Lajpat Rai.

He was popularly known as Punjab Kesari meaning The Lion of Punjab and also known as Sher-E-Punjab in Punjabi for his contribution to the freedom movement.

Union Government launched National Job Portal for Persons with Disabilities

The Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment Thaawarchand Gehlot on 27 January 2016 launched the National level Job portal www.disabilityjobs.gov.in for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs).

The Ministry aims to carry out skill training programme for 5 lakh Persons with Disabilities in next 3 years.

Rajasthan Govt inks MoU to join UDAY Scheme

Rajasthan Government along with its power distribution companies (DISCOMS) has signed a MoU to join UDAY (Ujwal Discom Assurance Yojana) Scheme.

State DISCOMS part of this MoU are Jaipur Vidyut Vitran Nigam Limited (JVNL), Jodhpur Vidyut Vitran Nigam Limited (JVVNL) and Ajmer Vidyut Vitran Nigam Limited (AVNL).

\$80-m ADB loan to improve infra in Agartala, Aizawl

ADB has sanctioned an \$50 mn loan to help continue improving infrastructure in the two North-Eastern cities of Agartala and Aizawl. The loan is the third tranche of \$200-million financing facility under the North Eastern Region Capital Cities Development Investment Program.

This will be used for investments in water supply, solid waste management and sanitation in the two cities. The loan will also support urban reforms, benefiting nearly a million people.

Previous program tranches have provided assistance to five other cities in the Northeast-Shillong (Meghalaya), Aizawl (Mizoram), Kohima (Nagaland), Gangtok (Sikkim) and Agartala (Tripura), an official release said.

Dr. Mahesh Sharma releases a Commemorative Coin of rs 150 and Circulation Coin of rs 10 on Lala Lajpat Rai

Dr Mahesh Sharma, Minister of State (I/C) for Culture and Tourism released a Commemorative Coin of Rs 150 and a Circulation Coin of Rs 10 on Late Lala Lajpat Rai here today.

The Commemorative Coin of Rs 150 is made of Quaternary alloy with diameter of 44 mm and weight of 35 grams and the Circulation coin of Rs 10 is made of bi-metallic material with diameter of 27 mm and weight of 7.71 grams.

Ministry of Culture has been celebrating the 150th birth anniversary of Lala Lajpat Rai from 28th January 2015 to 28th January 2016.

Gurdeep Singh appointed as CMD of NTPC

Gurdeep Singh has been appointed as the Chairman and Managing Director (CMD) of National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) Limited.

His appointment was confirmed by Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC), headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

He has been appointed through a search committee route and became the first person to be appointed to the top job at a Maharatna company through this way.

He was serving as the managing director (MD) of Gujarat State Electricity Company Limited (GESC).

Book named 'Turbulent years' released

The second part of President Pranab Mukherjee's biography 'Turbulent years' was released yesterday.

He has shared his political experiences in this book.

IRCTC announces new rule for online ticket booking

Railway Ministry has announced a new rule for booking of online tickets through the IRCTC website, further reducing the maximum number of ticket bookings allowed by an individual user to 6 from the current 10.

The provision will come into effect from February 15. This will replace the currently allowed 10 ticket bookings on the IRCTC website in a month by an individual.

However, the existing condition will continue wherein these booking will be subject to a limit of two opening Tatkal tickets between 10.00 am-12.00

pm in a day and two opening Advance Reservation Period (ARP) tickets between 8.00-10.00 am in a day.

Akash missile successfully test fired

Indigenously-built surface-to-air Akash missile was successfully test fired from complex-3 of the Integrated Test Range (ITR) at Chandipuri in Odisha.

Akash missile is a mid-range surface-to-air missile (SAM).

Indigenously developed by Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) under the Integrated Guided-Missile Development Programme (IGMDP).

The missile has supersonic speeds ranging from Mach 2.8 to 3.5. It has capability to carry warhead of 60 kg. It can engage aerial targets up to a range of approximately 25 kms.

Justice Sanjay Mishra has been appointed new Lokayukta of UP

The Supreme Court appointed former judge of the Allahabad High Court Justice Sanjay Mishra as the Lokayukta of Uttar Pradesh.

The apex court bench comprising Justice Ranjan Gogoi and Justice Prafulla C Pant appointed Mishra as the Lokayukta, while recalling their December 16, 2015 order appointing Justice Virendra Singh for the post.

Govt revises down 2014/15 GDP growth to 7.2% y/y

Government today revised down its annual economic growth for the fiscal year that ended in March 2015 to 7.2 percent from 7.3 percent reported earlier.

The central statistics office also lowered growth for the fiscal year to end-March 2014 to 6.6 percent from 6.9 percent earlier.

Anti-Leprosy Day observed on 30 January 2016

Anti-Leprosy Day was observed on 30 January 2016 nationwide to focus attention on the disease which is also known as the Hansen's disease.

Annually, the day is celebrated in the memory of Mahatma Gandhi, who attained martyrdom on 30 January 1948, in order to re-memorize his selfless efforts and care for the people affected by the infectious disease leprosy.

Former Army Chief Gen K V Krishna Rao passes away

Former Army Chief General K V Krishna Rao, who played a key role in the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War, died yesterday at the military hospital following a cardiac arrest. He was 92.

Rao also served as the Governor of Jammu and Kashmir at a time when militancy was at its peak in the state.

Goa launches project tracking portal

Goa Chief Minister Laxmikant Parsekar today launched Goa e-Suvidha Portal, an online project tracking mechanism to fast track projects.

It aims at resolving a variety of issues in setting up infrastructure and other large projects, both in the public and private sectors, with targeted investment between Rs.50 crore and Rs.1,000 crore.

Karnataka Vikas Grameen Bank sets up cell to monitor govt schemes

The Dharwad-headquartered Karnataka Vikas Grameen Bank (KVGB) has set up a separate cell for monitoring progress under all the government-sponsored schemes, according to Ashok Reddy, Chairman of the bank.

According to a press release from the bank here on Saturday, Reddy received the 'runner-up' award of the 'ASSOCHAM Social Banking Excellence Award 2015' under the 'regional rural banks'

category in Mumbai on Friday. The Minister of State for Finance, Jayant Sinha, gave away the award to Reddy.

Datta Padsalgikar appointed as Mumbai Police Commissioner

Senior IPS officer Datta Padsalgikar has been appointed as the Commissioner of Police of Mumbai. He will be 40th Police Commissioner of Mumbai.

He succeeds Ahmed Javed who had retired from service and was appointed as Ambassador of India to Saudi Arabia.

Born on 26 August 1958 and hails from Solapur district of Maharashtra.

He is an IPS Officer of 1982 Batch of Maharashtra cadre. He has vast experience in police service in terror and counter-terror operations.

30th Surajkund International Crafts Mela begins at Faridabad

The 30th edition of Surajkund International Crafts Mela has begun at Faridabad in Haryana after it was formally inaugurated by Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar.

Telangana is the theme State of this edition of Mela and the two focus countries are China and Japan.

The Mela is organized by the Surajkund Mela Authority and Haryana Tourism in collaboration with Union Ministries of Tourism, Textiles, Culture and External Affairs Ministry.

The 15-day festival will be showcasing the richness and diversity of handicrafts, handlooms and cultural heritage of the country.

Book titled Nathuram Godse - The Story of an Assassin released

The book titled Nathuram Godse - The Story of an Assassin authored by Anup Ashok Sardesai was released on 30 January 2016.

The book narrates the story of Nathuram Vinayakrao Godse who died an untimely death and his brother suffered a life of immense mental torture. It also speaks of the family of Godse who faced countless abuses and humiliations.

J K Garg takes over as MD of Corporation Bank

J K Garg has taken over as Managing Director and CEO of Corporation Bank following the retirement of S R Bansal.

Prior to this appointment, Garg was Executive Director in UCO Bank, Corporation Bank said in a statement.

He had started his career at Corporation Bank in 1986, and would head the bank for three years.

Kamlesh Kumar appointed as Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities

Kamlesh Kumar Pandey was appointed as the Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD) for a period of three years.

Before joining the post of CCPD, Pandey was associated with Saksham, an NGO working in the field of disability. He is a Science Graduate from University of Allahabad and Medical Graduate from Agra University in 1990.

Former Army Chief General K V Krishna Rao passes away

Former Army Chief General Kotikalapudi Venkata Krishna Rao, passed away in New Delhi following a cardiac arrest at the military hospital. He was 92.

He was the 14th Chief of the Army Staff of Indian Army and had played a key role in the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War.

He was awarded the Param Vishist Seva Medal for displaying outstanding leadership, determination, courage and drive during Jammu and Kashmir war.

K Durga Prasad appointed as DG of CRPF

Union Government has appointed senior IPS officer K Durga Prasad as Director General (DG) of Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF).

Decision in this regard was taken by Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi.

He is IPS officer of 1981 batch from Andhra Pradesh cadre.

Prior to this appointment he was serving as special director general of the CRPF.

India's first Defence Industrial Park gets nod by DIPP

Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP) of Union Government have given its final approval to Kerala Government's approval to set up India's first Defence Industrial Park at Ottappalam.

The proposed defence park will be established as part of Union Government's flagship Make in India programme and state government's Make in Kerala project.

It will have modern common infrastructure facilities aimed at attracting component manufacturers in the defence industry.

Former Lok Sabha Speaker Balram Jakhar Passes Away

Veteran Congress leader and former Lok Sabha Speaker Balram Jakhar passed away in New Delhi on Wednesday. He was 92.

Jakhar served as Speaker of Lok Sabha from 1980 to 1989 during which he contributed to the

establishment of Parliament Museum. He also served as Agriculture Minister in the Cabinet of former Prime Minister Narasimha Rao.

Jakhar also served as Governor of Madhya Pradesh from 30 June, 2004 to 30 May, 2009

Former Deputy Governor S.S.Tarapore passes away

S.S. Tarapore, former deputy governor of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and a noted economist, passed away in Mumbai on Tuesday.

Tarapore joined the RBI in 1961 and retired in 1996 as deputy governor, having been involved in almost all aspects of monetary policy.

Invest Karnataka 2016

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah today urged the global investor community at 'Invest Karnataka 2016' to consider Karnataka as their partner for growth.

Citing the Global Startup Eco-system Ranking Report 2015, Siddaramaiah pointed out that Bengaluru is the only Indian city to be ranked amongst the 20 Startup Eco- systems in the World.

Archana Ramasundaram became first woman to head a paramilitary force

Senior IPS officer Archana Ramasundaram appointed Director General of Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB), thus became the first woman to head a paramilitary force.

- The 1980-batch officer is the current head of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB).
- She has been appointed to the post till the date of her superannuation — September 30, 2017 — an order issued by the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) said.

DJ Pandian appointed AIIB Vice-President

Former chief secretary of Gujarat DJ Pandian has been appointed vice-president and chief investment officer of the newly-created Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB).

China had nominated its former finance minister Jin Liqun as the first president of AIIB.

China, India and Russia are the three largest shareholders, taking 30.34 per cent, 8.52 per cent, 6.66 per cent stake, respectively, in the newly-formed bank. Their voting shares are calculated at 26.06 per cent, 7.5 per cent and 5.92 per cent, respectively.

Pandit Ram Narayan selected for Bhimsen Joshi Award

Sarangi maestro Pandit Ram Narayan was selected for the prestigious Bharat Ratna Pandit Bhimsen Joshi Classical Music Award for 2015-2016.

Narayan's selection for the award was announced by Maharashtra's Cultural Affairs Minister Vinod Tawde in Mumbai.

India Develops World's First Zika Vaccine

Bharat Biotech, Hyderabad based vaccines and bio-therapeutic manufacturer, claimed to have achieved a breakthrough in developing a vaccine to fight the dreaded mosquito-borne Zika virus, which causes serious birth defects in children.

Bharat Biotech is home to some of the most brilliant minds in the world and began work on the Zika virus a year ago, Krishna Ella, CMD Bharat Biotech, said.

CSIR launches India's first ayurvedic anti-diabetic drug – BGR-34

The Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) launched the country's first anti-diabetic ayurvedic drug for type two Diabetes mellitus.

The drug was launched by Senior Principal Scientist, CSIR-NBRI, Dr A K S Rawat in at a function in Kozhikode, Kerala.

Samariya given additional charge as CPFC

HL Samariya, a 1985 batch IAS officer from the Telangana cadre, has been given additional charge as Central Provident Fund Commissioner (CPFC).

For three months or till the appointment of a regular incumbent or till further orders, a release said.

TCS Rated World's Most Powerful Brand in IT Services: Report

India's top multinational IT company Tata Consultancy Services has been rated as the world's most powerful brand in Information Technology Services by a leading global brand valuation firm, the company said on Wednesday.

Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) emerged as the IT services industry's most powerful brand with a score of 78.3 points - earning it an AA+ rating.

Prime Minister dedicated Brahmaputra Cracker and Polymer Limited to Nation

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 5 February 2016 dedicated the Brahmaputra Cracker and Polymer Limited (BCPL) at Lepetkata, Assam to the nation.

The 10000-crore plant is the first ever petro-chemical project in the entire North-East and it will make raw material for manufacturing plastic.

The Brahmaputra Cracker and Polymer Ltd was conceived as part of the Assam peace accord signed during the tenure of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and its foundation stone was laid in 2007 by the then Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh.

India becomes associate member of Embo

India is second country outside the European region to be an Associate Member State of EMBO.

First one being Singapore which had signed such agreement with European Molecular Biology Conference (EMBC) in 2015.

Odisha govt lifts ban on visit of foreign tourists to tribal areas

The Odisha government has relaxed the restrictions on visit of foreign tourists to tribal areas in the state allowing them to again trek and learn the lifestyle of primitive tribes living in the hilly terrain and lush green forest areas.

International

Indian activist Henri Tiphagne selected for Amnesty International Human Rights Award 2016

Indian lawyer and human rights defender Henri Tiphagne on 26 January 2016 was selected for the 8th Human Rights Award by Amnesty International Germany.

The award is a recognition of Tiphagne's exceptional commitment to human rights. He will be conferred with the award at an official ceremony on 25 April 2016 at the Maxim

Henri Tiphagne is the founder of the organization People's Watch, one of the most notable human rights organizations in India.

India and Armenia Sign Protocol amending the India-Armenia Double Taxation Avoidance Convention

A Protocol to amend the existing Double Taxation Avoidance Convention was signed by the Government of India and the Government of Armenia here today.

The Protocol amends the Double Taxation

Odisha is home to 62 tribal communities, including 13 categorized as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG). The ban was lifted after three years.

Aruna Sethi appointed as first women head of ICoAs

Aruna Sethi, took over charge as the head of Indian Cost Accounts Service (ICoAS). With this appointment, she became the first woman to occupy the post.

Prior to the present elevation, Aruna, a 1985 batch ICoAS officer, held important portfolios in Government of India including Ministry of Consumer Affairs.

Avoidance Convention between India and Armenia that has been in existence since 9th September, 2004.

The Amending Protocol was signed by Shri Arun Kumar Jain, Chairman, Central Board of Direct Taxes(CBDT), on behalf of Government of India and by H.E. Mr Armen Martirosyan, the Ambassador of Armenia to India, on behalf of the Government of Armenia.

Airbus signs \$25bn deal to sell 118 planes to Iran

Iran has signed a deal to buy 118 Airbus planes worth \$25bn (€22bn; £17.4bn) at list prices in one of the biggest deals signed since Western sanctions against Tehran were lifted.

The agreement was signed during a visit by Iranian President Hassan Rouhani to France. The order included 73 wide body and 45 narrow body jets, including 12 A380 superjumbos.

Cabinet of Somalia agreed on Election Model outlined by Mogadishu Declaration 2015

Cabinet of Somalia on 28 January 2016 agreed on Election Model outlined by the Mogadishu Declaration. The declaration, which was adopted in December 2015, calls for the electoral process in Somalia to establish a new, bicameral Federal Parliament in 2016, based on inclusivity and representation.

The new electoral model envisioned a 275-member lower house which maintains a power-sharing formula among clans and a 54-member upper house based on equal representation of existing, emerging and prospective federal states plus additional seats for Puntland and Somaliland.

It also requires that a minimum of 30 percent of seats be reserved for women.

Nisid Hajari won 2016 William E. Colby Award

Nisid Hajari won the 2016 William E. Colby Award for his book, *Midnight's Furies: The Deadly Legacy of India's Partition*.

He will be presented with the award and honorarium at Norwich University, the USA in April 2016.

The *Midnight's Furies: The Deadly Legacy of India's Partition* covers the 1947 partition of India and the violence that surrounded that event.

The Colby prize is awarded annually by Norwich University to a first-time author in recognition of a work of fiction or non-fiction that has made a major contribution to the understanding of military history, intelligence operations or international affairs.

India gets more voting rights in IMF reforms

International Monetary Fund's (IMF's) long-pending 2010 Quota and Governance Reforms have finally become effective and came into effect on 27 January 2016, Wednesday.

India's voting rights increased by 0.3% from the current 2.3% to 2.6%.

China's voting rights increased by 2.2% from current 3.8% to 6%.

Russia and Brazil are the other two countries that gain from the reforms.

Pietro Fittipaldi won 2015-16 MRF Challenge Formula 2000

Brazilian racing driver Pietro Fittipaldi on 31 January 2016 clinched the 2015-16 MRF Challenge Formula 2000 at Madras Motor Racing Track in Sriperumbudur, Tamil Nadu.

Fittipaldi won two of the four races which earned him the required points to clinch the title with a tally of 244 points while Colombian Tatiana Calderon finished second (199), just eight ahead of Nikita Troitckii of Russia (191).

Prince Mahidol Award 2015 conferred in Bangkok

Prince Mahidol Award 2015 was conferred upon Professor Morton Mower and Sir Michael Marmot for outstanding achievements in medicine and public health worldwide.

The award was presented on 29 January 2016 at the Grand Palace in Bangkok by the Princess MahaChakriSirindhorn on behalf of the King of Thailand BhumibolAdulyadej, who couldn't attend the ceremony due to ill health.

British TV and Radio presenter Terry Wogan passes away

Veteran British TV and radio presenter Sir Terry Wogan passed away in London after long battle with cancer. He was 77.

In Britain, he was one of the most popular personalities on both radio and television for several decades and often described his profession as jobbing broadcaster.

He was born as Michael Terence Wogan on 3 August 1938 in Limerick City, Ireland. He had acquired dual British and Irish citizenship in 2005.

India Women Lose Final T20I vs Australia, Clinch Series 2-1

Australia women clinched the third and final Twenty20 International by 15 runs but visitors India lifted the trophy with a 2-1 series victory at the Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG) here on Sunday.

Put into bat, Australia posted a total of 136/5 in 20 overs before halting the visiting team at 121/8.

The Indian women cricketers created history at the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) on Friday where their 10-wicket win resulted in their first bilateral series victory over Australia, the defending World Twenty20 champions who are eyeing their fourth successive world title in March, in any format.

Novak Djokovic beats Andy Murray to win the 2016 Australian Open final

Novak Djokovic is Australian Open champion for the sixth time, equalling Roy Emerson's record, but it is unlikely he will be spending much time analysing a final in which he eked out a sub-par 6-1, 7-5, 7-6 (7-3) win over Andy Murray here on Sunday night.

It was Djokovic's fourth win over Murray in the final of these championships – and the most ordinary – and his 11th in their past 12 matches.

Indo-Pak agreement on rail link extended for three years

India and Pakistan have extended their agreement relating to rail communication by mutual consent through diplomatic channels for next three years.

The agreement has been extended from January 19, 2016 to January 18, 2019, a statement issued by the Ministry of External Affairs said.

India won three-match T-20 series against Australia, 3-0

India on 31 January 2016 won the three-match T-20 series against Australia, 3-0. In the third and final Twenty20 match played in Sydney, India defeated Australia by seven wickets.

Winning the toss and electing to bat, Australia was able to score 197 for 5 in 20 overs after which India surpassed the target of 198 by making 200 for three in their 20 overs.

Virat Kohli of India was declared as the player of the series.

Meanwhile, Indian men's team also became the number one side in the ICC T20 rankings after whitewashing Australia in the three-match series in Sydney.

Muktesh Kumar Pardeshi appointed as India's Envoy to Mexico

Senior IFS officer Muktesh Kumar Pardeshi was appointed as India's Ambassador to Mexico.

He is currently posted as Joint Secretary (Passport division) in the Union Ministry of External Affairs.

He served as the Deputy Head of Mission at the Embassy of India in Jakarta from 2007 to 2010. During 1993-2001, he worked with Indian Missions in Mexico, Colombia and Nepal.

India exported six metro train coaches to Australia

According to the Union Ministry of Shipping, India has exported six metro coaches to Australia from Mumbai port.

The shipment was made as part of a deal with Australian government to export 450 made-in-India coaches in two and a half year period.

Vietnam gets world's longest cable car system

Vietnam today inaugurated the world's longest three-rope cable car system in Lao Cai province.

- With a total length of 6,292.5 metres, the system was recognized by the Guinness World Records as the world's longest three-rope cable car route, and also the world's biggest height gap between its departure and arrival stations of 1,410 metres.
- The system, connecting Muong Hoa Valley and Fansipan mountain in Lao Cai, some 250 km northwest of capital Hanoi, has a capacity of 2,000 passengers per hour with each cabin accommodating 35 people.

India, Afghanistan ink pact for visa-free travel by envoys

India and Afghanistan have signed an agreement for visa-free travel for diplomatic passport holders of the two countries.

- This agreement was signed after Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Afghanistan Government Abdullah Abdullah met Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi.
- Both leaders also shared views on further deepening the India-Afghanistan relationship both in the bilateral and regional context and also to reenergised the strategic partnership between the two countries.

WHO declares Zika virus outbreak as International Emergency

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has declared an international public health emergency over the explosive spread of the mosquito-borne Zika virus.

- This is the fourth time the WHO has declared an international public health emergency.
- Zika virus is a mosquito-borne virus transmitted by Aedes aegypti mosquitoes.

Archana Ramasundram becomes 1st woman DG of Sashastra Seema Bal

Senior IPS officer Archana Ramasundram (58) was appointed as the Director General of Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB).

With this, she became first woman police officer to lead a central police force that guards the country's international borders. She will be in office till the date of her superannuation 30 September 2016.

Prior to this appointment, she was the Director of New Delhi based National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB). She is 1980-batch IPS officer of Tamil Nadu Cadre.

SSB is one of India's Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs). It was formerly known as the Special Service Bureau.

Ban Ki Moon appoints Major General Menon as UNDOF head

Major General Jai Shanker Menon of the Indian Army, a veteran of peacekeeping operations, has been appointed as the head of a key United Nations force stationed in Golan to maintain the ceasefire between Israeli and Syrian forces.

U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has named Major General Menon as the Head of Mission and Force Commander of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF).

Titli became first Indian film to win Best First Foreign Film award by FSCC

Indian film-maker Kanu Behl directorial Titli on 1 February 2016 bagged the Best First Foreign Film Award conferred by the French Syndicate of Cinema Critics 2016 (FSCC).

Titli has earlier won at various international film festivals at places like Bordeaux, Hawaii, New York, Turkey and Spain.

Vice President visit to Thailand

Vice President Hamid Ansari reached Thailand on a three-day visit during which he will hold discussions on a range of issues with the country's top leadership to boost bilateral ties.

He was received at the airport by Thailand's Deputy Prime Minister Prajin Juntong.

Ansari will have a one-to-one meeting with Thai Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha, who will also host a banquet in Ansari's honour.

This is the first visit by an Indian Vice President to Thailand after a gap of 50 years.

World Cancer Day observed on 4th Feb

World Cancer Day (WCD) 2016 observed today across the world. The day was observed with year's theme – We can. I can.

More than 8.2 million people died in 2012 due to cancer, making it a leading cause of death throughout the world.

Vice President Hamid Ansari concluded his two-nation tour to Thailand and Brunei

Vice-President Hamid Ansari on 5 February 2016 concluded his two-nation tour to Thailand and Brunei. During the 5-day visit that started on 1 February 2016, the Vice President held talks with the head of governments, political leaders and Indian diaspora to enhance bilateral relations.

Visit to Brunei

- He visited the country for three days starting from 1 February 2016 on the invitation of Crown Prince Haji Al-Muhtadee Billah.
- With this tour, Hamid Ansari became the first Vice President to visit Brunei since the establishment of diplomatic relations.
- He met the Sultan of Brunei Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah.

- During his visit, India and Brunei signed 3 Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) in the field of health, defence and youth affairs and sports.

Visit to Thailand

- He visited the country on official invitation of the Prime Minister of Thailand. This was also the first Presidential visit from India after a gap of 50 years.
- During the visit, he held talks with Prime Minister Gen Prayut Chan-o-cha.
- He delivered a speech at the prestigious Chulalongkorn University on the topic India, Thailand and ASEAN: Contours of a Rejuvenated Relationship.
- He visited Wat Phra Kew (Emerald Buddha) and Reclining Buddha temple in the capital Bangkok.
- During the visit, India confirmed its participation in the Cobra Gold 2016 amphibious military exercise that will be held in Thailand.

Geetu Mohandas wins Global Filmmaking award at Sundance Film Festival 2016

Actress-filmmaker Geetu Mohandas has received the Global Filmmaking award at Sundance Film Festival 2016.

The award is given to emerging filmmakers from the World Cinema stage on the basis of their next screenplay and the 34-year-old director received it for her upcoming feature "Insha' Allah".

US General John Nicholson appointed NATO Commander in Afghanistan

A US Senate Armed Services Committee has confirmed the nomination of General John Nicholson to the commander of the NATO forces in Afghanistan.

He will succeed outgoing commander US General John Campbell. His appointment comes at a time when serious concerns have been raised about the security situation in Afghanistan.

Prior to this appointment, he was serving as US Army commander of NATO land forces (since October 2014). Previously he served as the commander of the 82nd Airborne Division.

'Phum Shang' bags the Golden Conch Award at MIFF

Manipuri documentary film 'Phum Shang' won the coveted Golden Conch Award for the best documentary at the 14th Mumbai International Film Festival (MIFF).

Directed by Hao Bam Pabankumar, 'Phum Shang' critically examined the serious ecological problems encountered at Loktak Lake, the largest fresh-water lake in northeast India.

Science & Technology

Scientists discover largest known solar system

Astronomers have discovered the largest known solar system in the form of gas giant located one trillion kilometers away.

This solar system has large planet known as 2MASS J2126-8140 that takes nearly a million years to orbit its star.

Astronomers by using lithium signature have estimated the age of planet somewhere between 10 million and 45 million years old.

JS Deepak replaces Garg as Telecom Secretary

Amid the Net neutrality controversy, Telecom Secretary Rakesh Garg on Friday was moved to the low-profile Minority Affairs Ministry.

JS Deepak, a UP cadre officer from the 1982 batch, who is currently Secretary, Department of IT

(DeitY), will replace Garg.

Puducherry Lt Governor AK Singh launched MITRA app for women safety

Lt Governor of Puducherry AK Singh on 28 January 2016 launched the MITRA mobile application to ensure safety and security of women in the Union Territory. The app was launched in the presence of the Chief Minister N Rangasamy in Puducherry.

The Android based application can send emergency SOS messages when in danger or emergency. At present, it is available only in smart phones.

ZTE Soft inks pact with AP

Chinese technology company ZTE has inked a pact with the Andhra Pradesh government to work on smart city projects in the state.

As a company associated with a number of smart city projects, the diversified telecom and technology major ZTE plans to engage itself with the state and work on the upcoming smart city projects in Andhra Pradesh.

Business & Economy

Cognizant acquires KBACE Technologies

United States (US) based software services exporter Cognizant Technology Solutions (CTS) has acquired cloud-based computing firm KBACE Technologies.

This acquisition will help Cognizant to strength and expands its digital capabilities from its critical business applications to cloud-based IT infrastructures.

The terms and amount of the acquisition deal were not disclosed by the company. This acquisition was part of Cognizant's strategy to diversify businesses

into newer geographies.

As part of the acquisition, KBACE Technologies' 400 consultants and implementation experts will become part of Cognizant.

Uttar Pradesh joins UDAY scheme

Uttar Pradesh became the fourth state to join the Centre's scheme to revive state electricity distribution utilities on Saturday. The state government signed a memorandum of understanding with the Centre and the Uttar Pradesh Power Corporation Ltd, the holding company of the various electricity distribution utilities in the state.

The four states – Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh – which have signed MoUs for joining UDAY, account for about 35 per cent of the outstanding loans of state electricity distribution utilities in the country.

Govt bans zero duty import of capital goods for power plants

The government today banned duty-free import of capital goods for power generation and transmission projects under the EPCG Scheme.

The decision is aimed at encouraging manufacturing of power equipment and giving a push to domestic capital goods sector, with an aim to boost the overall economy.

The Export Promotion Capital Goods (EPCG) scheme allows import of capital goods for pre-production, production and post-production at zero Custom duty.

HDFC Bank to sell loans to non-customers through ATMs

HDFC Bank, is now using its ATM network to grab new customers, including those of other banks who happen to use the bank's ATMs.

- ATMs is a game changer for the bank as

ATMs are open round the clock and available at more than double the locations as branches (4,281).

- The 'click to call' option enables the bank to work around the 'do not disturb' customers and the applicant can choose any number for a call-back.

Alphabet becomes The Most Valuable Public Company In The World

Google's parent company Alphabet surpassed Apple to become the most valuable U.S. traded company in the world.

- Alphabet became the most valuable publicly-traded company in the world — coming in at a market cap \$558 billion after jumping about 8% after the company reported its fourth-quarter earnings, and passing Apple, which sits at a market cap of \$535 billion.

RBI rates unchanged in 6th bi-monthly monetary policy review

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in its sixth bi-monthly monetary policy review for year 2016 has maintained status quo in key policy interest rate.

The key policy interest rates were kept unchanged on the basis of an assessment of the current and evolving macroeconomic situation in the country. RBI has kept its stance on the credit policy accommodative.

Key policy rates are

Repo rate under the liquidity adjustment facility (LAF): unchanged at 6.75 per cent.

Reverse repo rate under the LAF: unchanged at 5.75 per cent.

Marginal standing facility (MSF) rate and the Bank Rate has unchanged at 7.75 per cent.

Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR) of scheduled banks: Unchanged at 4.0 per cent of net demand and time liability (NDTL).

RBI keeps key rates unchanged

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) maintained a status quo in its sixth bi-monthly monetary review policy for year 2016 announced today.

- Keeping the rates unchanged, the apex bank has kept its stance on the credit policy accommodative.

Current Rates are as follows –

1. Repo Rate – 6.75% (Unchanged)
2. Reverse Repo Rate – 5.75% (Unchanged)
3. CRR (Cash Reserve ratio) – 4% (Unchanged)
4. Bank Rate – 7.75% (Unchanged)
5. MSF (Marginal Standing Facility) – 7.75% (Unchanged)
6. SLR (Statutory Liquidity Ratio) – 21.5% (Unchanged)

SBI Launches FlexiPay Home Loan Scheme For Professionals

State Bank of India introduced a new home loan scheme 'SBI FlexiPay Home Loan' for young working professionals/executives.

- Under the scheme, borrowers will get higher loan amount compared to their loan eligibility under normal home loan schemes and they will also have the option of step-up monthly repayments.
- Further, to lower the impact of such additional loan amount on monthly repayments in the form of equated monthly instalments (EMIs), customers taking home

loans under the new scheme will also be offered the option of paying only interest during the moratorium (pre-EMI) period of three to five years.

Sports

Australian batsman David Warner won Allan Border Medal 2016

Australian batsman David Warner on 27 January 2016 defeated captain Steve Smith for the prestigious Allan Border Medal for 2016.

Warner polled 240 votes from players, umpires and media representatives to beat 2015 winner and skipper Steve Smith on 219. Pace bowler Mitchell Starc was third on 183

Warner also won the Test Player of the Year Award with 30 votes ahead of Smith on 24.

Sania-Dodig lose in Australian Open mixed doubles semis

Sania Mirza and Martina Hingis were crowned the Australian Open women's doubles champions after taming the spirited Czech duo of Andrea Hlavackova and Lucie Hradecka in straight sets on Friday.

It was their third consecutive Grand Slam title for Sania and Martina, having won the Wimbledon and US Open in the 2015 season.

Sania and Martina have now extended their unbeaten run to 36 matches, winning eight titles in a row. They won five straight titles in 2015, starting from the US Open and before the Australian Open today they had won Brisbane and Sydney events.

Leslie Berland appointed as CMO of Twitter Inc

Micro blogging site Twitter has appointed Leslie Berland as its Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) of the company.

She was working at American Express (AmEx) as executive vice-president of global advertising, marketing and digital partnerships.

Leslie Berland was placed at 6th position in Fast Company's 100 Most Creative People in Business issue and also was included in Advertising Age's Creativity 50 list.

Angelique Kerber stuns Serena Williams to win Australian Open

Angelique Kerber became the first German to win a Grand Slam title since her childhood idol Steffi Graf in 1999 when she upset world number one Serena Williams 6-4 3-6 6-4 to clinch the Australian Open on Saturday.

The 34-year-old American had been seeking her seventh Melbourne Park title and 22nd overall, which would have moved her into a tie with Graf for the most Grand Slam singles titles in the Open era.

Aditya Mehta won 83rd Senior National Snooker Championship

Aditya Mehta defeated Manan Chandra 6-3 in the final to win the 83rd Senior National Snooker Championship held in Indore, Madhya Pradesh.

In another event, Vidya Pillai won the National Snooker Championship in the women's category by defeating Ameer Kamani 4-2. For 38-year-old Vidya, it was her ninth national title.

Shrikanth wins Syed Modi International Championships

Ace Indian shuttler K. Srikanth has clinched the Men's Singles title of the Syed Modi International Grand Prix Gold Badminton Championships.

In the final played at Lucknow last evening, Srikanth, who was the top seed, defeated China's

Huang Yuxiang, 21-13, 14-21, 21-14 to win his fifth title overall.

The Women's Singles trophy was bagged by the second seeded Korean, Sung Ji Hyun. She beat the fifth placed Japanese, Sayako Sato, 12-21, 21-18, 21-18.

Fukuoka to host 2021 World Aquatics Championships

The International Swimming Federation (FINA) announced that the Japanese city of Fukuoka will host the 2021 World Aquatics Championships. And the Qatar capital Doha will host the 2023 event.

The FINA World Championships or World Aquatics Championships are the World Championships for aquatics sports: Swimming, Diving, High Diving, Open Water Swimming, Synchronized Swimming and Water Polo. The event was first held in 1973 and is now held every two years.

Kerala emerges as winner of 61st National School Athletics championship

The National School Athletics championship began on January 29 and concluded yesterday, i.e on February 2. Kerala emerged as the overall winner for the 19th consecutive time. The national School Athletics championship was held at Olympian Rahman Stadium in Kozhikode, Kerala.

Kerala, the host of the championship got 306 points winning 39 gold, 29 silver and 17 bronze medals. On the other hand, Tamil Nadu stood at second position with 116 points winning 11 gold, 8 silver and 13 bronze medals.

Maharashtra with 101 points obtained the third position. The venue of this event of Athletics is at the Olympian Abdurrahman Stadium in Medical College Ground at Kozhikode, Kerala.

12th South Asian Games inaugurated in

Guwahati

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 6 February 2016 declared the 12th South Asian Games 2016 open at the Indira Gandhi Athletics Stadium in Guwahati, Assam.

In his address, Modi said that the South Asian Games demonstrate 3-Ts and they are Team Work, Togetherness and Talent.

Earlier the players of all 8-participating nations marched past a crowd of thousands who cheered for them with applause. Squash Player Gaurav Ghoshal was the flag bearer of the 521-member Indian contingent.

Rahul Dravid in ICC's Anti-Corruption Oversight Group

Batting great Rahul Dravid has been named in ICC's newly appointed Anti-Corruption Oversight Group as part of the recommendation from its Integrity Working Party of the parent body.

Dravid is currently coaching the Indian team in the ongoing U-19 World Cup, which is being held in Bangladesh.