

**GENERAL AWARENESS UPDATES:- (1<sup>st</sup> January – 8<sup>th</sup> January, 2018)**

- Israel has filed notice to withdraw from the UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) alongside the United States. Israel has blasted UNESCO in recent years over the organisation's criticism of Israel's occupation of East Jerusalem and its decision to grant full membership to Palestine in 2011.
- Arunachal Pradesh has been declared open defecation free ahead of the national deadline of October 2, 2019. The milestone was achieved after the state announced an incentive of Rs 8,000 in addition to the Rs 12,000-grant provided by the Centre for building toilets. Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Haryana were declared open defecation free states in October 2017.
- Vidarbha defeated Delhi to win Ranji Trophy for the first time.
- The citizen of Assam witnessed the release of the first draft of National Register of Citizens (NRC) containing the first batch of 19 million names of genuine Indian citizens in compliance with the Supreme Court's orders.
- Women and Child Development Minister Maneka Gandhi inaugurated an online portal NARI in New Delhi for the empowerment of women. NARI stands for National Repository of Information for Women.
- Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) introduced value-added tax (VAT). These are the first two countries in the Gulf which have introduced the VAT system.
- Indian golfer Shiv Kapur won the Royal Cup at Pattaya, which is his third Asian Tour title of 2017.
- The Centre unveiled the contours of the 'Electoral Bonds' scheme, which seeks to ensure the flow of clean money to political parties, without revealing the donors' names. The electoral bonds will be a bearer instrument in the nature of a Promissory Note and an interest-free banking instrument. A citizen of India or a body incorporated in India will be eligible to purchase the bond from specified branches of the State Bank of India. The bonds can be purchased for any value in multiples of Rs.1,000; Rs.10,000; Rs.1 lakh; Rs.10 lakh; and Rs.1 crore.
- The Cabinet has approved the signing and implementation of the MoU between Ministry of Road Transport and Highways and 'Transport for London' to improve public transport in the country.
- State-owned gas utility GAIL (Gas Authority of India Limited) has commissioned the country's second-largest rooftop solar power plant in Uttar Pradesh. The firm has installed a 5.76 MWp (Mega Watt peak) solar plant at its petrochemical complex at Pata in Uttar Pradesh. Tata Power Solar commissioned a 12 MW solar rooftop project in Amritsar, Punjab which is India's largest rooftop solar plant.
- The 171st Araadhanai Music Festival of one of the Trinities of Carnatic music Saint Thyagaraja began in Thiruvaiyaru, Tamil Nadu.
- G Sathiyam has become India's highest-ranked player in the latest International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) rankings. The current ranking of Sathiyam is 49. As for the women, Manika Batra is topping the world chart among Indians at 62th.

- The unusual and very efficient whistle language commonly called "bird language" used as a means of communication by villagers in remote northern Turkey entered the UNESCO list of Intangible Cultural Heritage. UNESCO has accepted the "bird language" of Black Sea villagers as an endangered part of world heritage in need of urgent protection.
- Pakistan has allowed Chinese currency Yuan for exports and financing transactions. According to Pakistan, external affairs ministry, both public and private sector enterprises of Pakistan and China are free to choose Yuan for bilateral trade and investment activities.
- Customers will not have to pay any transaction charges for payments through debit card, BHIM app and other payment made for up to Rs 2,000. Union Cabinet had recently approved a proposal that government will bear the merchant discount rate (MDR) charges on transactions up to Rs 2,000 made through debit cards, BHIM UPI or Aadhaar-enabled payment systems to promote digital transactions. The merchant discount rate (MDR) will be borne by the government for two years with effect from January 1, 2018 by reimbursing the same to banks.
- HDFC Bank has announced a partnership with Rajasthan Government to promote and nurture startups in the state.
- Nepal has banned solo climbers from scaling its mountains, including Mount Everest, in a bid to reduce accidents. Avtar Singh Cheema was the first Indian to climb Mount Everest successfully.
- The Reserve Bank of India has initiated 'prompt corrective action' (PCA) against Allahabad Bank over its high bad loans. There are total 11 banks on which RBI has initiated PCA till date.
- The Andhra Pradesh Grameena Vikas Bank (APGVB) has operationalised its first desktop ATM in Telangana. The mini-ATM within the branch premises will facilitate customers to withdraw small amounts.
- The world's biggest cleanliness survey 'Swachh Sarvekshan Survey 2018' was launched in India by PM Narendra Modi. It will be conducted from the 4th of January to 10th of March. The main objective of Swachh Sarvekshan is to encourage large-scale citizen participation and create awareness towards making towns and cities a cleaner and better place to live in. Under the first survey, Swachh Sarvekshan-2016, Mysuru had topped the list. In Swachh Sarvekshan-2017, Indore had emerged as the cleanest city.
- The Indian economy will expand by 6.5% in 2017-18, according to the new data of the government's Central Statistics Office (CSO). The Indian economy grew at 7.1% in 2016-17.
- Meghalaya signed the Host City Contract with the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) for hosting the 39th National Games in 2022.
- West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee unveiled the official emblem of the state government, which was recently approved by the centre. The logo highlights the Ashoka emblem on the top with the theme of "Biswa Bangla" at the centre.
- The Himalayan Hydro Expo 2018 kicked off at Kathmandu, the capital Nepal. The basic objective of Expo is to unleash massive hydropower potential of Nepal and bring all stakeholders under one roof.

- Iceland has become the first country in the world to legalise equal pay between men and women. Iceland has been ranked by the World Economic Forum (WEF) as the world's most gender-equal country. Iceland Capital- Reykjavik, President- Guoni Th. Johannsson.
- Telangana Industrial Health Clinic Ltd (TIHCL), a State government initiative, has got RBI clearance to register and function as a non-banking finance company (NBFC).
- Paytm Payments Bank has partnered IndusInd Bank to introduce a facility to create a fixed deposit (FD) when the customer balance exceeds Rs. 1 lakh at the end of the day. Paytm Payments Bank customers can redeem their deposits instantly, anytime without paying any pre-closure or miscellaneous charges and can earn up to 6.85 percent annual interest. Paytm Payments Bank MD and CEO- Renu Satti. IndusInd Bank Chairman- R. Seshasayee.
- The managing director of the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS), Ravi Menon, has been named the best central bank governor in Asia-Pacific for 2018 by UK-based magazine, The Banker.
- Haryana has become the first state in the country to launch High-Risk Pregnancy (HRP) Portal. This innovative web application has been designed to track every high-risk pregnant woman till 42 days after delivery.
- Minister of State (I/C) of the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region Jitendra Singh announced that Arunachal Pradesh would get its first Film and Television Institute, being set up by the Union Government. This would be the second such one in the country. The first Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) was set up in Pune. Current Chairman of FTII Pune is Anupam Kher.
- Team Liverpool sold Brazilian football player Philippe Coutinho to Team Barcelona for 160 million Euros (\$192 million). With this, transfer of Philippe Coutinho has become the 2nd Most Expensive transfer in World Soccer History. World's most expensive transfer is Brazilian football player Neymar's transfer from Barcelona to Paris Saint Germain team in 200 million pounds in 2017.
- Gilles Simon of France has lifted the inaugural Tata Open Maharashtra Tennis trophy.
- The vibrant Khelo India logo, reflecting the freshness, agility and vitality of New India was launched by the Union Minister of State (I/C) Youth Affairs and Sports Rajyavardhan Rathore. The three-stroke Khelo India logo, designed by Ogilvy India, has in-built modularity, allowing plenty of adaptability and flexibility into endless pictorial forms.
- Legendary astronaut John Young, who walked on the Moon and later commanded the first space shuttle flight, has died at 87. Young was the first to fly into space six times. He was the ninth man to walk on the Moon.