Economy

Automobile

- Termed as the first 'family' car for many, sales of Maruti Suzuki India's (MSIL) Alto crossed the 30-lakh mark. Launched in Sep 2000, the smallest car from the company's stable took about 15 years and six months to achieve this historic figure.

Aviation

- Air India on 7 Mar said it flew the "world's longest" all-women-operated flight from **Delhi to San Francisco**. The flight, which travelled a distance of around 14,500 km in close to 17 hours, was operated as part of International Women's Day (8 Mar) celebrations.

Banking

- The RBI has allowed some of the currently non-recognisable capital on banks' balance sheets to count as capital as per Basel norms.

Highlights

- ❖ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) revised norms on capital recognition, making available an additional **₹40,000 cr** to Indian banks.
- ❖ While calculating the Tier I capital, banks include share capital, share premium and other reserves (excluding revaluation reserves). In case of Tier II capital, provisions or loan-loss reserves which are freely available to meet losses are included.
- ❖ The revaluation reserves at **55 per cent** discount are included for Tier II capital calculation. Revaluation reserves arise from revaluation of assets that are undervalued on the bank's books, typically bank premises.
- ❖ Now, the RBI has allowed revaluation reserves (at 55 per cent discount) to be included in Tier I (CET 1-common equity) capital instead of Tier II.
- ❖ **Tier 1 capital is the core capital and is used to absorb losses. Tier II, on the other hand, is supplementary capital. Thus it is Tier I capital that is a true measure of a bank's financial health.**
- ❖ The move will unlock ₹35,000 cr capital for public sector banks and ₹5,000 cr for private sector banks.
- ❖ RBI said banks can recognise foreign currency reserves arising due to translation of financial statements of foreign operations to the reporting currency as common equity tier-I (CET1) capital.
- ❖ Deferred tax assets arising due to timing differences may be recognised as CET1 capital up to 10 per cent of a bank's CET1 capital.
- ❖ According to the Basel III norms, banks have to maintain **7 per cent** Tier I capital. Including revaluation reserves in Tier I capital can hence shore up banks' capital and help them meet Basel III norms.

- India on 1 Mar signed a loan agreement with multilateral lending agency World Bank for **$300 mn** for **Madhya Pradesh Higher Education Quality Improvement Project**. The objective of the project is to improve student outcomes, especially of disadvantaged groups in selected Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and to increase the effectiveness of the Higher Education System in Madhya Pradesh.

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- The Reserve Bank of India will share foreign direct investment-related information with country's intelligence agencies — **Intelligence Bureau (IB)** and **The Research and Analysis Wing (RAW)** — to check black money from entering the country. The move comes after Cabinet Secretariat — under whose administrative control RAW functions — expressed concern over companies in tax havens investing in the country.

- With public sector banks under pressure to tackle their dismal bad loan scenario, consolidation is the way forward, and this could bring down the number of lenders to about six from the present 27. An expert committee, which will be soon set up to look into the issue, will closely work with the **Banks Board Bureau (BBB)** to identify the right matches for consolidation. The BBB, which will independently oversee consolidation and chalk out business plans for public sector banks, is set to be put in place by Apr 1, 2016 with the former CAG **Vinod Rai** appointed first **Chairman** of the bureau. Since it is not feasible to bring down the govt's share in state-owned banks below 52%, consolidation to create strong banks is the only survival option. The finance ministry is already looking to merge the newly-launched Bharatiya Mahila Bank.

- The second addition of Gyan Sangam, a forum where the highest officials from public sector banks, the govt and the Reserve Bank of India meet to discuss issues facing the sector, ended 5 Mar in **Gurgaon, Haryana** without any policy announcement but with the govt reiterating its commitment to taking more steps to boost the sector.

- Jalandhar-based **Capital Local Area Bank (CLAB)** is set to become India's first small area finance bank (SFB) by flagging off its operations on Apr 13, 2016. CLAB is the first among the 10 applicants to get final licence from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). The lender is currently active as local area bank. The small bank will launch operations under a new name — **Capital Small Finance Bank Limited** – and its launch will coincide with the auspicious festival of Baisakhi (the beginning of rabi harvest that gives a major boost to rural spending) in Punjab. RBI had given its nod for setting up small finance banks on Nov 27, 2014.

- The private lender Yes Bank on 8 Mar launched an all-women-operated bank branch '**Yes Grace**' on Cunningham Road in **Bengaluru** aimed at offering customised banking solutions to women. The new branch, served by eight employees currently and with plans to raise the count to 12, will also drive for financial literacy, family banking, safety and wellness amongst women. Simultaneously, two more all-women bank branches were opened at Kalkaji, New Delhi and Vile Parle (E), Mumbai with plans to open more branches in major cities. The Yes Grace branch is part of a two-pronged approach by Yes Bank to promote women leadership in financial services sector and enable the evolving financial objectives of women.

- The **Japanese** investment bank SoftBank Group Corp has announced a major reorganisation of its businesses. The firm has said that it would separate its profitable domestic mobile business from its global business. SoftBank's President **Nikesh Arora** will now head the overseas management company whose holdings also include a 32 per cent share of Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba Group Holding Ltd and a range of other Internet and technology firms. SoftBank's Japanese telecom business and shares in domestic Internet firms such as Yahoo Japan will be managed by a separate company led by Ken Miyauchi, who now heads SoftBank's Japanese mobile operations. The company has been betting big in the Indian start-up ecosystem over the last two years, investing in companies like Oyo Rooms, Housing.com, Ola and Snapdeal among others.

- In order to enhance economic cooperation and strengthen financial stability, RBI has extended the $2-bn currency swap arrangement to SAARC nations till mid-Nov 2017. Under the arrangement, RBI is to offer swap arrangement up to an overall amount of $2 bn both in foreign currency and Indian rupee. The SAARC Swap Arrangement was offered by the RBI to SAARC nations on Nov 15, 2012. The facility will be available to all SAARC member countries — **Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan** and **Sri Lanka**. The swap amount available to various member central banks has been arrived at broadly based on two months' import cover subject to a floor of $100 mn and a maximum of $400 mn per country.

- The country's largest lender SBI on 26 Feb said it has got shareholders' approval to raise up to **₹15,000 cr** by public issue or overseas issuance of shares. The issue will be subject to the condition that the Govt shareholding in the bank's equity share capital does not fall below **52 per cent** at any point of time. The money can be raised by either of the ways including public issue, rights issue or private placement, such as qualified institutional

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placement (QIP) or Global Depository Receipt (GDR) or American Depository Receipt (ADR) or any other mode or a combination, as may be decided by the Board. The fund to be raised will help the bank to meet global risk norms under Basel III, which the banks needs to be fully compliant with by Mar 2019.

- The public sector lender State Bank of India (SBI) has launched SBI e-Smart SME to provide a working capital loan for sellers on ecommerce platforms. It was launched by SBI in partnership with ecommerce platform **Snapdeal** in the presence of bank's chairman **Arundhati Bhattacharya** and Snapdeal CEO **Kunal Bahl**.
- The state-owned IDBI Bank has received market regulator Sebi's approval to raise **₹3,771 cr** through issue of shares through **qualified institutional placement (QIP),** a move which would dilute the govt's holding significantly in the lender. The govt holding in the bank stands at **80.16 per cent**. Its current market capitalisation stood at ₹10,583.30 cr. As per the existing norms, govt equity in a public sector bank cannot go below **52 per cent** to maintain the public sector character of state-owned banks.
- The **State Bank of India** is among the four new foreign banks that have been given preliminary approval to open 100 per cent-owned branches in Myanmar, the latest move by the Southeast Asian nation to woo investment to the country long ruled by the military and hit by Western sanctions. The other three new banks that have been given initial approval by the Central Bank of Myanmar are Vietnam's Bank for Investment and Development, Taiwan's E.SUN Commercial Bank and South Korea's Shinhan Bank.
- The ICICI Bank on 7 Mar announced the launch of a work-from-home programme to prevent **women employees** from dropping out of its workforce. The programme **iWork@home** will enable employees to work from home for a long period of time, starting from up to a year, initially.
- The SWIFT India Domestic Services on 3 Mar said it had rolled out services to provide harmonised exchange of structured financial information between banks, the Reserve Bank of India, stock exchanges, clearing houses, corporations, and their customers.
- In the run-up to the next BRICS Summit to be held in New Delhi this year, Yes Bank on 11 Mar inked a pact with the India Brazil Chamber of Commerce for cooperation in knowledge sharing, consultancy, skill and technology.
- The India Post has selected Deloitte to advise it on setting up a payments bank and an agreement between the two was signed on Mar 14. The **Public Investment Board** has already approved the **₹800-cr** proposal of India Post. India Post payments bank will primarily target unbanked and under-banked customers in rural, semi-rural and remote areas, with a focus on providing simple deposit products and money remittance services.
- The State Bank of India on 14 Mar released arrears worth ₹1,465 cr to 7.75 lakh defence pensioners under One Rank One Pension (OROP) scheme.
- The savings bank depositors will now earn slightly better returns on their savings bank (SB) deposits as the Reserve Bank of India has mandated that banks should credit interest on savings deposit at **quarterly or shorter intervals**. In the absence of any regulation on interest application frequency, till now most of the banks were paying interest on the SB deposits accounting for more than a quarter of the total deposit pie, at an interval of six months. Under the prevailing SB interest of **4 per cent** per annum, the new regulation would benefit the SB depositors to the tune of ₹500 cr or more from the next financial year. For loans taken from the banks, the interest is computed at monthly rates.
- The country's largest private sector lender ICICI Bank on 10 Mar launched a credit-linked subsidy scheme for home loans under **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY)**. Under this scheme, individuals' including women borrowers from the economically weaker sections and low-income groups, will be able to acquire and construct the first brick-and-mortar house of the family by paying significantly lower equated monthly instalments (EMIs). ICICI Bank has signed an MoU with **National Housing Bank (NHB)** to facilitate credit-linked subsidy to eligible borrowers. Under the scheme, an eligible customer will get a subsidy at 6.5 per cent per annum on a maximum amount of ₹6 lakh or the loan amount, whichever is lower, for a maximum tenure of 15 years. The subsidy is computed on the net present value method.
- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on 3 Mar released a draft regulatory framework to allow the entry of a new kind of non-banking finance company (NBFC) that can act as an account aggregator.

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- India's leading online marketplace Flipkart has silently launched its wallet – **Flipkart Money** – powered by payments firm FX Mart on its Android app.

Capital Market

- The **International Finance Corporation (IFC)** on 1 Mar launched its first **Uridashi Masala Bonds (Japanese bonds)** to mobilise ₹30 cr from Japanese retail investors. The proceeds will be used for promoting private sector development in India.
- Cracking a whip on 'wilful defaulters', market regulator Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) has decided to bar them from raising public funds through stocks and bonds, and also from taking board positions at listed companies. Sebi has also decided to bar such defaulters from setting up market intermediaries such as mutual funds and brokerage firms. These defaulters would also not be allowed to take control of any other listed company. Under the existing framework, a wilful defaulter was allowed to come out with an initial public offering (IPO) merely by making adequate disclosures in the offer document.

Wilful defaulter

- ❖ Deliberate non-payment of dues despite adequate cash flow and net worth
- ❖ Siphoning of funds to the detriment of the defaulting unit
- ❖ Assets financed either not bought; or sold and proceeds wrongly utilised
- ❖ Fraudulent transactions by the borrower
- ❖ Disposal/removal of securities without bank's knowledge
- ❖ Misrepresentation/falsification of records

- The market regulator Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) on 12 Mar said it had given its in-principle nod for BSE to list itself on a bourse. **Currently, Multi Commodity Exchange of India Ltd (MCX) is the only listed exchange in the country**.

Corporate

- UltraTech Limited has agreed to acquire Jaypee Group's 22.4 mn tonnes of cement capacity assets for ₹16,500 cr, making it the largest deal in the Indian cement sector.
- The London-listed Vedanta Resources Inc bagged a gold mine in **Chhattisgarh** that was put up for auction by the state govt. The company quoted the highest price to get the **Baghmara (Sonakhan) gold mine**, which became **country's first mine** carrying the yellow metal **to be auctioned**.
- Flipkart has launched its **Brand Story Ads** on the mobile app with over 50 leading brands on board. Brands including Yes Bank, L'Oreal, Micromax, Intel, Gillette, Datsun and Sony have already signed up on the platform to launch their ad campaigns.
- Ajanta Pharma has received final approval for its generic version of acute migraine pain relief drug **almotriptan malate** tablets from the US health regulator.
- Digital payments platform FreeCharge has partnered with Mexico-based chain of movie theatres, Cinepolis, that aims to provide its customers an easy-to-use and secure way of making payments.

Energy

- India has been ranked at the 90th place in a list of 126 countries compiled by **World Economic Forum (WEF)** on the basis of their ability to deliver secure, affordable and sustainable energy.
- Taking up some long-pending issues in the oil and gas space, the govt on 10 Mar approved a new policy for their exploration, and defined the pricing norms for existing and new discoveries made in difficult areas. Contracts for 28 old blocks were also extended.

FDI

- With the govt taking steps to improve ease of doing business and attract foreign investment foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows into the services sector grew by 85.5 per cent in Apr-Dec period. The sector, which includes banking, insurance, outsourcing, R&D, courier and technology testing, had received FDI worth $2.29 bn during Apr-Dec 2014, according to the **Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP)**. The services sector contributes over **60 per cent** to Indian GDP. FDI in the sector accounts for 17 per cent of the country's total foreign investment inflows. The other sectors where inflows have recorded growth are: computer software and hardware ($5.3 bn), trading ($2.71 bn), automobile ($1.78 bn) and chemicals ($1.19 bn).

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Power

- Bajaj Power Generation Company has signed an agreement with the Indian Railways for electrification of the **Lalitpur-Udaipura** rail section under public private partnership (PPP). The Railways would complete the electrification work in a year's time under its customer funding scheme, which would cost nearly ₹47 cr.
- A unit of the **Kakrapar Atomic Power Station** in Gujarat had to be shut down after a leakage was reported on 11 Mar morning. The leakage was reported in the primary heat transport system of the power plant. No nuclear radiation has been reported.

PSUs

- An agreement to release ₹1000 cr to the **Fertilizers and Chemicals Travancore Limited (FACT)**, a Central Public Sector Undertaking, for its revival was signed on 3 Mar. FACT, due to various reasons, had fallen sick and its revival has been one of the priority item on the Govt's agenda. It is one of the oldest fertilizer companies of the country and provides employment to over 2,700 persons directly or indirectly.
- BEML Limited has bagged a ₹900-cr order for the supply of Metro coaches to Kolkata East-West Metro Line. BEML forayed into manufacture and supply of Metro Cars during 2002 and is the reliable 'Make in India' partner in Metro Rolling Stock, having supplied so far over 700 metro cars to Delhi Metro Rail Corporation.

Taxation

- To reduce grievances of tax payers, the revenue department has set up a dedicated structure for delivery and monitoring of taxpayer services. The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) Member (Revenue and Tax Payer Services) will oversee the related services in CBDT.
- The Finance Minister Arun Jaitley on 8 Mar announced he was withdrawing a controversial Budget proposal **to tax 60% of EPF balances at the time of withdrawal**. He also withdrew another proposal to tax contribution made by an employer beyond ₹1.5 lakh a year. However, the proposal to not tax 40 per cent of money withdrawn from national pension system stays. Both Jaitley and Revenue Secretary Hasmukh Adhia had positioned the tax as a way of getting individuals to invest in annuity schemes that would then act as a pension plan and social security net for their retirement.

Telecom

- The state-run telecom services provider Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) on 9 Mar signed an agreement with DTH operator Tata Sky to offer video-on-demand. As an initial incentive to customers, BSNL is offering free first month broadband rental and Tata Sky will be offering video-on-demand services free for the first month to download content worth up to ₹500.

Others

- The retirement fund body **Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO)** has tightened norms on withdrawal of provident fund as well as investment of such amount in *Varishtha Pension Bima Yojana* for its over five cr subscribers.

Abbreviations

- **QIP**: Qualified Institutional Placement
- **EPFO**: Employees' Provident Fund Organisation
- **MUDRA**: Micro Units Development and Refinance Agency
- **GDR**: Global Depository Receipt
- **ADR**: American Depository Receipt
- **IFC**: International Finance Corporation
- **WEF**: World Economic Forum
- **SWIFT**: Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication
- **DIPP**: Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion
- **DRT**: Debt Recovery Tribunal
- **BBB**: Banks Board Bureau
- **RAW**: Research and Analysis Wing
- **FIPB**: Foreign Investment Promotion Board
- **TARC**: Tax Administration Reforms Commission
- **USFDA**: US Food and Drug Administration
- **IPO**: Initial Public Offering
- **SECC**: Stock Exchanges and Clearing Corporation
- **CSO**: Central Statistics Office
- **AIM**: Atal Innovation Mission
- **SETU**: Self Employment and Talent Utilisation
- **IRNSS**: Independent Regional Navigation Satellite System
- **BIMSTEC**: Bay of Bengal Initiative on Multi Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation

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- Bullish on India, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has projected a robust growth rate of 7.3 per cent for the country in 2015-16, picking up to **7.5 per cent in 2016-17**.
- Fitch Ratings on 7 Mar lowered India's economic growth forecast for 2016-17 to **7.7 per cent**, but maintained the GDP projection for 2015-16 at 7.5 per cent. Fitch, in Dec 2015, forecast an 8 per cent GDP growth in 2016-17 supported by the govt's beefed-up capex spending and gradual implementation of a broad-based structural reform agenda.
- More than 30 industries that have zero-pollution load have been exempted from taking environmental clearance even as the Centre on 5 Mar released a new four-colour classification scheme for industries based on their pollution potential. The scheme classifies companies as follows:
  - ❖ Industries which pollute the most have been put in the **red** category
  - ❖ The moderately polluting units are classified **orange**.
  - ❖ Industries that have a significantly low pollution load have been placed in the **green** category
  - ❖ Those that operate without causing any pollution have been categorised as **white**.
- The Consumer Price Index-based (CPI) inflation for the month of Feb contracted to the lowest in three months at **5.18%**, compared with 5.59% in Jan and 5.37% in Feb last year, on back of a sharp decline in food prices, data released by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) showed on 14 Mar. The CPI inflation for Jan was the highest in 17 months, raising the prospect of a delay in any further interest rate cut by RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan.

Nation

Centre

- The Union Minister for Women and Child Development **Maneka Sanjay Gandhi** on 7 Mar launched Mahila e-Haat portal in New Delhi which is an online marketing platform. It will provide access to markets to thousands of women who make products and are spread all over the country.
- President Pranab Mukherjee on 5 Mar inaugurated a national conference on '**Women Legislators: Building Resurgent India'** in New Delhi. The conference, which intended to hone the skills of legislators to perform their legislative and non-legislative roles with greater effectiveness.
- Technology seems to be the latest mantra in the Indian Railways, with the national transporter set to create a special unit for conducting in-house research. Named **Special Railway Establishment for Strategic Technology and Holistic Advancement (Srestha)**, the new entity will comprise mostly scientists and railway experts.
- Paving the way for granting of ST status to six OBC communities in **Assam**, the Centre on 1 Mar set up a committee to recommend the modalities for completing the process. The committee, to be headed by Special Secretary (Internal Security) in the Home Ministry **Mahesh Kumar Singla**, will consult the Assam govt and suggest the modalities for the required reservations and shifting the existing reservation for these communities from OBC to ST.
- The Centre on 24 Feb approved a proposal to establish **Atal Innovation Mission (AIM)** and **Self Employment and Talent Utilisation (SETU)** in NITI Aayog, which will encourage innovations and entrepreneurship. The AIM mission would be a focal point for innovation and entrepreneurship in the country.
- The govt has cancelled the contract for the ₹10,050-cr ($1.5-bn) Zojila Pass Tunnel Building Project, India's most expensive and biggest national highway (NH) project, after Opposition parties alleged irregularities in bidding.
- The govt has proposed to constitute a 10-member committee of Kashmiri Pandits (KPs) to monitor implementation of rehabilitation packages for the displaced community. The panel, according to a proposal of the Union Home Ministry, includes representatives of migrant camps from *Muthi* and *Pukhroo*. The proposal has been sent to govts of Jammu and Kashmir and Delhi, asking them to consult various associations of Kashmiri

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migrants and offer inputs in the matter at the earliest.

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 4 Mar launched an ambitious **₹50,800-cr** Setu Bharatam project to ensure highways without railway crossings by **2019** and overhaul of 1,500 British-era bridges. Under the Setu Bharatam project, a total of 208 railway crossings will be replaced by rail over bridges (ROBs) by 2019 at an estimated cost of ₹20,800 cr while 1,500 bridges of the British era will be overhauled at an estimated expenditure of ₹30,000 cr across the country.
- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has approved **Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana** – a scheme for providing free LPG connections to Women from BPL Households.

Highlights

- ❖ Under the scheme, **₹8000 cr** has been earmarked for providing five crore LPG connections to BPL households.
- ❖ The Scheme provides a financial support of ₹1600 for each LPG connection to the BPL households.
- ❖ The identification of eligible BPL families will be made in consultation with the State Govts and the Union Territories.
- ❖ This Scheme would be implemented over three years, namely, the FY 2016-17, 2017-18 and 2018-19.
- ❖ According to WHO estimates, about 5 lakh deaths in India occurred due to unclean cooking fuels.
- ❖ In this direction, Finance Minister in Budget speech on 29.2.2016 had announced a budgetary provision of ₹2000 crore for 2016-17 to provide deposit-free LPG connections to 1.5 crore women.

- Germany on 7 Mar announced that it would support the govt's 'Smart Cities' programme by taking up projects in **Bhubaneswar, Kochi** and **Coimbatore**.
- Indian Railways has appointed global consultancy firm Ernst &Young (EY) to help the utility mop up advertising revenues worth over ₹5,000 cr in the next few years. The move is aimed at initiating a large-scale significant exercise to identify and leverage pan-India advertising opportunities at railway stations and trains.
- The Union Govt has set up a high-level committee to look into the issue of missing files related to **2004 Ishrat Jahan encounter** case. The committee headed by an Additional Secretary in the Home Ministry will see how the draft of the second affidavit filed in the case went missing.
- Total fund mobilised under Swachh Bharat Kosh (SBK) as on Jan 31, 2016 stood at ₹369.74 cr. Since inception, donations received from corporates are ₹365 cr and from individual are ₹5.95 lakh. So far, proposal for ₹405.51 cr have been received for construction of toilets against which funds to the extent of ₹359 cr have been released to various state-level implementing agencies from Dec 2014 to Jan 2016.
- In a significant move ensuring safety and efficacy of medicines, the health ministry has banned around 350 **fixed dose combination (FDC)** drugs that were widely available in the market till now. These medicines include FDCs based on codeine, used in popular cough syrups like Phensedyl and Corex.
- President Pranab Mukherjee on 12 Mar inaugurated the Festival of Innovations at the Rashtrapati Bhavan. The week-long festival was organised by Rashtrapati Bhavan in collaboration with the National Innovation Foundation. A total of 65 grassroots innovations were part of the festival.

Important Days

- **03 Mar**: National Defence Day; World Wildlife Day
- **04 Mar**: National Security Day
- **08 Mar**: International Women's Day
- **09 Mar**: CISF Raising Day
- **10 Mar**: World Kidney Day (second Thursday of Mar)
- **12 Mar**: Mauritius Day
- **15 Mar**: World Consumer Rights Day
- **20 Mar**: International Day of Happiness; World Sparrow Day
- **21 Mar**: World Forestry Day; World Poetry Day; International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination; International Day of Nowruz; World Down Syndrome Day; International Day of Forests
- **22 Mar**: World Water Day
- **23 Mar**: World Meteorological Day
- **24 Mar**: World Tuberculosis Day; International Day for the Right to the Truth Concerning Gross Human Rights Violations and for the Dignity of Victims
- **25 Mar**: International Day of Remembrance for the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade; International Day of Solidarity with Detained and Missing Staff Members
- **26 Mar**: Bangladesh Liberation Day

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- Piyush Goyal, Union Minister of State (IC) for Power, Coal and New & Renewable Energy on 11 Mar announced the name 'UJALA' for the LED-based **Domestic Efficient Lighting Programme (DELP)**, which is currently running successfully in over 120 cities across India. UJALA, an acronym for **Unnat Jyoti by Affordable LEDs for All**, is being implemented by Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL).
- Project Mausam is the initiative of the **Ministry of Culture** which is to be implemented by the **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)** as the nodal agency with research support of the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) and National Museum as associate bodies. This project aims to explore the multi-faceted Indian Ocean world collating archaeological and historical research in order to document the diversity of cultural, commercial and religious interactions in the Indian Ocean extending from East Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, the Indian Subcontinent and Sri Lanka to the Southeast Asian archipelago.
- The Union Cabinet has given its approval for signing and ratification of the **Bay of Bengal Initiative on Multi Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)** Convention on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters. The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has been designated as the Central Authority under Article 15 of the Convention.
- The Union Cabinet has given its approval for the MoU between India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on Technical Cooperation in Cyber Space and Combating Cyber-Crime. It was signed between both countries in Feb 2016 to cooperate in combating cybercrime in the wake of the serious security threat posed by it to safety of people.
- The 91-year-old Sikh Gurdwaras Act will soon be amended to exclude **Sahajdhari Sikhs** from voting in the elections to Sikh religious bodies.

States

- President Pranab Mukherjee launched the Digital Empowerment Campaign and declared Kerala a digital state during his visit to the state recently. By virtue of its proactive policies and initiatives, Kerala has emerged as the first e-literate state. **Akshaya** and **IT@School** projects, both launched in 2002, were landmark initiatives in digital literacy in the state.
- The Govt of Kerala has taken first-of-its-kind initiative by launching the Air Ambulance in the state. It will exclusively be used for speedy organ transplant.
- Delhi has become the first state in the country to launch the **Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine** as a public health programme for school children.
- Telangana and Maharashtra gov on 8 Mar signed Memoranda of Understanding to construct five barrages across **Godavari** and **Pen Ganga** rivers. A high-level meeting to sign the MoUs was held in Mumbai in which Telangana Chief Minister **K Chandrasekhara Rao** and Maharashtra Chief Minister **Devendra Fadnavis** took part.
- Justice Vishnu Sahai inquiry commission on the **Muzaffarnagar riots** has given a clean chit to the Uttar Pradesh govt in the 2013 riots, in which more than 60 people were killed and over 50,000 displaced. The report, tabled in the state Assembly on 6 Mar, blamed local officials for mishandling the situation which aggravated the riots.
- The Karnataka govt launched a scheme to provide immediate cashless treatment to accident victims on Mar 8. The accident victims will be provided immediate treatment of up to **₹25,000** in the first 48 hours under this scheme.
- A sum of ₹100 cr towards welfare of Brahmins has been allocated in the **Telangana** Budget 2016-17. The State Govt will "work out the modalities for the welfare of Brahmins and decide on the action plan," Finance Minister Eatala Rajender said in his Budget speech on 14 Mar. Noting that Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao has decided to allocate a budget of ₹100 cr, the Finance Minister said the fund for the purpose would be known as '**Brahmin Samkshema Nidhi**'.

Bills

- A bill that would enhance compensation for air travellers in case of death, injury, lost baggage or even inordinate delay in flights, was passed by the Rajya Sabha on 2 Mar. The Carriage by Air (Amendment) Bill, 2015, was passed by the Upper House with changes. It was cleared by the Lok Sabha in Dec 2015.
- The Rajya Sabha passed a landmark Real Estate Bill on 10 Mar with a promise to secure the interests of homebuyers and developers in equal measure and remove corruption and inefficiency from the sector.

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Highlights

- Real estate contributes **nine per cent to the national GDP** and the Bill's passage was seen as crucial to ensure better regulatory oversight and orderly growth in the industry.
- An equal rate of interest has to be paid by promoters and buyers in case of default or delays.
- All projects will have to be registered with regulatory authorities, and developers will have to disclose project information including details of the promoter, project, layout plan, land status, status of approvals and agreements along with details of real estate agents, contractors, architects and structural engineers.
- There will be no discrmination of any kind on the basis of religion, region, caste, creed or sex and gender.
- Builders will have to deposit a minimum of 70% collections from buyers in an escrow account to cover cost of construction and land.
- State-level Real Estate Regulatory Authorities will be established to regulate transactions related to both residential and commercial projects and ensure their timely completion and handover.
- No pre-launch will be allowed without getting all approvals from the local authorities and without obtaining registration from the regulator.
- All incomplete projects are to come under the regulation.
- The bill covers any project that is more than 500 sq m or has more than eight apartments (states can lower this requirement further).
- Builders can no longer go scot-free by putting up flashy designs or photographs of a project to attract buyers and failing to deliver projects that match the pictorial claims.
- The bill states the builder has to return the payment with interest to buyers who are affected by such "incorrect, fast statements contained in the notice, advertisement or prospectus or the model apartment, plot or building as the case may be".
- It provides for imprisonment of up to three years for promoters and up to one year for real estate agents and buyers and/or monetary penalties if they violate orders of appellate tribunals.
- The authority can even order "compensation" to consumers in case of misleading advertisements.
- In addition, developers will have to provide brief details of projects launched in the past five years, both completed or under-construction, and the current status of the projects.

- The National Waterways Bill aimed at unleashing the navigation potential of India's larger riverways resources was cleared by the Rajya Sabha recently. The Lok Sabha had passed the Bill earlier. As part of this Bill, under entry 24 of the Union List of the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution, the Union govt can make laws on shipping and navigation on inland waterways that are classified as national waterways.

- The Parliament has passed the Bureau of Indian Standards Bill 2015 with the Rajya Sabha approving it on 8 Mar. The Bill was passed by the Lok Sabha in the last session. The Bill extends the ambit of the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) to include services, processes and products while ensuring production of world-class goods.

Defence

- The fifth edition of the trilateral naval exercise between **Brazil, India and South Africa** named IBSAMAR 2016 was held in **Goa**. This is the for the first time the exercise has been held in India as all the previous editions were held in South Africa since it began in 2006.

- The seventh Indo-Seychelles joint training exercises, aiming to improve interoperability between both armies in counter-insurgency operations, concluded on 29 Feb at **Victoria**, Mahe Island in Seychelles. An Indian contingent comprising an infantry platoon and representatives from the special forces attended the exercise, **Ex Lamitye 2016**.

- The field training phase of Exercise 'FORCE 18', the largest-ever foreign military exercise hosted by India, ended on 7 Mar in **Pune**. Ten members of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) plus eight observer states – India, Japan, South Korea, China, Russia, United States, Australia and New Zealand — participated in the exercise.

- Ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Israel later this year, a first by an Indian Prime Minister, the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) has cleared the purchase of additional surveillance aircraft from the country. The CCS chaired by Modi on 1 Mar cleared the proposal to acquire two more **Phalcon Airborne Early Warning and Control Systems (AWACS)** at a cost of ₹7,500 cr under a tripartite agreement with Israel and

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Russia.

- India, on 14 Mar, successfully test-fired its indigenously built nuclear-capable intermediate range Agni-I ballistic missile, capable of hitting a target 700 km away, from a test range off Odisha coast as part of a user trial by the Army. The surface-to-surface, single-stage missile, powered by solid propellants, was test-fired from a mobile launcher at the Integrated Test Range (ITR) at Abdul Kalam Island (Wheeler Island).
- After successful completion of basic-performance flight testing and outstation trials for cold weather, hot weather and hot and high altitude testing in the year 2015, the **Light Combat Helicopter (LCH)** has achieved yet another milestone by satisfactory firing of Rockets (70 mm) from its prototype.

Judiciary

- The Supreme Court on 2 Mar cleared the decks for the issuance of dance bar licences to hotels and restaurants in Mumbai as it modified the conditions for the permit and excluded installation of CCTV from restaurants and dance performance place.
- The Allahabad High Court celebrated 150 years of existence recently. President Pranab Mukherjee was in Allahabad to attend the celebrations. He released postal stamps bearing images of the High Court and its bench at Lucknow, besides the 10-rupee coin, on Mar 13 at a function which was also attended by Chief Justice of India **TS Thakur**, Union Law Minister Sadananda Gowda and a number of other judges of Supreme Court and Chief Justices of other High Courts. The celebrations took place from Mar 13 to 17.

Others

- The Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) is working for establishment of a Satellite Tracking & Data Reception Station and Data Processing Facility for Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) member countries in Vietnam.
- The Indian space agency ISRO on 10 Mar successfully put into orbit India's sixth dedicated navigation satellite, the IRNSS-1F from Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota.

Highlights

- ❖ The satellite was launched on-board India's workhorse launch vehicle, the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV).
- ❖ The **Independent Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS)** is designed to provide accurate position information service to users in India and the region extending up to 1,500 km from the border.
- ❖ This system aims at developing an independent regional navigation satellite system for India just like America's reliable Global Positioning System (GPS).
- ❖ The IRNSS-1F is the sixth navigation satellite in the IRNSS system, which comprises total seven satellites, three in Geostationary Earth Orbit and four in Geosynchronous orbit.
- ❖ The first five satellites of the series, namely IRNSS-1A, 1B, 1C, 1D and 1E, were launched in Jul 2013, Apr 2014, Oct 2014, Mar 2015 and Jan 2016 respectively.
- ❖ The seventh and last satellite in this series is expected to be launched in the second half of the year and will help in providing accurate positional information to the Indian users.
- ❖ Along with the navigation payload and ranging payload, the satellite also carries a "highly accurate Rubidium atomic clock" with it.

- India will launch 25 foreign satellites belonging to seven countries, with the USA topping the list in 2016-17. Jitendra Singh, Minister of State in Prime Minister's Office (PMO) which looks after the department of space, said till date 57 foreign satellites from 21 countries had been launched using the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV). Antrix – the commercial arm of ISRO – has signed agreements with Algeria and Canada for launching three satellites each, four for Germany, one each for Japan and Malaysia and 12 for the USA in 2016-17. In the last three years, from Jan 2013 till Dec 2015, Isro launched 28 foreign satellites belonging to 13 countries, with Singapore, the United Kingdom and the USA topping the list. ISRO earned 80 mn euros for the launch.

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World

- India and a consortium of top UK research institutions, including the Cambridge University, have signed an MoU to conduct a research programme in the field of crop science to help tackle global challenges in the areas of food security, crop science and biotechnology.
- India on 24 Feb approved a $150-mn credit line for the development of Iran's Chabahar port. The port in **southeast Iran** is central to New Delhi's efforts to circumvent arch-rival Pakistan and open up a route to landlocked Afghanistan, where it has developed close security ties and economic interests.
- Maldives govt has established a counter-terrorism centre to combat growing radicalisation and support to the ISIS in the country. The **National Counter Terrorism Centre** will act as the focal point on all counter-terrorism efforts and will formulate guidelines and procedures based on international benchmarks.
- The Peruvian govt declared a state of emergency in **Morona**, a district in the Amazonian region of Loreto, due to environmental damage caused by an oil spill from the country's main pipe line.
- South Korea's parliament on 2 Mar passed the country's first anti-terror bill, ending the nine-day marathon speeches. The bill, which was first brought up in South Korea in 2001 after the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the US, had repeatedly failed to be enacted due to worries about abuse of power by the country's spy agency.
- The UN Security Council on 2 Mar unanimously approved the toughest sanctions on North Korea in two decades, reflecting growing anger at Pyongyang's latest nuclear test and rocket launch in defiance of a ban on all nuclear-related activity. The United States and China, North Korea's traditional ally, spent seven weeks negotiating the new sanctions, which include **mandatory inspections of cargo** leaving and entering North Korea by land, sea or air; **a ban on all sales or transfers of small arms and light weapons** to Pyongyang; and **expulsion of diplomats** from the North who engage in "illicit activities."
- Islam could be dropped as Bangladesh's official religion following a number of attacks in the country against people of other faiths. Christians, Hindus and Muslim minority Shiites have recently faced attacks that are believed to have been carried out by Islamic extremists. The country's Supreme Court is currently hearing arguments in favour of removing Islam as the official religion of Bangladesh.
- At the annual session of the National People's Congress, China announced its aim to keep its economy growing by at least 6**.5 per cent** over the next five years while pushing hard to create more jobs and restructure inefficient industries.
- India has filed a complaint in the World Trade Organization (WTO) against the **US decision to impose high fees on temporary working visas**, a move that makes Indian IT companies less competitive in that market.
- Myanmar has granted operating licenses to four Asian banks, bringing to 13 the number of foreign banks allowed to conduct business in the previously isolated country. Bank for Investment and Development of Vietnam, **State Bank of India**, Taiwan's Sun Commercial Bank and South Korea's Shinhan Bank were granted preliminary licenses, Myanmar's Foreign Bank Licensing Committee said in a statement on 6 Mar.
- The US and South Korean troops on 7 Mar began their largest-ever military exercises off the coast of the Korean peninsula. The bilateral exercises come just days after the UN passed new sanctions against Pyongyang, North Korea, following its recent nuclear test and rocket launch.
- Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) test-fired several ballistic missiles on 8 Mar, challenging a United Nations resolution and drawing a threat of a diplomatic response from the United States. Two months ago, Washington imposed sanctions against businesses and individuals linked to Iran's missile programme over a test of the medium-range **Emad** missile carried out in Oct 2015.
- The annual growth rate of atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO_2) jumped by **3.05 parts per mn (ppm)** during 2015, the largest year-on-year increase in 56 years, according to US scientists.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi delivered the keynote address at a conference on Asia that took stock of the strong economic performance and policy challenges of the region. The three-day conference began on Mar 11 and was jointly organised by International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Indian govt. IMF Managing Director

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Christine Lagarde also was a keynote speaker at the conference named "Advancing Asia: Investing for the Future" held in New Delhi.

- The **Arab League** has declared **Lebanese** movement Hezbollah a terrorist group only days after the Gulf Cooperation Council adopted the same stance. The move came during the Arab League Foreign Ministers' meeting at the organisation's seat in Egypt's capital **Cairo** on 11 Mar.
- India will supply 18 Meter Gauge 1350 HP Diesel Electric Locomotives to Myanmar to augment locomotive fleet of Myanmar Railways to meet increasing demand for passenger and freight traffic.
- China's Supreme Court has decided to set up its own **International Maritime Judicial Centre (IMJC)** to handle territorial disputes and protect its sea rights.
- India Inc on 12 Mar 2016 formally adopted the United Nations' (UN) agenda for the world's sustainable development and the 17 goals identified for its implementation in Mumbai.

17 Sustainable Development Goals

1. No Poverty
2. Zero Hunger
3. Good Health and Well-Being
4. Quality Education
5. Gender Equality
6. Clean Water and Sanitation
7. Affordable and Clean Energy
8. Decent Work and Economic Growth
9. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
10. Required Inequalities
11. Sustainable Cities and Communities
12. Responsible Consumption and Production
13. Climate Action
14. Life Below Water
15. Life on Land
16. Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions
17. Partnerships for the Goals

- Venezuela President **Nicolas Maduro** on 14 Mar declared a two-month extension on emergency powers meant to help shore up the country's crippled economy. The declaration will bestow more time on the govt to intervene in the market, boost productivity and redress a flagging financial sector. It will also allow the govt to take more anti-crisis measures to reduce fiscal moratorium and to tap up funds from the 2015 budget to address short-term social needs. **Venezuela has the biggest known oil reserves in the world** but has suffered from the plunge in world oil prices since mid-2014. The official inflation rate topped 180 per cent in 2015, which is one of the highest in the world.

Person

Appointed

- **MS Dhoni**: The Sun Pharmaceuticals has named the Indian cricket team captain the **brand ambassador** of its health supplement brand **Revital H**.
- **MK Sharma**: The Diageo-controlled United Spirits (USL) on 26 Feb appointed him as its new **chairman**, a day after the embattled liquor baron Vijay Mallya resigned from the post.
- **LT Gen NPS Hira**: The Chief of the Indian Army's Northern Command has been appointed as **Deputy Chief of Army Staff**.
- **Anil Wadhwa**: The Ambassador of India to Italy has been concurrently accredited as the next **Ambassador** of India to the **Republic of San Marino** with residence in Rome.
- **Naina Lal Kidwai:** The non-banking finance company (NBFC) **Altico Capital** on 14 Mar announced the appointment of ex-HSBC India chief as an **independent non-executive director** on its board.
- **H Deep Saini**: The noted Indian scholar and plant physiologist has been appointed the next **Vice Chancellor** of the prestigious **University of Canberra**.
- **Mrugank Paranjape:** MCX, the country's largest commodity exchange, has appointed him as the **new MD & CEO**, nearly two years after Manoj Vaish, the then incumbent MD & CEO, put in his papers. His

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appointment is valid for three years and is subjected to approval of SEBI.

- **Ajit Singh**: He was sworn in as **Chief Justice** of the **Gauhati High Court** on 5 Mar.
- **Balbir Singh Chauhan**: The former Supreme Court judge was on 10 Mar appointed **Chairman** of the **21st Law Commission**, a post lying vacant since Sep 2015.
- **Kangana Ranaut:** The 'Queen' of Bollywood was announced as the **brand ambassador** of **Reebok India** on 8 Mar.
- **Rohit Sharma**: In a bid to strengthen their global sponsorship deal with the International Cricket Council (ICC), **Nissan** has named Indian opening batsman as its new **brand ambassador**.
- **Dinesh Maheshwari**: He has been sworn in as the **chief justice** of the **Meghalaya High Court**.
- **Ashwini Nangia**: He has been appointed as the **Director** of the **CSIR-National Chemical Laboratory**, **Pune**.
- **Mashrafe bin Mortaza**: The Bangladesh limited-overs captain has been named as the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) "national goodwill ambassador for youth".
- **Rajendra Singh**: The govt has appointed him as the **Director General (DG)** of **Coast Guard**, the country's coastal protection force.
- **Alok Kumar Verma**: The senior IPS officer on 29 Feb took charge as the new **Commissioner** of **Delhi Police**. He succeeds BS Bassi.
- **Vinod Rai**: The govt on 28 Feb announced the appointment of former Union comptroller and auditor general as the first **chairman** of the proposed **Banks Board Bureau (BBB)**.

Govt appoints 3 commissioners in CIC

The Centre has appointed three information commissioners in the Central Information Commission (CIC). They are:

- **Amitava Bhattacharyya**, retired Chairman, Staff Selection Commission
- **Bimal Julka**, retired Secretary, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting
- **Divya Prakash Sinha**, retired Secretary (Security), Cabinet Secretariat.

- **HL Dattu**: The former Chief Justice of India has been appointed as the next **chairperson** of the **National Human Rights Commission** (NHRC).
- **Atul Kumar Jain**: The Vice Admiral took over as the **Chief of Staff, Eastern Naval Command (ENC)** from Vice Admiral Bimal Verma on 28 Feb.

Died

- **BK Garudachar**: India's oldest cricketer and former captain of Mysore died on 26 Feb in Bengaluru at 99.
- **Nana Vasconcelos**: The noted Brazilian musician passed away recently.
- **Anita Brookner**: The renowned British author and art historian passed away recently. She had won the Booker in 1984 for her novel ***Hotel du Lac*** and was a bestselling author who had written around 25 books.
- **Lloyd Stowell Shapley**: The renowned American mathematician and Nobel Prize-winning economist passed away on 12 Mar.
- **Nihal Ahmed**: The socialist leader and former Maharashtra Minister on 29 Feb passed away in Nashik.
- **George Kennedy**: The Academy Award winning actor has died of old age in Boise, Idaho. He won Oscar for his portrayal of a savage chain-gang convict in the 1960s classic *Cool Hand Luke*. One of his strongest supporting roles was in the hit 1970 film *Airport*.
- **PA Sangma**: The former Speaker of the Lok Sabha from 1996 to 1998, passed away in Delhi on 4 Mar. He was a co-founder of the Nationalist Congress Party and was chief minister of Meghalaya from 1988 to 1990.
- **PK Nair**: The legendary film archivist passed away recently. He was founder director of the National Film Archieve of India (NFAI), Pune.
- **Ashok Ghosh:** The veteran All India Forward Bloc (AIFB) leader and senior-most leader of the Left Front in West Bengal has died.
- **Martin Crowe**: The former Black Caps captain recently passed away. He represented New Zealand from the early 1980s until he retired in 1996.
- **Kalabhavan Mani**: The popular Malayalam actor passed away at 45.

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- **Ray Tomlinson**: The US programmer credited with inventing **email** in the 1970s and choosing the "@" symbol for the messaging system, has died.
- **Nancy Reagan**: The former first lady of the US and an actress who was fiercely protective of husband Ronald Reagan through a Hollywood career, eight years in the White House, an assassination attempt and her husband's Alzheimer's disease, died at age 94.
- **MV Rao**: The noted agriculture scientist and one of the key persons in India's 'Green Revolution' passed away on 8 Mar in Hyderabad.

Elected

- **Dinesh Sharma**: The additional finance secretary, Department of Economic Affairs and India's Governor to the International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD) was unanimously elected as the **Chairperson** of the **Governing Council** of **IFAD** for a period of two years in its 39th Session held in Rome, Italy.
- **Rozle Prezelj**: The Slovenian high-jumper has been elected the new **chairman** of the **International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF)** Athletes' Commission.
- **Gianni Infantino**: He was on 26 Feb elected as the **President** of **FIFA** for the remainder of the current term of office (until 2019) by the Extraordinary FIFA Congress held in Zurich. He was elected as the ninth FIFA President and replaces **Sepp Blatter**.
- **Htin Kyaw**: Myanmar's parliament has elected him as the country's **next president**, the first civilian leader after more than 50 years of military rule.
- **Hashim Thaci**: Kosovo's MPs have elected the Foreign Minister as the new president. He was a guerrilla leader during a conflict that led to Kosovo – a mainly ethnic Albanian province – declaring independence from Serbia.
- **Tapan Kumar Chand**: The CMD, Nalco, has been elected **president** of **Aluminium Association of India (AAI)**.
- **Ahmed Abul Gheit**: The veteran Egyptian diplomat has been named as the Arab League's new secretary general, at a time when the regional body faces multiple wars and a widening jihadist threat.

Books & Authors

- *The Forgotten Room* – **Lincoln Child**
- *Cometh the Hour* – **Jeffery Archer**
- *Framed as a Terrorist* – **Mohammad Aamir Khan**
- *Standing Guard: A Year in Opposition* – **P Chidambaram**
- *China: Behind the Miracle* – **Sumita Dawra**
- *Swimmers among the Stars* – **Kanishk Tharoor**
- *The Golden Son* – **Shilpi Somaya Gowda**
- *Alphabet Soup for Lovers* – **Anita Nair**
- *Incarnations: India in 50 Lives* – **Sunil Khilnani**
- *Life Mantras* – **Subrata Roy**
- *And Then There Were None* – **Agatha Christie**
- *India-Myanmar Relations*: **Changing Contours – Rajiv Bhatia**
- *Erotext* – **Sudeep Sen**
- *The Story of the Lost Child* – **Elena Ferrante**
- *The Invisible Man from Salem* – **Christoffer Carlsson**
- *Baat Niklegi Toh Phir: The Life and Music of Jagjit Singh* – **Sathya Saran**
- *Woodsmoke and Leafcups* – **Madhu Ramnath**

Resigned

- **Enda Kenny**: The **Irish Prime Minister** has resigned but will continue as acting Prime Minister until a successor is appointed.

Sentenced

- **Babak Zanjani**: Iran's billionaire tycoon has been sentenced to death for corruption after a trial in which he was accused of fraudulently pocketing $2.8 bn. Zanjani became notorious during the era of president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, finding ways to channel hard currency to Tehran.

Others

- **Resul Pookutty**: Oscar-winning sound designer Resul Pookutty has made the country proud by becoming the **first Asian to win the award for best sound** for documentary *India's Daughter* at the coveted Motion Picture Sound Editors' 63rd annual Golden Reel Awards.
- **Mukesh Ambani**: The Reliance Industries chairman again topped 84 Indian billionaires in Forbes 2016 list of the world's richest people once again headed by Bill Gates with a net worth of $75 bn.

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- **Scott Kelly:** The US Astronaut recently landed safely on Earth after spending 340 days aboard the International Space Station.
- **Mother Teresa:** She will be made a saint on Sep 4, Pope Francis announced on 15 Mar, 19 years after the death of the Nobel Laureate who spent 45 years serving the poor and sick on the streets of Kolkata.
- **Vijay Mallya:** The industrialist and a Rajya Sabha member who owed the banks over ₹9,000 cr that companies promoted by Mallya had been sanctioned between 2004 and 2007, left the country recently. The information came to light at a hearing before the Supreme Court on 9 Mar. Thirteen banks, led by SBI, represented by Attorney-General Mukul Rohatgi and advocate Robin Ratnakar David, told a Bench of Justices Kurian Joseph and Rohinton Nariman that the liquor baron is said to have left the country on Mar 2, the day they approached the Debt Recovery Tribunal (DRT). As informed by Rohatgi to the court, Mallya's properties were mostly abroad and only a fraction is in India, maybe one-fifth. Defending itself the govt has said that when Mallya left the country, legal proceedings had not yet begun. Banks converted the loans into non-performing assets in 2009. The NPAs were restructured in 2010. The CBI has asked the rest of the 17 banks which had given loans to now defunct Kingfisher Airlines to declare these loans as fraud, on the lines of IDBI bank, after which it can take over probe in their cases as well. Clarifying his position in the loan owed by KFA, Mallya in a recent statement had said after the closure of the airline, since Apr, 2013, the aggregate cash recovery/security available to the banks is ₹2,494 cr.

Places in News

- **Ahmedabad:** The 13th World Spice Congress was held in the city with the theme of the biennial event "**Target 2020: Clean, Safe and Sustainable Supply Chain**". The three-day event resolved to hammer out a credible and actionable road map to further push the growth of spices industry and address its challenges across the globe. The event was jointly organised by the Spices Board, the Cochin Hill Produce Merchants' Association, and India Pepper and Spice Trade Association.
- **Shanghai**: The financial leaders from G20 nations gather in the Chinese city against a backdrop of worsening economic conditions and a lack of wider consensus on how to fix the problems. The world economy is facing its most serious crisis of confidence since the global financial turmoil of 2008-09. The G-20 members agreed to use monetary, fiscal and structural tools to boost growth.
- **Hyderabad:** Amazon, a leading e-commerce and cloud services firm, is setting up a facility in India, its largest facility outside of the US. The firm will be setting up a 29 lakh square feet facility in Gachibowli, the IT hubthere. The facility will take care of operational support that it needs for its global operations. The site would also help the firm ramp up its cloud services Amazon Web Services in the Indian market.
- **New York**: The most expensive train station in the world opened on 3 Mar at the site of the World Trade Center destroyed 14 years ago in the 9/11 attacks. The World Trade Center Transportation Hub is next to the site of the Twin Towers, which were destroyed in the Al-Qaeda hijackings. The building, designed by Spanish-Swiss architect Santiago Calatrava and called **Oculus**, is a giant oval made up of steel ribs and glass laid out in elliptical shape, reaching for the sky like wings of a bird.
- **Mathura**: The Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan laid the foundation stone for India's first "Octomax" unit at the Mathura refinery for the production of high-octane gasoline. The unit at Mathura refinery will be the first of its kind in India addressing the emerging scenario in petroleum refining. Octomax is a novel technology developed in-house by the research and development centre of Indian Oil for production of high-octane gasoline blending stock from the C4 stream to give very high-octane number of the product.
- **Mumbai**: India is going to host BRICS Friendship Cities Conclave in the financial capital of India from Apr 14 to 16, 2016. It will be attended by the top urban policy makers and planners from BRICS nations, viz Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. The conclave will

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be a joint initiative of the Union Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and Govt of Maharashtra. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the conference which will be attended by representatives of at least two cities from each of the BRICS nations.

- **Pokhara:** The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) ministerial meet was held here between Mar 14-17. Before the Ministerial meeting, a session of the Programming Committee of SAARC was held. The meetings are part of regular interactions within the SAARC framework.
- **Ankara**: Turkish President **Recep Tayyip Erdogan** has vowed to bring terrorism to its knees after an attack in the capital that killed at least 34 people and wounded 125 on 13 Mar. Erdogan said that terror groups were targeting civilians because they were losing the battle against Turkish security forces.

Sports

Athletics

- The national Special Olympics was organised in the world- famous Narkanda slopes in Shimla District. It concluded on 9 Mar. This is an annual sports event for special children organised by Special Olympic Bharat.

Badminton

- Lin Dan earned his sixth All England badminton title when he routed Chinese team-mate **Tian Houwei** in the final on 13 Mar.
- Nozomi Okuhara of Japan marked her 21st birthday with her first All England badminton championships title after beating two-time champion Wang Shixian of China in a thrilling final on 13 Mar.

Boxing

- There was no stopping Indian boxing star Vijender Singh as he notched up his fourth successive knockout professional win by pummelling Hungary's **Alexander Horvath** in under three rounds on 12 Mar.

Cricket

- Mumbai clinched the Ranji Trophy for a humongous **41st time** after completing a comprehensive an innings and 21 runs thrashing of Saurashtra in the final on 26 Feb.
- There was more good news for Mumbai cricket followers on 3 Mar. After clinching their 41st Ranji Trophy title in Pune, Mumbai annexed their second title this season when they won the Col CK Nayudu Trophy (U-23) by beating Madhya Pradesh on the basis of first innings' lead at the MPCA Stadium in Indore.
- India clinched the Asia Cup trophy for a record sixth time after beating hosts Bangladesh by eight wickets, riding on Shikhar Dhawan's scintillating 44-ball 60 in a rain-truncated final, in Mirpur, Bangladesh on Mar 6.
- Rest of India has won the Irani Cup Cricket Title 2015-16 by defeating Mumbai in the final match of the Cup by four wickets.
- Hyundai has announced a four-year partnership with the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI). The Korean car-maker is now the official partner of the BCCI for all matches to be played over the next four years across the three formats – Test, One day, and T20.

Football

- The Services team has won the 70th edition of Santosh Trophy Football Championships title 2016 by defeating hosts **Maharashtra** 2-1.

Kabaddi

- Season 3 of Star Sports Pro Kabaddi ended on a high note with power-packed action between U Mumba and Patna Pirates. Stamping their authority and continuing their dream winning streak, Patna Pirates beat the dominant U Mumba to emerge as Champions of Pro Kabaddi Season 3.

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Shooting

- Indian shooter Jitu Rai clinched the 50m pistol gold at the **ISSF World Cup** in Bangkok on 4 Mar. Jitu beat China's former World and Olympic Champion Wei to second place.

Snooker

- Rahul Sachdev clinched his maiden title by winning the 1st **All India Open Invitational Snooker Championship**. Sailing in cue sports for the last five years, Rahul had achieved the highest by reaching the National 6Reds final in the year 2013.

Tennis

- Stan Wawrinka from Switzerland has won the 2016 Dubai ATP Tennis title in the men's singles category. In the final match played in the United Arab Emirates, he defeated **Marcos Baghdatis** of Cyprus.
- **Sara Errani** of Italy won the 2016 Dubai ATP Tennis title in the women's singles category. In the final she defeated Barbora Strycova of Czech Republic.
- The Russian tennis star Maria Sharapova, the highest-paid woman in sports, said on 7 Mar that she failed a drug test at the Australian Open due to a substance she has been taking for 10 years for health issues.

Table tennis

- Indian men's and women's teams scripted history on 5 Mar by clinching the gold medals at the **World Table Tennis Team Championship** in Kuala Lumpur. While Indian eves beat Luxembourg, the men overcame Brazil.

Award

- The Indian Sports Award were given away at the 'Turf 2015-16' organised by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) with the support of the Sports Ministry.

The recipients

- ❖ Best Company Promoting Sports (Public Sector): **Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Ltd (ONGC)**
- ❖ Best Company Promoting Sports (Private Sector): **YES Bank Pvt Ltd**
- ❖ Best Professional Services Company: **Technology Frontiers (India) Pvt Ltd**
- ❖ Best NGO Promoting Sports: **STAIRS**
- ❖ Best Sports Start-up: **HotFut Sports Infrastructure Pvt Ltd**
- ❖ Best National Sports Federation: **Amateur Kabaddi Federation of India**
- ❖ Sportsperson of the Year: **Lalita Babar (Athletics)**
- ❖ Breakthrough Sportsperson of the Year: **Dipa Karmakar (Gymnastics)**
- ❖ Coach or Support Staff of the Year: **Kuldeep Handoo (Wushu)**
- ❖ Best State: **Gujarat**
- ❖ Lifetime Achievement Award: **Balbir Singh**

- Avinash Chander, former Scientific Adviser to Defence Minister and Director General of the DRDO, has been conferred with the Aryabhata Award of the Astronautical Society of India.
- Goverdhan Mehta, a well-known researcher in Chemical Sciences & former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Hyderabad (UoH), has been conferred with Federal Republic of Germany's prestigious **Bundesverdienstkreuz** or '**Cross of the Order** of **Merit**'.
- The 88th Academy Awards ceremony, presented by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS), honoured the best films of 2015 at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood, Los Angeles on Feb 28, 2016. The Academy Awards are commonly referred to as the **Oscars**.

Winners

- ❖ Best Picture: ***Spotlight***
- ❖ Actor in a leading role: **Leonardo DiCaprio** (*The Revenant*)
- ❖ Actress in a leading role: **Brie Larson** (*Room*)
- ❖ Actor in a supporting role: **Mark Rylance** (*Bridge of Spies*)
- ❖ Actress in a supporting role: **Alicia Vikander** (*The Danish Girl*)

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- ❖ Animated Feature Film: ***Inside Out***
- ❖ Cinematography: ***The Revenant***
- ❖ Direction: ***The Revenant***
- ❖ Documentary (Feature): ***Amy***
- ❖ Foreign Language Film: ***Son of Saul***
- ❖ Music (Original Score): ***The Hateful Eight***
- ❖ Music (Original Song): "Writing's On The Wall," ***Spectre***

- The Windham-Campbell Prizes on 1 Mar announced the annual list of nine winners. Each of the recipients receives $1,50,000 for accomplishments in the worlds of literature and theatre. This year's winners in fiction were Tessa Hadley, CE Morgan and Jerry Pinto. This year's prizes in non-fiction went to Hilton Als, Stanley Crouch and Helen Garner. The winners in drama were Branden Jacobs-Jenkins, Hannah Moscovitch and Abbie Spallen. The awards, administered by the Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library at Yale University, were first issued in 2013.
- Three British scientists have won a prestigious 2016 Grete Lundbeck European Brain Research Prize (also known as Brain Prize) for giving vital insight how the human brain remembers, learns and navigates. These scientists are **Timothy Bliss**, **Graham Collingridge** and **Richard Morris.**
- Veteran playwright and director **Ratan Thiyam** has been selected for prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award for 2016 at the Mahindra Excellence in Theatre Awards (META).
- Veteran actor Manoj Kumar, best known for his patriotic films *Purab Aur Paschim*, *Upkar* and *Kranti*, will be conferred the **47th** Dadasaheb Phalke Award for the year 2015.
- Eminent poet **Dr Bhagwati Lal Vyas** has been chosen for the 2015 Bihari Puraskar for his anthology of Rajasthani poems *Katha Sun Aawe Hai Sabad*.
- Renowned **Dogri** poetess and writer Padma Sachdev has been awarded Krutitava Smagra Samman for 2015 by Bharatiya's Bhasha Parishad, Kolkata.
- The Charutar Arogya Mandal Chairman Dr Amrita Patel was decorated with the Mahindra Samriddhi India Agri Lifetime Achievement Award in New Delhi.
- President Francois Hollande has awarded the **Legion d'Honneur**, France's highest honour, to visiting Saudi crown prince **Mohammed bin Nayef**. Nayef was cited for his "efforts in the fight against terrorism and extremism."
- Mahindra & Mahindra Chairman and Managing Director **Anand Mahindra** has been conferred with **Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur** (Knight of the Legion of Honour) by the French authorities.
- Kerala Tourism's new campaign on responsible tourism has bagged the prestigious '**Golden City Gate Award**' at the world's leading travel trade show ITB in Berlin. Titled 'New Worlds', the multimedia campaign containing three short films directed by reputed Malayalam filmmaker Anwar Rasheed won the silver prize of this year's Das Golden Stadttor or Golden City Gate, dubbed the Oscar of tourism communication, at the Internationale Tourismus-Borse Berlin (ITB-Berlin) 2016. Kerala Tourism had earlier won the 'Ulysses' Prize of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) for its contribution as a global leader to sustainable tourism.
- A primary school teacher from a refugee camp in conflict-torn **Palestine** has won USD one mn Global Teacher Prize for educating her students about non-violence, beating nine other finalists from around the world, including an Indian. Hanan al Hroub beat India's Robin Chaurasiya, who runs a not-for-profit school in Mumbai for girls from the city's red-light district of Kamatipura, and eight other finalists to bag the Varkey Foundation's prize at a star-studded ceremony in Dubai.

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Miscellany

- Times Internet, the **largest Indian digital network**, on 25 Feb announced a strategic partnership with *Investopedia.com*, one of the web's premier destinations for financial information.
- MS Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) has decided to establish a research chair at **Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS)** in **Bhubaneswar**.
- Bombay House, the **Tata group's headquarters**, on 8 Mar became the first heritage building in India to be awarded a platinum rating by the Indian Green Building Council (IGBC).
- A 108-foot-tall idol of **Lord Rishabhdeva**, the first Teerthankar of the Jains, carved out of a single rock, has entered the "Guinness World Records" as the **world's tallest Jain statue**. The impressive statue is located atop Mangi Tungi mountain near Teharabad village of Baglan tehsil in the North Maharashtra district of **Nashik**. Till now, the 57-foot idol of Lord Bahubali in Shravanabelagola in Karnataka was considered the world's tallest Jain statue.
- Google is previewing the next version of its Android operating system two months ahead of schedule in an effort to get the upgraded software on more mobile devices. The upgraded software, known as "Android N" for now, offers a split-screen feature so users can toggle between apps more easily. Android N also enables users to reply directly to notifications, something already available on the software that Google makes for smartwatches running on Android Wear. Another change is being made to reduce the battery power drawn by apps when the device's screen turns off. Devices running on Android "Marshmallow," a version released last year, shift into a battery-saving mode called "Doze" only when they're stationary.
- The Railway Minister **Suresh Prabhu** on 11 Mar launched an online "clean my coach" service that allows travellers to get their compartments cleaned by sending an SMS or by using an app or a designated website. As per the scheme, for any cleaning requirement in the coach, passengers have to send an SMS on a mobile number **58888**. Alternatively, passengers can use the android app or Web page *www.cleanmycoach.com* for logging the request. Following this, a passenger's request is immediately acknowledged via SMS on mobile phone along with a code.
- Singapore is still the world's most expensive city as it has topped the Economist Intelligence Unit's 2016 Worldwide Cost of Living survey, making that the third year in a row. The annual report, which ranks 133 cities based on a twice-yearly survey, notes Singapore's high transport and utility costs.

World's 10 most expensive cities

1. Singapore
2. Zurich, Switzerland
3. Hong Kong
4. Geneva, Switzerland
5. Paris
6. London
7. New York
8. Copenhagen, Denmark
9. Seoul, South Korea
10. Los Angeles

Asia has six of the cheapest cities on the 133-city survey and four of the cities in the bottom 10 are in India.

124. Damascus, Syria
124. Caracas, Venezuela
126. New Delhi
127. Almaty, Kazakhstan
127. Algiers, Algeria
127. Chennai, India
127. Karachi, Pakistan
131. Mumbai, India
132. Bangalore, India
133. Lusaka, Zambia

- Scientists at the US University have designed a new type of foldable material that is versatile, tunable and self-actuated. It can change size, volume and shape and can fold flat to withstand the weight of an elephant without breaking, and pop right back up to prepare for the next task. The structure is inspired by an origami technique called **snapology**, and is made from extruded cubes with 24 faces and 36 edges. Researchers demonstrated, both theoretically and experimentally, that the cube can be deformed into many different shapes by folding certain edges, which act like hinges.

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- The 4th World Congress of Biosphere Reserves was held starting 14 Mar at **Lima** in Peru. The event was held from 14 Mar to 17 Mar to address different issues related to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Post 2015 Development Agenda. It was a world meeting of the Committees of UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Program (MAB) and experts directly involved in the practical implementation of biosphere reserves, including representatives of govts, biosphere reserves, local communities, UN agencies, NGOs, academic institutions, and organisations and institutions from all over the world working with the MAB.
- The 13th meeting of the Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development was held on 14 Mar in **Dubai**, United Arab Emirates (UAE). The meeting was held to promote the power of broadband networks and services for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It brought the leaders from the public, private and social sectors together to seek the solutions to achieving education, equity and employment for all. The Broadband Commission also discussed, among other issues, how to innovate in education through technology. It works to ensure that no one is left behind by leaving no one off-line. In 2015, **44 per cent world population remained offline**.
- **Mar 15** is World Consumer Rights Day (WCRD), an annual occasion for celebration and solidarity within the international consumer movement. **It marks the date in 1962 when the US President John F Kennedy first outlined the definition of Consumer Rights**. WCRD is an opportunity to promote the basic rights of all consumers, for demanding that those rights are respected and protected, and for protesting the market abuses and social injustices which undermine them. Consumer organisations around the world take up initiatives like special campaigns, press conferences, public exhibitions, workshops, street events or new publications, to spread awareness.
- An unmanned spacecraft named ExoMars 2016 was successfully launched jointly by Europe and Russia to search for bio-signatures on Mars (or Martian life) in past or present. The spacecraft was launched on a Proton-M rocket operated by Russia's Roscosmos from Baikonur, Kazakhstan. ExoMars 2016 is the first of a two-phase of ExoMars (Exobiology on Mars) programme. ExoMars programme is an astrobiology mission of European Space Agency (ESA) and Russian Federal Space Agency (Roscosmos).
- In order to address the climate change issues in India and the US, the two countries have launched the Fulbright-Kalam Climate Fellowship, an initiative to advance bilateral cooperation on climate change. The first call for applicants was announced for the fellowship jointly funded by both the govts and will enable up to six Indian PhD students and post-doctoral researchers to work with US host institutions for a period of 6-12 months. The fellowship has been named after the late Indian President APJ Abdul Kalam and is part of a commitment made by the US President Barack Obama and Prime Minister Narendra Modi to build long-term capacity to address climate change-related issues in both the countries.

Terms related to Budget

- **Ad Valorem Tax**: This is charged as a percentage of the value of a good or service, not at a specific rate per unit. It is typically imposed at the time of a transaction, as in the case of a sales tax or value-added tax (VAT).
- **Advance Pricing Agreement (APA)**: It is an agreement between a taxpaying entity and the taxman that indicates how the former will price transactions with its associates.
- **Annual Financial Statement**: Article 112 of the Constitution requires the govt to present to Parliament a statement of estimated receipts and expenditure in respect of every financial year – Apr 1 to Mar 31. It is divided into three parts – consolidated fund, contingency fund and public account.
- **Banking Cash Transaction Tax (BCTT)**: Introduced in Budget 2005-06, BCTT is a small tax on cash withdrawal from bank exceeding a particular amount in a single day. The basic idea is to curb the black economy and generate a record of big cash transactions.

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- **Capital Gains Tax**: It is a tax on the gains that ensue when an asset is sold for a price higher than what it was bought for.
- **Capital Receipt/Expenditure**: All receipts and expenditure that liquidate or create an asset would in general be under capital account. For instance, if the govt sells shares (disinvests) in public sector companies, it is in effect selling an asset. The receipts from the sale would go under capital account. On the other hand, if the govt gives someone a loan from which it expects to receive interest, that expenditure would go under the capital account.
- **Central Plan**: Central or annual plans are essentially Five Year Plans broken down into annual instalments. Through these plans, the govt achieves the objectives of the Five Year Plans. The Central plan's funding is split almost evenly between govt support (from the budget) and internal and extra-budgetary resources of public enterprises.
- **Cess**: This is an additional levy on the basic tax liability. Govts resort to cess for meeting specific expenditure.
- **Consolidated Fund**: This is the most important of all govt funds. All revenues raised by the govt, money borrowed and receipts from loans given by the govt flow into the Consolidated Fund of India. All govt expenditure is made from this fund, except for exceptional items met from the Contingency Fund or the Public Account. Importantly, no money can be withdrawn from this fund without the Parliament's approval.
- **Consumer Price Index (CPI)**: It is a measure of inflation, or price change, arrived at after regularly measuring the prices of a slew of household goods and services.
- **Contingency Fund**: As the name suggests, any urgent or unforeseen expenditure is met from this fund. The ₹500-cr fund is at the disposal of the President. Any expenditure incurred from this fund requires a subsequent approval from Parliament and the amount withdrawn is returned to the fund from the Consolidated Fund.
- **Corporation Tax**: Tax on profits of companies.
- **Countervailing Duty (CVD)**: Countervailing duty is a tax imposed on imports, over and above the basic import duty. CVD is at par with the excise duty paid by the domestic manufacturers of similar goods. This ensures a level playing field between imported goods and locally-produced ones.
- **Current Account Deficit**: It is a trade measure that shows the value of a country's imports of goods and services to be higher than the value of its exports.
- **Customs**: These are the taxes imposed on imports. While revenue is an important consideration, customs duties may also be levied to protect the domestic industry or sector (agriculture, for one), in retaliation against measures by other countries.
- **Direct Tax**: Traditionally, these are taxes where the burden of tax falls on the person on whom it is levied. These are largely taxes on income or wealth. Income tax (on corporates and individuals) FBT, STT and BCTT are direct taxes.
- **Direct Taxes Code (DTC)**: India's likely replacement to the long-standing Income Tax Act, the Direct Taxes Code is meant to make direct tax laws simpler and more efficient.
- **Disinvestment Receipts**: The term refers to the money raised by the Govt through disinvestment, or the sale of its equity stake in companies it owns.
- **Dividend Distribution Tax**: This is a tax levied on companies that pay out dividends to its shareholders, ie share a portion of earnings with them.
- **Export Duty**: This is a tax levied on exports. In most instances, the object is not revenue, but to discourage exports of certain items.
- **External Commercial Borrowing (ECB)**: The term ECB refers to commercial loans with a minimum three-year maturity that can be raised from lenders from overseas where interest rates are lower than in India.
- **Finance Bill**: The proposals of govt for levy of new taxes, modification of the existing tax structure or continuance of the existing tax structure beyond the period approved by Parliament are submitted to Parliament through this bill. It is the key document as far as taxes are concerned.
- **Financial Inclusion**: Financial inclusion is universalising access to basic financial services (to have a bank account, timely and adequate credit) at an affordable cost. Exclusion from financial services imposes costs on those excluded; these are typically the disadvantaged and low-income group.
- **Fiscal Consolidation**: The term refers to the things a Govt does to maintain good fiscal health — cut debt and wasteful expenditure and improve revenue opportunities.

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- **Fiscal Deficit**: When the govt's non-borrowed receipts fall short of its entire expenditure, it has to borrow money from the public to meet the shortfall. The excess of total expenditure over total non-borrowed receipts is called the fiscal deficit.
- **Fiscal Policy**: It is what a govt does to influence the course of an economy through decisions on taxes and spending.
- **FRBM Act**: Enacted in 2003, Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act required the elimination of revenue deficit by 2008-09. Hence, from 2008-09, the govt was to meet all its revenue expenditure from its revenue receipts. Any borrowing would only be to meet capital expenditure. ***The Act mandated a 3% limit on the fiscal deficit after 2008-09***.
- **Goods and Services Tax (GST)**: Proposed to be rolled out in India from Apr 1, 2016, the GST seeks to make the indirect tax structure simpler and efficient by replacing a slew of levies such as octroi, central sales tax, State sales tax, entry tax and so on.
- **Grants-in-Aid and contributions**: It is one of the receipt items in the revenue account. These are in the nature of pure transfers to the govt without any repayment obligation.
- **Indirect Tax**: A tax on goods and services, typically, levied on an entity but paid by another. In case of indirect taxes, the incidence of tax is usually not on the person who pays the tax. These are largely taxes on expenditure and include customs, excise and service tax.
- **Market Stabilisation Scheme**: The scheme was launched in Apr 2004 to strengthen RBI's ability to conduct exchange rate and monetary management. The securities under the scheme are issued not to meet the govt's expenditure but to provide RBI with a stock of securities with which it can intervene in the market for managing liquidity.
- **Minimum Alternate Tax (MAT)**: This tax on corporate profits was introduced in 1996-97 and has been modified since. If the tax payable by a company is less than 10% of its book profits, after availing of all eligible deductions, then 10% of book profits is the minimum tax payable. Book profits are profits calculated as per the Companies Act, while profits as per the Income-Tax Act could be significantly lower, thanks to various exemptions and depreciation.
- **Miscellaneous receipts**: These are receipts from disinvestment in public sector undertakings. Capital account receipts of the consolidated fund – public debt, recoveries of loans and advances, and miscellaneous receipts – and revenue receipts are receipts of the consolidated fund.
- **Monetary Policy**: It is what a central bank does to influence the course of an economy through decisions on money supply and interest rate.
- **Non-Plan Expenditure**: This is largely the revenue expenditure of the govt. The biggest items of expenditure are interest payments, subsidies, salaries, defence and pension. The capital component of the non-plan expenditure is relatively small with the largest allocation going to defence. ***Defence expenditure is non-plan expenditure***.
- **Non-Tax Revenue**: The most important receipts under this head are interest payments (received on loans given by the govt to states, railways and others) and dividends and profits received from public sector companies.
- **Pass-Through Status**: A pass-through status helps avoid double taxation. Mutual funds, for instance, enjoy pass-through status. The income earned by the funds is tax-free. Since mutual funds' income is distributed to unit holders, who are in turn taxed on their income from such investments, any taxation of mutual funds would amount to double taxation.
- **Plan Expenditure**: This is essentially the budget support to the Central plan and the Central assistance to State and Union territory plans. Like all budget heads, this is also split into revenue and capital components.
- **Primary Deficit**: The revenue expenditure includes interest payments on govt's earlier borrowings. The primary deficit is the fiscal deficit less interest payments. A shrinking primary deficit indicates progress towards fiscal health.
- **Public Account**: This fund is to account for flows for those transactions where the govt is merely acting as a banker. The provident funds and small savings are examples of this fund. These funds do not belong to the govt. They have to be paid back at some time to their rightful owners. Because of this nature of the fund, expenditure from it are not required to be approved by the Parliament.

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- **Public Debt**: Public debt receipts and public debt disbursals are borrowings and repayments during the year, respectively. The difference is the net accretion to the public debt. Public debt can be split into **internal** (money borrowed within the country) and **external** (funds borrowed from non-Indian sources). Internal debt comprises treasury bills, market stabilisation schemes, ways and means advance, and securities against small savings.
- **Revenue Deficit**: The excess of disbursements over receipts on revenue account is called revenue deficit. This is an important control indicator. All expenditure on revenue account should ideally be met from receipts on revenue account; the revenue deficit should be zero.
- **Revenue Receipt/Expenditure**: All receipts and expenditure that in general do not entail sale or creation of assets are included under the revenue account. On the receipts side, taxes would be the most important revenue receipt. On the expenditure side, anything that does not result in creation of assets is treated as revenue expenditure. Salaries, subsidies and interest payments are good examples of revenue expenditure.
- **Securities against small savings**: The govt meets a small part of its loan requirement by appropriating small savings collection by issuing securities to the fund.
- **Securities Transaction Tax**: It is a tax on all transactions done over the stock exchanges involving securities such as shares, derivatives, and equity-linked mutual funds.
- **Service Tax**: It is a tax on services rendered. Telephone bill, for instance, attracts a service tax.
- **Subvention**: The term *subvention* finds a mention in almost every Budget. It refers to a grant of money in aid or support, mostly by the govt. In the Indian context, for instance, the govt sometimes asks institutions to provide loans to farmers at below-market rates. The loss is usually made good through subventions.
- **Surcharge**: As the name suggests, this is an additional charge or tax. A surcharge of 10% on a tax rate of 30% effectively raises the combined tax burden to 33%.
- **Treasury bills (T-bills)**: These are bonds (debt securities) with maturity of less than a year. These are issued to meet short-term mismatches in receipts and expenditure. Bonds of longer maturity are called *dated securities*.
- **Union Excise Duty**: Duties imposed on goods made in India.
- **Value-Added Tax (VAT)**: VAT helps avoid cascading of taxes as a product passes through different stages of production/value addition. The tax is based on the difference between the value of the output and inputs used to produce it. The aim is to tax a firm only for the value added by it to the inputs it is using for manufacturing its output and not the entire input cost.
- **Venture Capital Funds**: These are funds that invest in startups, a financially riskier proposition than investing in established companies.
- **Ways and Means Advance (WMA)**: One of RBI's roles is to serve as banker to both Central and State govts. In this capacity, RBI provides temporary support to tide over mismatches in their receipts and payments in the form of ways and means advances. When revenue disbursement exceeds receipts, the govt would have to borrow.
- **Wholesale Price Index (WPI)**: It is a measure of inflation, or price change, arrived at after regularly measuring the prices of a slew of wholesale goods.

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