

My Notes....

NATIONAL

NPE 2019

The Union Cabinet gave its approval to the National Policy on Electronics 2019 (NPE 2019), proposed by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY). The Policy envisions positioning India as a global hub for Electronics System Design and Manufacturing - (ESDM) by encouraging and driving capabilities in the country for developing core components, including chipsets, and creating an enabling environment for the industry to compete globally.

What

1. The interest subvention scheme proposes to provide interest subsidy on the loan taken by the investor to offset the disability of financing faced by the manufacturers in India due to higher interest rate compared with the interest rate on loans in other competing countries.
2. Other scheme proposed under the policy is credit guarantee fund scheme, which will create a fund to provide default guarantee to the banks up to 75% of the loan on plant and machinery for loans of up to ₹100 crore.
3. This will eliminate the need for small and new investors to provide third-party collateral currently being demanded by banks for giving such loans. The scheme will be on the pattern of credit guarantee being provided by Sidbi for the SME sector.
4. A revised electronics manufacturing clusters will replace the existing scheme.
5. As per the revised cluster scheme, support for creating infrastructure and common facilities will be provided in collaboration with state governments.
6. It is also being proposed to create a sovereign patent fund to acquire IPs for chips and chip components so that it can be made available to Indian entrepreneurs at very low cost.
7. The government has proposed to provide suitable direct tax benefits for setting up a new manufacturing unit or expansion of an existing unit.
8. The policy also proposes to promote a forward looking and stable tax regime, including advance intimation to the industry to plan investments in the form of phased manufacturing programme in various segments of electronics, with a sunset clause.

Background

1. The implementation of the Schemes/ Programmes under the aegis of the National Policy on Electronics 2012 (NPE 2012) has successfully consolidated the foundations for a competitive Indian ESDM value chain.
2. NPE 2019 proposes to build on that foundation to propel the growth of ESDM industry in the country.
3. The National Policy of Electronics 2019 (NPE 2019) replaces the National Policy of Electronics 2012 (NPE 2012).

9. Production of mobile handsets, TVs and LED products (such as light bulbs) has gone up significantly in the recent past, primarily due to the initiatives of the government.
10. Electronics production has grown by 26.7% annually for the last four years and many investors have shown interest for making large investment in the sector.

Salient Features of NPE 2019

1. Create eco-system for globally competitive ESDM sector: Promoting domestic manufacturing and export in the entire value-chain of ESDM.
2. Provide incentives and support for manufacturing of core electronic components.
3. Provide special package of incentives for mega projects which are extremely high-tech and entail huge investments, such as semiconductor facilities display fabrication, etc.
4. Formulate suitable schemes and incentive mechanisms to encourage new units and expansion of existing units.
5. Promote Industry-led R&D and innovation in all sub-sectors of electronics, including grass root level innovations and early stage Start-ups in emerging technology areas such as 5G, IoT/ Sensors, Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning, Virtual Reality (VR), Drones, Robotics, Additive Manufacturing, Photonics, Nano-based devices, etc.
6. Provide incentives and support for significantly enhancing availability of skilled manpower, including re-skilling.
7. Special thrust on Fabless Chip Design Industry, Medical Electronic Devices Industry, Automotive Electronics Industry and Power Electronics for Mobility and Strategic Electronics Industry.
8. Create Sovereign Patent Fund (SPF) to promote the development and acquisition of IPs in ESDM sector.
9. Promote trusted electronics value chain initiatives to improve national cyber security profile.

PM-KISAN LAUNCHED

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 24 February 2019 officially launched the Rs 75,000-crore Pradhan Mantri Kisan Nidhi (PM-KISAN) at a **farmer's** rally in Gorakhpur. He transferred the first instalment of Rs 2,000 each to over one crore farmers. The scheme would help to achieve the aspirations of crores of farmers who feed the nation. PM Modi also distributed certificates among select farmers under the PM-KISAN scheme. State governments will send list of farmers who avail this scheme to central government and 12 crore small farmers in the country who have 5 acres or less land will benefit from it.

What

1. The Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana (PM-KISAN) was announced in the interim Budget 2019-20 on February 1, 2019.
2. Under the Scheme, Rs 6,000 will be given per year to small and marginal farmer families having combined land holding/ownership of up to 2 hectares. The amount will be given in three instalments of Rs.2000 each.

3. The amount will be transferred directly to the bank account of beneficiaries through Direct Benefit Transfer. DBT will ensure transparency in the entire process and will save time for the farmers.
4. The Scheme was introduced to augment the income of the Small and Marginal Farmers (SMFs). It is estimated to benefit more than 12 crore small and marginal farmers.

5. This could perhaps become the largest-ever direct disbursement of cash under the farmer investment support scheme announced in the Union Budget which allocated it Rs 75,000 crore.



6. Under the scheme, Rs 6,000 will be given per year to small and marginal farmer families having combined land holding/ownership of up to two hectares.

7. The amount will be given in three instalments of Rs 2,000 each and will be transferred directly to the bank accounts of beneficiaries through the direct benefit transfer (DBT) scheme.
8. The funds would be electronically transferred to the beneficiary's bank account by the Centre through State Notional Account on a pattern similar to MGNREGS.
9. Over one crore farmers from 14 states, including UP and Karnataka, will get their first instalment on 24 February 2019 and one crore more beneficiaries, spread over 28 states and one UT, would get their instalment in the next 2-3 days.
10. A small and marginal landholder farmer family for the purpose of the calculation of the benefit has been defined as "a family comprising of husband, wife and minor children (up to 18 years of age) who collectively own cultivable land up to 2 hectare as per land records of the concerned states/UT.

SECOND EDITION OF STARTUP RANKING

After the successful **first edition of States' Startup** ranking in 2018, where 27 States and 3 Union Territories participated, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) released second edition of Startup Ranking for 2019. The Startup Ranking framework aims to rank the States/UTs for establishing a robust ecosystem for supporting Startups. The framework also encourages States and UTs to identify, learn and replicate good practices from each other.

What

1. The Ranking Framework 2019 comprises of 7 pillars and 30 action points. **The pillars will assess States'/UTs efforts across institutional support, simplifying**

- regulations, easing public procurement, incubation support, seed funding support, venture funding support and awareness and outreach related activities.
2. The ranking exercise aims to evaluate measures taken by States/UTs during the assessment period from May 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019.
 3. DPIIT has prepared the framework after several rounds of consultation with State and UT Governments.
 4. The framework has evolved distinctly as compared to last year with major emphasis on collecting feedback from Startups and other important stakeholders from the Startup ecosystem.
 5. DPIIT also proposes to recognise States and UTs for their exemplary performance in seven pillars of the ranking framework. As part of the Ranking 2019 exercise, DPIIT will recognize innovative Startup programs and initiatives from State/UT Governments.
 6. The launch of the ranking framework in 2018 galvanized the States/UTs into action, thereby giving impetus to the Startup movement across the country.
 7. Till date, 25 States and UTs have launched their dedicated Startup policies to incentivize Startups in their jurisdiction.
 8. The Startup Ranking 2019 is expected to take forward the Startup ecosystem in the country and give impetus to the vision of India becoming a Startup Nation.

FIRST NATIONAL WAR MEMORIAL

The National War Memorial (NWM) at India Gate was inaugurated by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 25 February 2019 is built at India Gate and it is in memory of the war heroes of Indian forces. It has been constructed to honour around 26,000 soldiers who laid down their lives in war and operations since India got independence in 1947.

What

1. The approval for the construction of NWM was given in Oct 2015 at a cost of Rs 176 crore. A Group of Ministers (GoM) in August 2012 recommended “**C**” Hexagon of India Gate as the appropriate location for the Memorial.
2. Though a Note for the Cabinet was initiated by the then Ministry of Urban Development in 2012 and was circulated to Ministry of Defence (MoD), Deptt. Of Expenditure (Ministry of Finance), the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Note could not be finalised for Cabinet approval.
3. It is located at India Gate C-Hexagon, will have artificial lighting for evenings and a walking plaza, there will be a 14 lakh litre water storage tank for rainwater harvesting, keeping the area green and cool, and preventing water logging.
4. It has a layout of four landscaped concentric circles spread over 40 acres. The four circles — Amar Chakra (circle of immortality), Veer Chakra (circle of bravery), Tyag Chakra (circle of sacrifice) and Rakshak Chakra (circle of protection) — will include a 15m tall obelisk with eternal flame, bronze murals, graphic panels, inscription of names of martyrs and busts of 21 Param Vir Chakra awardees.

What is at India Gate?

1. The India Gate was built by the British in memory of 84,000 Indian soldiers killed during World War I and the Afghan campaign.

- The Amar Jawan Jyoti was constructed under the arch of India Gate to honour the 3,843 soldiers who died during the Bangladesh liberation war of 1971.

Flashpoint

- There will be busts of 21 Param Vir Chakras (PVC) in bronze installed on both sides of the walkway
- The citations of PVC winners are in both Hindi and English.
- There are narratives of individual battles fought by the brave soldiers
- A stone mural is in the gallantry gallery called Param Yodha Sthal.
- Four concentric circles called Amar, Veerata, Tyag and Suraksha chakras, with the obelisk of the Tyag Chakra containing 25,927 names of martyrs – Army: 25,539; Navy: 239; IAF 164 – since 1947.
- Individual tablets of martyrs are listed according to seniority of regiments/squadrons
- The tablets are on the granite stone, embedded in sandstone.
- A digital system to identify the location of a martyr's tablet.**
- The battles depicted in the murals are Gangasagar, Longewala, Tithwal, Rizangla, and Operations Meghdoot and Trident.
- It will also commemorate the soldiers who participated and made supreme sacrifice in UN Peace Keeping Missions, during HADR Operations, Counter Insurgency Operations and Low-Intensity Capital Operation (LICO).

ALL INDIA SURVEY OF POLICE SERVICES

Ministry of Home Affairs has commissioned the Bureau of Police Research and Development to conduct a pan-India survey called "ALL INDIA CITIZENS SURVEY OF POLICE SERVICES". **The survey will be conducted through the National Council of Applied Economic Research, New Delhi.** The survey is aimed to understand public perceptions about Police, gauge the level of non-reporting of crimes or incidents to Police, the position on ground relating to crime reporting & recording, timeliness and quality of police response and action, and to assess citizens' perception and experience about women and **children's safety**.

What

- The survey will commence in March, 2019 and cover a representative sample of 1.2 lakh households spread over 173 districts across the country, based on the National Sample Survey framework. All States and UTs would be included in this survey. The survey will be completed in 9 months.
- The outcome of the survey is expected to bring out useful suggestions for stakeholders in formulating and implementing appropriate policy responses and changes in the functioning of police at the cutting edge and for improving crime prevention and investigation, transformation in community policing, improvement in the access to the justice and increased/ appropriate resource allocation for police in a systematic manner.

3. States/UTs have been requested to extend full cooperation to the conduct of the survey, and to adopt this good practice and prepare their Police for undertaking such surveys on their own, in future.

INDIA SUCCESSFULLY TEST FIRES QRSAM

India has test-fired its Quick Reaction Surface-to-Air Missile (QRSAM) off the Odisha coast. The test firing of the missile twice was successfully. The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) developed the missile for the armed forces and the missile, in particular, will be of use to the Indian army.

What

1. The missile has a strike range of 30 km. The APJ Abdul Kalam Research Centre Imarat (RCI) which is the missile avionics laboratory in Hyderabad was involved among other DRDO institutions like BEL in developing the missile. Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL) in Hyderabad produced the missile.
2. QRSAM has already been tested four times in the past with two tests conducted in 2017 it.
3. In the latest test-firing that was done, DRDO conducted it twice on the same day.
4. The test-firing of the QRSAM on 26 February 2019, coming it is, on the day the Indian Air Force (IAF) targeted terror hideouts in Pakistan, also could be indicative of the preparedness of the country to counter any retaliation from across the border. QRSAM is capable of tracking enemy aircraft and also firing.

‘DELHI DECLARATION’ ON DIGITAL HEALTH

This Delhi Declaration on digital health firmly aligns with our Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi’s **Digital India**. This was stated by Shri Ashwini Kumar Choubey, Minister of **State for Health and Family Welfare**, at the **concluding session of the ‘4th Global Digital Health Partnership Summit,’ in Delhi on 27 February 2019**. As part of the high-level summit, the ministers and delegation also adopted the Delhi Declaration on digital health for sustainable development, **which called for WHO’s leadership in digital health and for it to establish a specific mechanism to centrally coordinate digital health to assist its Member States**.

What

1. The global intergovernmental meeting on digital health is being hosted by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in collaboration with World Health Organization (WHO) and the Global Digital Health Partnership (GDHP).
2. The declaration marks **India’s commitment in maximizing the digital health investments to ensure UHC and realize Ayushman Bharat**. **India further stressed on the need for sharing best practices in Digital Health among the countries**.
3. The Government has highlighted the initiatives of the Government in **Digital Health and ‘engaging citizens in partnering with government for planning and management of digital health interventions in health services delivery and improving governance are important.’**
4. Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General, WHO in his live video **address shared that, “Digital technologies are not just the latest trend – they**

are a vital tool for strengthening primary care, achieving universal health coverage, and achieving Sustainable Development Goals.”

FAME INDIA PHASE II

The Union cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has approved the proposal for implementation of scheme titled 'Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles in India Phase II (FAME India Phase II)' for promotion of Electric Mobility in the country. The scheme with total outlay of Rs 10000 Crores over the period of three years will be implemented with effect from 1st April 2019. This scheme is the expanded version of the present scheme titled 'FAME India1 which was launched on 1st April 2015, with total outlay of Rs. 895 crores. The main objective of the scheme is to encourage faster adoption of Electric and hybrid vehicle by way of offering upfront Incentive on purchase of Electric vehicles and also by way of establishing a necessary charging Infrastructure for electric vehicles. The scheme will help in addressing the issue of environmental pollution and fuel security.

Details

1. Emphasis is on electrification of the public transportation that includes shared transport.
2. Demand Incentives on operational expenditure model For electric buses will be delivered through State/city transport corporation (STUs).
3. In 3W and 4W segment incentives will be applicable mainly to vehicles used for public transport or registered for commercial purposes.
4. In the e-2Ws segment, the focus will be on the private vehicles.
5. Through the scheme, it is planned to support 10 Lakhs e-2W, 5 Lakhs e-3W, 55000 4Ws and 7000 Buses.
6. To encourage advance technologies, the benefits of incentives, will be extended to only those vehicles which are fitted with advance battery like a Lithium Ion battery and other new technology batteries.
7. The scheme proposes for establishment of charging infrastructure, whereby about 2700 charging stations will be established in metros, other million plus cities, smart cities and cities of Hilly states across the country so that there will be availability of at least one charging station in a grid of 3 km x 3 km.
8. Establishment of Charging stations are also proposed on major highways connecting major city clusters.
9. On such highways, charging stations will be established on both sides of the road at an interval of about 25 km each.

INTERNATIONAL

INDONESIA SUBMITS BID TO HOST 2032 OLYMPICS

Indonesia has submitted a bid to host the 2032 Olympics, after winning praise for **hosting last year's Asian Games, though it could face competition from India and a joint bid by North and South Korea. Indonesia's ambassador to Switzerland submitted a letter from President Joko Widodo to the International Olympic Committee (IOC).**

What

1. **The IOC has acknowledged Indonesia's capabilities during the Asian Games and Asian Paragames of 2018.**
2. A senior official in the coordinating ministry for human development and culture, Gunawan, who goes by one name, confirmed the bid.
3. **If Southeast Asia's most populous nation wins the opportunity to host the summer Olympics, it would become the fourth Asian country to do so, after Japan, China and South Korea. The IOC will pick the 2032 host by the year 2025.**
4. Tokyo is to host the next Summer Olympics in 2020, with Paris holding the 2024 Games and Los Angeles confirmed to host the event four years later.

Flashback

1. The modern Olympic Games or Olympics are leading international sporting events featuring summer and winter sports competitions in which thousands of athletes from around the world participate in a variety of competitions.
2. The Olympic Games are considered the world's foremost sports competition with more than 200 nations participating.
3. The Olympic Games are held every four years, with the Summer and Winter Games alternating by occurring every four years but two years apart.
4. Their creation was inspired by the ancient Olympic Games, which were held in Olympia, Greece, from the 8th century BC to the 4th century AD.
5. Baron Pierre de Coubertin founded the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in 1894, leading to the first modern Games in Athens in 1896.
6. The IOC is the governing body of the Olympic Movement, with the Olympic Charter defining its structure and authority.

PARTICIPATION OF INDIA IN PISA

The Union Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given ex-post facto approval to the Agreement between India and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) for participating in the Programme for International Students Assessment (PISA), which will be conducted by the OECD in 2021. The Agreement was signed on 28th January 2019.

What

1. Learnings from participation in PISA will help to introduce competency-based examination reforms in the school system and help move away from rote learning.
2. The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) and the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) will be part of the process and activities leading to the actual test.
3. PISA is a competency-based assessment which unlike content-based assessment, measures the extent to which students have acquired key competencies that are essential for full participation in modern societies.

4. It would lead to recognition and acceptability of Indian students and prepare them for the global economy in the 21st century.
5. The CBSE and the NCERT will be part of the process and activities leading to the actual test. Schools run by the Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS), Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti (NVS) and schools in the Union Territory of Chandigarh will participate.
6. More than 80 countries, including 44 middle-income countries including Brazil, China, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam have participated in PISA

US, CANADA MOVE WTO AGAINST INDIA

The US and Canada on 15 February 2019 said they have jointly approached the World Trade Organisation (WTO) against India for **allegedly “under-reporting” market price support** for five varieties of pulses and have submitted their own steeper calculations for scrutiny of members. **“Based on United States/Canadian calculations, it appears that India has substantially underreported its market price support for chickpeas, pigeon peas, black matpe, mung beans and lentils,”** a US Department of Agriculture release stated.

What

1. When calculated according to WTO Agreement on Agriculture methodology, **India’s** market price support for each of these pulses far exceeded its allowable levels of trade-distorting domestic support.
2. US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer and Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue said the US on February 12 has submitted a counter notification, co-sponsored by Canada, in the WTO Committee on Agriculture **(COA) on India’s market price support (MSP, also referred to as minimum support price) for the five type of pulses.**
3. The two countries have taken issue with the quantity of production used in market price support calculations, the lack of information necessary to assess WTO compliance, problems with currency conversions and the prices used in the calculations.
4. The US expects a robust discussion on how India implements and notifies its policies at the next COA meeting, which is scheduled for February 26-27.

Flashback

1. The World Trade Organization came into being in 1995. One of the youngest of the international organizations, the WTO is the successor to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) established in the wake of the Second World War.
2. The WTO deals with regulation of trade in goods, services and intellectual property between participating countries by providing a framework for negotiating trade agreements and a dispute resolution process aimed at enforcing participants' adherence to WTO agreements, which are signed by representatives of member governments and ratified by their parliaments.

IRAN UNVEILS MISSILE-EQUIPPED SUBMARINE

Iran's state TV is reporting that the country's President Hassan Rouhani has unveiled the first Iranian made semi-heavy submarine. The report said the Fateh, "Conqueror" in Persian, is capable of being fitted with cruise missiles.

What

1. Since 1992, Iran has developed a homegrown defense industry that produces light and heavy weapons ranging from mortars and torpedoes to tanks and submarines.
2. The Fateh has subsurface-to-surface missiles with a range of about 2,000 kilometers (1,250 miles), capable of reaching Israel and U.S. military bases in the region.
3. The move is the latest show of military strength by Iran, as it marks the 40th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution at a time of heightened tensions with the United States.
4. The US and other European countries have repeatedly warned against Iran's missile programme. The US has claimed that the missiles are capable of carrying nuclear warheads.
5. Iran's missile programme is not covered by the 2015 nuclear agreement with world powers, and Tehran insists that it is purely for defensive purposes.
6. UN nuclear inspectors have also said that Iran is not pursuing any nuclear weapons and has continued to abide by the nuclear agreement.
7. Since the US decision to withdraw from the 2015 deal and reimpose sanctions, Iran has ramped up its missile development.
8. Earlier this month, Iran announced that it successfully tested a new cruise missile, Hoveizeh, with a range of up to 1,350km.
9. Days later, it also unveiled a surface-to-surface missile, the Dezful, with a shorter range of 1,000km.
10. Iran has so far set a 2,000km limit to its missiles - a range capable of reaching Israel and Western military bases in the Middle East, but not the US. According to experts, an Iranian missile requires a 10,000km range to reach the US.
11. The US has pointed to these recent missile activities in its efforts to convince Europe and other countries to withdraw from the nuclear deal.

MOU FOR NUCLEAR ENERGY COOPERATION

India and Argentina inked a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to boost cooperation in the sector of nuclear energy. Argentina minister for foreign affairs Jorge Faurie said his country has expertise in building small-capacity reactors and was looking to work with India in some third country in tripartite projects.

What

1. The two countries also wished to enhance and explore cooperative ventures in the area of nuclear power and its societal uses in the fields of health, agriculture, industrial application, training and capacity building, the joint statement added.
2. India and Argentina had signed an agreement in 2010 for cooperation in the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

3. Argentine company INVAP is working on the Fission Molly Project to build a molybdenum plant in Mumbai. Faurie said the plant focuses on creating isotopes. Argentina also manufactures some components used in Indian power reactors, Faurie said.
4. During the talks, Modi and Macri expressed satisfaction at the ongoing talks in the area of space.

INDIA AND SOUTH KOREA SIGN 6 PACTS

India and South Korea signed six agreements on 22 February 2019 to enhance cooperation in key areas, including infrastructure development, media, start-ups and combating trans-border and international crime, during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the country.

What

1. The memorandum of understandings (MoUs) were signed after the two leaders held "constructive" talks on enhancing bilateral cooperation in a number of areas including trade, investment, defence and security.
2. Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Raveesh Kumar said that six documents between India and South Korea were signed/exchanged in the presence of the two leaders on cooperation in media, start-ups and police among others.
3. Earlier, the MEA said that a total of seven documents were signed/exchanged. However, it later said that six agreements were inked.
4. A MoU was signed between Korean National Police Agency and the Ministry of Home Affairs to enhance cooperation between the law enforcement agencies of the two countries and combat trans-border and international crimes.
5. Another agreement was signed for releasing a joint stamp, commemorating Princess Suriratna (Queen Hur Hwang-ok), a legendary Princess of Ayodhya, who went to Korea in AD 48 and married King Kim-Suro. A large number of Koreans trace their ancestry to the princess.
6. The two sides also signed an agreement to continue operations of Korea Plus organisation that facilitates investments by Korean companies in India.
7. Korea Plus was operationalised in June 2016, and comprises representatives from the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Energy of South Korea, Korea Trade Investment and Promotion Agency (KOTRA) and Invest India.
8. The two countries will promote collaboration among start-ups and set up a Korea Start-up Centre (KSC) in India to commercialise ideas, technologies and designs of start-up companies.
9. The Korean Broadcasting System (KBS) and Prasar Bharti have agreed to facilitate the broadcast of DD India Channel in South Korea and KBS World Channel in India.
10. Another MoU was signed between the National Highways Authority of India and Korea Expressway Corporation to promote bilateral cooperation in road and transport infrastructure development projects of India, and facilitate technical and institutional knowledge exchange in the field of road and transport.

11. Modi is visiting South Korea on the invitation of President Moon. This is his second visit to the Republic of Korea since 2015 and second summit meeting with the South Korean president.

SUDAN DECLARES STATE OF EMERGENCY

Sudan President Omar al-Bashir, **facing the country's biggest popular protests since** he came to power 30 years ago, declared a one-year state of emergency on 22 February 2019 and called on parliament to postpone constitutional amendments that would allow him to seek another term in a 2020 presidential election. In a televised speech, Bashir said he would dissolve the central government as well as state governments.

What

1. Sudanese protesters march in downtown Khartoum, chanting "freedom". Sudanese police fired tear gas at protesters marching towards the presidential palace.
2. In a subsequent decree, Bashir set up a caretaker administration comprising a senior official from each ministry, but kept the defense, foreign and justice ministers in place.
3. The anti-government demonstrations began on Dec. 19, triggered by price increases and cash shortages, but quickly developed into protests **against Bashir's rule.**
4. The National Consensus **Forces, one of Sudan's main opposition groups, said the response to Bashir's** declaration of a state of emergency should be more protests.
5. Bashir, an Islamist and former army officer, came to power in 1989 after a military coup. He won elections in 2010 and 2015 after changes in the constitution following a peace agreement with southern rebels, who then seceded to form South Sudan.
6. **Bashir had previously blamed the protests on foreign "agents", and challenged** his rivals to seek power through the ballot box. He had shown no sign that he was prepared to concede any power.
7. Bashir is wanted by the International Criminal Court over charges of masterminding genocide in the Darfur region, which he denies. He has been lobbying for Sudan to be removed from a list of countries which Washington deems state sponsors of terrorism.
8. The listing has blocked the investment and financial aid that Sudan was hoping for when the United States lifted sanctions in 2017.

Flashback

1. Sudan officially the Republic of the Sudan is a country in Northeast Africa.
2. It is bordered by Egypt to the north, the Red Sea to the northeast, Eritrea to the east, Ethiopia to the southeast, South Sudan to the south, the Central African Republic to the southwest, Chad to the west, and Libya to the northwest.
3. Sudan's predominant religion is Islam and its official languages are Arabic and English.
4. The capital is Khartoum, located at the confluence of the Blue and White Nile.

MUHAMMADU BUHARI WINS SECOND TERM

Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari won a second term at the **helm of Africa's** largest economy and top oil producer, the electoral commission chairman said on 27 February 2019, following an election marred by delays, logistical glitches and violence. He defeated his main opposition candidate Atiku Abubakar, a businessman and former vice president. Buhari secured 56 percent of votes, compared with 41 percent for Atiku, a candidate for the **People's Democratic Party (PDP)**.

What

1. Buhari faces a daunting to-do list, including reviving an economy still struggling to recover from a 2016 recession and quelling a decade-old Islamist insurgency that has killed thousands of people in the northeast, many of them civilians.
2. Addressing supporters at the campaign headquarters of his All Progressive Congress (APC) party in the capital Abuja, he promised increased efforts to tackle these issues.
3. In Lagos, the largest city in Nigeria, preparation at a polling station is ongoing before people are allowed to cast their vote.
4. Muhammadu Buhari of the APC, having satisfied the requirement of the law and scored the highest number of votes is hereby declared the winner.
5. Buhari, 76, took office in 2015 and sought a second term with pledges to fight **corruption and overhaul Nigeria's creaking road and rail network**.
6. Atiku, 72, had said he would aim to double the size of the economy to \$900 billion by 2025, privatise the state oil company and expand the role of the private sector.
7. Voting took place after a week-long delay which the election commission said was due to its inability to get ballots and results sheets to all parts of the country.
8. The event – **Africa's largest democratic** exercise – was also marred by violence with at least 47 people killed, according to the Situation Room, a monitoring organisation linking various civil society groups.

ECONOMY

GOVT REVISES STARTUP DEFINITION

The government on 19 February 2019 announced raising angel tax exemption limit for startups with share premium not exceeding Rs 25 crore from earlier Rs 10 crore. Considerations of shares received by eligible startups for shares issued or proposed to be issued by all investors shall be exempt up to an aggregate limit of Rs 25 crore.

What

1. This notification is a great step forward for the startup ecosystem taken by the **PMO, CBDT and DPIIT. This acknowledges India is not only going to be the world's fastest growing startup ecosystem but it will also attract more capital.**
2. Angel tax is referred to 56(2)(viib) of Income Tax Act, 1961 wherein if a closely held company issues its shares at a price more than its fair market value, the amount received in excess of the fair market value will be charged as income from other sources.

3. Many startups have reportedly been taxed around 30% of their angel investments, which have been argued because most startups take multiple years to break-even and hence find 30% tax on funding affecting their early growth.
4. The exemption on investments beyond Rs 25 crore limit made by non-residents, alternate investment funds – category 1.
5. Investments into eligible startups by non-residents, alternate investment funds- category I registered with SEBI shall also be exempt under Section 56(2)(viib) of Income Tax Act beyond the limit of Rs 25 crores.
6. This should resolve the angel tax issue which has been more of a draconian tax for startups and allow even listed companies with revenues of Rs 100 core to invest in startups.
7. The definition of startup has also been revised from existing 7 years since its incorporation or registration date to 10 years.
8. Moreover, the government has also exceeded the turnover limit for entities from existing Rs 25 crore to be considered as a startup.
9. An entity shall be considered a startup if its turnover for any of the financial **years since its incorporation/registration hasn't exceeded Rs 100** Crore instead of existing Rs 25 crore.
10. The government also announced that a Gazette Notification will be issued for the same to get exemptions on investments under section 56(2)(viib) of Income Tax Act, 1961.

THE COMPANIES (SECOND AMENDMENT) ORDINANCE 2019 APPROVED

The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the Promulgation of the Companies (Second Amendment) Ordinance 2019 and for replacement of the said Ordinance in Parliament by a replacement Bill. It is based on the recommendations of the Committee to review offences under the Companies Act, 2013, so as to fill critical gaps in the corporate governance & compliance framework as enshrined in the Companies Act 2013, while simultaneously extending greater Ease of Doing Business to law abiding corporates. This will incentivize compliance of law while simultaneously meting out exemplary punishment for serious violations.

What

1. The Companies (Amendment) Bill, 2018 later renamed as the Companies (Amendment) Bill, 2019) was introduced in the Lok Sabha on 20th December, 2018 and was considered and passed by the Lok Sabha on 4th January, 2019. The Bill was transmitted to the Rajya Sabha but it could not be considered and passed in the Upper House in the Winter Session or in the Budget Session.
2. A total of 29 sections were amended and 2 new sections were inserted through the earlier ordinances, which were promulgated on 2nd November, 2018 (Ordinance 9 of 2018) and on 12th January, 2019 (Ordinance 3 of 2019).
3. The amendments have been brought in to address the need to impose civil liability for technical & procedural defaults of a minor nature.

Range of issues

1. Re-categorization of 16 minor offences as purely civil defaults which will de-clog special courts.

2. Transfer of certain routine functions from NCLT to the central government such as dealing with applications for change of financial year and conversion from public to private companies.
3. Making non-maintenance of registered office and non-reporting of commencement of business grounds for striking of from register of companies.
4. Stringent provisions with reduced timelines for creation and modification of charges
5. Breach of ceiling on directorships being made a ground for disqualification.

NEW COMPANY UNDER DOS

The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given its approval to the Setting up of a new company under Department of Space (DoS), to commercially exploit the research and development work carried out by Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) Centers and constituent units of DOS.

The following areas/avenues provide opportunities for commercial exploitation:

1. Small satellite technology transfer to industry, wherein the new company shall take license from DoS/ISRO and sub-license to industries;
2. Manufacture of small satellite launch vehicle (SLV) in collaboration with the Private Sector;
3. Productionisation of Polar SLV through industry;
4. Productionisation and marketing of Space-based products and services, including launch and applications;
5. Transfer of Technology developed by ISRO Centers and constituent units of DoS;
6. Marketing of some spin-off technologies and products, both in India and abroad; and
7. Any other subject which Government of India deems fit.

COMPREHENSIVE POLICY ON E-COMMERCE

The government released the draft that proposes setting up a legal and technological framework for restrictions on cross-border data flow and also laid out conditions for businesses regarding collection or processing of sensitive data locally and storing it abroad.

What

1. The 42-page draft addresses six broad issues of the e-commerce ecosystem — data, infrastructure development, e-commerce marketplaces, regulatory issues, stimulating domestic digital economy and export promotion through e-commerce.
2. On e-commerce marketplace businesses, the draft said the policy aims to invite and encourage foreign direct investment (FDI) in the marketplace model **“alone”**, which is being carried out by companies like Flipkart and Amazon.
3. Online marketplaces should not adopt business models or strategies which are discriminatory and which favour one or few sellers/traders operating on their platforms over others, the draft clarify. It also enlists certain steps that have to be followed by all e-commerce websites/applications.

4. Comprehensive national policy on e-commerce will provide a “facilitative policy environment” for India’s fast-growing digital economy.
5. **The draft policy’s categorical rejection of inventory based e-commerce** model must be followed by effective implementation of FDI norms to ensure marketplaces do not own or control inventory, directly or indirectly.
6. One of the proposals states that a business entity that collects or processes any sensitive data in India and stores it abroad, shall be required to adhere to certain conditions.
7. All such data stored abroad shall not be made available to other business entities outside India, for any purpose, even with the customer consent.
8. Further, the data shall not be made available to a third-party for any purpose and it would also not be shared with a foreign government, without the prior permission of Indian authorities, the draft said.

GOVERNMENT DECLARES CURRENCY PRINTING PRESSES AS PUS

The government in a notification has declared printing presses and mints as public utility service under the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947. The notification issued by the Ministry of Labour and Employment is valid for six months and can be reissued after expiry. The notification is part of a series of notifications issued earlier on January 15, and July 13, last year, announcing currency printing presses and mints as public utility service. Following the declaration, employees will have to comply with rules pertaining to strikes and lockouts.

What

1. The printing presses and mints included in the declaration are India Security Press (Nashik), India Government Mints (Kolkata, Noida, Mumbai and Hyderabad), Security Printing Press (Hyderabad), Security Paper Mill (Hoshangabad) Services in the Bank Note Press (Dewas), and Currency Note Press (Nashik Road).
2. Also, in a separate notification issued on February 1, the ministry had declared **the services of ‘Transport (other than railways) for the carriage of passengers or goods (by land or water)’, covered by entry 1 in the First Schedule to the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947, as a public utility service for six months.**
3. Likewise, chemical fertilisers industry and coal industry were declared as public utilities on December 28 and November 1 last year respectively.
4. Bhartiya Reserve Bank Note Mudran Limited in Mysore and Salboni in West Bengal were also turned into public utilities on October 9, 2018.
5. **Adding to the list have been ‘services engaged in the industrial establishments manufacturing or producing Nuclear Fuel and components, Heavy Water and Allied Chemicals and Atomic Energy’ that were declared public utilities on September 27, 2018.**
6. **‘Copper mining industry’, ‘uranium industry’, ‘service in any oilfield’ were also given the public utility status on September 6, 2018.**
7. Public utility service is defined as any railway service (or any transport service for the carriage of passengers or goods by air); any service in, or in connection with the working of, any major port or dock; any section of an industrial establishment, on the working of which the safety of the establishment or the workmen employed therein depends; any postal, telegraph or telephone service;

any industry which supplies power, light or water to the public; any system of public conservancy or sanitation.

SINGAPORE LARGEST FDI SOURCE

Months before **India's new double taxation avoidance agreements** with them are to kick in fully; Singapore has beaten Mauritius to emerge **as New Delhi's largest source of foreign direct investment (FDI)**. FDI in equity from Singapore jumped 41% in the April-December period to almost \$13 billion, while that from Mauritius dropped 55% from a year before to just \$6 billion, showed the latest official data.

What

1. **India's total FDI inflows into equity** — which had shot up by 23% in the first quarter — lost pace subsequently and dropped 7% to \$33.5 billion between April and December 2018.
2. The inflows are poised to record a fall in FY19 — the first such annual decline during the current NDA regime—unless the last quarter records a massive rebound.
3. Interestingly, at \$6.06 billion, FDI inflows into chemicals (excluding fertilisers) in the first three quarters of this fiscal exceeded those into bigger sectors like financial and other services (\$5.92 billion), computer software and hardware (\$4.75 billion), telecommunications (\$2.29 billion), trading (\$2.34 billion) and automobiles (\$1.81 billion).
4. The chemicals sector had attracted just \$1.3 billion in the entire 2017-18 fiscal.
5. As for the destinations of FDI, India had tweaked its 33-year old tax treaty with Mauritius in May 2016 and revised it with Singapore in December that year to plug loopholes exploited by companies in tax havens to avoid legitimate taxes.
6. These pacts are to come into effect fully from April 2019 after a two-year transitional phase during which capital gains on the transfer of Indian shares acquired since April 2017 are being taxed at 50% of the domestic rate. After April 1, 2019, full domestic capital gains tax will apply.
7. With the advantage of a tax haven set to go fully now, inflows from Mauritius have faltered. However, since Singapore has a robust and fairly transparent financial system with easier access to funds at low costs, many foreign companies with interest in India continue to be inclined to invest via Singapore rather than Mauritius, said analysts.
8. Although Singapore had also surpassed Mauritius as the biggest source of FDI into India in 2015-16 (only to cede the top slot the very next year), the gap in their investments was never as stark as in 2018-19.

Flashback

1. Foreign direct investment (FDI) is an investment made by a firm or individual in one country into business interests located in another country.
2. Generally, FDI takes place when an investor establishes foreign business operations or acquires foreign business assets, including establishing ownership or controlling interest in a foreign company.
3. Foreign direct investments are distinguished from portfolio investments in which an investor merely purchases equities of foreign-based companies.

9. Already, the share of Mauritius in cumulative FDI inflows into India since April 2000 has eroded gradually over the years from as much as 42% as of March 2011 to 32% by December 2018, while that of Singapore jumped from 9% to 19% during this period.
10. A decline in overall FDI inflows this fiscal could weigh on the rupee, although a fall in oil prices in recent months has eased pressure on trade balance, the largest component **of the country's current account**.
11. Already, current account deficit worsened to 2.9% of GDP in the July-September period of this fiscal from 2.4% in the previous quarter.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

HACHIMOJI DNA

Scientists have synthesised a molecular system that, like DNA, can store and transmit information, and may help in the search for alien life. The finding, published in the journal *Science*, suggests there could be an alternative to DNA-based life, as we know it on Earth — a genetic system for life that may be possible on other worlds. This new molecular system, which is not a new life form, suggests scientists looking for life beyond Earth may need to rethink what they are looking for.

What

1. DNA is a complex molecule that stores and transmits genetic information, is passed from parent to offspring in all living organisms on Earth, and its components include four key ingredients called nucleotides — all standard for life as we know it.
2. **Life detection is an increasingly important goal of NASA's planetary science missions, and this new work will help us to develop effective instruments and experiments that will expand the scope of what we look for, NASA's Planetary Science Division said.**
3. One way to imagine the kinds of foreign structures found on other worlds is to try to create something foreign on Earth.
4. Researchers, led by Steven Benner at the Foundation for Applied Molecular Evolution in the US, successfully achieved the fabrication of a new informational molecular system that is like DNA, except in one key area.
5. The new molecule has eight informational ingredients instead of four. The synthetic DNA includes the four nucleotides present in Earth life — adenine, cytosine, guanine, and thymine — but also four others that mimic the structures of the informational ingredients in regular DNA. The result is a double-helix structure that can store and transfer information.
6. The team, including researchers from the University of Texas and Indiana **University in the US, dubbed their creation "hachimoji" DNA.**
7. Hachimoji DNA meets all the structural requirements that allow our DNA to store, transmit and evolve information in living systems.
8. By carefully analysing the roles of shape, size and structure in hachimoji DNA, this work expands our understanding of the types of molecules that might store information in extraterrestrial life on alien worlds.

9. Scientists have much more to do on the question of what other genetic systems could serve as the foundation for life, and where such exotic organisms could be found. However, this study opens the door to further research on ways life could structure itself in environments that we consider inhospitable, but which might be teeming with forms of life we have not yet imagined.
10. **One of NASA's goals is to search for life on other planets like Mars**, where there was once flowing water and a thick atmosphere, or moons of the outer solar system like Europa and Enceladus, where vast water oceans churn under thick layers of ice.
11. The discovery that DNA with eight nucleotide letters is suitable for storing and transmitting information is a breakthrough in our knowledge of the range of possibilities necessary for life.

MOON'S SURFACE ACTS AS 'CHEMICAL FACTORY'

The **lunar surface could act as a 'chemical factory'** that produces the ingredients for water, making it easier for future human colonies on the Moon to sustain them, NASA scientists have found. Using a computer programme, scientists simulated the chemistry **that unfolds when the solar wind pelts the Moon's surface. When a stream of charged particles known as the solar wind careens onto the Moon's surface at 450 kilometers per second, they enrich it in ingredients that could make water.**

What

1. As the Sun streams protons to the Moon, they found, those particles interact with electrons in the lunar surface, making hydrogen (H) atoms.
2. These atoms then migrate through the surface and latch onto the abundant oxygen (O) atoms bound in the silica (SiO₂) and other oxygen-bearing molecules that make up the lunar soil, or regolith.
3. The whole process is like a chemical factory," said **William M Farrell, a plasma physicist at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center in the US, who helped develop the simulation.** Together, hydrogen and oxygen make the molecule hydroxyl (OH), a component of water.
4. Once seen as the least glamorous objects in the solar system, it now looks like asteroids could hold clues to how the Earth was formed, how life began and ultimately, how it will end.
5. Several spacecraft used infrared instruments that measure light emitted from the Moon to identify the chemistry of its surface.
6. All found evidence of water or its components (hydrogen or hydroxyl). It is possible that meteor impacts initiate the necessary chemical reactions, but many scientists believe that the solar wind is the primary driver.
7. **Tucker's** simulation, which traces the lifecycle of hydrogen atoms on the Moon, supports the solar wind idea. Showing how hydrogen atoms behave on the Moon helped resolve why spacecraft have found fluctuations in the amount of hydrogen in different regions of the Moon.

SOLAR-POWERED SUPERCAPACITOR DEVELOPED

A team led by an Indian-origin scientist has developed a flexible supercapacitor which can generate power from the Sun and store excess energy for later use. The

technology developed by researchers from the University of Glasgow in the UK could pave the way for a new generation of flexible electronic devices, including solar-powered prosthetics for amputees. The team led by Professor Ravinder Dahiya used layers of graphene and polyurethane to create the flexible supercapacitor, according to the study published in the journal *Advanced Science*. The researchers demonstrated the effectiveness of their new material by powering a series of devices, including a string of 84 light-emitting-diodes (LEDs) and a prosthetic hand, allowing it to grasp a series of object.

What

1. The top touch sensitive layer is made from graphene, a highly flexible, **transparent 'super-material' form of carbon layers just one atom thick**. Sunlight which passes through the top layer of graphene is used to generate power via a layer of flexible photovoltaic cells below.
2. Any surplus power is stored in a newly-developed supercapacitor, made from a graphite-polyurethane composite. The team worked to develop a ratio of graphite to polyurethane which provides a relatively large, electroactive surface area where power-generating chemical reactions can take place, creating an energy-dense flexible supercapacitor which can be charged and discharged very quickly.
3. The new flexible which is made from inexpensive materials, takes us some distance towards our ultimate goal of creating entirely self-sufficient flexible, solar-powered devices which can store the power they generate.
4. There is huge potential for devices such as prosthetics, wearable health monitors, and electric vehicles which incorporate this technology, and we are keen to continue refining and improving the breakthroughs we have made already in this field.

VIRUS-INFECTED BACTERIA FOR CLIMATE CHANGE

Viruses do not always kill their microbial hosts, say researchers who found that virus-infected bacteria could thus provide help in the fight against climate change.

The study showed that viruses develop a mutually beneficial relationship with their microbial hosts. The virus establishes itself inside the microbe and, in return, grants its host with immunity against similar viruses.

What

1. Understanding this relationship is beneficial not only for medical research and practical applications but also in marine biology as well as climate change, said Alison Buchan, Professor at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.
2. Marine microbes are uniquely responsible for carrying out processes that are essential for all of earth's biogeochemical cycles, including many that play a role in climate change.
3. The function of a microbial community is in large part dictated by its composition - what microbes are present and how many of each.
4. Within the community, bacteria compete with one another for resources. In the course of this fight, some bacteria produce antibiotics and use them against other types of bacteria. This kind of interaction has been known for some time.
5. But there is another fight strategy that scientists are now considering - bacteria might use the viruses that infect them as weapons against other types of microbes.

6. This type of competitive interaction, Buchan said, is important for stabilising the size of microbial populations in marine systems. This balance may be crucial for biogeochemical processes, including many related to climate change.

AERO INDIA 2019

The 12th edition of Aero India 2019, the International Aerospace and Defence Exhibition will be held during 20-24 Feb 2019 at Yelahanka, Bengaluru. The mega event organized biennially has already carved a niche for itself globally as a premier aerospace exhibition in the world. Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO) is participating in this mega exposition in a big way and will be showcasing around 250 systems, technologies, working models and innovations in all formats i.e. indoor, outdoor and live display. More than twenty four laboratories under different technology clusters of DRDO connected to the aerospace & aeronautics are displaying their products and showcasing their achievements.

What

1. The participating clusters are - Aeronautical Systems, Missiles, Armaments & Combat Engineering, Electronics & Communication Systems, Micro electronics Devices & Computational Systems, Naval Systems & Materials and Life sciences.
2. In the Indoor Pavilion scaled models of LCA-Tejas variants viz., Airforce Mark-1, Medium Weight Fighter, Naval Variants and also Trainer variants are displayed.
3. In addition scaled model of twin engine stealth aircraft namely AMCA (Advance Medium Combat Aircraft) is being displayed with audio-visual effect.
4. DRDO is also showcasing proven expertise in the field of Fighter aircraft Simulators design & development as well 360 degree immersive virtual experience kiosks and both these facilities will offer an insightful experience.
5. In addition DRDO is also displaying demonstrative Virtual Design, Assembly and servicing of LCA Tejas aircraft virtual reality experience centre which will offer near real life experience to the visitors.
6. The outdoor display includes the Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas, Limited Series Production version aircraft and Rustom-2 of 1:1 size.
7. In addition, DRDO is also showcasing models of its proven products as well as futuristic Advanced Fighter aircraft with Stealth features at the Prestigious India Pavilion.
8. Models of missiles developed by DRDO including Astra, QRSAM, MRSAM, Brahmos, will be showcased to emphasize the advances made in missile systems. Besides the Model of the upcoming MWF (Medium Weight Fighter) is being unveiled for the first time.
9. **The highlight of DRDO's participation** at aero show is the aerial display of LCA Tejas by the 45th Squadron and flight display Airborne Early Warning & Control System (AEW&C).
10. As a prelude to Aero India 2019, DRDO in association with the Aeronautical Society of India (AeSI) is organizing the 12th Aero India International Seminar during 18-19 Feb 2019 at Bengaluru.
11. **This year the theme of the seminar is "Emerging Frontiers in Aerospace Technologies". The Seminar is of global importance and provides best exposure to**

all participating professionals by bringing together the best in the field from all over the world.

12. **DRDO's participation in Aero India** - 2019 will definitely provide a platform for collaboration and evolve new opportunities to boost export of indigenous defence products.

MISCELLANEOUS

DIGITAL INDIA AWARDS CONFERRED

The Digital India Awards have been instituted under the ambit of the National Portal of India by National Informatics Centre, MeitY, to promote exemplary initiatives in e-governance using the medium of World Wide Web. **Hon'ble Minister of Electronics&IT, Law & Justice Shri Ravi Shankar Prasad conferred "Digital India Awards 2018" in an exclusive ceremony.** Besides conferring the Digital India Awards, the series of releases for enriching the Digital India vision also took place:

1. Digital India Coffee Table Book - "Towards a New India, Transforming Digital Dream to Reality"
2. Digital India Awards Compendium – A compilation of the exemplary digital initiatives that have been awarded in each of the eight categories for the platinum, gold and silver awards. The compendium also carries a mention of Jury Choice and Special Mention awards.
3. STQC Accessibility Certification Scheme- A scheme to assess and certify websites that migrate to S3WaaS (Secure, Scalable & Sugamya websites) for web content accessibility.
4. Unified Messaging Platform- A platform released by MeitY for secure and efficient Government communications and NIC is the implementing agency for this large deployment. Email and messaging are the backbone of e-governance.
5. Public DNS (Domain Name System) Service- A service being implemented by MeitY and configuration setup to be done by NIC for offering to all citizens
6. Cyber Crisis Management Plan 2019 (CCMP) and Guidance Framework for the CCMP- A framework document for countering Cyber Attacks and Cyber Terrorism and dealing with cyber-related incidents.

35 awards were conferred to teams and individuals in the following categories:

1. Web Ratna - Ministry/Department
2. Exemplary Online Service
3. Best Mobile App
4. Emerging Technology
5. Open Data Champion
6. Web Ratna - State/UT
7. Web Ratna - District
8. Outstanding Digital initiative by Local body
9. Jury Choice Awards
10. Special Mention Award

Digital India Awards shall go a long way in creating a healthy competition for high quality, innovative, universally Accessible & Inclusive Presence of Indian Government in Cyber Space.

List of Winners

Category	Platinum	Gold	Silver
Web Ratna - MINISTRY / DEPT	Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises	Department of Financial Services	Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports
Exemplary Online Service	Government e- Marketplace	Central Board of Secondary Education	Goods and Services Tax
Best Mobile App	eCourts Services	ePathshala	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • T App Folio • Mobile Meeseva App - Andhra Pradesh
Emerging Technology	Rajkot Eyeway Project	Blockchain Implementation in Land Records, Andhra Pradesh	Crop Area Estimation and Loss Assessment for the State of Gujarat
Open Data Champion	Marketing Research and Information Network (AGMARKNET)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Agriculture, Cooperation & Farmers Welfare • Ministry of Drinking water and Sanitation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surat Municipal Corporation • Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion
Web Ratna - STATE / UT	Tripura	Himachal Pradesh	Kerala
Web Ratna - District	Kurukshetra	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vellore • Mahabubnagar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Koraput • East Champan
Outstanding Digital initiative by Local body	Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation	Municipal Corporation, Gurugram	Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai
Jury Choice			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCA21 Application (Ministry of Corporate Affairs) 			

- UMANG - Mobile App

Special Mention

- E-District Project (Meghalaya)
- Andhra Pradesh Real Estate Regulatory Authority
- Arunachal Pradesh in Web Ratna – State / UT (North East)
- South Tripura District Web Ratna – District (North East)

GANDHI PEACE PRIZE PRESENTED

The President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind, presented the Gandhi Peace Prize for the years 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018 in the presence of the Prime Minister and other dignitaries, at a function held at Rashtrapati Bhavan on 26 February 2019. The Gandhi Peace Prize was presented to the Vivekananda Kendra, Kanyakumari for 2015, jointly to the Akshaya Patra Foundation and the Sulabh International for 2016, to the Ekal Abhayan Trust for 2017, and to Shri Yohei Sasakawa for 2018.

What

1. The Vivekananda Centre has promoted self-help, sustainability and development throughout our country, especially in areas populated by tribal communities.
2. It has built capacities in education and health, and in a sensitive and meaningful approach to rural development and harnessing of natural resources.
3. The Akshaya Patra Foundation has advanced education and cognition by working to remove hunger and enhance nutrition. It has leveraged modern technology to provide quality meals to schoolchildren.
4. The Sulabh International and its founder Dr Bindeshwar Pathak were sanitation pioneers, advocating the merits of sanitation and advocating toilets in days and years when not many others were.
5. The Ekal Abhayan Trust is helping 2.2 million children – 52 per cent of them girls – access education. Many of its initiatives benefit tribal communities.
6. Mr Yohei Sasakawa has been instrumental in helping us win crucial battles in the war against leprosy – to prevent and eradicate the disease, and to end stigma and discrimination.

Flashback

1. The International Gandhi Peace Prize, named after Mahatma Gandhi, is awarded annually by the Government of India.
2. As a tribute to the ideals espoused by Gandhi, the Government of India launched the International Gandhi Peace Prize in 1995 on the occasion of the 125th birth anniversary of Mohandas Gandhi.
3. This is an annual award given to individuals and institutions for their contributions towards social, economic and political transformation through non-violence and other Gandhian methods.

TAGORE AWARD FOR CULTURAL HARMONY

The President of India present the Tagore Award for Cultural Harmony to Shri Rajkumar Singhajit Singh; Chhayanaut (a cultural organization of Bangladesh); and Shri Ram Sutar Vanji for the years 2014, 2015 & 2016 respectively on 18.02.2019 at Pravasi Bhartiya Kendra, New Delhi.

What

1. Tagore Award for Cultural Harmony was instituted by the Government of India from 2012 recognizing the contributions made by Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore to humanity at large with his works and ideas, as part of the Commemoration of his 150th Birth Anniversary in 2012, for promoting values of Cultural Harmony.
2. It is awarded annually and carries an amount of Rs. One Crore (convertible to foreign currency), a citation in a Scroll, a Plaque as well as an exquisite traditional handicraft / handloom item.
3. The Award may be divided between two persons / institutions that are considered by the Jury to be equally deserving of recognition in a given year.
4. This annual award is given to individuals, associations, institutions or organizations for their outstanding contribution towards promoting values of Cultural Harmony.
5. The Award is open to all persons regardless of nationality, race, language, caste, creed or gender. Normally, contributions made during ten years immediately preceding the nomination are considered.
6. The First Tagore Award – 2012 was conferred upon Pt. Ravi Shankar, the Indian Sitar Maestro and the Second Award – 2013 was conferred upon Maestro Zubin Mehta.

PM RECEIVES SEOUL PEACE PRIZE FOR 2018

Prime Minister Narendra Modi was conferred the prestigious Seoul Peace Prize for 2018 on 22 February 2019 for his contribution to international cooperation and fostering global economic growth. The award was presented to him by the Seoul Peace Prize Foundation at a grand ceremony. Modi expressed his gratitude for the prestigious honour and said, "This award belongs not to me personally, but to the people of India."

What

1. He dedicated the USD 200,000 prize money to 'Namami Gange Programme', which is flagship programme of his government to accomplish the twin objectives of effective abatement of pollution, conservation and rejuvenation of River Ganga.
2. Modi is the 14th recipient of the award and the past laureates included former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and renowned international relief organizations like Doctors Without Borders and Oxfam.
3. The Seoul Peace Prize was established in 1990 to commemorate the success of the 24th Olympic Games held in Seoul.
4. The award was established to crystallise Korean people's yearning for peace on the Korean peninsula and in the rest of the world.

SHANTI SWARUP BHATNAGAR PRIZE

Several Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) combined won eight awards at the ceremony for the coveted Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Prize for Science and Technology, in New Delhi. Close behind the IITs was the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru (IISc), which won seven prizes at the ceremony. Given out in seven disciplines – Biological, Engineering, Medical, Chemical, Physical, Mathematical, as well as Earth, Atmosphere, Ocean and Planetary Sciences – the awards were given out on February 28, the National Science Day, which marks the 1928 discovery of the Raman

Effect by India's first Nobel Laureate in science, CV Raman.

What

1. In four of the seven categories, the winners were awarded a cash prize and a plaque by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The awards were presented for the years 2016, 2017, and 2018, with a total of 34 winners. A skewed gender-ratio was clearly visible – there was only one woman among the awardees.
2. Aditi Sen, who works with the Harish Chandra Research Institute in Allahabad, was awarded in the physics category **for her work in “quantum information and communication, including the formulation of a computable entanglement measure and a novel density-matrix recursion method”**.
3. Most of the awards for scientists working with the IITs came in the fields of engineering and Mathematics-three in each category. The awards won by IISc **were more evenly spread, with the institute's scientists winning the prize** in the fields of Engineering, Physical Sciences, Biological Sciences, and Chemical Sciences, among others.
4. Others won it for pioneering works that included designing models and algorithms to solve online problems and problems of clustering, scheduling and network design (Amit Kumar of IIT-Delhi), and the development of end-to-end carrier-class networking solutions and carrier Ethernet switch routers used in the national infrastructure (Ashwin Anil Gumatse of IIT-Bombay), and molecular mechanisms for red cell invasion as highly potent targets for malaria vaccine targets (Deepak Gaur of JNU, New Delhi).
5. Some of the other work that was felicitated included research on cancer cells, neuronal physiology, dynamic geological processes, alternate fuels, metamaterials and genome replication.
6. Ganesan Venkatasubramanian, who works with the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences in Bengaluru, received his award on crutches due to a disability in his legs.
7. His work towards the psychiatric disorder schizophrenia that won **Venkatasubramanian his award, for his “outstanding body of clinical research in schizophrenia spanning from pathogenesis to treatment and indigenous device development”**.
8. The Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Prize is among the most sought after multidisciplinary awards in the fields of science and technology in the country, given by the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) since 1958.
9. **Some of India's top scientists, like M S Swaminathan and C N R Rao have been recipients of this award in the past.**

UN APPOINTS INDIAN AS CONTROLLER AND ASG

The UN has appointed an Indian official in one of the top most positions in its Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance. Chandramouli Ramanathan has been appointed as Controller, Assistant Secretary-General for Programme Planning, Budget and Finance in the management strategy, policy and compliance department, UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said. He succeeds Bettina Tucci Bartsiotas of Uruguay.

What

1. Ramanathan brings to the position nearly 40 years of executive international experience in diverse organisational settings in finance and budget, management and information technology.
2. He has proven experience leading complex change management initiatives, including implementation of IPSAS (International Public Sector Accounting Standards), and Umoja (the United Nations Enterprise Resource Planning solution).
3. Ramanathan has served as Acting Controller since September 2018, concurrently with his position as Assistant Secretary-General for Enterprise Resource Planning since 2016.
4. He previously served as Deputy Controller, Director of Accounts Division and Chief of Service, IT Services Division. He also served as Assistant Auditor General, India (1993-1995) and Director of Accounts for the Auditor General of India (1989-1993). **He has a Master's Degree in Economics and is a Cost Accountant.**

NISHAN-E-PAKISTAN CONFERRED

Pakistan on 18 February 2019 conferred its highest civilian award Nishan-e-Pakistan on Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman for his **“outstanding support”** in reinvigorating the ties between the two countries. The award was presented by Pakistan President Arif Alvi at a special ceremony held at the President House in Islamabad.

What

1. According to the citation, the Crown Prince provided “outstanding support for reinvigorating Pak-Saudi bilateral relationship.”
2. The Crown Prince arrived at the President House in traditional Presidential chariot along with Prime Minister Khan. A special contingent of Presidential security guards escorted the chariot.
3. Saudi Arabia and Pakistan have been indispensable partners for a very long time. We have been together for centuries. Our friendship is bound in religion and culture, Mr. Alvi said.

Flashback

1. The Nishan-e-Pakistan is the highest of civil awards and decorations given by the Government of Pakistan for the highest degree of service to the country and nation of Pakistan. The award was established on 19 March 1957.
2. The Nishan-e-Pakistan, unlike other honours, is a highly restricted and most prestigious award and is only conferred for the merit and distinguished services to the country, international community, and foreign relations.

4. The President also hosted a luncheon for the royal guest. A formal meeting was held between the President and the Crown Prince, along with their respective delegations. The two sides expressed desire to further promote and deepen the bilateral ties.
5. Earlier, the Saudi prince also met a joint parliamentary delegation of all parties and discussed various matters of interest.
6. Prince Salman arrived in Pakistan amid heightened security and arrangements in Islamabad and Rawalpindi.

SC APPOINTS OMBUDSMAN OF BCCI

The Supreme Court on 21 February 2019 appointed Justice (retd) DK Jain as the BCCI ombudsman. Justice Jain will look into the Hardik Pandya-KL Rahul talk-show controversy and decide the appropriate punishment as well as look into the disputes between state cricket associations in the Board of Control for Cricket in India.

What

1. Other than deciding the quantum of punishment for the pair, the appointed BCCI ombudsman will also look into allegations of misconduct against BCCI officials. DK Jain, who was the former chairman of National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission, will resume charge as soon as possible.
2. A bench of Justices S A Bobde and A M Sapre also expressed displeasure over differences among BCCI Committee of Administrators and agreed to appoint a 3rd member to CoA, adding that they had a name in mind for the 3rd CoA member.
3. The Court also asked Amicus Curiae Sr Adv P S Narasimha to advise CoA members of which Diana Edulji and Vinod Rai are members, not to fight in open.
4. The previous BCCI ombudsman was Justice (retd.) AP Shah who worked for one season after his appointment in December 2015. The post has been vacant since then and the Committee of Administrators (CoA) had been asking the court for **directions on a new appointment since Justice Shah's departure.**

Flashback

1. The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) is the national governing body for cricket in India.
2. The board was formed in December 1928 as a society, registered under the Tamil Nadu Societies Registration Act.
3. It is a consortium of state cricket associations and the state associations select their representatives who in turn elect the BCCI Chief.
4. It's headquarters are in Wankhede Stadium, Mumbai.

INTERNATIONAL MOTHER LANGUAGE DAY 2019

International Mother Language Day is celebrated every year on February 21 since the year 2000. It was first recognized in November 1999, when the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) brought the subject in the UN General Conference. Later, the resolution was welcomed by the UN General Assembly in 2002. Only 10 Oldest Languages still Spoken in the World Today.

What

1. The history behind Mother Language Day was a language movement was held by the people of Bangladesh (then Pakistan) in 1952 in Dhaka.
2. Post independence, Pakistan government declared Urdu as its national language. However, the idea was not approved by the people living in East Pakistan as their mother language was Bangla. They wanted Bangla to get acceptance as one of the official languages to be spoken and used in their country.
3. On February 21, 1952, students from the University of Dhaka held a massive protest against the decision.
4. In 1956, the government agreed to grant official status to Bangla. Although Bangladesh became independent in 1971, it still celebrates the International Mother Language Day on February 21, observing a national holiday.
5. On 16th May 2007, the United Nations General Assembly in its resolution called upon member states to promote the preservation and protection of all languages used by peoples of the world.

This year, the United Nations is celebrating the International Mother Language Day by asking for a proverb from people across the globe on the following topics:

1. Peace
2. Harmony
3. Conflict resolution/competence to deal with conflict
4. Mindfulness
5. Resilience
6. Well-being.

SAURABH CHAUDHARY WINS GOLD

Teenager Saurabh Chaudhary smashed the world record on his way to a gold medal in the ISSF World Cup in Delhi on 24 February 2019, securing the country's third Tokyo Olympics quota. The 16-year-old claimed the top honours in the men's 10m air pistol event at the season-opening International Shooting Sport Federation event. The Asian Games gold medallist ended the event with a total score of 245.

What

1. Dami Mikec of Serbia was second in the podium with a score of 239.3, while the bronze medal was bagged by Wei Pang of China, who managed 215.2.
2. Such was Saurabh's dominance in the eight-man final that he finished the event 5.7 points ahead of the silver medallist, the gold assured even before his final shot.
3. Saurabh, who started strongly finished, tied on top with Serbian Mikec at the end of the first series.
4. In the second series, the champion shooter continued his good form and finished at the top.
5. Other Indians competing in the event, Abhishek Verma and Ravinder Singh, failed to qualify for the final.
6. Both Abhishek and Ravinder finished with a total score of 576 in the qualification round.

OSCARS 2019

The 91st Academy Awards began in Los Angeles without a host, for the first time. Regina King took home the first award - Best Supporting Actress for her exemplary role in 'If Beale Street Could Talk'. Rami Malek won Best Actor for his performance as Freddie Mercury in 'Bohemian Rhapsody', which also won sound and editing awards. India made headlines too at the ceremony with the Guneet Monga-produced 'Period. End Of Sentence', by winning in the Best Documentary Short category. The film is set in India.

All the winners

1. Best Picture: 'Green Book'
2. Best Director: Alfonso Cuaron for 'Roma'
3. Best Actress: Olivia Colman for 'The Favourite'
4. Best Actor: Rami Malek for the 'Bohemian Rhapsody'
5. Best Supporting Actress: Regina King for 'If Beale Street Could Talk'
6. Best Supporting Actor: Mahershala Ali for 'Green Book'
7. Best Foreign Film: 'Roma' (Mexico)
8. Best Animated Feature Film: 'Spider-Man: Into The Spider-Verse'
9. Best Original Screenplay: 'Green Book'
10. Best Adapted Screenplay: 'BlacKkKlansman'
11. Best Original Score: 'Black Panther'
12. Best Original Song: 'Shallow' from 'A Star Is Born'
13. Best Documentary Feature: 'Free Solo'
14. Best Documentary Short: 'Period. End Of Sentence'
15. Best Live Action Short: 'Skin'
16. Best Animated Short: 'Bao'

Flashback

1. The 91st Academy Awards, presented by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS), honored the best films of 2018.
2. The ceremony was held on February 24, 2019, at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood, Los Angeles, California.
3. AMPAS presented Academy Awards (commonly referred to as Oscars) in 24 categories.
4. The ceremony was televised in the United States by American Broadcasting Company (ABC) and produced by Donna Gigliotti and Glenn Weiss, with Weiss also serving as director.
5. It was the first ceremony in three decades, since the 61st Academy Awards in 1989, to be conducted with no host.

17. Best Cinematography: Alfonso Cuaron for 'Roma'
18. Best Production Design: 'Black Panther'
19. Best Costume Design: 'Black Panther'
20. Best Hair And Makeup: 'Vice'
21. Best Sound Editing: 'Bohemian Rhapsody'
22. Best Sound Mixing: 'Bohemian Rhapsody'
23. Best Visual Effects: 'First Man'

FOUNDATION DAY OF DEPARTMENT OF BIOTECHNOLOGY

Department of Biotechnology in the Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of India, celebrated its 33rd Foundation Day on 26 February 2019 in New Delhi with the theme as "Celebrating Biotechnology: Building Indian as an Innovation Nation". On the occasion Union Minister for Science & Technology, Dr. Harsh Vardhan gave away the Biotechnology Research Innovation and Technology Excellence (BRITE) awards.

What

1. The Union Minister emphasized the role of Department of Biotechnology during the last 33 years in creating a large scale impact across the multiple sectors by development and commercialization of affordable solutions for healthcare, improved crop varieties, animal diagnostics and technology for generation of clean energy.
2. The Minister announced key missions at the foundation day ceremony including Atal JaiAnusandhan Biotech Mission - Undertaking Nationally Relevant Technology Innovation (UNaTI), which is expected to transform Health, Agriculture and Energy sectors during the next 5 years.
3. This mission includes GARBH-ini - A Mission to promote Maternal and Child Health and develop prediction tools for pre-term berth, IndCEPI - A Mission to develop affordable vaccines for endemic diseases, Development of Biofortified and Protein Rich wheat - contributing to POSHAN Abhiyan, Mission on Anti Microbial Resistance for Affordable Diagnostics and Therapeutics and Clean Energy Mission - Innovative Technology interventions for Swachh Bharat.
4. The Department has recently established Skill Development Centers at various institutions and also collaborated with State Council of Science and Technology for implementation of Skill Vigyan programme which aims to provide high quality hands on training in tools and techniques in multidisciplinary area of biotechnology for entry level students.

5. The Science & Technology Minister also highlighted that Discovery research and generation of new knowledge of biological sciences is very important and is fundamental and foundation of innovation and Department's support to competitive R&D activities in biotechnology has resulted in more than 6000 publications.

NEW FINANCIAL BACKER FOR BOOKER PRIZE

Britain's leading literary award, the Booker Prize, found a new financial backer on 28 February 2019 after its sponsor of almost two decades pulled out. Prize trustees said the Crankstart Foundation will become the sponsor in June. The charity was founded by Silicon Valley venture capitalist Michael Moritz and his wife, writer Harriet Heyman.

What

1. Crankstart has committed to funding the Booker Prize for English-language novels and the International Booker Prize for translated works for at least five years.
2. The **prize's previous sponsor, the investment firm Man Group PLC**, announced last month that it was stopping its funding after 18 years.
3. Founded in 1969, the 50,000-pound (\$67,000) Booker Prize was originally open to writers from Britain, Ireland and the Commonwealth.
4. U.S. authors became eligible in 2014, a move that remains contentious.
5. **Anna Burns won the 2018 prize for her novel "Milkman."**