



Current Affairs - July to December 2018

Month Type



- [451 Current Affairs were found in Last Six Months for Type - International](#)

(Showing **293** Important Ones)

International

1. Forbes released 4th annual *America's Richest Self-Made Women* list 2018 -

It lists 60 women with combined net worth of \$71 billion, with minimum net worth needed is \$320 million.

Top 5 are -

Rank	Name	Company	Net Worth (\$B)
1.	Diane Hendricks	ABC Supply	\$4.9 billion
2.	Marian Ilitch	Little Caesars	\$4.3 billion
3.	Judy Faulkner	Epic Systems	\$3.5 billion
4.	Meg Whitman	Hewlett Packard Enterprise	\$3.3 billion
5.	Johnelle Hunt	J.B. Hunt Transport Enterprise	\$3.2 billion

Actress Kylie Jenner is notable entrant in list as at just 21 years, she has built a \$900 million cosmetics fortune with virtually no employees or capital. Kylie Cosmetics launched 2 years ago has sold over \$630 million worth of makeup accessories.

2 Indian-origin Women named in List. Jayshree Ullal (CEO of Arista Networks, ranked 18th) has net worth of 1.3 billion dollars. Neerja Sethi is Vice president of Syntel and ranked 21st.

2. World Bank mandated Commonwealth Bank of Australia (CBA) to issue world's first blockchain-based bond. The Kangaroo bond, referring to foreign bonds issued in Australia in local currency, has been named bond-i, an acronym standing for Blockchain Offered New Debt Instrument. (It's also a reference to Bondi Beach, an iconic spot in Sydney).

Bond-I is Ethereum blockchain bond denominated in Australian dollars, making it Kangaroo bond (referring to foreign bonds issued in Australia in local currency).

3. World Trade Organization (WTO) approved constitution of panels to review complaints against US decision to put tariffs of 25% on steel and 10% on aluminium.

WTO Dispute Settlement Body will create separate panels for complaints by European Union, China, Canada, Mexico, Norway and Russia, after US stated it would not agree to a single panel to hear all of them.

DSB also agreed for a panel which will review *certain Chinese measures pertaining to the protection of intellectual property rights* as demanded by US.

4. 18th International Children's Film Festival began in Kolkata, to screen 36 films from 17 countries. It is organised by Cine Central in collaboration with UNICEF.

5. 2018 *Soft Power 30* Index, by UK-based firm Portland and University of Southern California -

UK topped the list, with France placed second. List does not feature India. Germany was ranked 3rd, followed by USA.

India does not feature in global list, but is ranked 8th 10 countries in Asia.

6. 2018 Global Hunger Index (GHI), prepared by global NGOs Concern Worldwide (Ireland) and Welthungerhilfe (Germany).

Level of hunger and undernutrition worldwide fell to 20.9, down from 29.2 in 2000.

India was ranked 103rd out of 119 qualifying countries.

15 countries with 2018 GHI scores of less than 5 are not assigned individual ranks, but rather are collectively ranked 1-15. These are - Belarus, Cuba, Estonia, Kuwait, Latvia, Croatia, Montenegro, Romania, Turkey, Ukraine, Uruguay, Costa Rica, Chile, Lithuania, Bosnia & Herzegovina.

- Bottom 5 - Central African Republic (119), Chad (118), Yemen (117), Madagascar (116), Zambia (115)
 - Neighbours - Bangladesh (86), China (25), Nepal (72), Pakistan (106), Sri Lanka (67)
- 7. ▶ 2018 Global Liveability Index released by Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) -
 - Austrian capital Vienna ranked as world's most liveable city among 140 major cities.
 - Top 5 -
 - Vienna (Austria)
 - Melbourne (Australia)
 - Osaka (Japan)
 - Calgary (Canada)
 - Sydney (Australia)
 - Bottom 10 (Least Liveable) -
 - Port Moresby (Papua New Guinea) (136th)
 - Karachi (Pakistan) (137th)
 - Lagos (Nigeria) (138th)
 - Dhaka (Bangladesh) (139th)
 - Damascus (Syria) (140th)
 - No Indian cities were ranked in top ten or bottom ten of this edition of index. New Delhi ranked 112th and Mumbai ranked 117th position in list.
- 8. ▶ 26 countries and 11 international organisations committed to Changsha Declaration at the end of a forum on international development cooperation in Changsha, China. It focuses on agricultural and rural development, eliminate poverty and hunger.
- 9. ▶ 3rd BRICS Film Festival held in Durban (South Africa), along with International Durban Film Festival (DIFF). Last day of festival was celebrated as India Country Day. Indian winners of Film Festival -
 - Best Actress - Bhanita Das, Village Rockstars
 - Best Film - Newton by Amit Masurkar
 - Special Jury Award - Village Rockstars by Rima Das
- 10. ▶ 7 Indian companies have been listed in Fortune's 500 list 2018 of world biggest corporations, led by Indian Oil Corp (137th) and followed by Reliance (148th).
 - RIL is most profitable in India and ranked 99th globally, with with Apple at top.
 - World's 500 largest companies generated \$30 trillion in profits in 2017.
 - Top 5 - Walmart, State Grid, Sinopec Group (China), China National Petroleum (China), Royal Dutch Shell
- 11. ▶ A massive Earthquake of 7.5 Richter Scale along with Tsunami waves hit Palu City of Indonesia, triggering over 1000 human casualties.
- 12. ▶ According to *The Annual World Airport Traffic Report 2018* by Airport Council International (ACI) -
 - Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGI) is 16th busiest in world, by handling 63.4 million passengers in 2017.
 - First place was held by Atlanta Hartsfield-Jackson in US, handling 103.9 million passengers in 2017, followed by Beijing with 95.8 million passengers.
- 13. ▶ According to Global Soil Biodiversity Atlas prepared by World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), India faces grave danger to soil biodiversity -
 - Atlas was released as part of WWF's biennial Living Planet Report (LPR) 2018. The key aspect of this year's report was threat to soil biodiversity and pollinators, the two key drivers of biodiversity.
 - Soil Biodiversity -
 - Soil biodiversity is total community from genes to species, and varies depending on environment. The immense diversity in soil allows for great variety of ecosystem services that benefit species that inhabit it.
 - India was coloured red on atlas and is among countries whose soil biodiversity faces the highest level of risk
 - Pollinators -
 - 150 million bee colonies were needed to meet pollination requirements of about 50 million hectares of agricultural land in India, only 1.2 million colonies were present. Pollination is process by which plant pollen is transferred from male reproductive organs to female reproductive organs to form seeds.
- 14. ▶ According to International Monetary Fund (IMF), Macau in China would overtake oil-rich Qatar with highest per-capita gross domestic product of any country or jurisdiction on earth, by 2020. Macau is only place in China where casinos are legal and its gross domestic product has more than tripled from about \$34,500 per capita in 2001.

15. ▶ According to International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-Biotech Applications (ISAAA) 'Global Status of Commercialized Biotech/ GM Crops in 2017' report -
 - ✎ India with 11.4 million hectares (mh) has world's 5th largest area cultivated under genetically modified (GM) crops in 2017. India's entire GM crop area is under single crop BT Cotton incorporating genes from *Bacillus thuringiensis* or Bt soil bacterium coding for resistance against heliothis bollworm insect pests.
 - ✎ USA has highest area under transgenic crops (75 mh), followed by Brazil (50.2 mh), Argentina (23.6 mh) and Canada (13.1 mh).
 - ✎ In 2017, farmers planted 189.8 mh under transgenic crops, as against 1.7 mh in 1996, when transgenic crops were grown commercially for first time.
 - ✎ Highest share in world's total 189.8 mh GM crop area in 2017 is of soyabean (94.1 mh), followed by maize (59.7 mh), cotton (24.1 mh).
16. ▶ According to a recent study, earth may enter an irreversible hothouse condition, with global temperatures rising by 4 - 5 degrees and sea levels rising 10 - 60 metres, even if targets under 2015 Paris climate deal are met.
 - ✎ Currently, global average temperatures are just over 1 degree Celsius above pre-industrial and rising at 0.17 degree Celsius per decade.
 - ✎ Keeping global warming to within 1.5-2 degrees Celsius as agreed in 2015 Paris climate agreement by around 200 countries.
17. ▶ According to a study by Seattle-based Institute of Health Metrics and Evaluation published in *The Lancet* -
 - ✎ India ranks 158th in world for its investments in education and healthcare, among 195 Surveyed countries.
 - ✎ Finland tops the list in two key sectors.
 - ✎ USA ranked 27th, while China placed at 44th and Pakistan 164th.
18. ▶ According to a study named Economic Freedom in the World by Centre for Civil Society (CCS) along with Canada's Fraser Institute -
 - ✎ India stands at 96th rank out of 162 countries in economic freedom.
 - ✎ Hong Kong (1) and Singapore (2) are at top of list. New Zealand (3), Switzerland (4), Ireland (5) are others in Top 5.
 - ✎ Among BRICS nations, Russia and South Africa are ahead of India at 87th and 94th place and China and Brazil are behind it at 108th and 144th positions.
 - ✎ 10 lowest-ranked countries - Sudan, Guinea-Bissau, Angola, Central African Republic, Republic of Congo, Syria, Algeria, Argentina, Libya and last-place Venezuela.
19. ▶ According to global airlines events organiser Routesonline -
 - ✎ Bengaluru Kempegowda International Airport Secured Second Spot and Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport Secured Sixth Spot as fastest growing airport in world during January to June 2018.
 - ✎ Tokyo's Haneda Airport topped the Survey.
20. ▶ According to recent report, Pakistan could become world's 5th largest nuclear weapons state after Russia, United States, France and China in terms of possession of total nuclear warheads. Pakistan currently has 140 to 150 nuclear warheads and its stockpile is expected to increase to 220 to 250 by 2025 (surpassing United Kingdom).
 - ✎ The current estimate of 140 to 150 nuclear weapons with Pakistan exceeds projection made by US Defense Intelligence Agency in 1999 that Pakistan would have 60 to 80 warheads by 2020.
21. ▶ According to report by United Nation's World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO), patents granted by India increased by 50% in 2017, from 8,248 in 2016 to 12,387 in 2017. Globally, 1.4 million patents were granted in 2017. China led with 4,20,144 granted patents and was followed by US with 3,18,829.
22. ▶ According to research firm Canalys, India overtaken US to become second largest smartphone market in the July-September 2018 quarter. India saw shipment of 40.4 million units during third quarter and was second to China where 100.6 million smartphones. USA was at 40 million units.
23. ▶ According to review by Asia Pacific Policy Group on Money Laundering (APPG), Pakistan's recent action against terror financing, particularly on legal front were found to be "unsatisfactory". Note that Pakistan was placed on Financial Action Task Force (FATF) grey list in February 2018 for failing to curb terror funding. APPG examines cases of all countries on the grey and black lists and reports to FATF.
24. ▶ Acting New Zealand PM Winston Peters demanded Australia to change their flag, As the Flag of New Zealand looks similar to that of Australia. New Zealand flag was adopted 52 years before Australian flag and was adopted in 1902, replacing union jack. Australian flag was adopted in 1954.
25. ▶ African Nations Ethiopia and Eritrea declared end to their long conflict, with marking launch of a commercial flight from Ethiopia to Eritrea in 20 years.
 - ✎ Eritrea was once a province of Ethiopia. In 1993, Eritrea separated after an independence struggle. Demarcation of shared border caused a brutal conflict in 1998-2000, in which 80,000 people were killed.

26. ▶ After USA withdrawing recently from UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC), UN General Assembly elected Iceland to replace USA. Iceland's term will be valid until December 31, 2019.
27. ▶ After recent launch of Fateh Mobin (Bright Conqueror) short-range ballistic missile, Iran unveiled first domestically manufactured fighter jet nicknamed Kowsar. Its a fourth-generation fighter with advanced avionics and multi-purpose radar.
28. ▶ Agriculture and Environment ministries along with UN body Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) launched agriculture project that seeks to bring transformative change in farm sector through conservation of biodiversity and forest landscapes.
 - ✎ It will be implemented in Madhya Pradesh, Mizoram, Odisha, Rajasthan and Uttarakhand.
 - ✎ It is being funded with US \$33.5 million grant from Global Environment Facility (GEF).
 - ✎ Existing unsustainable agricultural practices have resulted in depletion of water tables, biodiversity and habitat loss for wild species and land and soil degradation which have contributed to the environmental crisis in India. To overcome it, there is need for alternative paradigm to current extractive methods of agricultural production systems.
29. ▶ Airports Authority of India (AAI) partnered with US Trade and Development Agency (USTDA) to develop a roadmap for modernisation of its air traffic services (air traffic management (ATM) and communication, navigation and surveillance (CNS)).
30. ▶ American Express became first foreign payments company allowed to build a network in China, with a 50:50 joint venture with Chinese fintech firm LianLian to set up the payment network.
31. ▶ American Space Exploration Firm SpaceX launched U.S. Air Force's newest 'GPS III' satellite, to replace aging GPS 2R spacecraft launched in 1997. The solar-powered spacecraft, dubbed "Vespucci," is company's first official "National Security Space" mission. Vespucci's nickname honours Italian cartographer and explorer Amerigo Vespucci, after whom North and South America were named.
32. ▶ Amid economic crisis, Argentina central bank raised its benchmark interest by 15 percentage points to 60%, highest in world. The Argentine peso is down 50% this year against the dollar and the country's inflation is running at over 30%. Many south american nations are facing economic crisis, with neighbouring nation venezuela being under more more steep financial stress.
33. ▶ As part of its plan to connect billions of people who are still offline, Facebook will launch Athena, its own Internet satellite, early in 2019. The project is designed to *efficiently provide broadband access to unserved and underserved areas throughout the world.*
34. ▶ As per A World bank Report, India retained its position as world's top recipient of remittances in 2018, with Indians abroad sending \$80 billion back home. India is followed by China (\$67 billion), Mexico and Philippines (\$34 billion each) and Egypt (\$26 billion).
35. ▶ As per Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australia surpassed Qatar to become world's leading exporter of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) for the first time. Australia exported 6.55 million tonnes of LNG in November 2018 compared to Qatar's 6.27 million tonnes. LNG is Australia's third-largest export commodity behind coal and iron ore.
36. ▶ As per Germany's Ifo Institute for Economic Research -
 - ✎ Germany's current account surplus will remain world's largest in 2018, for 3rd year at \$299 billion, in spite of increased trade tensions. It is followed by Japan in second position with \$200 billion. Netherlands is 3rd with 110 billion dollars. From 2011, Germany's current account surplus has been consistently above the European Commission's indicative threshold of 6 % of gross domestic product (GDP).
 - ✎ Current account surplus measures flow of goods, services and investments. It is considered a positive for any economy.
 - ✎ On other hand, in terms of Current Account Deficit, USA will remain to have largest current account deficit with nearly 420 billion euros.
37. ▶ As per Global Nutriiton Report 2018 -
 - ✎ With 4.6 Crore stunted children, India tops the list. It is followed by Nigeria (1.4 crore) and Pakistan (1.07 Crore). Stunting Means low height for age, which is caused by long-term insufficient nutrient-intake and frequent infections.
38. ▶ As per International Air Transport Association (IATA), India will become world's 3rd largest aviation market by 2024. India is presently at 7th place.
39. ▶ As per International Monetary Fund, global debt reached an all-time high of 184 trillion US dollars with USA, China and Japan accounted for over half of it. On average, world's debt exceeds 86,000 USD dollars per person, which is over 2.5 times average income per-capita.
40. ▶ As per Oxford Economics report, top 10 fastest growing cities in the world from 2019 to 2035 are in India -
 - ✎ Surat, a diamond processing and trading center in Gujarat will see fastest expansion through 2035. Agra and Bangalore gets 2nd and 3rd spot respectively. Hyderabad is in the fourth place, followed by Nagpur, Tirupur, Rajkot, Tiruchirappalli, Chennai and Vijayawada.
 - ✎ In *Africa* - Tanzanian port of Dar es Salaam is fastest City, while top spot in *Europe* is held by Armenian capital of Yerevan, San Jose a proxy for Silicon Valley will be best performer in *North America*.
41. ▶ As per WHO's Global Nutrition Report 2018, India has highest number of 'stunted' children in world (nearly third of global count).

- ▶ Globally, Stunting (*low height for age*) among children aged under five has fallen from 32.6 per cent in 2000 to 22.2 per cent in 2017.
 - ▶ About 46.6 million children in India suffer from stunting due to poor nutrition intake in long term and repeated infections. India also tops in number of *Wasted* children (*Low Weight for height*), amounting 25.5 million.
 - ▶ In creating this report, International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) used district-level aggregate data from 2015-2016 National and Family Health Survey (NFHS) in India along with data from UNICEF/WHO/World Bank Group.
42. ▶ As per a UN Report, Ozone layer that shields life from cancer-causing solar rays is recovering at a rate of 1 - 3 per decade, reversing years of dangerous depletion caused by the release of harmful chemicals. It may get fully healed by 2061.
- ▶ Montreal Protocol, which was signed in 1987, has been termed as Most Successful environmental agreement ever. It was an International agreement for banning industrial gases such as chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), which harm Ozone Layer.
43. ▶ As per a UN report on 'state of food security and nutrition in the world' number of undernourished globally increased to 821 million in 2017. Africa has highest prevalence of undernourishment, affecting almost 21 % of population (more than 25 crore people). Situation is also deteriorating in South America, where PoU increased from 4.7 % in 2014 to a 5 % in 2017.
44. ▶ As per index compiled by Arton Capital, Top three most powerful passports are - UAE (1), Singapore (2), Germany (3).
45. ▶ As per report by Global Carbon Project, 2017's top 4 emitters were China (27%), US (15%), European Union (10%) and India (7%).
46. ▶ As per report by 'Which? Travel', Iceland is safest country to visit, while India is the fourth dangerous. UAE and Singapore are 2nd & 3rd respectively.
- ▶ South Africa is least safe, owing to high risk of crime, health and terrorism. Turkey was second most dangerous, Thailand is 3rd least safe and India is 4th least safe.
47. ▶ Asian Development Bank (ADB) signed arrangement with World Bank to enact a single framework to make co-financed projects more efficient. ADB's first Alternative Procurement Arrangement (APA) with World Bank will allow procedures on co-financed projects to follow a single procurement framework, in line with ADB's Strategy 2030.
- ▶ Strategy 2030 is ADB's long-term plan to respond effectively to Asia and Pacific region's changing needs.
48. ▶ Asian Development Bank released its 2018 Flagship Statistical Report for Asia and the Pacific. This year's report is focusing on: Technological Innovation for Agricultural Statistics. As per the report -
- ▶ Asia and Pacific region continues to grow in GDP and labour force has been reduced and is shifting from agriculture towards employment in industry and services.
 - ▶ Around 780 million people from the region moved out of extreme poverty from 2002 to 2013,
 - ▶ The GDP has increased from 30.1% in 2000 to 42.6% in 2017 (at 2011 purchasing power parity),
 - ▶ Use of satellite imagery and remote sensing technology has improved data accuracy.
49. ▶ Asian Economic Integration Report 2018 presented by Asian Development Bank, with focus on progress in cooperation and migration.
- ▶ India hosts highest number of outward international migrants in 2017, followed by China and Bangladesh. About one third of international migrants were from Asia in 2017.
 - ▶ FDI in Asian region remain stable with 517.5 billion in 2017.
 - ▶ This year in the report there was a special chapter "Toward Optimal Provision of Regional Public Goods in Asia and the Pacific". It stressed on that optimal provision of Regional public goods can be a solution for development challenges in era of economic interdependence.
50. ▶ At International Court of Justice, India supported Mauritius over its claim on Chagos Islands, which are under United Kingdom's control in Indian Ocean..
51. ▶ Australia declined signing UN Global Compact for Migration (agreed upon in July 2018), saying that it would undermine its existing immigration policies.
- ▶ According to Australian government, nation's immigration policy already promotes safe, orderly and regular migration. Government feels that adopting it would risk encouraging illegal entry to Australia and reverse hard-won successes in combating people-smuggling trade. Australia's harsh immigration policy detains asylum-seekers who try to reach the country by boat on remote Pacific islands.
 - ▶ US has already rejected this UN pact.
52. ▶ Bahrain's Economic Development Board signed MoU with Maharashtra Government to provide a framework for Co-operation, to promote FinTech in respective markets.
53. ▶ Bangladesh President Abdul Hamid approved controversial Digital Security Bill 2018, combining colonial-era Official Secrets Act with tough new provisions such as arrests without warrant. It aims to deal harshly with cybercrimes, including hurting religious sentiment, spreading negative propoganda against 1971 Liberation War and Bangabandhu (Sheikh Mujibur Rahman).

- ✎ It also covers illegal activities in e-transactions and spreading defamatory data under its ambit. It provides for 7 - 14 years imprisonment and monetary fines of 25 lakh - 1 crore Taka.
 - ✎ Law faced widespread vocal opposition from rights groups and journalists that it could endanger freedom of speech— especially on social media. The law has also drawn opposition internationally including from USA.
54. ▶ Blood Moon 2018 or century's longest total lunar eclipse of 1 hour 43 minutes occurred on July 27-28, 2018. It was majorly seen in Eastern Hemisphere including Central Asia, Eastern Africa and South East Asia.
- ✎ Moon was gradually covered by Earth's shadow and totality phase was seen on July 28 and total eclipse lasted up to 2h 43m. During this time, Moon was located at apogee (i.e. at farthest from Earth) in its orbit and moved at slower speed in its orbit, making it longest duration of total eclipse of this century.
 - ✎ Such long duration of total lunar eclipses earlier had occurred on July 16, 2000 for totality duration of 1 hour 46 minutes and on June 15, 2011 for totality duration of 1 hour 40 minutes.
55. ▶ Canada agreed to sign a trade deal with USA and Mexico, revamping North American Free Trade Agreement. New deal has been named as *United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA)*.
- ✎ USMCA modernises what was covered by NAFTA by adding provisions on digital trade and intellectual property.
 - ✎ It would allow US farmers greater access to Canada's dairy market and address concerns about potential US auto tariffs. The pact will come up for review every six years.
 - ✎ Canada will export 2.6 million vehicles to USA, after 25 % global autos tariffs imposed by US on national security grounds. Deal, however, failed to resolve U.S. tariffs on Canada's steel and aluminum exports.
 - ✎ Background -
 - ✎ USA President Trump threatened to end 25-year-old North American Free Trade Agreement into a bilateral pact with Mexico and tax Canadian vehicle exports to USA if Canada failed to sign deal before September 30 midnight deadline. Canada, USA's 2nd largest trading partner, was left out when the US and Mexico had reached a preliminary deal in late August to revamp NAFTA.
56. ▶ Canada legalised possession and use of recreational cannabis (also called Marijuana), becoming 2nd country to do so After Uruguay.
57. ▶ Central Asian Nation Turkmenistan launched its first messaging app BizBarde. ex-Soviet Nation Turkmenistan has blocked Western social services including Twitter, Facebook and Whatsapp.
58. ▶ Central Asian Nation Tajikistan inaugurated a USD 3.9 billion hydro-electric power plant, a mega project that will eliminate domestic energy shortages and will enable exporting electricity to Afghanistan and Pakistan. It is Built on Vakhsh River and expected to reach height of 335 metres, becoming world's tallest hydro-electric dam.
59. ▶ Central Indonesia's Mount Soputan volcano erupted with ash going upto 7.5 km high in sky.
- ✎ Indonesia is highly prone to earthquakes and volcanoes as it is located on *the Pacific Ring of Fire*, a major area in Pacific Ocean, spread approx 25000 miles. 75% of world's volcanoes are located in this region.
60. ▶ China and Myanmar signed an agreement to build a port in Myanmar's Kyaukpyu town along the Bay of Bengal. China will fund 70% of the project, while the remaining 30% will be funded by Myanmar.
- ✎ China has been in India's Vicinity as it has helped build port in Gwadar in Pakistan, Hambantota in Sri Lanka and Chittagong port in Bangladesh.
61. ▶ China and Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) started off their first joint maritime exercises in Zhanjiang (China), to ease regional tensions linked to rival claims in South China Sea.
62. ▶ China completed deployment of its indigenously developed BeiDou Navigation Satellite System (BDS) constellation with successful launch of 2 more satellites. They will work with 17 other BDS-3 satellites already in space. BDS will be 4th global satellite navigation system after GPS (USA), Russia's GLONASS and European Union's Galileo.
- ✎ BDS will become global in 2020 with over 30 satellites.
 - ✎ India is also building its navigational system called Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS), with an operational name of NAVIC (7 Satellites).
63. ▶ China is planning bullet trains from Kolkata to Kunming City of China, expected to traverse through Myanmar and Bangladesh. The service is also expected to give a thrust to trade and commerce in the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) Economic Corridor.
- ✎ BCIM project is projected to run through Mandalay in Myanmar, Chittagong and Dhaka in Bangladesh, terminating in Kolkata.
64. ▶ China launched 6 Yunhai-2 atmospheric environment research satellites and a test communication satellite of Hongyan constellation into orbit. Yunhai-2 satellites will study environment and first test satellite of Hongyan constellation will be used to verify function of mobile communications in low earth orbit (LEO).
65. ▶ China launched an optical remote sensing satellite which will be used to monitor its Belt and Road Initiative, named Gaofen-11.

66. ▶ China launched its first communication satellite to offer broadband internet services to users worldwide, as CASIC's (China Aerospace Science and Industry Corporation) first satellite under Hongyun project. It aims to rival companies which have similar plans for providing Internet services worldwide.
- ▶ Hongyun Project began in September 2016. Under this, China plans to give broadband internet connectivity to users globally by building a space-based communications network.
 - ▶ CASIC will be placing than 150 Hongyun satellites on orbits about 1,000 km above ground around 2023.
 - ▶ OneWeb, a USA Firm, will launch 648 low-Earth orbit microsattellites by end of 2019 to provide broadband services.
67. ▶ China launched its Centispace-1-s1 satellite, on a Kuaizhou-1A low-cost solid-fuel carrier rocket.
68. ▶ China pledged \$60 billion of financial assistance to Africa, announced at 3rd Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) held in Beijing. FOCAC excludes Swaziland (recently renamed to Eswatini).
- ▶ Out of \$60 billion offered, China will disburse \$15 billion as aid, interest-free loans and concessional loans, \$20 billion as credit line, channel \$10 billion into special fund for China-Africa development and \$5 billion special fund will be set up only for African imports.
69. ▶ China successfully launched a new marine satellite called HY-1C aboard a Long March-2C rocket. It will aim at better monitor its maritime waters and study impact of climate change.
70. ▶ China successfully tested its first hypersonic aircraft called Xingkong-2 *Starry Sky-2*, capable of flying at speed 5 - 6 times that of Sound. It attained top speed of 4563 miles (7344 kilometers) per hour (speed of sound is 1235 km/h). It is difficult to trace this spacecraft due to its excessive speed.
71. ▶ China tested the world's largest unmanned transport drone which can carry a payload of 1.5 tonnes, called Feihong-98 (FH-98). It has Max takeoff weight of 5.25 tonnes, capacity of 1.5 tonnes and 15 cubic metres, a flight height of 4,500 metres, speed of 180 KMPH, and a maximum range of 1200 kms.
- ▶ China is also planning to put a 'moon' of its own in the night sky by 2020, to replace conventional street lamps and save electricity.
 - ▶ Chengdu city in southwestern Sichuan province of China is developing illumination satellites, which will shine along with the real moon but will be eight times brighter.
 - ▶ These satellites will have a reflective coating which can reflect sunlight towards Earth similar to the moon. Placed only 500km above Earth, light reflected from the man-made moon will be more luminous than actual moon.
72. ▶ China will sale 48 Wing Loong II high-end armed drones to Pakistan, as largest export deal for drones to date to any country.
- ▶ Wing Loong II is a high-end reconnaissance, strike and multi-role endurance unmanned aerial system, capable of being fitted with air-to-surface weapons. It can payload up to 480kg (1,060lbs), including 12 laser guided missiles or YJ-9E anti-ship missiles. It can fly at maximum altitude of 9,000 metres (29,500 feet).
73. ▶ China's first private research university officially inaugurated in Zhejiang Province's Hangzhou city. Autonomy for top educational institutions has been a long-standing demand of Chinese academic community, as china's higher education bodies are mostly govt owned.
- ▶ Chinese Govt also announced to scrap setting population target in future, and give people more freedom with respect to childbirth. China wants to ease restrictions on family planning to combat ageing population.
74. ▶ China-Maldives Friendship Bridge opened for traffic, as first cross-sea bridge to be built in Maldives.
- ▶ It is 2.2 km long bridge and has four vehicle lanes and two pedestrian lanes. It connects Maldives capital city Male and neighbouring Hulhule island where island country's main international airport is located.
 - ▶ The bridge was built with Chinese grant of \$116 million, along with \$72 million as an additional loan.
75. ▶ China's BeiDou Navigation Satellite System (BDS) started offering global navigation services, to rival America's Global Positioning System (GPS). Pakistan became first foreign nation to use BeiDou system.
- ▶ BeiDou is 4th global navigation system after US's GPS, Russia's GLONASS and the European Union's Galileo.
 - ▶ India's Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS) (named NAVIC) is a regional satellite navigation system that provides accurate real-time positioning services covering region extending 1500 km around India. Plans are to expand NavIC system by increasing number of satellites from 7 to 11.
76. ▶ Chinese President Xi Jinping officially opened world's longest sea-crossing bridge.
- ▶ The \$20-billion bridge, which spans 55 kilometres, connects Hong Kong and Macau to the mainland Chinese city of Zhuhai.
 - ▶ Bridge is designed to withstand earthquakes and typhoons, built using 400,000 tonnes of steel, enough to build 60 Eiffel Towers.
 - ▶ It includes dual three-lane, oversea stretch (22.9 km) and undersea tunnel (6.7 km) which reaches depth of 44 m. The rest 25.4 km of the bridge runs over land. The two ends of tunnel of bridge are connected to two artificial islands. Bridge contains 400,000 tonnes of steel.
 - ▶ Its total cost was 120 billion yuan (\$17.3 billion).









77. ▶ Delhi government signed MOU with Seoul Metropolitan Government to work closely in the fields of environment, tourism, waste / solid waste management, infrastructure and public health.
78. ▶ Delhi government signed a twin-city agreement with the Moscow (Russia) for cooperation in fields like environment, culture and education, for the next 3 years.
79. ▶ Druzhba 2018 (Friendship 2018) joint bilateral military exercise between Pakistan and Russia held in Pakistan, as 3rd addition of this joint military drill.
80. ▶ East African Nations Ethiopia and Eritrea agreed to fully implement a peace deal reached in 2000, ending 20-year war between two countries. Eritrea seceded from Ethiopia in 1993, and the two countries fought a border war from 1998 to 2000.
81. ▶ Europe Space Agency launched a rocket named 'Aeolus' from French Guyana. This satellite will be put into orbit at an altitude of 320 kilometres (200 miles) above the Earth which will track global winds, allowing for improved weather forecasting.
82. ▶ European Central Bank launched TARGET Instant Payment Settlement (TIPS), a new system aimed at letting banks settle payments instantly across Europe, helping them compete with global tech giants like Paypal. It will let people and companies in Europe transfer euros instantly.
83. ▶ European Commission became first major economy to target achieving climate neutrality by 2050, as scientists suggest worldwide in order to avoid catastrophic global warming.
84. ▶ European Nation Hungary will withdraw from Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration agreement, to be adopted in December 2018. Hungarian government opposed migration, arguing that UN agreement could aid flow of migrants to Europe and force countries to shelter them. USA withdrew from it last year.
85. ▶ European Parliament approved a free trade agreement between Japan and EU, covering 63.5 crore people and almost 33% of world's economy, known as world's largest free trade agreement. EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement will remove duties on almost all agricultural and industrial products as well as open up service sector and procurement, eliminating all non-tariff barriers for trade.
86. ▶ European Parliament rejected a controversial European Union copyright law proposal that was proposed by Beatles legend Paul McCartney against creators of Wikipedia.
 - ▶ It proposed to put more responsibility on websites to check for copyright infringements and forced platforms to pay for linking to news.
 - ▶ Wikipedia went down on July 4 in Poland, Spain and Italy, in protest against the Draft law.
 - ▶ The two highly contested parts of the law are -
 - ▶ Article 11 -
 - ▶ Required online platforms to pay publishers a fee if they link to their news content. It proposed to protect newspapers and other outlets from internet giants like Google and Facebook using their material without payment.
 - ▶ However, article failed to clearly define what constitutes a link and hence, could be manipulated by governments to curb freedom of speech on Internet.
 - ▶ Article 13 -
 - ▶ Proposed greater responsibility on websites to enforce copyright laws. It would make online platforms legally liable for copyrighted material put on the web by users.
 - ▶ It means that social media sites and other websites would check every piece of content uploaded including texts, images, sounds or code. It is too expensive for most companies.
 - ▶ Article has been most controversial and it faced most resistance from critics.
87. ▶ European Union (EU) and Japan have signed Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), as biggest ever trade deal negotiated by EU and creates free trade zone covering nearly third of the world's GDP. Key Features Include -
 - ▶ Eases up Agricultural exports. It ensures protection in Japan of more than 200 high-quality European agricultural products (Geographical Indications (GIs)), and protection of several Japanese GIs in EU.
 - ▶ Services markets - Opens up services markets, in particular financial services, e-commerce, telecommunications and transport.
 - ▶ Procurement markets - Guarantees EU companies access to large procurement markets of 48 large Japanese cities.
 - ▶ Automotive sector - Addresses sensitivities of EU in this sector and elimination of customs duties in transition periods of up to 7 years.
 - ▶ Trade and sustainable development .
 - ▶ Data protection.
88. ▶ European Union (EU) established India's first Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence (CoE) at Department of European Studies (DES) at Manipal Academy of Higher Education (MAHE) in New Delhi. It comes with grant of €1,00,000 to pursue India-EU interdisciplinary

studies in culture, literature, education and society. This is for fifth time MAHE has been awarded grants under Erasmus+Jean Monnet initiative.

89. ▶ European Union (EU) will stop twice-yearly changing of clocks from October 2019, implemented during the two World Wars and the 1970s oil crisis to save energy. EU countries are required to move forward by an hour on the last Sunday of March and back by an hour on the last Sunday of October.
90. ▶ Export-Import Bank of India extended a credit facility of USD 500 million to Tanzania (East Africa) for water supply projects in country.
91. ▶ External Affairs Ministry and Telecommunications Consultants India Ltd (TCIL) signed agreement for implementation of e-VidyaBharati and e-AarogyaBharati (e-VBAB) Network Project in Africa, seen as digital bridge of knowledge and health between India and Africa.
 - ▶ It is technological upgrade and extension of Pan-African e-Network Project (Phase 1) which was implemented in 48 partner countries across Africa from 2009 till 2017.
 - ▶ e-VBAB Network Project is completely funded by India for its entire duration, open for participation to all India's partner countries in Africa. Over its five-year duration, this project will provide free tele-education courses to 4000 students every year from African countries.
92. ▶ Facebook co-founder Mark Zuckerberg overtook Warren Buffett as world's third-richest person, with \$81 Billion Net Worth. He is now only behind Amazon founder Jeff Bezos (\$141 Billion) and Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates (\$93 Billion).
93. ▶ Facebook obtained a licence to set up a startup incubator in China despite its website being banned in country since 2009. The \$30-million subsidiary will be located in Hangzhou city, to reportedly make small investments and give advice to local businesses.
94. ▶ Facebook will invest over \$1 billion to build its first Asian data centre in Singapore, expected to open in 2022. Like other data centres, it will be fully powered by renewable energy.
95. ▶ Forbes World's 100 Most Powerful Women of 2018 -
 - ▶ 4 Indians in the list - Roshni Nadar Malhotra (HCL Enterprises CEO), Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw (CMD of Biocon Limited and chairperson of IIM Bangalore), Shobhana Bhartia (Chairperson and Editorial Director of Hindustan Times Group) & Priyanka Chopra (Actress).
 - ▶ Top 5 in List -
 - ▶ Angela Merkel (German Chancellor)
 - ▶ Theresa May (UK Prime Minister)
 - ▶ Christine Lagarde (IMF Chief)
 - ▶ Mary Barra (CEO of General Motors USA)
 - ▶ Abigail Johnson (CEO of Fidelity Investments USA)
96. ▶ Forbes' list of World's Highest-Paid Actors 2018 -
 - ▶ Top 3 -
 - ▶ George Clooney: \$239m
 - ▶ Dwayne Johnson: \$124m
 - ▶ Robert Downey Jr: \$81m.
 - ▶ Indian Actors Akshay Kumar (\$40.5 million) and Salman Khan (\$38.5 million) ranked at 7th and 9th place respectively.
97. ▶ Former PM HD Deve Gowda (*11th PM from June 1, 1996 to April 21, 1997*) conferred with Maharshi Valmiki Jayanti Award on occasion of Valmiki Jayanti (Oct 24), for his contribution to welfare of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes communities. Award will be given by Karnataka CM HD Kumaraswamy.
98. ▶ Fortune Change the World List 2018 -
 - ▶ It ranked companies using profit motive to help tackle social problems.
 - ▶ Reliance Industries' Telecom Unit Jio ranked as top company globally, for widening Internet access in India and benefitting the subscribers in terms of monetary savings and quality of services.
 - ▶ Top 5 Companies are -
 - ▶ Reliance Jio (Telecommunications) - India
 - ▶ Merck (Pharmaceuticals) - USA
 - ▶ Bank of America (Commercial Banking) - USA
 - ▶ Inditex (Specialty Retailers) - Spain
 - ▶ Alibaba Group (Internet Services & Retailing) - China
99. ▶ France Parliament approved a controversial asylum and immigration bill, designed to accelerate asylum procedures by cutting maximum processing time from 120 days to 90 days after entering France.
100. ▶ France banned smartphones, tablets and other internet-enabled devices in schools, applicable for pupils aged between 3 - 15 years.

101. ▶ French President Emmanuel Macron and Morocco's King Mohammed VI have inaugurated Morocco's first high-speed rail line, first ever such line in Africa. \$2 billion project was launched in September 2011 by the king and Nicolas Sarkozy, then president of France. Known as LGV, it will connect the economic hubs of Tangier and Casablanca in 2 hours 10 minutes at a speed of up to 320 kph (199 mph).
102. ▶ From January 2019, Indian tourists travelling to Bhutan via road will need either a voter ID or a valid passport to enter the country, while accompanying children can also travel with a birth certificate. Visitors will now get entry permits instead of identification slips.
103. ▶ Germany and UK with support from World Bank, launched a new Global Risk Financing Facility (GRiF), To support vulnerable countries to climate and disaster shocks.
- ✎ This fund will consist of an initial corpus of \$150 million. It will be built on the work of several existing programs including InsuResilience Climate Risk Financing and Insurance Program MDTF established by BMZ, DFID and World Bank, Centre for Global Disaster Protection established by DFID and World Bank, and InsuResilience Solutions Fund jointly established by BMZ and KFW.
 - ✎ Funding includes Insurance premium financing, Risk financing investments, Risk financing mechanisms that promote parallel improvements in countries for crisis response and recovery AND Technical assistance and capacity building where this is not yet covered by other programs.
104. ▶ Germany will provide soft loan of euro 120 million (INR 990 crore approximately) to India to strengthen sewage water treatment infrastructure in Uttarakhand in an effort to clean River Ganga under Clean Ganga Mission. German development agency GIZ also has prepared 'Ganga Box' aimed to target schools-going children and inform them about the river.
105. ▶ Global Competitiveness Report 2018 by World Economic Forum (WEF) -
- ✎ India - Ranked 58th, Bettering 2017 Rank by 5 Places.
 - ✎ Top 5 - USA (1), Singapore (2), Germany (3), Switzerland (4), Japan (5)
 - ✎ Bottom 5 - Chad (140), Yemen (139), Haiti (138), Angola (137), Burundi (136)
 - ✎ Neighbours - Bangladesh (103), Sri Lanka (85), Pakistan (107), Nepal (109)
106. ▶ Global Innovation Index (GII) 2018, by Cornell University, INSEAD and World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) -
- ✎ India ranked 57th, improving from its last year rank of 60.
 - ✎ Top 6 - Switzerland (1), Netherlands (2), Sweden (3), United Kingdom (4), Singapore (5), USA (6)
 - ✎ Neighbours - China (17), Bangladesh (116), Pakistan (109), Sri Lanka (88), Nepal (108)
107. ▶ Global Passport Index 2018 by *Passportindex.org* -
- ✎ Most Powerful Passport is of Singapore, along with Germany. India is ranked 66th in List.
 - ✎ Note that Recent Henley Passport Index 2018 ranked Indian passport at 81st Place, with Japan at top.
108. ▶ Google will shut down its social network Google+ for consumer use over next 10 months after a bug exposed personal data of up to 5 lakh users. Google+ currently has "low usage and engagement" and that 90% of Google+ user sessions last less than 5 seconds. Company plans to keep it alive enterprise customers who use it to facilitate conversation among co-workers.
109. ▶ Government launched information fusion centre (IFC) to boost maritime security and Information exchange in Indian Ocean Region (IOR), set up by Indian Navy at Information Management and Analysis Centre (IMAC) in Gurugram (Haryana).
- ✎ IFC-IOR will share information on "white shipping", or commercial shipping with the countries in the region to improve maritime security and tackling piracy and terrorism in Indian Ocean. Those countries will be served that have White Shipping Information Exchange agreements with India. (21 countries so far).
 - ✎ IFC will generate a seamless real-time picture of the nearly 7,500-km coastline of India by linking all coastal radar chains.
 - ✎ India also recently signed ascension agreement to Trans Regional Maritime Network (T-RMN), that will allow information exchange on movement of commercial ships on high seas. T-RMN agreement is being steered by Italy.
110. ▶ Government of Burundi (East Africa) declared Gitega as country's new political capital, replacing Bujumbura, that will from now on serve as economic capital of the country.
111. ▶ Green Climate Fund (GCF) approved more than \$1 billion new investments for 19 new projects to help developing countries tackle climate change, during a meeting of GCF in Manama (Bahrain).
- ✎ Funding was approved for projects linked to geothermal energy in Indonesia, greener cities in Europe and Middle East and protection for coastal communities in India.
 - ✎ About GCF -
 - ✎ GCF is UN-backed fund considered as key vehicle for climate-related development programs, guided by principles of UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). It aims to help developing countries to finance clean energy projects other mitigation efforts, practices and adaptation to counter climate change.
 - ✎ It was formally established by UNFCCC decision in Durban, South Africa in December 2011.
112. ▶ Henley Passport Index 2018.

- ▶ Indian passport secured 81st rank with visa-free or visa-on-arrival access to 60 destinations.
 - ▶ Top 5 - Japan (1), Singapore (2), Germany (3), France (4), South Korea (5)
113. ▶ Historic Esala Maha Perehera festival held in Kandy (Sri Lanka), held in month of Esala (July or August). It commemorates first teaching of Buddha after his enlightenment.
114. ▶ IIT Kharagpur and University of Auckland (New Zealand) signed a pact to foster academic exchange and research collaboration, faculty exchange and visiting/adjunct appointments, student mobility. Its first strategic partnership of University of Auckland with a higher educational institution in India.
115. ▶ IMD World Talent Rankings 2017 -
- ▶ India Ranked 53rd, down by 2 places compared to last Year.
 - ▶ Top 5 - Switzerland (1), Denmark (2), Norway (3), Austria (4), Netherlands (5)
116. ▶ IT Firm IBM partnered with Indian IT companies (*including Persistent Systems, Invest India, Wipro, Capgemini and NASSCOM*) for its 'Call for Code' initiative that aims to build global solutions for disaster management. For this, IBM provides access to its cloud, data, Artificial Intelligence and blockchain technologies, along with training and code to developers.
117. ▶ India Based construction major Larsen & Toubro is only Indian firm to be featured among top 25 companies in Forbes' global 2000 best employers list (ranked 22).
- ▶ Among top 100, there are 4 Indian firms - Mahindra & Mahindra (55), Grasim Industries (59) and HDFC (91). Also, Total 24 domestic companies in overall list.
 - ▶ Top 3 - Alphabet (1), Microsoft (2), Apple.
118. ▶ India and Agence Française de Développement (France) signed an implementation agreement on "MOBILISE YOUR CITY (MYC). MYC is part of an international initiative which is supported by French and German Governments and was launched at 21st Conference of Parties (COP21) meeting in December 2015.
- ▶ European Union has agreed to provide funds of Euro 3.5 million through the AFD to contribute to specific investments and technical assistance components within the Mobilise Your City (MYC) programme in India.
 - ▶ MYC aims at supporting three pilot cities - Nagpur, Kochi and Ahmedabad, to reduce their Green House Gas (GHG) emissions related to urban transport.
119. ▶ India and Bangladesh jointly launched construction of India-Bangladesh Friendship Product Pipeline Project, as first such pipeline through which refined diesel will be supplied to Bangladesh from India.
- ▶ It involves construction of 130-kilometre long pipeline that will connect Siliguri in West Bengal and Parbatipur in Dinajpur district of Bangladesh. 6 KM stretch will be in India side and remaining 124 kilometres will be in Bangladesh.
 - ▶ Pipeline has capacity of 1 million metric tons per annum. Initially, it will supply Bangladesh 2.5 lakh tonnes of diesel every year and gradually it will be increased to 4 lakh tonnes. It will replace existing practice of sending diesel by rail covering distance of 510 kilometers.
 - ▶ Also, Bangladesh approved allowing India to use its Chittagong and Mongla ports to transport cargo to and from its northeastern states. Indian goods can be transported through four entry points from states Tripura, Meghalaya and Assam. India will have to follow General Agreement on Tariff and Trade (GATT) and Bangladeshi regulations, pay customs duties and buy tax equivalent bonds to transport freight.
120. ▶ India and Bangladesh several agreements for enhancing inland and coastal waterways connectivity, including an agreement to use Chattogram and Mongla Ports in Bangladesh for movement of goods to and from India. An addendum to 'Protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade between two countries' has also been signed for the inclusion of Dhubri in India and Pangaon in Bangladesh as new Ports.
121. ▶ India and Germany signed Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) on skill development, which will provide dual vocational education and training to Indian youth. Under it, students who complete specific training courses in India will get certificate that is recognised in India and also in Germany.
122. ▶ India and Myanmar signed MoU for appointment of private port operator for Operation and Maintenance (O&M) of Sittwe Port, Paletwa Inland Water Terminal and associated facilities included in Kaladan Multi Model Transit Transport Project.
- ▶ Sittwe port in Myanmar will connect India's landlocked north-east region to Bay of Bengal through Mizoram. It will also provide alternate route to Kolkata.
 - ▶ It is also significant in implementation of India's Act East Policy as it will boost connectivity and will contribute to job creation in whole region, particularly in Myanmar's strife-torn Rakhine and Chin States.
 - ▶ It will significantly lower cost and distance of movement from Kolkata to Mizoram and beyond. It will also reduce dependency on only route narrow strip dubbed as Chicken's Neck in West Bengal, sandwiched between Bhutan and Bangladesh.

123. ▶ India and UAE signed MoU to create a bilateral Artificial Intelligence Bridge that envisages the generation of \$20 billion in economic benefits during the next decade. It was signed During Visit of Deepak Bagla to UAE, managing director and CEO of Invest India.
124. ▶ India announced contributions of \$13.36 million (over ₹97.2 crore) for various United Nations (UN) agencies and development activities at the 2018 United Nations Pledging Conference for Development Activities. 19 countries pledged a total of \$425.69 million at the conference.
125. ▶ India become 69th shareholder of European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.
 European Bank is headquartered in London (UK). President is Suma Chakrabarti (Indian Origin).
126. ▶ India contributed \$1 million to United Nations (UN) Headquarters' Solar Project, under which solar panels will be installed on roof of UN headquarters at New York (US).
127. ▶ India elected as President of Asia-Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development (AIBD) for 2 years, during its annual gathering in Colombo (Sri Lanka). Also, India's F. Sheheryar was re-elected as chair of executive board of AIBD and Sri Lanka elected as vice-chair.
 AIBD is regional inter-governmental organisation serving countries of United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN-ESCAP) in field of electronic media development. It was established in 1977 under auspices of UNESCO.
128. ▶ India elected as a Member of the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) Council for 4-year term (2019-2022), during ITU Plenipotentiary Conference 2018 at Dubai (UAE).
129. ▶ India elected to United Nations' Human Rights Council for a period of three years, by securing 188 votes in Asia-Pacific category (highest vote among all candidates).
130. ▶ India invited USA President Donald Trump to be chief guest at 2019 Republic Day celebrations. If accepted, Trump will be 2nd serving US President after Barack Obama to be invited as chief guest of Republic Day Parade.
 Also, 1st India-USA 2+2 Talks may be held in September 2018. On India's Behalf, Sushma Swaraj (External Affairs Minister) and Nirmala Sitharaman (Defence Minister) will be attending the talks.
131. ▶ India is Partner Country in 87th Izmir International tradeshow in Turkey. India also launched its mega business pavilion 'Source India' hosting 75 Indian companies. Izmir is 3rd most populous city in Turkey, after Istanbul and Ankara.
132. ▶ India is elected as Vice Chair of Asia Pacific Region of World Customs Organisation (WCO) for 2 years.
 WCO is Located in Brussels (Belgium), with 182 customs administrations as Members and Kunio Mikuriya as Secretary General.
133. ▶ India is ranked 6th in global optimism index in second quarter (Q2) of 2018, by Grant Thornton's International Business Report (IBR), a quarterly global business survey. It was topped by Indonesia followed by Netherlands, Austria, Philippines and China.
134. ▶ India launched humanitarian operation Samudra Maitri to provide assistance to earthquake and tsunami victims in Indonesia, dispatching two aircraft C-130J and C-17 and three naval ships carrying relief material and personnel to Indonesia.
135. ▶ India lost one spot to rank as 9th most valuable nation brand in world, according to UK-based consultancy Brand Finance's Nation Brands 2018 report. However, India's brand value increased by 5% to \$2,159 billion. US topped the list with a brand value of \$25,899 billion.
136. ▶ India moved up 15 places to 73rd in terms of money parked by its citizens with Swiss banks in 2017, while UK remains on top. UK accounted for over 27% (403 billion francs) of total foreign money while India accounted for 0.07%. The money held by Indians rose 50% to 1.01 billion francs (INR 7000 crores).
137. ▶ India participated in China's 1st International Import Expo (CIIE) at the National Exhibition and Convention Center in Shanghai. Aims is to reduce the over USD 51 billion trade deficit with neighboring nation. It is considered to be the world's first import-themed national-level expo.
138. ▶ India ranked 11 in terms of FDI attractiveness, according to AT Kearney report, down from 8 in 2017 and 9 in 2016.
 Top 5 - US (1), Canada (2), Germany (3), UK (4), China (5)
139. ▶ India ranked 28th among 73 countries in 2018 Government e-Payments Adoption Ranking (GEAR) by Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU)
 -
 India jumped 8 positions in this ranking from 36th in 2011.
 Norway has topped 2018 GEAR list scoring 89.7 points in seven categories.
140. ▶ India ranked 5th among 206 countries in 2018 *Cigarette Package Health Warnings: International Status* Report by Canadian Cancer Society. In India, 85% of both sides of cigarette packets are covered with warnings.
 Top 5 - Timor-Leste (92.5%), Nepal (90%), Vanuatu (90%), New Zealand (87.5%) and India held 5th rank jointly with Hong Kong and Thailand for 85% warnings.
141. ▶ India ranks third globally in terms of number of family-owned businesses with 111 companies having a total market capitalisation of \$839 billion, according to a Credit Suisse report. India followed China (159 companies) and US (121 companies).

142. ▶ India signed an agreement with Iran to make Oil Import payments in Indian rupees. MoU was signed after US letting India and seven other nations to keep buying Iranian oil despite sanctions were imposed on Iran in November.
- ▶ Earlier India paid Iran in Euros using European banking channels. Under the 180-day USA exemption, India is allowed to import a maximum of 300,000 barrels a day of crude oil. This compares to an average daily import of about 560,000 barrels this year.
143. ▶ India stands 19th in 'Theft Ranking' for countries with weapons-usable nuclear materials, according to the Nuclear Security Index. The index was released by the US-based Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI).
- ▶ Neighboring Pakistan ranks 20th in List.
 - ▶ Australia shared top spot with Switzerland.
144. ▶ India will Chair Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS) from 1st January 2019, after being handed Chairmanship by European Union during KPCS Plenary 2018 held in Brussels (Belgium).
- ▶ Kimberley Process is Joint international initiative to stem flow of 'conflict diamonds', rough diamonds used by rebel groups to finance wars against legitimate governments. At present, KPCS has 54 members representing 81 countries including EU with 28 members.
 - ▶ Botswana and Russia will serve as Vice-Chair during 2019-2020.
145. ▶ India will buy 18 Bullet Trains from Japan, Each train with 10 coaches and would be able to attain speed of 350 km per hour. The 508-km high speed train corridor between Mumbai and Ahmedabad at an estimated cost of Rs 1,10,000 crore is expected to be operational by 2022.
146. ▶ India's Ministry of Information and Broadcasting joined SDG Media Compact aimed at advancing awareness of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- ▶ SDG Media Compact is initiative of United Nations, in collaboration with UN Foundation. It is alliance of news and entertainment media and it is committing to work with United Nations to foster public discourse and spur action on SDGs.
 - ▶ It seeks to inspire media companies around world to leverage their resources to advance SDGs adopted by all world leaders at UN in 2015.
 - ▶ SDGs are 17 global non-binding goals featuring 169 targets to be implemented from 2015 to 2030.
147. ▶ India-China Film Festival held at Siri Fort Auditorium in New Delhi, to deepen cultural understanding between two countries.
148. ▶ Indian IT industry apex body Nasscom partnershiped with Hiroshima government for co-creating a Japan-India IT Corridor in Hiroshima. Through this partnership, India would be getting a gate way to the cutting-edge manufacturing technology of Japan. Indian companies on software side can help Japanese manufacturing companies adopt digital transformation and create innovative product and solutions lines.
149. ▶ Indian PM Narendra Modi, Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina and CMs of West Bengal (Mamta Baannerjee) and Tripura (Biplab Kumar Deb), jointly inaugurated three projects in Bangladesh, via video conference. Projects are -
- ▶ 500 MW additional power supply from India to Bangladesh, through existing Bheramara (Bangladesh) - Baharampur (India) interconnection.
 - ▶ Akhaura – Agartala Rail Link
 - ▶ Rehabilitation of Kulaura-Shahbazpur section of Bangladesh Railways.
150. ▶ Indian Pavilion inaugurated at Videocittà 2018 event in Rome Film Festival (Italy), with India as partner country for the event.
- ▶ "Mere Pyaare Prime Minister" was only Asian film screened at 13th Rome Film Festival.
151. ▶ Indian Short Film *Period. End of Sentence* made it Oscar shortlist in Documentary Short Subject category. Its about women in India fighting against deeply rooted stigma of menstruation and delving upon work of real-life 'Pad Man' Arunachalam Muruganantham. India's entry for the Foreign Language Film Category, Village Rockstars is out of Oscar race.
152. ▶ Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserves Ltd (ISPRL) signed MoU in with Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) to explore the possibility of storing ADNOC crude oil at ISPRL's underground oil storage facility at Padur in Karnataka, which has a 2.5 million tonne capacity.
- ▶ ADNOC is only foreign oil and gas company so far, to invest by way of crude oil in India's strategic petroleum reserves program.
 - ▶ It has been announced a few days after cabinet Approved filling of Padur Strategic Petroleum Reserves (SPR) at Padur (Karnataka) by overseas National Oil Companies (NOCs).
153. ▶ Indian-American Adobe CEO Shantanu Narayen named by Fortune in its 2018 Business Person of the Year list, ranked 12th. List has been topped by Tricia Griffith (CEO of US Insurance Company Progressive).
154. ▶ India's national accreditation body National Accreditation Board for Certification Bodies (NABCB) secured equivalence for its accreditation programme for Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems (OHSMS) Certification Bodies in Asia- Pacific region, by signing Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (MLA) of Pacific Accreditation Cooperation (PAC).
- ▶ Now, Any industry carrying ISO 45001 certificate with NABCB logo will be recognized in Asia Pacific region. It will benefit Indian Industry as it is exporting products to various countries in Asia Pacific region.

- Now, NABCB can facilitate export of Indian goods into the world market by attesting that these are certified as per international standards by competent certifying bodies.
 - NABCB is 3rd accreditation body in Asia Pacific Region to become internationally equivalent in the region, after accreditation bodies of Hong Kong and Mexico.
 - MLA with PAC would now facilitate signing MLA with International Accreditation Forum (IAF) to secure full international equivalence.
- 155. ▶ India's non-life insurance penetration risen marginally to 0.9 % of GDP (\$ 27 billion), but still remains among highest underinsurance levels globally, as per a report by Lloyd's. It was .7 % for India in 2012.
 - India's insurance gap accounts for 17 % of the total global insurance gap (\$162.5 billion).
 - Globally, India has seventh-largest insurance gap, with top spot held by Bangladesh (in Terms of % of GDP). In absolute terms, China has biggest insurance gap of \$ 76.4 billion.
 - Netherlands remains the country with the highest insurance penetration at 7.7 per cent, followed by South Korea (5 %).
- 156. ▶ Indra Jatra festival held in Kathmandu (Nepal), as an eight day long annual festival observed to worship Indra, the lord of rain and good harvest.
- 157. ▶ Interbrand's "Best 100 Global Brands 2018" report -
 - Apple displaced Google to become top brand in the world in 2018. Apple's brand value grew 16 % to \$214.5 billion. It also became first company in US to hit the \$1 trillion market cap.
 - Amazon achieved 56% growth to become third top brand globally.
 - Facebook fell to 9th place, amid data breach controversies.
- 158. ▶ International Energy Agency (IEA) report *World Energy Outlook 2018* stated that natural gas will overtake coal as world's second largest energy source after oil by 2030, expected due to a drive to cut air pollution and rise in liquefied natural gas (LNG) use.
 - Global gas demand would increase by 1.6 % a year to 2040 and would be 45 % higher by then than present. Electricity demand will grow 2.1 % a year and will account for a quarter of energy used by 2040.
 - CO2 emissions would rise by 10 % to 36 gigatonnes in 2040, mostly driven by growth in oil and gas.
- 159. ▶ International Energy Agency report *World Energy Outlook* stated that India will overtake the U.S. to become world's second-biggest emitter of carbon dioxide from the power sector before 2030. China will remain the biggest emitter.
- 160. ▶ International Monetary Fund (IMF) approved a loan agreement with Economically troubled South American Nation Argentina, on a 36-month Stand-By Arrangement (SBA) totaling to US\$57.1 billion. It is largest ever loan given by IMF.
- 161. ▶ International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank and World Trade Organization collectively launched report "Reinvigorating Trade and Inclusive Growth" report, seeking liberalisation of global service sector, asserting that barriers to these services trade currently is roughly as high as those to trade in goods about a half century ago.
 - Services comprise some two-thirds of global GDP and employment, Yet facing lags due to limited opening of service sectors to foreign competition. Full services trade liberalisation can raise manufacturing productivity by average of 22%.
 - Services comprise significant shares of value added of all sectors in economy, yet Only quarter of global trade is traded as services. The trade in services sector has potential of contributing particularly strongly to productivity growth and economic growth overall.
 - Prolonged slowdown in pace of trade reform is leading to widespread trade distortions and putting at risk strength of global economic recovery, despite recent rebound in trade.
- 162. ▶ Internet Firm Google has been fined a record €4.34bn by European Commission, saying it used Android mobile operating system to illegally *cement its dominant position* in search.
- 163. ▶ Iran unveiled Fateh Mobin (Bright Conqueror) next generation short-range ballistic missile capable of striking targets on land and sea. It is believed to have range between 300-500 kilometers.
 - Amid this, USA created Iran Action Group (IAG) to execute Its Iran strategy and pressure it to change its behaviors. USA recently withdrawn from Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (also known nuclear deal) signed between Iran and P5+1 countries (P5: China, France, Russia, United Kingdom, United States and +1: Germana) and European Union in Vienna (Austria) in July 2015.
- 164. ▶ Israel became a full member of Financial Action Task Force (FATF), an international body set up to combat money laundering, terrorist financing and other threats to international financial system.
- 165. ▶ Israel government enacted a new law which will financially penalize Palestinian Authority for paying stipends to Palestinians killed or jailed by Israel. Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu repeatedly demanded to stop Palestinians from paying stipends to prisoners and their families.
- 166. ▶ Israel opened a Visa Application Centre in Kolkata for tourists from West Bengal and the northeastern states to encourage more Indian travelers to visit Israel. It also reduced visa fees to INR 1,100 rupees from 1,700 charged from Indians.

167. ▶ Israel passed a Controversial Bill declaring that only Jews have right of self-determination in country, defining it as an exclusively Jewish state. It also strips Arabic of its designation as an official language alongside Hebrew, downgrading it to a special status that enables its continued use within Israeli institutions.
168. ▶ Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries launched United Arab Emirates' (UAE) first locally made satellite KhalifaSat into orbit. The Japanese rocket also carried an IBUKI-2 greenhouse gas observation satellite for Japan.
169. ▶ Japan announced to withdraw from International Whaling Commission (IWC) and resume commercial whaling in its territorial waters next year, after 30 years.
170. ▶ Japan became world's first country to land 2 robotic rovers in asteroid Ryugu, also being first man made robot to have landed in an asteroid. Name of the rover that landed is *MINERVA-III*, consisting of 2 rovers.
171. ▶ Japan joined joint exercise 'Kamandag'(venom) with US and Filipino troops in Philippines for first time since World War II. Its first time Japanese armoured military vehicles were used on foreign soil since 1945.
172. ▶ Joint military exercise *Iron Magic 19* between United Arab Emirates (UAE) and United States (US) held near Dubai.
173. ▶ Khangchendzonga Biosphere Reserve became 11th Biosphere Reserve from India, to be included in UNESCO designated World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR), during 30th Session of Man and Biosphere (MAB) Programme of UNESCO held at Palembang (Indonesia).
- ▶ India has 18 Biosphere Reserves, with 11 internationally designated WNBR now with this Inclusion.
 - ▶ Khangchendzonga Biosphere Reserve (Sikkim) reaching elevations of 1220 metres above sea-level.
 - ▶ Khangchendzonga National Park was designated a World Heritage Site in 2016 under 'mixed' category.
 - ▶ Over 118 species of large number of medicinal plants found in Dzongu Valley in north Sikkim are of ethno-medical utility.
174. ▶ Luxembourg became first country to make all public transport free, implementing it from 2020. It is aimed at addressing environmental issues and problem of traffic congestion.
175. ▶ Macedonia held a referendum on whether to change its name to the 'Republic of North Macedonia'.
- ▶ Greece and Macedonia had signed a deal in this regard in June. Greece argued that the name 'Macedonia' implied a territorial claim on its own province of the same name and has thus vetoed Macedonia's entry into NATO and European Union.
176. ▶ Malaysia Government abolished death penalty, following strong domestic opposition for it.
177. ▶ Maldives Govt. approved to rejoin the Commonwealth, two years after withdrawing from 53-nation grouping.
178. ▶ Manila (Philippines) based Asian Development Bank (ADB) launched its first Trade Finance Scorecard, a new tool to address market and boost trade finance. It aims to prevent money-laundering and terrorism. It will use a 2 level assessing, First level will consist of score out of 10 on seven criteria on the macro level and Second level will consist of five working-level issues on the micro level.
179. ▶ Members of European Parliament approved banning single-use plastics, to curb marine pollution. The ban is likely to take effect by 2021.
180. ▶ Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare asked United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (UNFAO) to declare 2019 as 'International Year of Millets', to draw wider global attention and action to promote cultivation of millets.
- ▶ India is observing 2018 as *National Year of Millets* to promote cultivation by amending cropping pattern of areas which are especially susceptible to climate change.
181. ▶ Ministry of Human Resource Development (HRD) decided to participate in Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) after gap of nine years, by sending team of officers to Paris to negotiate India's terms of participation in PISA 2021.
- ▶ Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is assessment test for 15-year-olds, organised every three years by Organisation for Economic Cooperation Development (OECD), Paris (France).
 - ▶ PISA measures student performance in mathematics, reading, and science and even innovative subjects like collaborative problem-solving and money literacy.
 - ▶ PISA test results give insight into education systems around the world. The results are shown as a national mean score and not shown individually. Its objective is not to rank countries, but to see how education system can be improved.
182. ▶ MoU signed between Department of Biotechnology and Cancer Research UK for India-UK India-UK Cancer Research Initiative, as a collaborative 5-year bilateral research initiative. Both CRUK and DBT will invest £5m each in this 5-year pilot, and seek investment from potential partners. It was launched at Inaugural Researchers' Summit held in New Delhi.
- ▶ David Hunter of University of Oxford and CS Pramesh of Tata Memorial Hospital will serve respectively as Chair and Co-chair of India-UK Cancer Research Initiative's Advisory Panel.
183. ▶ More than 30 countries announced establishment of African Carnivore Initiative, to save 4 carnivores species - (Panthera leo), Cheetah (Acinonyx jubatus), Leopard (Panthera pardus), and African Wild Dog (Lycaon pictus).
- ▶ It is unique collaboration between only two global treaties whose mandate is to conserve endangered species - Convention on Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) and Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

184. ▶ Morocco launched its second earth observation satellite named Mohammed VI-B on board of Arianespace Vega rocket. It will be placed at same orbit as its twin satellite Mohammed 6-A, the first Moroccan satellite launched in November 2017. It completes Morocco's two-satellite constellation for Earth observation.
185. ▶ NASA's first OSIRIS-REx (*Origins, Spectral Interpretation, Resource Identification, Security-Regolith Explorer*) mission designed to visit asteroid and return sample of its dust back to Earth reached its destination, Bennu, two years after its launch. It will study the asteroid for 1.5 years. It is NASA's first asteroid sampling mission i.e. it will survey surface, collect sample and deliver it safely back to Earth.
186. ▶ NITI Aayog and United Nations signed India-United Nations Sustainable Development Framework (UNSDF) for 2018-2022.
- ✍ It outlines work of UN agencies in India, with 19 UN agencies signing UNSDF 2018-2022.
 - ✍ 7 priority areas outlined in the UNSDF are - Poverty and Urbanization; Health, Water, and Sanitation; Education and Employability; Nutrition and Food Security; Climate Change, Clean Energy, and Disaster Resilience; Skilling, Entrepreneurship, and Job Creation; Gender Equality and Youth Development.
187. ▶ NSE signed a pact with the Uttarakhand government to provide access to capital to SMEs, to fuel growth of such SMEs in state by increasing awareness along with government on opportunities to raise capital, SME exchange guidelines, listing processes, compliance with listing etc.
188. ▶ Nagaland government signed 5 year MoU with e-Governance Academy of Estonia to provide advisory and technical knowledge for setting up of e-Governance Academy of Nagaland (e-GAN).
189. ▶ Named *Little India Gate*, first-of-its-kind structure in Indonesia recognizing contribution of Indian community in development of Medan city, has been unveiled.
190. ▶ National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM) signed a MoU with the Dubai Internet City (DIC) to help small and medium-sized Indian enterprises expand their operations in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.
191. ▶ Nepal banned Indian currency above Rs 100 (Including New Indian notes of Rs 2,000, Rs 500 and Rs 200 denominations). It can affect Indian tourist and Nepali people working in India, who carry currency in Nepal for transaction.
192. ▶ Nepal become first country to double its tiger population in a decade as part of World Wildlife Foundation's (WWF) 'Tx2' programme, that aims to double number of tigers in all over world by 2022.
- ✍ There are now estimated 235 wild tigers in Nepal, compared to 121 back in 2009.
 - ✍ Tx2 programme It was launched by World Wildlife Foundation (WWF) at the 2010 St Petersburg Tiger Summit held in Russia. Under it, 13 tiger range countries had agreed to double the world tiger population by 2022, which is the year of tiger in Chinese calendar.
193. ▶ Nepal government launched a Social Security Scheme for formal sector workers, Including People of all ages and categories. It will be contribution based and will cover medical facilities, motherhood, accident and physical incapacity security.
194. ▶ Nepal imposed a monthly limit on the amount of Indian currency its citizen can spend in India. Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) stated that a Nepali citizen would be unable to spend more than INR 1 lakh per month while paying for goods and services in India.
- ✍ Recently, Nepal banned Indian currency above Rs 100 (Including New Indian notes of Rs 2,000, Rs 500 and Rs 200 denominations).
195. ▶ Ocean Cleanup foundation (founded by 24-year-old Dutch innovator Boyan Slat) launched world's first ocean cleanup array from San Francisco, called System 001, marking start of cleanup of Great Pacific Garbage Patch, a collection of marine debris in North Pacific Ocean. The patch is larger than area of France.
- ✍ System 001, named as 'Wilson', will be able to collect 50 tons of plastic in its first year. • It consists of a 2000 ft long U-shaped floating barrier with a three-meter (10 ft) skirt attached below.
 - ✍ Great Pacific Garbage Patch -
 - ✍ Its a collection of marine debris in the North Pacific Ocean, containing up to 16 times more waste than previously thought.
 - ✍ The Patch occupies an area three times the size of France in the Pacific Ocean between California and Hawaii with 79000 tons of plastic debris in the form of 1.8 trillion pieces.
 - ✍ It was discovered in 1997 by Charles Moore, who had sailed through a mishmash of floating plastic bottles and other debris on his way home to Los Angeles.
196. ▶ PM Narendra Modi conferred with United Nation's Champions of the Earth Award 2018 by UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres in New Delhi. He is among the six winners who received this award. Other Awardees are -
- ✍ French President Emmanuel Macron.
 - ✍ India's Cochin International Airport - Awarded in Entrepreneurial Vision category. It is world's first fully solar-powered airport.
 - ✍ Joan Carling - Awarded lifetime achievement award as a prominent defender of environmental and indigenous rights.
 - ✍ Beyond Meat and Impossible Foods - Jointly recognised in Science and Innovation category.
 - ✍ China's Zhejiang's Green Rural Revival Programme - Awarded in inspiration and action category.

197. ▶ Pacific Endeavor-2018, a communication exercise under Multinational Communications Interoperability Program (MCIP) began in Kathmandu (Nepal). It aims to develop common communications operating procedures to enable military forces in Asia Pacific region to collectively work in wake of disaster. It is jointly organised by Nepali Army and United States Pacific Command.
198. ▶ Pakistan and Russia signed contract on admission of service members of Pakistan in Russia's Military Training Institutes. This will be for first time, Pakistani soldiers will undergo training at Russian military institutes.
199. ▶ Pakistan cabinet approved issuance of first-ever renminbi-denominated 'Panda Bonds' to raise loans from China's capital markets, as country moved a step forward to give Chinese currency status at par with US dollar.
200. ▶ Pakistan invited Saudi Arabia to join \$50 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as 3rd strategic partner. Saudi Arabia is first country that Pakistan has invited to become partner in CPEC.
 - ▶ Saudi Arabia has long history of financially bailing out Pakistan during economic crisis. Saudi Arabia loaned Pakistan \$1.5 billion in 2014 to strengthen its rupee currency, six months after Pakistan obtained its last IMF bailout.
201. ▶ Pakistan test-fired Ghauri ballistic missile capable of carrying both conventional and nuclear warheads up to a distance of 1300 kilometres.
202. ▶ Pakistan will launch its first manned mission in 2022, same year that India has planned to launch its own manned space mission Gaganyaan. It will be attempted by Pakistan with China's help.
203. ▶ Paytm launched QR-based smartphone payment settlement service in Japan, Named *PayPay*, in collaboration with SoftBank and Yahoo Japan Corporation. It is built around its QRtech, which is deployed in India to allow customers to make offline payments.
204. ▶ Philips selected 19 start-up companies for its first global start-up collaboration programme named 'AI in Healthcare for Radiology, Ultrasound and Oncology'. It will be conducted at Philips' innovation hubs in Bengaluru, Cambridge (US), Eindhoven (Netherlands) and Shanghai (China).
205. ▶ QS Asia University Ranking 2018 -
 - ▶ Indian Institute of Technology Bombay (IIT-Bombay) has topped the Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) Asia University Rankings from India followed by IIT Delhi and IIT Madras.
 - ▶ Eight Indian universities have figured among the top 100 in the list of Asia's top 50 universities.
 - ▶ There are 75 universities from India in the top 500 Asia list.
 - ▶ National University of Singapore is ranked as Asia's best university, followed by University of Hong Kong, Nanyang Technological University (Singapore), Tsinghua University (China) and Peking University (China).
206. ▶ Qatar announced to leave Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) from January 2019 and focus more on production of natural gas.
207. ▶ Qatar become first Gulf nation to offer permanent residency to expatriates, allowing maximum 100 expatriates to gain permanent residency each year.
208. ▶ RTI rating by Access Info Europe and the Centre for Law and Democracy , created by Transparency International -
 - ▶ India ranked at 6th position out of 123 countries, after a downfall of 4 positions from the previous year. India got a score of 128 out of 150. It noted that India doesn't provide protection for whistleblowers.
 - ▶ In India, total RTIs filed in 2017 were: 66.6 lakh, out of which, 4.8 lakh were rejected. Total number of second appeals were 18.5 lakh and total penalty imposed by CIC is 1.9 crore.
 - ▶ Top 5 - Afghanistan, Mexico, Serbia, Sri Lanka, Slovenia. Austria Ranked Lowest.
209. ▶ Researchers discovered new strain of Ebola virus in bats in northern Bambuli region of African Nation Sierra Leone, named as Bambuli. It is 6th known virus strain Ebola virus. Others are Zaire, Sudan, Tai Forest, Bundibugyo and Reston. Zaire strain of Ebola virus is the most deadly strain known.
210. ▶ Russia established a new directorate in Russian Army to promote patriotism. A similar directorate existed in the Soviet Army to ensure that soldiers remained loyal to then-ruling Communist party.
211. ▶ Russia will conduct Vostok-2018 (East-2018) military exercise in September 2018, as biggest war games ever conducted by Russia since Zapad-81 (West-81) exercise conducted by erstwhile Soviet Union in 1981 which saw involvement of 100,000 to 150,000 troops.
 - ▶ In Vostok 2018, over 300000 troops will participate. China and Mongolia will also participate in Vostok 2018.
 - ▶ Vostok-2018 exercise is being conducted in response to aggressive attitude towards Russia by NATO and West countries.
212. ▶ Russia's Akademik Lomonosov, world's first floating nuclear power plant (FNPP) become operational. For power generation, it has been fitted with two modified KLT-40 naval propulsion nuclear reactors (each of 35 MW capacity) together providing up to 70 MW of electricity and 300 MW of heat. It is named after Russian Academician Mikhail Lomonosov.
213. ▶ SBI signed MoU with Kathmandu-based National Banking Institute (NBI) for development of human resources of NBI. SBI will impart education, training and development to facilitate transformation of NBI's HR department.

214. ▶ Saudi Arabia and UAE announced USD 500 million in aid Yemen, the war torn Arab Nation.
215. ▶ Search engine Google launched Dataset Search, a new search engine for scientific community that will help them make sense of millions of datasets present online. It will work like Google Scholar, company's popular search engine for academic studies and reports.
- It will have twin benefits of creating data sharing ecosystem that will encourage data publishers to follow best practices for data storage and publication and give scientists way to show impact of their work through citation of datasets that they have produced.
 - Google also launched a new app 'Blog Compass' to help Indian bloggers manage their site and find topics to write about. The India exclusive app works as an analytics and recommendation platform. .
216. ▶ Singapore based DBS Bank named as world's best bank by Global Finance magazine, for its ability to invest in digital innovation while still maintaining stable operations for its customers. DBS is the first Asian bank to receive this title from New York-based publication, which last year gave it to ING Bank.
217. ▶ South Africa unveiled a powerful radio telescope, part of an international project that scientists say will provide new details on the Milky Way and other galaxies, called MeerKAT.
- MeerKAT, originally Karoo Array Telescope, is a radio telescope consisting of 64 mirrors.
 - It is largest and most sensitive radio telescope in southern hemisphere until Square Kilometer Array is completed in 2024 (tentative).
 - Square Kilometre Array (SKA) is a large multi radio telescope project aimed to be built in Australia and South Africa. If built, it would have a total collecting area of approximately one square kilometer.
218. ▶ South Korea and USA resumed their battalion-level marine exercises "Korea Marine Exercise Program (KMEP)", in Pohang (South Korea).
219. ▶ Sri Lanka President Maithripala Sirisena announced to lift suspension of parliament as international pressure mounted on him to open legislature and resolve a leadership struggle.
- Recently, Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena removed Ranil Wickremesinghe as prime minister of Sri Lanka, amid Political Turmoil because of Differences between President Sirisena and PM Vikramasinghe. Mahinda Rajapaksha was appointed as new Prime Minister.
220. ▶ Super Typhoon Mangkhut, world's strongest storm in 2018, hit northern coast of Philippines with winds up to 200 kmph and heavy rains.
221. ▶ Sweden released a handbook of its "feminist foreign policy" for rights groups and foreign governments, showcasing lessons from nation's flagship approach to promote women's rights globally.
- Sweden began its feminist foreign policy in response to discrimination and systematic subordination that still marks daily lives of countless women and girls around the world.
 - Policy's main aim is to include promotion of economic emancipation, fighting sexual violence and improving women's political participation.
222. ▶ Swedish PM Stefan Löfven became country's first leader to be ousted in a no-confidence vote.
223. ▶ Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) is only Indian company among top 10 firms to get foreign labour certification for the H-1B visas for the fiscal year 2018, according to data from US Department of Labour.
- H-1B visas are the most sought-after among Indian IT professionals. London-headquartered Ernst and Young emerged as top employer to have received the certification.
224. ▶ Telangana government and British Council signed MoU to strengthen educational and cultural cooperation.
225. ▶ Thailand became first Southeast Asian nation to legalise use of marijuana and kratom for medical use and research.
- Also, Israel's parliament (Knesset) approved exporting of medical marijuana, making Israel 3rd country after Netherlands and Canada, to take its medical cannabis global.
226. ▶ Times Higher Education *Global University Employability Rankings 2018* -
- India's IISc Bangalore (28), IIT Delhi (58) and IIM Ahmedabad (144) have made it to Top 150 Universities list.
 - Top 5 -
 - Harvard University (USA)
 - California Institute of Technology (USA)
 - Massachusetts Institute of Technology (USA)
 - University of Cambridge (UK)
 - Stanford University (USA)
227. ▶ Times Higher Education's (THE) world university rankings 2019 -
- No Indian institution figures in the top 250 Universities. Although number of Indian institutions in rankings increased from 42 last year to 49, making India 5th best-represented nation.

- Indian Institute of Science Bengaluru retained its position as best In India (ranked 251 - 300 globally), followed by IIT Indore (351-400).
 - Top 5 Globally -
 - University of Oxford (UK)
 - University of Cambridge (UK)
 - Stanford University (USA)
 - Massachusetts Institute of Technology (USA)
 - California Institute of Technology (USA)
- 228. ▶ Trident Juncture 18 (TRJE18) NATO-led military exercise to be held in Norway in October and November 2018, as largest of its kind in Norway since 1980s. 50,000 participants from 31 nations will take part, including 10,000 vehicles, 250 aircraft and 65 vessels.
- 229. ▶ UAE President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan declared 2019 as Year of Tolerance, an extension of the Year of Zayed which has run in 2018. In 2016, UAE introduced first post of Minister of State for Tolerance and launched National Tolerance Programme.
- 230. ▶ UK India Business Council released its report named *Beyond the Top 200-Effective International Collaboration for Indian Higher Education*, -
 - By 2030 India will have the largest number of people in the world of college-going age - 140 million. Currently there are 736 universities in India educating 28.6 million students. India will need another 1,500 institutions by 2030 to accommodate huge influx of students.
- 231. ▶ UK launched new UKRI Science, Research and Academia scheme for overseas scientists and researchers, including Indians, to enhance growth of UK's research sector. It invites researchers and academics to come to UK for up to 2 years. It is being added to the already existing Tier 5 (Temporary Worker Government Authorised Exchange) visa route.
- 232. ▶ UK-based charity Oxfam International's 'Commitment to Reducing Inequality (CRI) Index' -
 - India ranked 147th among 157 countries, describing country's poor commitment to reducing inequality.
 - Top 5 - Denmark (1), Germany (2), Finland (3), Australia (4), Norway (5).
 - Bottom 5 - Nigeria (157), Uzbekistan (156), Haiti (155), Chad (154), Sierra Leone (153).
 - Neighbours - Bhutan (152), Bangladesh (148), Nepal (139), Pakistan (137), Sri Lanka (102), China (81)
- 233. ▶ UN Environment Programme (UNEP) partnered with Google to monitor impacts of human activity on global ecosystems by using sophisticated online tools, to develop platform to enable governments, NGO's and public to track specific environment-related development targets with user-friendly front-end.
 - In long term, it will strive to establish platform for open-source data and analysis of UN Sustainable Development Goals. It will enable UNEP to get access to most sophisticated online tools to track progress, identify priority areas for action, and needs for making world sustainable.
- 234. ▶ UN General Assembly adopted a framework to strengthen international response to global refugee crisis, with USA and Hungary only nations to have voted in against the Global Compact on Refugees.
- 235. ▶ UN Member states approved a 6.69 billion US Dollar budget for 13 peacekeeping operations for 2018-19. It is 2nd year in a row, that UN has made significant cuts to overall peacekeeping budget.
 - Missions include -
 - MINUJUSTH (UN Mission for Justice Support in Haiti)
 - MINUSCA (Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Central African Republic)
 - MINURSO (Mission for Referendum in Western Sahara)
 - MONUSCO (Stabilisation Mission in Democratic Republic of the Congo)
 - UNIFIL (Interim Force in Lebanon).
 - United States is biggest contributor to UB, paying 22% of \$5.4 billion core budget and 28.5% of US \$7.9 billion peacekeeping budget. China is other top contributor with 10.3% followed by Japan with 9.7 %.
- 236. ▶ UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres declared 2019-2028 as *Nelson Mandela Decade of Peace*, during Nelson Mandela peace summit honouring South African leader at UN.
- 237. ▶ UN Security Council (UNSC) held its first-ever meeting on corruption and its linkages to global conflicts. Citing the World Economic Forum's estimates, UN Secretary-General António Guterres said that corruption costs at least \$2.6 trillion or 5% of global GDP.
- 238. ▶ UN will launch a project on creating an "inventory" of art forms, craftsmanship and other intangible cultural heritage of the country. A total of 13 intangible cultural heritage elements from India have been inscribed till date on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

239. ▶ UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) approved India's proposal to observe an International Year of Millets in 2023. FAO also approved India's membership to Executive Board of UN World Food Program (WFP) for 2020 and 2021.
240. ▶ UNESCO added six new elements into its list of *intangible heritages* -
- ▶ Chidaoba - Georgia's traditional wrestling.
 - ▶ Hurling - Field game from Ireland. It dates back 2,000 years
 - ▶ Reggae - Jamaican music originating from marginalized groups.
 - ▶ Raiho-shin - Japanese rituals used to admonish laziness and teach children good behavior.
 - ▶ As-Samer - consists mainly of dancing and singing and practiced across many areas of Jordan.
 - ▶ Spring festive rites of Kazakhstan's horse breeders - Marks beginning of a new annual horse-breeding cycle.
241. ▶ US Based Merriam-Webster declared 'Justice' as its 2018 Word Of The Year.
- ▶ Earlier, 'Toxic' was chosen as 'Word of the Year 2018' by Oxford Dictionaries. Also, Dictionary.com chosen *misinformation* as its word of the year.
242. ▶ US Defence Department will create a Space Force as 6th branch of military by 2020.
243. ▶ US International Trade Commission ruled against putting an anti-dumping duty on the import of a synthetic fluoropolymer from India and China. Fluoropolymer is a key ingredient in the non-stick coating for pans and other cookware.
- ▶ Without the orders, PTFE imports from India would have been subject to an anti-dumping duty of 22.78 %.
244. ▶ US, Mexico and Canada signed new US-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) which will replace North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). USMCA will govern over a trillion dollars worth of trade between three countries.
245. ▶ US-based *Internet Society and Internet Service Providers Association of India (ISPAI)* signed MoU to make Internet safe and secure in India by securing routers which is vital for healthy internet infrastructure. It will also promote Mutually Agreed Norms for Routing Security (MANRS) which is global initiative to implement crucial fixes needed to reduce most common threats to internet's routing system.
246. ▶ US-based Hyperloop Transportation Technologies or HyperloopTT launched first full-scale transportation capsule to be operational in 2019, named *Quintero One*. Its a 32-metre 5 tonne capsule, made a specially made dual-layer smart composite material called "Vibranium".
- ▶ It can move at speeds of more than 750 miles (1,200 kilometers) per hour and has a capacity to hold 30 to 40 passengers.
 - ▶ In May 2018, Andhra Pradesh signed Mou with HyperloopTT to set up Hyperloop transportation system connecting Anantapur, Amaravati, Vijayawada and Visakhapatnam, as part of 700-800-km-long integrated public transit system.
 - ▶ Maharashtra government too signed pact with Richard Branson-led Virgin Group to build Mumbai-Pune Hyperloop.
 - ▶ HyperloopTT would build the first Hyperloop system in China in the Guizhou province.
247. ▶ US-based aircraft maker Boeing will set up an electronics manufacturing and avionics assembly facility in Bengaluru at an investment of INR 1,152 crores, as company's second-largest such facility after one in Seattle (Washington).
248. ▶ USA and Morocco launched GCTF Terrorist Travel Initiative under Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF), to enable sharing expertise on implementing effective counterterrorism watchlisting and screening tools. It will strengthen UNSC Resolution 2396 aiming to stop terrorist travel altogether.
249. ▶ USA announced \$39 million grant to Sri Lanka as part its foreign military financing to boost maritime security, as first US grant to Sri Lanka since 2009, after US stopped arms sales to Sri Lanka during its Tamil separatist war that ended in 2009.
250. ▶ USA announced closure of Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) mission in Washington DC, after PLO leaders failed to engage with US efforts to bring about peace with Israel and attempted to prompt an investigation of Israel by International Criminal Court.
251. ▶ USA based IT Firm IBM acquired software Firm Red Hat in a \$34 billion cash and debt deal, as IBM's biggest ever acquisition so far. It will become a unit of IBM's Hybrid Cloud division.
252. ▶ USA designated India as Strategic Trade Authorization-1 (STA-1) country that will allow it to buy highly advanced and cutting-edge sensitive technologies from USA, bringing India in par with US's closest allies such as NATO.
- ▶ Currently there are 36 countries on STA-1 list, wit India being only South Asian on list.
 - ▶ STA-1 treatment will expand scope of technology exports subject to Export Administration Regulations (EAR) that can be made to India without individual licenses.
253. ▶ USA exempted India from imposition of certain sanctions for development of strategically-located Chabahar port in Iran, along with construction of railway line connecting it with landlocked Afghanistan. This exception relates to reconstruction assistance and economic development for Afghanistan. These activities are vital for ongoing support of Afghanistan's growth and humanitarian relief.
- ▶ US has imposed toughest ever sanctions on defiant Iran aimed at altering the Iranian regime's "behaviour". It covered Iran's banking and energy sectors and reinstate penalties for countries and companies in Europe, Asia and elsewhere that do not halt Iranian oil imports.

- ▶ However, eight countries — India, China, Italy, Greece, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and Turkey — were temporarily allowed to continue buying Iranian oil as they showed significant reduction in oil purchase from Iran.
- 254. ▶ USA merged its Consulate General with its new embassy in Israel into single diplomatic mission in Jerusalem, as part of US's global efforts to improve efficiency and effectiveness of its operations. Earlier in May 2018, US moved its Israeli Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.
 - ▶ US will establish new Palestinian Affairs Unit inside embassy in Jerusalem to continue reporting, outreach and programming in West Bank and Gaza as well as with Palestinians in Jerusalem.
- 255. ▶ USA proposed establishing an *Arab NATO* force to counter Iran's military expansion in region. Proposed Middle East Strategic Alliance (MESA) will consist of the US, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, Oman, Kuwait, Bahrain, Egypt and Jordan.
- 256. ▶ USA will pull out of three-decade-old Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty signed with Russia during Cold War.
 - ▶ INF was crucial Cold War-era treaty banning development, testing and possession of short and medium range ground-launched nuclear missiles with range of 500-5,000 km, signed in December 1987 between USA and USSR.
 - ▶ It was central to ending arms race between two superpowers during cold war and protected America's NATO allies in Europe from Soviet missile attacks. It was designed to provide measure of some strategic stability on continent of Europe.
 - ▶ USA alleged that Russia has violated treaty and has been violating it for many years. This violation comes after Russia's alleged development and deployment of Novator 9M729 missile (also known as SSC-8), that could strike Europe at short notice.
 - ▶ It will allow US new nuclear weapon options in Pacific, to counter China's growing influence and may also trigger new Arms race between USA & Russia.
- 257. ▶ USA's Central Bank Federal Reserve raised interest rates for a third time this year (by 25 basis points to 2.25 %), also reaffirming outlook for further hikes well into 2019. It reflects an upbeat assessment of economy.
- 258. ▶ Ukraine approved ending two-decade-old treaty on friendship, cooperation and partnership between Ukraine and Russia. Treaty will be terminated on April 1, 2019 amid rising tensions between two countries.
- 259. ▶ Ukraine began series of large-scale air force exercises with USA and other NATO countries, named *Clear Sky 2018*.
- 260. ▶ Ukraine launched annual joint military exercise named Rapid Trident with United States and other NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) member countries, to be held in western Ukrainian village of Starychi till September 15, 2018.
- 261. ▶ Ukraine's parliament imposed martial law for 30 days in country to counter differences with Russia, after a weekend naval confrontation off disputed Crimean Peninsula in which Russia fired on and seized three Ukrainian vessels.
- 262. ▶ United Arab Emirates (UAE) Govt. increased representation of Emirati women in Federal National Council to 50 % (from 22.5 % currently), to enforce women empowerment.
- 263. ▶ United Arab Emirates resumed its diplomatic services at its embassy in Syria, after six years of suspension, amid syrian civil war.
- 264. ▶ United Kingdom chosen *Sutherland*, on A'Mhoine peninsula on north coast of Scotland as site of UK's first spaceport, to send satellites vertically into orbit by early 2020s.
- 265. ▶ United Nations E-Government Survey 2018 -
 - ▶ India jumped 22 places to break into top 100 this year, ranked 96th.
 - ▶ Top 5 - Denmark (1), Australia (2), South Korea (3), UK (4), Sweden (5)
- 266. ▶ United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and World Health Organization (WHO) reiterated India's status as polio-free country, after some oral polio vaccine vials being found contaminated with the type-2 polio virus.
 - ▶ They also asserted that all vaccines provided under Universal Immunization Programme (UIP) are safe and urged people to get their children vaccinated.
 - ▶ India was certified polio-free in March 2014 and it still continues to remain vigilant against all three types of polioviruses. Last polio case due to wild poliovirus in country was detected on 13 January 2011.
- 267. ▶ United Nations Development Programme Human Development Index 2018 -
 - ▶ India ranked 130 among 189 countries.
 - ▶ Neighbours - Bangladesh (136), Pakistan (150), Nepal (149), Sri Lanka (76)
 - ▶ Top 5 - Norway (1), Switzerland (2), Australia (3), Ireland (4) and Germany (5)
 - ▶ Bottom 5 - Niger (189), Central African Republic (188), South Sudan (187), Chad (186), Burundi (185).
- 268. ▶ United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released special report on global warming in Incheon (South Korea), with contributions from 91 authors from 40 countries. It will be key scientific input in upcoming Katowice Climate Change Conference in Poland in December 2018.
 - ▶ It shows how half degree of warming makes big difference, adversely impacting global population and overall ecosystem.

- ✎ It is possible to meet new warming target, with nations taking rapid transitions over 10 to 20 years and reach net zero around 2050, 25 years earlier than planned under earlier 2-degree goal.
 - ✎ It lists four pathways to curb global warming and through which the 1.5 degree target can be achieved. Also, Varying amounts between 100 to 1000 gigatons (billion tonnes) of CO₂ needs to be removed from atmosphere in these four pathways.
 - ✎ Advantages of keeping global temperature rise within 1.5 degrees Celsius -
 - ✎ By 2100, global sea level rise would be 10 cm lower with global warming of 1.5 degrees compared with 2 degrees Celsius.
 - ✎ Arctic Ocean free of sea ice in summer would be once per century with global warming of 1.5 degrees, compared with at least once per decade with 2 degrees Celsius.
 - ✎ Coral reefs will decline by 70-90% with global warming of 1.5 degrees, whereas virtually all (over 99%) would be lost with 2 degrees Celsius.
 - ✎ Climate-related risks to health, livelihoods, food security, water supply, human security and economic growth are projected to increase with global warming of 1.5 degrees Celsius and increase further with 2 degrees Celsius.
269. ▶ United Nations Postal Administration (UNPA) issued special stamps with Diyas lamps (special event sheet) to commemorate India Hindu festival of Diwali, in denomination of US \$1.15.
270. ▶ United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres constituted a High-Level Panel on Digital Cooperation, to be co-chaired by Melinda Gates and Jack Ma (Executive Chairman of Alibaba Group).
- ✎ Panel has been mandated to contribute to broader public debate on the importance of cooperative and interdisciplinary approaches to ensure a safe and inclusive digital future. It Panel will identify policy, research and information gaps, and make proposals to strengthen international cooperation in the digital space.
271. ▶ United Nations Security Council (UNSC) adopted Resolution 2428 to impose an arms embargo on South Sudan, 5 years after civil war began. It calls upon all UN member states to prevent supply, sale or transfer to South Sudan – from or through their territories till 31 May 2019.
272. ▶ United Nations Security Council lifted sanctions against Eritrea, after nine years of imposition. The Security Council had imposed an arms embargo, asset freeze and a travel ban on Eritrea, amidst claims that the northeast African nation, supported al-Shabab militants in Somalia.
273. ▶ United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) and Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba Group have formed strategic partnership to support efforts eliminate hunger globally by 2030. Alibaba Cloud will work with WFP to develop digital “World Hunger Map”, to monitor global hunger and operations to end scourge by 2030, one of UN’s key Sustainable Development goals.
274. ▶ United Nations finalized Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration to better manage international migration and strengthen migrant rights. Its first time that UN Member countries negotiated an agreement covering all dimensions of international migration, forming a non legally binding framework. US did not agreed upon these new UN Migration terms.
275. ▶ Vatican reached a landmark deal with China on appointment of bishops in China, with Pope Francis recognizing 7 state-appointed Chinese bishops as part of the deal.
276. ▶ Western Pacific nation Palau became first country to ban many kinds of sunscreen, to protect its coral reefs from chemicals that cause significant damage.
277. ▶ With a lifespan of roughly 10 years, China’s Tiangong space station (also known as Heavenly Palace) will become replacement of International Space Station, which will retire in 2024. Three astronauts will be permanently stationed in 60-tonne orbiting lab, which will enable crew to conduct biological and microgravity research.
- ✎ ISS is a collaboration between US, Russia, Canada, Europe and Japan. It has been in operation since 1998.
278. ▶ World Bank Ease of Doing Business Report 2018 (16th Edition) -
- ✎ India saw a surge of 23 places with 77th rank in current report. In Previous report, India was ranked 100th. Overall, India has improved by 57 places in 2 years, compared to 130 in 2016 and 77 in 2018.
 - ✎ Top 10 - New Zealand (1), Singapore (2), Denmark (3), Hong Kong (4), South Korea (5), Georgia (6), Norway (7), USA (8), UK (9), Macedonia (10).
 - ✎ Bottom 5 - Somalia (190), Eritrea (189), Venezuela (188), Yemen (187), Libya (186)
 - ✎ Neighbours - China (46), Pakistan (136), Bangladesh (176), Nepal (110), Sri Lanka (100)
279. ▶ World Bank Group's International Finance Corporation (IFC) launched its \$1 billion masala bond programme in the US and Europe, aimed at funding rapidly expanding investment activities of IFC in India.
- ✎ Masala bonds are rupee-denominated borrowings issued overseas. IFC uses them to raise rupee funds overseas and brings the proceeds to India for investments.
280. ▶ World Bank announced concessional loan worth USD 195 million to Nepal to reform country’s financial and energy sectors.

281. ▶ World Bank announced funding of up to \$1 billion for the Indonesian government to supplement relief and reconstruction efforts in wake of the earthquake and tsunami that hit the country last month.
282. ▶ World Bank approved US\$155.7 million loan to Nepal to build and maintain bridges, and improve food security of vulnerable households and communities.
283. ▶ World Bank released its East Asia and Pacific economy update October 2018 edition.
- ▶ Countries of the East Asia and Pacific region will grow at 6.3 per cent in 2018 mainly due to China's moderate growth, down from 6.6 % growth of region in 2017.
284. ▶ World Bank report titled *In the Dark: How Much Do Power Sector Distortions Cost South Asia*. As per the report -
- ▶ Efficiency gap in India's power sector costs the Indian economy 4% every year (\$86 billion in 2016 FY).
 - ▶ Rural household's income in India can be increased by \$9.4 billion and business losses worth USD 22.7 billion can be eliminated with 24 hours access to power supply. In 2016, around 20% of electricity generated was lost during transmission and distribution, as highest loss rate in world.
 - ▶ The consumption of groundwater in India has increased by 700% from 1950 to 2014.
 - ▶ Reliable access to electricity will have positive impact on Gender Equality by increasing women's employment and girls' study time. It will lead to lower use of kerosene lamps which would improve environment. Energy prices should be rationalised to reflect actual cost of supply.
285. ▶ World Economic Forum Gender Gap Index 2018 -
- ▶ India ranked at 108th position, same rank as 2017.
 - ▶ Top 10 - Iceland (1), Norway (2), Sweden (3), Finland (4), Nicaragua (5).
286. ▶ World Health Organization (WHO) SAFER initiative to support governments in taking practical steps to accelerate progress on health, beat noncommunicable diseases (NCDs). SAFER provides five high-impact strategic actions prioritized for implementation to promote health and development -
- ▶ Strengthening restrictions on alcohol availability.
 - ▶ Advance and enforcing drink driving countermeasures.
 - ▶ Facilitating access to screening, brief interventions, and treatment.
 - ▶ Enforcing bans or comprehensive restrictions on alcohol advertising, sponsorship, and promotion.
 - ▶ Raising prices on alcohol through excise taxes and pricing policies.
287. ▶ World Health Organization (WHO) launched first global guidelines on sanitation and health, aimed at securing health and wellbeing for everyone, everywhere by considering sanitation as fundamental foundation of human health and development. By adopting these, countries can significantly reduce diarrhoeal deaths due to unsafe water, sanitation and hygiene.
288. ▶ World Meteorological Organization (WMO) designated India as nodal centre for developing customized model to issue advance warning of floods to Asian countries, called as Flash Flood Guidance System.
- ▶ It will provide forecasts by computing likelihood of rainfall and soil moisture levels to warn of possible floods. It will be customized weather model, originally developed by US and donated to WMO to warn about flash floods at least six hours in advance.
289. ▶ World Trade Organization has set up a panel to look into the India-US export-subsidy dispute, on request of the US to examine the allegations on India's export incentive measures.
- ▶ US has challenged India's export subsidy programmes such as Merchandise Exports from India Scheme in the WTO, stating that these initiatives were harming its companies.
 - ▶ According to US, all WTO members, including India, are required to provide subsidies consistent with provisions of WTO's Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures.
290. ▶ World's First Intertidal art gallery called Coralarium opened in Maldives, filled with around 30 Sculptures acting as a habitat for coral and other marine species.
291. ▶ World's Most Innovative University Report, by Reuters news agency rankings -
- ▶ It was first published in 2015, since then there has been no mention of any Indian university in the list.
 - ▶ In top 100, 48 universities are from North America, 23 from Asia, 27 from Europe and 2 from Middle East. US dominated with 46 universities among top 100.
 - ▶ Top 10 -
 - ▶ Stanford University (US)
 - ▶ Massachusetts Institute of Technology (US)
 - ▶ Harvard University (US)
 - ▶ University of Pennsylvania (US)

-  University of Washington(US)
-  University of Texas System(US)
-  KU Leuven (Belgium)
-  Imperial College London (United Kingdom)
-  University of North Carolina (US)
-  Vanderbilt University (US)

292. ▶ World's first self-driving tram, fitted with multiple radar, LiDAR, and camera sensors, has been successfully tested in Potsdam (Germany). The tram operated on a 6-km test route in real traffic with a safety driver for emergency purposes.

293. ▶ 'Toxic' has been chosen as the 'Word of the Year 2018' by Oxford Dictionaries, Stating that it had become a "descriptor for year's most talked about topics". While, Dictionary.com chosen *misinformation* as its word of the year.

Top

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