

**RBI holds rates on inflation risk**

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) held the policy repo rate at 6% as the central bank's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) raised the estimate for fourth-quarter inflation and flagged concerns about the future outlook for price gains.

- Considering the factors such as sharp rise in domestic petrol and diesel prices etc., MPC estimated Inflation for Q4 to be 5.1%.
- The central bank also projected retail inflation in the range of 5.1-5.6% for the first half of 2018-19, while assuming a normal monsoon — effectively ruling out any rate reduction in the near future.
- For the second half of the next fiscal, inflation is projected at 4.5-4.6%, with 'risks tilted to the upside'.

Among the upside risks to inflation, the MPC noted that pick-up in global growth could exert further pressure on crude oil, with the higher minimum support price to farmers, announced in the Budget, adding to the uncertainty.

The RBI pared its 2017-18 GVA growth estimate to 6.6%, from December's 6.7%.

**UjjwalaYojana to benefit eight crore women now**

The Union Cabinet approved the increase in the target for the PradhanMantriUjjwalaYojana, meant to provide cooking-gas connections to rural women, to eight crore from the earlier five crore.

- The Cabinet also approved an additional allocation for the scheme of Rs 4,800 crore.
- The deadline for achieving the target is 2020.

**INTERNATIONAL**

**Nasheed, renews call for 'liberator' India's help**

Maldivians see India's potential role in resolving the crisis gripping the island not as an occupation, but as "liberating assistance", exiled former President Mohamed Nasheed said, reiterating his earlier call for Indian intervention.

- Amid heightening political upheaval in the Indian Ocean island , culminating in President Abdulla Yameen declaring a state of emergency.

- Following the declaration of emergency rule, a wave of high-profile arrests were made which includes Supreme Court Chief Justice Abdulla Saeed and another judge of the court and Former President Gayoom.
- Mr. Nasheed sought Indian military intervention to release jailed dissidents, he said: "They [India] come, they sort out the situation, and they promptly leave... it is because a vast majority of our people want India to intervene that I sought India's help".
- He was referring to a coup attempt that India helped put down, on then President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom's request in 1988.

### **Kim Jong-un's sister to visit S. Korea**

Kim Yo-jong, sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un will visit the South this week for the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics, — the first member of North Korea's ruling family ever to do so.

- According to experts the visit will mark Kim Yo-jong's debut on the international stage
- Kim Yo-jong, 30, was promoted in October to be an alternative member of the party's powerful politburo, the decision-making body presided over by her brother.
- She will meet South Korean President Moon Jae-in and give him a personal letter from her brother, expressing his hopes for a successful hosting of the Olympics and a desire to improve inter-Korean ties.

The two Koreas have been divided by the Demilitarised Zone since the end of the Korean War in 1953, and Pyongyang's pursuit of nuclear weapons has seen it subjected to multiple rounds of United Nations Security Council sanctions.

But the Olympics have triggered a rapid rapprochement on the peninsula.

## **STATE-TELANGANA**

### **Foreign footfall in TS rose by 8% in 2017**

Foreign tourist arrivals to the State rose modestly last year while domestic tourist arrivals fell sharply.

- Telangana registered 1.8 lakh foreign tourist arrivals in 2017, about 8% more than that of previous year. The trend in foreign tourist arrivals has increased since the State was created in 2014.
- In its year of creation, Telangana saw the arrival of only 75,000 foreign tourists.

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- Domestic tourist arrivals, as shown by the tourism department data, fell by about 3 crore tourists compared to 2015 and 2016.
- Tourism Secretary B. Venkatesham attributed it to Godavari and Krishna Pushkaralu not being held last year. "Pushkaralu bring in large footfall. Without such events in 2017, the number dipped. This year, however, we expected the number to be higher due to Medaramjatara," he said.
- The Sammakka-SarakkaJatara in Medaram, which concluded earlier this month, is expected to raise the number by 1 crore.

While Hyderabad remained the most visited district for both Indian and foreign tourists, like previous years, RajannaSiricilla district saw a big jump in domestic footfall, thanks to the attraction of the Vemulawada temple.

- Put together, Hyderabad, Ranga Reddy, Medchal and Vikarabad welcomed 1.4 crore domestic visitors.

Though foreign footfalls are on the rise, the department admits the numbers are mainly driven by arrivals for meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions (MICE).

The government aims to make Telangana a State with million-plus foreign tourist footfall by 2025