

## **January 17<sup>th</sup> news:**

### **International:**

#### **European Union to remove Panama, UAE, five others from tax haven blacklist**

The European Union will remove Panama, South Korea and six other countries from its recently unveiled EU tax blacklist at a meeting of finance ministers next week, a European Union official said on 16<sup>th</sup> January.

The United Arab Emirates, Tunisia, Mongolia, Macau, Grenada and Barbados are also to be struck from the list. The reversal comes just a few weeks after the EU announced an original blacklist of 17 non-EU states, which drew the furious reaction from several of the states targeted.

**Panama inks multilateral tax pact:** Panama, a popular tax haven that was in the eye of a data-leak storm dubbed 'Panama Papers' in 2016, has finally signed an international agreement that would pave the way for exchange of financial account information with the international community.

By signing this agreement — CRS Multilateral Competent Authority Agreement (CRS-MCAA) — at the OECD headquarters in Paris on January 15, Panama has re-affirmed its commitment to start the OECD/G-20 Common Reporting Standards (CRS) exchanges with all interested partners from September this year. The signing of the CRS-MCAA will allow Panama to activate bilateral exchange relationships with the 97 other jurisdictions that have so far joined the agreement.

### **National:**

#### **Centre scraps Haj subsidy, says funds will be used for community's welfare**

The Centre has abolished the Haj subsidy, Minorities Affairs Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqi said on 16<sup>th</sup> January. He said the Supreme Court had in 2012 asked the Centre to phase out the subsidy by 2022, but the Narendra Modi government has decided to implement the decision in 2018 itself as a symbol of its commitment towards "empowerment without appeasement" of the minority communities.

Naqi said the Centre would use the money for welfare of minority communities. He said a record number of 175,000 Muslims would undertake the pilgrimage this year from India. He said the Centre had spent over Rs 2.5 billion last year towards Haj subsidy.

The Saudi Arabian government has agreed to allow Indians to go on Haj via sea and officials of the two countries will work out the modalities.

The sea route is likely to be much cheaper. He said Haj pilgrims from certain regions would be free to choose their port of departure and this would bring down the cost by up to 70 per cent on some routes. The minister said, in a first, over 1,300 women would go on Haj without a mehram (male guardian), a practice done away with from this year. Woman Haj assistants would accompany them and the government has made arrangements for their stay in Saudi Arabia

**Bilateral:****BBIN Motor Vehicles Agreement India, Bangladesh, Nepal approve Passenger protocol**

Bangladesh, India, and Nepal agreed on the text of operating procedures for passenger vehicle movement (Passenger protocol) in sub-region under Bangladesh - Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN) Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA). The decision in this regard was taken at a meeting of High-level officials of three countries held in Bengaluru, Karnataka. It was convened and chaired by India's Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH).

**Sports:****Union Minister Rajyavardhan Rathore launches Khelo India Anthem**

Sports Minister Rajyavardhan Rathore made the announcement during the launch of the official anthem and mascot of Khelo India School Games, beginning January 31. Now when an athlete wins a medal at Commonwealth Games, Asian Games and Olympics, the coach gets the incentive.

The video features India's eminent sports personalities such as Sardar Singh, Sunil Chhetri, Devendra Jhajharia, Baichung Bhutia, Pullela Gopichand, Leander Paes, Mary Kom, Akhil Kumar, Sakshi Malik and Saina Nehwal.