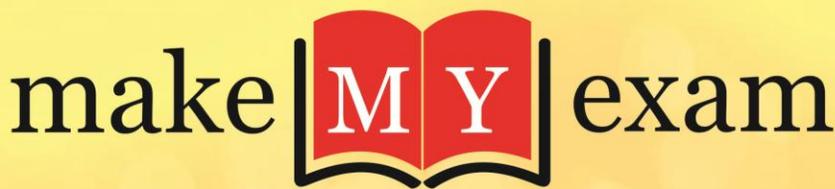


Weekly Current Affairs

27 January – 02 February 2019



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National News

1. Shri Nitin Gadkari to Inaugurate Four National Highway Projects in Bikaner and Nagaur in Rajasthan

- ✚ Shri Nitin Gadkari will inaugurate and lay the foundation stone for four NH projects in Rajasthan on the 28th of January. These include three projects in Bikaner and one in Nagaur.
- ✚ This road is being built under Bharatmala on EPC mode at a cost of Rs 687.07 crore.
- ✚ At Bikaner the first project for laying of foundation stones is the 162.46 kms , 2 lane section of NH from Raisinghnagar to Poogal.

2. Sugarcane juice declared as national drink of Pakistan

- ✚ Government of Pakistan has declared sugarcane juice as the nation juice of Pakistan
- ✚ Poll includes three option including orange juice, carrot juice and sugarcane juice. But it is sugarcane juice which won the poll with 81 percent votes.

3. Indian Railways' fastest Train 18 named Vande Bharat Express: Piyush Goyal

- ✚ India's first indigenously built engineless semi-high speed train, Train 18, has been named Vande Bharat Express.
- ✚ The train is set to run between Delhi and Varanasi at a maximum speed of 160 kmph and will soon be flagged off by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- ✚ The 16-coach train, built in 18 months at a cost of Rs 97 crore by the Modern Coach Factory, Rae Bareli, is regarded as a successor to the 30-year-old Shatabdi Express. It's also the first locomotive-less train in the country.

4. India The Sixth Leading Nation In Readiness Index For GDPR, Says Cisco Study

- ✚ Cisco recently announced its 2019 Data Privacy Benchmark Study which placed India amongst the leading nations globally in their preparedness towards the General Data Protection Regulation.
- ✚ According to the report, organizations worldwide that invested in maturing their data privacy practices are now realizing tangible business benefits from these investments.
- ✚ The study validates the link between good privacy practice and business benefits as respondents report shorter sales delays as well as fewer and less costly data breaches.

5. Election Commission of India hosts International Conference on 'Making our Elections Inclusive and Accessible'.

- ✦ The Chief Election Commissioner of India, Shri Sunil Arora and Election Commissioner Shri Ashok Lavasa inaugurated an International Conference on 'Making our Elections Inclusive and Accessible'.
- ✦ On the sidelines of the conference, the poll panel will also renew Memorandum of Understanding with the Election Commission of Bhutan for co-operation in the field of election management.
- ✦ The Election Commission's quarterly magazine 'Voice International' also released in event.

6. UP to build world's longest Expressway: Yogi Adityanath

- ✦ The Uttar Pradesh cabinet met at Prayagraj, the venue of the Kumbh and cleared the decks to construct what is being touted as the world's longest highway -- the Ganga Expressway between Meerut and Prayagraj.
- ✦ The proposed Ganga Expressway will weave through Meerut-Amroha-Bulandshahr-Budaun-Shahjahanpur-Kannauj-Unnao-Rae Bareli-Pratapgarh and end at Prayagraj, earlier known as Allahabad.
- ✦ The cabinet also decided to make tax free the Bollywood film "Uri", based on the Indian Army's surgical strike on terror bases in Pakistan.

7. New campus of National Museum Institute inaugurated at Noida

- ✦ The new Campus of the National Museum Institute was inaugurated by Shri Prakash Javadekar
- ✦ Speaking at the inauguration, the Chief Guest Shri Prakash Javadekar, Union Minister for Human Resource Development said that there is a huge scope for the courses offered by the Institute like history of arts, conservation, museology among others.
- ✦ He also proposed that Ministry of Culture should consider setting up a national museum of educational history so that the future generations could understand the evolution of education.

8. Renaming of Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion

- ✦ The Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP) has been renamed as the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade with a mandate to deal with matters related to start-ups, facilitating ease of doing business among others
- ✦ The newly-named department under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry will look into matters related to promotion of internal trade, including retail trade, welfare of traders and their employees, facilitating ease of doing business and start-ups.
- ✦ The move comes amidst a demand by traders' body CAIT for forming a separate ministry for internal trade.

9. Finance minister Piyush Goyal arrives at Finance Ministry; to present the Interim Budget

- ✦ Finance minister Piyush Goyal will present the Interim Budget for 2019-20 amid heightened expectations that he will announce an income support scheme for distressed farmers who have seen their incomes stagnate because of plunging prices, barely enough to pay for loans and input costs.
- ✦ The budget, the last before April-May Lok Sabha elections, will be keenly watched for cues about the government's intent on creating jobs, in the face of the latest set of data showing four-decade high unemployment rates.
- ✦ Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government's sixth and final budget before the polls due by May is supposed to be an interim budget or a Vote on Account.

10. Paytm enters hotel booking business, buys NightStay

- ✦ Paytm has launched hotel bookings on its platform and acquired NightStay, which offers deals on last-minute bookings at luxury hotels
- ✦ Its hotel partners include chains like Sarovar, Zuri, Treebo, Indian Hotels Co's Ginger, Sterling and Vresorts.
- ✦ Paytm planned to invest 70 million for its growth in the travel segment.

11. Punjab govt gave approval for Smart Village Campaign worth of Rs 385 crores

- ✦ Punjab government approved a rural development scheme "Smart Village Campaign" worth Rs 384.40 crore to build village infrastructure and provide essential amenities.
- ✦ Getting approved by Chief Minister Amarinder Singh, Reformation and implementation of the scheme would be financed with funds from the 14th Financial Commission and MGNREGA.
- ✦ Projects worth Rs 25 lakh would be approved by a committee of deputy commissioner and additional deputy commissioner (Development) while those above Rs 25 lakh would be given sanction by a state-level committee headed by the joint development commissioner.

12. Government sets up committee to explore prepaid payments by discoms to generator companies

- ✦ The government has constituted a committee under the Central Electricity Authority (CEA) to explore prepaid payments by state electricity distribution companies to power plants
- ✦ The formed committee, consist of The chairman of distribution companies of Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra, and representatives from Union power ministry and power associations to look into problems of delayed payments from distribution companies to power generators .
- ✦ The committee will study working capital cycles of power distribution companies and generation companies and identify gaps contributing to stress in the sector.

13. Govt Reduces Import Duties On Electric Vehicle Parts

- ✦ The customs duty on electric vehicle components which are imported in a knocked-down or semi knocked down state, have been reduced to 10%-15%

- ✦ This reduction of the taxes is aimed at encouraging global automobile companies to assemble electric vehicles in India.
- ✦ The Custom duty on battery packs for mobile phones has been doubled by CBIC and hence they will attract a tax of 20% on import.
- ✦

International News & Foreign Affairs

1. Union Minister Gadkari inaugurates Atal Setu in Goa

- ✦ Union Minister Nitin Gadkari inaugurated four-lane, 5.1-kilometer long “Atal Setu”, the third Cable bridge across river Mandovi in Panaji, Goa.
- ✦ Infrastructure works worth 15 Thousand crore rupees have been sanctioned for the state of Goa.
- ✦ This is the third bridge across Mandovi River. This bridge would overcome the bottlenecks and curb traffic jams at Panaji Circle and Panaji entrance. It is reported that about 66,000 vehicles use this route every day.

2. WHO Reappoints Poonam Khetrapal Singh As South-East Asia Region Director

- ✦ The World Health Organization appointed Dr Poonam Khetrapal Singh as its South-East Asia regional director for a second five-year term.
- ✦ The WHO Executive Board on Saturday unanimously endorsed Ms Khetrapal Singh, who was earlier unanimously nominated by 11 member-countries of the region for another five years.
- ✦ She is the first woman to become Regional Director of WHO South-East Asia Region.

3. GST on Haj reduced from 18% to 5%

- ✦ Union Minister for Minority Affairs Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi said that GST on Haj has been reduced from 18 percent to 5 percent and this will significantly lower the airfare thus saving Haj pilgrims’ 113 crore rupees this year.
- ✦ He was speaking at the inauguration ceremony of a new conference hall and passport section at the Haj House in Mumbai.
- ✦ Mr. Naqvi said this for the first time since the independence that 2,340 women from India will go on 2019 Haj without Mehram.

4. Africa Center for Climate and Sustainable Development inaugurated in Rome

- ✦ The Africa Centre for Climate and Sustainable Development was inaugurated by the Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte at Rome.
- ✦ He also emphasized that global hunger rates are rising in various parts of Africa.. "If we don't step up our actions in the Sahel we will not achieve the Sustainable Development Agenda and the Zero Hunger goal by 2030.
- ✦ It will facilitate much-needed exchange of information and coordination to increase efficiencies and build synergies across Africa, develop and scale-up

innovative solutions for sustainable development and implement the goals of the 2030 Agenda and Paris Climate Agreement.

5. Anti-dumping duty imposed on Chinese chemical import

- ✚ The government has imposed an anti-dumping duty on a chemical from China, used in photography and manufacturing of dyes, for five years to protect domestic producers of the chemical intermediate from cheap shipments.
- ✚ The anti-dumping duty on Meta Phenylenediamine (MPDA) imported from China will be in the range USD 573.92-USD 1,015.44 a tonne
- ✚ It is for the second time in a row that anti-dumping duty has been imposed on the import of the chemical from China. The duty was to expire in March 2019.

6. UAE, Saudi Arabian central banks launch common digital currency called 'Aber'

- ✚ The central banks of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia have launched a common digital currency called 'Aber', which will be used in financial settlements between the two countries through Blockchains and Distributed Ledgers technologies.
- ✚ The UAE central bank said in a statement that it will establish an additional means for the central financial transfer systems of the two countries and enable banks to directly deal with each other in conducting financial remittances.
- ✚ The UAE's central bank and SAMA hope that their pilot projects will benefit everyone locally and internationally.

7. ICC ropes in Coca-Cola as official sponsor

- ✚ The International Cricket Council (ICC) announced a five-year global partnership deal with beverage manufacturer Coca-Cola Company.
- ✚ The partnership will see Coca-Cola's brands becoming exclusive non-alcoholic beverage partners of the ICC until 2023.
- ✚ ICC also signed sponsorship with Alcobev brands, Royal Stag and Bira 91.

8. International conference on 8th century sage held to mark 50 years of India-Bhutan ties

- ✚ Celebrating 50-years of formalization of diplomatic ties between India and Bhutan, a two-day international conference on 8th century Himalayan sage Guru Padmasambhava was held in New Delhi.
- ✚ The conference, organised by the Centre for Escalation of Peace (CEP) and titled 'Life and Legacy of Guru Padmasambhava.
- ✚ The two countries share formal diplomatic ties for half a century now but the relations between India and Bhutan date back to centuries and has only grown stronger with time.

9. Mizoram govt bans import of pigs and piglets

- ✦ Deputy Commissioners of all the eight districts in Mizoram have issued orders banning import of pigs and piglets from other countries in view of possible outbreak of the Porcine Reproductive and Respiratory Syndrome
- ✦ The orders were issued as the dreaded PRRS outbreak always occurred from March to July, during a dry spell after pre-monsoon downpours.
- ✦ It was suspected that the PRRS outbreak was due to illegal and even legal import of pigs and piglets from Myanmar where there was reported prevalence of the porcine disease.

Banking

1. FDI grew 18% in FY18 to Rs 28.25 lakh crore: RBI data

- ✦ Reserve Bank of India released a data on “Census on Foreign Liabilities and Assets of Indian Direct Investment Companies, 2017-18” which shows that the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) has been increased 18 percent to Rs. 28.25 lakh crore.
- ✦ The RBI said as many as 23,065 companies responded to the latest round of the census, of which, 20,732 firms had FDI or ODI in their balance sheet in March 2018.
- ✦ Singapore was the top destination followed by Netherlands, Mauritius and United States of America in case of Overseas investment by Indian companies.

2. Piyush Goyal to Receive Carnot Prize for Power Reforms, Rural Electrification

- ✦ Union Finance Minister Piyush Goyal will receive the Carnot prize for his contribution towards sustainable energy solutions, with a team from University of Pennsylvania coming here to felicitate him on January 30.
- ✦ The award recognises Goyal's tenure as minister of power in which he is credited to have "reformed" the electricity sector and extended access to electricity to 18,000 villages, as documented by the International Energy Agency.
- ✦ Last year This award was skipped before being entitled to the former power minister ,because of the Amritsar tragedy in which over 60 people died after being moved down by a train.

3. Ujjivan Small Finance Bank launches Ujjivan Bank Kisan Suvidha loan for small and marginal farmers.

- ✦ Ujjivan Small Finance Bank (SFB) announced the launch of Ujjivan Bank Kisan Suvidha loan to offer financial credit services to small and marginal farmers.
- ✦ It is the first bank in this category to offer collateral free loans for both agriculture and allied activities such as dairy purchase and maintenance.
- ✦ The product is launched across four states namely, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Karnataka and Odisha.

4. RBI takes three banks out of the PCA framework

- ✦ The Reserve Bank of India has taken three public sector banks — Bank of India, Bank of Maharashtra and Oriental Bank of Commerce — out of the Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) framework and lifted various restrictions on lending and expansion of businesses.
- ✦ The RBI will continuously monitor the performance of these banks under various parameters.
- ✦ The Centre has also assured that the capital requirements of these banks will be duly factored in while making allocations during the current financial year.

New Appointments & Person in News

1. Dilip Sadarangani Appointed Part Time Chairman of Federal Bank

- ✦ Dilip Sadarangani has been appointed as Part Time Chairman of Federal Bank. The Bank obtained approval of Reserve Bank of India in this regard.
- ✦ He has been in the board of Federal Bank since 2013. Shri. Dilip Sadarangani is a renowned banker with experience in various facets of banking, particularly technology, in different countries.
- ✦ He has played key roles in setting up of IT infrastructure in different banks in India, Australia, and Kuwait.

2. Punit Goenka named new BARC India chairman

- ✦ Punit Goenka, managing director and CEO, Zee Entertainment Enterprises Ltd has been elected the new chairman of TV viewership measurement company, BARC India.
- ✦ Goenka will take over from Nakul Chopra who has completed his year-long tenure as chairman of the joint industry body.
- ✦ Goenka was the founder chairman of BARC India and is known to have played an important role in setting up the TV monitoring agency and providing the industry with accurate data and insights.

3. Pakistan Appoints its first Ever Female hindu civil judge

- ✦ Suman Kumari has become the first Hindu woman in Pakistan to be appointed as a civil judge
- ✦ Suman, who hails from Qambar-Shahdadkot, will serve in her native district.
- ✦ The first judge from the Hindu community was Justice Rana Bhagwandas, who served as the acting chief justice for brief periods between 2005 and 2007.

4. LT Gen Rajeev Chopra takes over as Director General of NCC

- ✦ Lt Gen Rajeev Chopra assumed the appointment of Director General of NCC (DGNCC). Commissioned in the Madras Regiment in December 1980, Lt Gen Chopra is an alumnus of the National Defence Academy, Khadakwasla and Indian Military Academy, Dehradun.
- ✦ The General Officer commanded a Corps in Eastern Theatre and has also been the Commandant of the prestigious Infantry School. He is also the Colonel of The Madras Regiment since Jun 2016.
- ✦ He is a graduate of Technical Staff Officers Course, has attended the Higher Command Course at National Defence University, China and National Defence College, New Delhi.

5. NSC members resign after row over NSSO employment report

- ✦ The two remaining non-official members of the National Statistical Commission (NSC) including the acting chairman of the apex statistical body PC Mohanan have resigned from their post leaving the body defunct.
- ✦ The chairman's post of NSC is vacant since 31 July, 2018 when Radha Binod Barman retired.
- ✦ In November, Mohanan had raised objections to the Niti Aayog getting involved in the release of the back-series GDP (gross domestic product) data.

Science Tech & Defence

1. Ministry of Defence Launches 'RDP INDIA 2019'

- ✦ Ministry of Defence had launched a mobile app 'RDP India 2019' on the Republic Day, with the intent of making available the highlights of the Republic Day event.
- ✦ This app contains information about The Parade on Rajpath, New Delhi, including Order of the March, details of the tableaux presented by different States and Ministries.
- ✦ People who desire to know the theme and ideas depicted in the tableaux and also those who for some reason could not witness the Parade on Rajpath or watch it on TV, can still download the app and gather all information about the event.

2. Defence Ministry Acquire 5,000 Milan 2T Anti-tank Guided Missiles

- ✦ In a major decision, the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) approved indigenous construction of six submarines for the Indian Navy. The total worth of these has been estimated at Rs 40,000 crore.
- ✦ The project comes under Defence Ministry's "strategic partnership" (SP) model that aims at providing significant fillip to the government's Make in India program. This is the second such project under the SP model.
- ✦ The first project under SP model was indigenous production of 111 naval utility helicopters in August 2018.

Obituaries

1. George Fernandes, former Union minister, dies at 88

- ✦ George Fernandes, former Union minister, and nine-time Lok Sabha MP passed away at the age of 88 following a prolonged illness.
- ✦ Fernandes was born in Mangalore in Karnataka in 1930. An anti-Emergency crusader, Fernandes was a fiery socialist and arch-enemy of Indira Gandhi.
- ✦ During his term, he took on American multinational companies like IBM and Coca-Cola, making them leave the country.

Awards

1. Delhi to award MSP as per Swaminathan committee Report

- ✦ The Delhi government has decided to implement the Swaminathan Committee's recommendations with regard to the minimum support price (MSP) for farm produces.
- ✦ The Delhi government had constituted a committee in 2018 to study the techniques adopted for deciding MSP in different states of the country.
- ✦ The move comes just months ahead of the Lok Sabha elections. There are about 20,000 farmers in the national capital.

2. India bags Award of Excellence for 'Best in Show' at New York Times Travel Show 2019

- ✦ India received the Award of Excellence for 'Best in Show' at the recently concluded New York Times Travel Show 2019.
- ✦ It is the largest travel show in North America which is held from January 25 to January 27 in New York.
- ✦ India was honored during the closing bell ceremony at the New York Stock Exchange.

3. Jayant Kaikini's 'No Presents Please' wins prestigious DSC Prize

- ✦ Kannada poet and short story writer Jayant Kaikini was named the winner of the DSC Prize for South Asian Literature for his translated work "No Presents Please."
- ✦ Jayant beat internationally-acclaimed writers including Kamila Shamsie and Mohsin Hamid to win the prize and the generous purse of \$25,000.
- ✦ The announcement was made at the Tata Steel Kolkata Literary Meet at the iconic Victoria Memorial Hall in Kolkata. This marks the first time a translated work has won the prestigious prize.

Sports

1. Operation Olympics Commences in Kerala

- ✦ Operation Olympics', an expert programme to train athletes in 1 disciplines has commenced in kerala, Chief Minister Pinarayi vijayan announced.
- ✦ The objective of 'Operation Olympics is to provide international standard training with the help of eminent trainers from both India and abroad.
- ✦ At present training in wrestling, cycling, swimming and boxing are being conducted at various stadiums in Thiruvanthapuram district.

2. Nagaland CM inaugurates state's first Astro Turf Football Pitch

- ✦ Nagaland got its first Astro Turf Football Pitch at Indira Gandhi Stadium in Kohima on the occasion of 100th Birth Anniversary of the legendary footballer, Dr. T. Ao .
- ✦ Inaugurating the Astro Turf Football Pitch today, Nagaland Chief Minister Mr. Neiphiu Rio said it is a landmark occasion for the state to have its first Astro Turf Pitch and a dream come true.
- ✦ The Chief Minister expressed hope that the installation of the first Astro turf stadium will begin the process of sports development in regard to football in Nagaland.

3. Vani 1st Indian to grab Australian LPGA card

- ✦ Vani Kapoor became the first Indian to earn a card for the Australian Ladies PGA Tour (LPGA) after coming through its first-ever Qualifying Tournament at the Ballarat Golf Club.
- ✦ Vani shot rounds of 71, 78 and 69 to finish at a 2-over 218 and was tied-12th with three others. The top-20 from a field of 81 earned the playing rights on the Australian LPGA.
- ✦ Diksha Dagar, Astha Madan and Ridhima Dilawari also participated in the qualifying tournament but they could not grab the Card of LPGA.



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