



Current Affairs - December 2017 to May 2018

Month Type



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International

- ▶ JLL's annual global report 'City Momentum Index' (CMI) 2018 -
 - ▶ Indian cities dominated *short term momentum ranking*, with Hyderabad and Bengaluru are at top two positions. Pune ranked fourth, Kolkata (5th) and Delhi (8th).
- ▶ North Korea extended its Clocks by 30 Minutes, to synchronize its time zone with that south Korea, which was pulled back 30 minutes 3 years ago. Its a major step towards unification among 2 Koreas looking for peace.
- ▶ Renault-Nissan-Mitsubishi automakers alliance overtook Volkswagen as biggest seller of light vehicles in 2017 -
 - ▶ Renault-Nissan Group posted total of 10.61 million light vehicles sales in 2017, taking over Volkswagen's 10.53 million. Volkswagen group also includes Audi, Skoda, Seat and Porsche brands.
 - ▶ Toyota was 3rd with 10.2 million light vehicles sold in 2017.
- ▶ 11 Pacific Rim countries entered into Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership or CP TPP or TPP11 in Santiago (Chile). It is revised version of Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) proposed by US, finalized after US withdrew from it.
 - ▶ TPP11 includes Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam.
 - ▶ It will be world's third largest trade bloc after European Union (EU) and North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). It will come into effect 60 days after 6 of 11 member countries ratify it domestically.
- ▶ 11th World Hindi Conference (विश्व हिंदी सम्मेलन) will be hosted by Mauritius in Port Lois in August 2018 with theme *Vaishvik Hindi Aur Bharatiy Sanskriti*.
- ▶ 1st Asia Power Index Australia Based Lowy Institute -
 - ▶ Termed as *giant of the future*, India is ranked 4th out of 25 nations in Asia-Pacific region. As per Report, India trails behind in indicators of defence networks and economic relationships.
 - ▶ A country's overall power is its weighted average across eight measures of power - *economic resources, military capability, resilience, future trends, diplomatic influence, economic relationships, defence networks and cultural influence*.
 - ▶ USA, China And Japan are top 3. While Russia is at 5th Place.
- ▶ 2 Days after Saudi Arabia Allowed Indian Haj Pilgrims to travel to Haj via Sea Route, Saudi Arabia has now Increased India's Haj Quota for 2018 to 175025 (1 Lakh 75 Thousand and 25 Pilgrims), an increase of 5000 compared to previous year.
 - ▶ Additionally, Women above 45 years of age will be allowed to travel for Haj in groups of 4 or more women, without a Mehram (Male Companion).
- ▶ 2 Indian institutes featured in top 50 Asian institutes in *TIMES Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings for educational institutes in Asia*. These institutes are Indian Institute of Science (29th) and Indian Institute of Technology Bombay (44). List is Topped by National University of Singapore.
- ▶ 2017 Global Talent Competitiveness Index by INSEAD -
 - ▶ India is ranked 81st among 118 countries, improving from 92nd rank last year.
 - ▶ Top 5 Nations - Switzerland, Singapore, United Kingdom, United States, Sweden.
- ▶ 2018 *World Economic League Table* report released by Centre for Economics and Business Research (UK) -
 - ▶ India will overtake UK and France to become fifth largest economy in 2018, and will further move to 3rd spot by 2032.
 - ▶ China is likely to overtake USA as world's largest economy by 2032.

✎ Russia will fall to 17th place among world's largest economies by 2032, from 11th place in 2017, mainly because of low commodity (oil) prices in international market and its excessive reliance on energy sector.

11. ▶ 2018 A.T. Kearney Foreign Direct Investment Confidence Index (25 Nations) -

✎ Top 5 - USA, Canada, Germany, UK, China.

✎ India is ranked at 11th, down from 8th Position in China.

12. ▶ 2018 Edelman Trust Barometer Report -

✎ In Both Categories of General Public and Informed Experts - China ranked 1st and India ranked 3rd. Indonesia is at 2nd place in both categories.

✎ Note that In 2017 report, India was at top in both categories.

13. ▶ 2018 World Press Freedom Index by Reporters Without Borders (RSF)

✎ India ranked 138th (falling 2 positions from 136th in 2017).

✎ Top 5 - Norway (1), Sweden (2), Netherlands (3), Finland (4), Switzerland (5)

✎ North Korea is at Bottom (150th).

✎ Neighbours - Bangladesh (146), Sri Lanka (131), Pakistan (139), Nepal (106)

14. ▶ 2nd India-Afghanistan air cargo route linking Kabul to Mumbai inaugurated at Hamid Karzai international airport in Kabul, to boost export of fresh fruits and medicinal plants from Afghanistan. First air corridor between both countries linking Kabul-New Delhi was inaugurated in June 2017.

15. ▶ 34th Harbin International Ice and Snow Festival (world's largest ice festival) began in Harbin (north-east China). It highlights ice sculptures of castles, historic landmarks and famous figures.

16. ▶ 44 African countries from total 55 members of African Union (AU) have signed agreement to create African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), one of world's largest free trade blocs, during a summit held in Kigali (Rwanda). AfCFTA will bring together 1.2 billion people with combined gross domestic product (GDP) of more than \$2 trillion from Africa.

17. ▶ *Feminism* is named as Merriam-Webster's Word of the year 2017.

✎ *Feminism* word has its roots in the Latin language, where it was used for "woman" and "female" in 14th century English.

✎ Other Words of The year 2017

✎ *Populism* - Cambridge Dictionary.

✎ *Kwaussie* - Australian National Dictionary.

18. ▶ *Global Manufacturing Index* released by World Economic Forum (WEF, titled *Readiness for the future of production report* -

✎ Japan is at top, while India is ranked 30th. Top 5 Nations -

✎

1	Japan
2	South Korea
3	Germany
4	Switzerland
5	China

19. ▶ *Gulf Shield* – 1 military exercise of 23 countries including Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states held in Saudi Arabia. This 1 month exercise is largest military drill in region.

20. ▶ *The Legatum Prosperity Index 2017* (149 countries) -

✎ India ranks 100th in this list of prosperity.

✎ Top 5 - Norway, New Zealand, Finland, Switzerland and Sweden.

21. ▶ *We Are Sikhs*, A campaign to create awareness of Sikhism and its followers in USA has won a top award for excellence in public relations programming to promote public causes. It won 2018 PRWeek US award in category of Public Cause.

22. ▶ A 910-carat gem diamond, considered 5th largest gem-quality diamond ever found has been discovered in a Lesotho mine (Africa). It is more valuable as it is colourless, with worth of approx \$40 million.

23. ▶ A consortium of chinese firms is Constructing Bangladesh's first eco-friendly thermal power plant with ultra-modern clean coal technology, near sea port in Payra town in Patuakhali district of Bangladesh. Estimated cost of the project is USD 1.56 billion.

24. ▶ A film on life of Indian Nobel Peace laureate *Kailash Satyarthi* won USA Documentary Grand Jury Award at Sundance Film Festival in Utah (USA). The documentary titled *Kailash* has been directed by Derek Doneen.

25. ▶ A rare signed photo of M K Gandhi, walking alongside Madan Mohan Malaviya, was auctioned for USD 41806 in USA. It dates back to August - December 1931.

26. ▶ A three-day international conference on "Accessible Tourism" has been held in Nepal,. During this, Nepal launched first accessible trekking trail for differently abled and elders in Pokhara city. Inaugurated trek is a 1.3 kilometers section of the 14 kilometer hiking path in ridge connecting Sarangkot to Naudanda areas.

27. ▶ According to *Clampdowns and Courage-South Asia Press Freedom Report 2017-18* by UNESCO -
 - ✎ India accounted for 82 out of 97 instances of Internet shutdown among South Asia between May 2017 and April 2018.
 - ✎ Pakistan witnessed 12 while Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka reported just 1 instance each of internet shutdown.
28. ▶ According to *Migration and Development Brief* by World Bank, India retained top position as recipient of remittances with about \$69 billion in 2017. India was followed by China (\$64 billion), Philippines (\$33 billion), Mexico (\$31 billion), Nigeria (\$22 billion) and Egypt (\$20 billion). Global remittance grew 7% to US \$613 billion in 2017.
29. ▶ According to *Military Balance 2018* report by International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) -
 - ✎ India overtook UK to become 5th largest defence spender in world in 2017, with \$52.5 billion defence expenditure in 2017 (compared to UK's \$50.7)
 - ✎ Top 5 - USA (\$602.8 billion), China (\$150.5 billion), Saudi Arabia (\$76.7 billion), Russia(\$61.6 billion), India (\$52.5 billion).
30. ▶ According to Chinese General Administration of Customs, India-China bilateral trade reached \$84.44 billion last year, a historic high with 18.63% year-on-year growth. This is well above previous high of \$71.18 billion registered in 2016.
31. ▶ According to International Energy Agency (IEA), global energy-related carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions rose to historic high of 32.5 gigatonnes in 2017. It was due to higher energy demand and slowing of energy efficiency improvements. While, Global energy demand rose by 2.1% in 2017 to 14,050 million tonnes of oil equivalent.
32. ▶ According to International Energy Agency, USA will overtake Russia as world's biggest oil producer by 2019. USA's crude oil output rose above 10 million barrels per day late last year for first time since 1970s, overtaking top oil exporter Saudi Arabia.
33. ▶ According to Internet Security Threat Report by Symantec, India is third most vulnerable country in terms of risk of cyber threats (malware / spam /ransomware) (with 5.09% global threats). USA (26.61% global threats) is most vulnerable, followed by China (10.95%) in 2017. India is 2nd most impacted by spam and bots attacks, third most impacted by network attacks, and fourth most impacted by ransomware.
34. ▶ According to New York Post, Amazon became 3rd most valuable company in world with market cap of \$702.5 billion, getting past Microsoft. Apple and Alphabet stand ahead of Amazon as most valuable companies in world. Amazon also became first foreign e-commerce firm to start its own food retail venture in India called Amazon Retail, piloting its services in Pune.
35. ▶ According to Sanctum Wealth Management report, India will become the fastest growing large economy in the world in 2018, surpassing China and the country's equity market will jump to become the fifth largest in world.
36. ▶ According to Steel Users Federation of India (SUFIL), India overtook Japan to become world's second largest producer of crude steel, with China at top.
37. ▶ According to US Treasury Department, India is now 12th largest overseas holder of US government securities, with India's exposure being US \$144.7 billion.
 - ✎ Overall, China is largest holder of US government securities with holdings to tune of \$1.18 trillion, followed by Japan at \$1.06 trillion. Ireland third with \$326.5 billion.
38. ▶ According to World Energy Access report by International Energy Agency (IEA) -
 - ✎ Half a billion people have gained access to electricity in India since 2000, almost doubling country's electrification rate. It paves way for India to achieve access to electricity for all in early 2020s.
39. ▶ According to World Steel Association (WSA), India overtook USA to become 3rd largest steel producer in 2017, with crude steel production growing 6.2% to 101.4 million tonnes (MT). China remains 1st by producing 831.7 MT in 2017, followed by Japan (104.7 MT).
40. ▶ According to global property consultancy Knight Frank's Wealth Report 2018 -
 - ✎ Mumbai ranked 47th on *city wealth index* among 314 cities in world, while Guangzhou (China) tops the list.
41. ▶ According to global traffic scorecard published annually by *Inrix*, top 5 most congested cities are -
 - ✎ Los Angeles (USA)
 - ✎ New York City (USA)
 - ✎ Moscow (Russia)
 - ✎ Sao Paulo (Brazil)
 - ✎ San Francisco (USA)
 - ✎ Further, most congested country is Thailand, followed by Indonesia and Colombia.
42. ▶ According to report *Indian Industry's Inclusive Footprint in South Africa – Doing Business, Doing Good*, released by Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) -
 - ✎ 140 Indian companies invested approx \$4 billion in South Africa, creating nearly 18000 direct employment opportunities.
43. ▶ According to wealth index based on data from 4th National Family and Health Survey (NFHS-4) 2015-16,

- ✎ Wealth index was prepared on basis of information of scores on ownership of consumer goods and household characteristics such as availability of clean drinking water, classified into wealth quintiles.
 - ✎ State wise wealth Distribution -
 - ✎ Delhi and Punjab are richest with over 60% of their households in top wealth quintile. They are followed by Goa (54.5% in top bracket). Bihar is poorest with half of its households in bottom quintile. Rajasthan has most equitable wealth distribution with similar number of households in all quintiles.
 - ✎ Wealth distribution in religious groups -
 - ✎ Jains - 70% population in top quintile.
 - ✎ Sikhs - 59.6% in top quintile.
 - ✎ Hindus and Muslims have similar and also most equitable wealth distribution across all quintiles.
 - ✎ Community wise wealth distribution -
 - ✎ Scheduled tribes are poorest with 45.9% of their people in lowest quintile.
 - ✎ Rural and Urban wealth -
 - ✎ 29% of rural India belongs to bottom quintile, while it is just 3.3% for urban India.
44. ▶ Aditya Puri, managing director of HDFC Bank is only Indian in Barron's top 30 global CEO list 2018, Featuring for fourth consecutive year.
 45. ▶ Afghanistan offered to recognise Terror Group Taliban as a legitimate political group in order to end over 16-year-long war.
 46. ▶ AfrAsia Bank Global Wealth Migration Review -
 - ✎ India is named 6th wealthiest country in world, with total wealth of 8,230 billion dollars.
 - ✎ USA is ranked top with total wealth of 62,584 Billion dollars, followed by China with wealth of 24,803 billion dollars and Japan (19,522 billion dollars).
 47. ▶ Air India flight (AI 139) became first flight to land at Tel Aviv Airport (Israel), after passing through Saudi Arabia air space. This is first time, Saudi Arabia has allowed a commercial flight to Israel to use its airspace. Saudi Arabia's decision to permit Air India to use its airspace enabled it to take a shorter route, saving 2.10 hours of travel time.
 48. ▶ Airports Council International (ACI) named Mumbai (Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport) and Delhi (Indira Gandhi International Airport) for top position among airports handling over 40 million passengers annually, in its annual airport service quality (ASQ) awards. Beijing and Shanghai Pudong (China) have been ranked 2nd.
 49. ▶ Airports Council International (ACI) ranked New Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport as 16th in world in terms of traffic volumes. Georgia's Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport (ATL) ranked as busiest airport in world.
 50. ▶ American and Japanese armies launched 13th edition of their joint exercise named Iron Fist, in California (USA).
 51. ▶ American electric Carmaker TESLA has builds world's biggest lithium-ion battery to be plugged into an Australian state grid, capable of powering 30,000 homes for up to an hour in the event of a severe blackout.
 52. ▶ An Indo-German MOU has been signed for *Implementation Agreement in Sustainable Urban Development and Smart Cities in India*, to develop and apply concepts for sustainable urban development about the provision of urban basic services and housing in selected cities and Smart Cities in India.
 53. ▶ Andhra Pradesh Government and Zurich (Switzerland) signed a letter of intent to promote mutual prosperity and development.
 54. ▶ Andhra Pradesh ranks 51st globally in Multidimensional Poverty Index according to a household survey conducted in state, in association with University of Oxford (UK). It is first Indian state to conduct a household survey at state and district level to estimate multidimensional poverty.
 55. ▶ Andijan Region of Uzbekistan and India signed agreement for cooperation in pharmaceutical industry, for implementation of program for production of pharmaceutical, bio-pharmaceutical products and medical equipment in Andijan region of Uzbekistan.
 56. ▶ Annual survey of *Gallup International* ranked Indian PM Narendra Modi as 3rd among world leaders, with German chancellor Angela Merkel at top and French president Emmanuel Macron at 2nd place.
 57. ▶ Arab Nation Qatar announced \$50 million donation to United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA). India also increased aid for Palestinian refugees to \$5 million, from \$1.5 Million Initially.
 58. ▶ Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Paraguay and Peru temporarily left Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), amid differences over choosing secretary general of the group.
 59. ▶ Arms import by India increased by 24% between 2008-2012 and 2013-2017 period as per data by International Peace Research Institute.
 - ✎ India is followed by Saudi Arabia, Egypt, UAE, China, Australia, Algeria, Iraq, Pakistan and Indonesia as world top importers.
 - ✎ Largest arms suppliers to India are Russia (62%), US (15%) and Israel (11%).

60. ▶ As per *Water Resources Research*, Phosphorus levels in freshwater bodies across world are escalating, posing serious threat to ecosystem. About 1.5 teragrams of phosphorus (1.5 billion kilograms) is dumped annually into freshwater systems. China contributes most with 30%, followed by India (8%), USA (7%). Huang He river basin of China has highest phosphorus-related water pollution. India's Ganges basin is ranked 4th in list.
61. ▶ As per Airports Council International (ACI), Dubai International Airport retained No 1 rank as world's busiest airport for international travel, with 88.2 million passengers.
 - ▶ Dubai witnessed 15% growth in tourist arrivals from India in 2017, hosting 2.1 million visitors, retaining top spot as source market.
62. ▶ As per Grant Thornton's quarterly global business survey -
 - ▶ India slipped to 6th position globally in business optimism index for first quarter of 2018.
 - ▶ Top five - Austria, Finland, Indonesia, Netherlands and US.
63. ▶ As per Hurun's Global Rich List 2018 -
 - ▶ India has 3rd highest number of Billionaires across world with 131 names (31 added this year). Mukesh Ambani remains India's richest person with net worth of \$26 billion.
 - ▶ China with 819 names and USA with 571 are at top 2 places.
64. ▶ As per a UN Report, Delhi will surpass Tokyo (Japan) as most populous city in world by 2028.
65. ▶ As per a World Bank Report, India's new Indirect Tax System, The goods and services tax (GST) is one of most complex with the second highest tax rate in the world (After Chile), among 115 countries which have a similar indirect tax system. Further, there are several exempted sales and exports are zero-rated, which allows exporters to claim refund for taxes paid on inputs.
66. ▶ As per data by *International Air Transport Association (IATA)*, India topped worldwide growth chart of domestic air passenger traffic for November 2017 with growth by 16.4 %, highest in world.
67. ▶ As per data by Bank of Thailand, India has highest unemployment rate in Asia (8%). Thailand's 1.3% employment rate is ranked best in Asia.
68. ▶ As per data by Sri Lanka Govt., India remains top source of tourists to Sri Lanka in 2017, with over 3.8 Lakh Indians visiting Sri Lanka. India was followed by followed by China and United Kingdom (UK).
69. ▶ As per new discovery, *Mount Hope* is new tallest mountain in British Antarctic Territory (BAT) with height measured at 3,239 meters above, more than 3,184 meters tall *Mount Jackson*.
70. ▶ As per survey by personal finance platform *GoBankingRates*
 - ▶ India is 2nd cheapest country to live or retire among 112 countries, after South Africa. It is based on four metrics - local purchasing power index, rent index, Groceries index, and Consumer price index. These metrics evaluate relative affordability as compared to New York city.
 - ▶ Most Expensive - Bermuda (112), Bahamas (111), Hong Kong (110), Switzerland (109) and Ghana (108).
71. ▶ Australia abolished its employer-sponsored 457 visa programme which was mainly used by Indians. It has been replaced with a new programme that requires higher English-language proficiency and job skills.
72. ▶ Australia became 25th country to recognize same-sex marriage as it passed a bill that changed a 2004 law that stipulated a legal marriage as the one between a man and a woman.
73. ▶ Azerbaijan inaugurated a pipeline at Sangachal Terminal, creating first direct route to transport gas from one of world's largest fields to Europe bypassing Russia. Project is worth USD 40-billion. It consists of 3 linked pipelines that will bring gas from Azerbaijani Shah Deniz 2 field across Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey, Greece, Albania and Adriatic Sea to southern Italy.
74. ▶ BHEL commissioned 1st unit of 110 MW of Kishanganga hydroelectric project (HEP) of NHPC in Jammu and Kashmir, Located on Jhelum Tributary Kishanganga. All three units of 340 MW project will generate 1,350 million units (MU) of clean electricity annually.
75. ▶ BHEL signed a Technology Collaboration Agreement (TCA) with South Korea's HLB Power. It is for in-house manufacturing of large size gates and dampers used in coal fired power plants that would be commissioned or retrofitted with high capacity emission control equipment.
76. ▶ BRICS New Development Bank (NDB) will launch Americas Regional Office in Brazil, to increase operational capabilities of NDB in Brazil.
77. ▶ Bangladesh Government ended quota system in government services, that sets aside jobs for some special groups. It has been done after several protests against the same.
78. ▶ Bangladesh, India and Nepal approved operating procedures for passenger vehicle movement (Passenger protocol) in sub-region under Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN) Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA).
79. ▶ Bangladesh's first communication satellite *Bangabandhu-1* will be launched by SpaceX's Falcon 9 rocket from Kennedy Space Center Launch Complex 39A. It will provide wide range of broadcast and communication services throughout Bangladesh. It is built by Thales

Alenia Space, a Franco-Italian aerospace manufacturer. It is named after Bangladesh's *Father of the Nation - Sheikh Mujibur Rahman*.

80. ▶ Bank of America launched new chatbot named *Erica* that can help customers check balances, remind about bills and answer bank-related questions.
81. ▶ Bank of Baroda will cease its 21 years long operations in South Africa by March-end, amid a probe into alleged compliance lapses by BOB there.
82. ▶ Bank of Cyprus selected digital security company Gemalto to supply world's first biometric payment card for both chip and contactless payments. These cards will use fingerprint recognition instead of a personal identification number (PIN) to authenticate the cardholder.
83. ▶ Belgium became first country to send a female ambassador (Dominique Mineur) to Saudi Arabia.
84. ▶ Bengaluru city signed MoU with C40 cities network to work together to tackle air pollution.
 - ✍ C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group (C40) is grouping of cities aims at tackling climate change and reducing greenhouse gas emissions in urban areas.
85. ▶ Bermuda became first country to legalize and then repeal same-sex marriage, after it reversed right of gay couples to marry.
86. ▶ Bharti Airtel joined *Seamless Alliance*, a new global collaboration to bring high-speed and uninterrupted in-flight data connectivity to mobile customers. It works towards leveraging satellite technology to offer high-speed data connectivity to mobile users even when they are up in air.
87. ▶ Bharti Airtel signed agreement with Millicom International, under which *Airtel Rwanda Ltd* will acquire 100% equity in Tigo Rwanda Ltd.
88. ▶ Bhutan has become the first country to pledge rapid deployment troops to the UN peacekeeping operations, keeping them at the ready for participation in missions within 60 days.
89. ▶ Bilateral trade between India and China through Nathu La border (Sikkim) has resumed, located at 14,200 feet.
90. ▶ Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation announced USD 170 million projects aimed at advancing women's economic empowerment in India, Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda. Projects are focused on advancing gender equality, increasing job opportunities, spreading digital financial inclusion, and supporting agricultural sector and women's support groups.
91. ▶ Bisket Jatra Festival celebrated in Nepal, believed to have started during Malla dynasty and marks beginning of Nepali new year.
92. ▶ Bloomberg Billionaires List 2018 -
 - ✍ Mukesh Ambani ranked 19th Globally, 3rd in Asia and 1st in India with net worth of \$38.3 billion. Alibaba co-founder Jack Ma is ranked 14th, Followed by Tencent Founder Pony Ma (Ma Huateng).
 - ✍ Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos is at top (\$126 Billion), Followed by Bill Gates (\$91 B).
93. ▶ Bolivia unveiled its 200 km long flag and 3 metre wide, claimed to be world's biggest flag. It extended between cities La Paz and Oruro. Bolivia is demanding access to Pacific Ocean, which it lost to Chile in a war in the 19th century.
94. ▶ Bollywood Film *Padmaavat* has been banned in Malaysia by country's censor board, stating that it touches on the *sensitivities of Islam*.
95. ▶ Botanical Survey of India (BSI) and Natural History Museum of UK signed a MOU for cooperation in genetic/taxonomic studies, research and training, conservation etc.
96. ▶ Brazil declared *social emergency* on Venezuela border, to tackle influx of people fleeing crisis hit Venezuela. The declaration will free the authorities to allocate infrastructure funds and other humanitarian measures on Venezuela border.
97. ▶ Brazil's securities regulator prohibited local investment funds from buying cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin, Ethereum.
98. ▶ Brazzaville declaration was signed to promote better management and conservation of world's largest tropical peatlands-Cuvette Centrale region in Congo Basin from unregulated land use and prevent its drainage and degradation.
 - ✍ It was signed by Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Republic of Congo and Indonesia during 3rd Partners Meeting of Global Peatlands Initiative held in Brazzaville (Republic of Congo).
 - ✍ Peatlands are wetlands that contain mixture of decomposed organic material, partially submerged in layer of water, lacking oxygen. Their high carbon content makes them uniquely vulnerable to incineration if they are drained. They are globally important carbon store.
99. ▶ Britain's Prince Charles launched a new 10-million-dollar Development Impact Bond (DIB) to help improve education for over 200,000 children in India, as largest such bond in South Asia. It is the latest fundraising initiative by British Asian Trust (BAT) set up by royal 10 years ago to fight poverty in South Asia.
100. ▶ Britain's Royal Navy Received its first unmanned autonomous minesweeping system, capable of operating from a land or ship-based control station.
101. ▶ Britain's fertility regulator Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA) allowed doctors to create country's first 'three-parent' babies through mitochondrial donation therapy (or MRT), to prevent passage of incurable genetic diseases from mothers to offsprings.

102. ▶ British government introduced a new technology to remove extremist material from social media, developed by ASI Data Science. It uses advanced machine learning to study sound and visual of videos for “subtle signals” to check if they are extremist content.
103. ▶ Bulgaria taken over European Union’s six-month revolving presidency, from Estonia.
104. ▶ Cabinet Approvals -
- ▶ CCEA Approvals -
 - ▶ Approved proposal of Department of Commerce to give focused attention to 12 identified Champion Services Sectors for promoting their development, Including IT & ITeS, Tourism and Hospitality Services, Medical Value Travel, Transport and Logistics Services, Accounting and Finance Services, Audio Visual Services, Legal Services, Communication Services, Construction and Related Engineering Services, Environmental Services, Financial Services and Education Services. Fund of INR 5000 crores has been proposed for this purpose. It will enhance competitiveness of India's service sectors , thereby promoting GDP growth, creating more jobs and promoting exports to global markets.
 - ▶ Approved extension of Govt. Guarantee provided to lender Bank for providing credit limit to National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (NAFED) to 19000 crores from INR 9500 crores for undertaking procurement operation of pulses and oilseeds under Price Support Scheme (PSS).
 - ▶ These Government Guarantees are provided for a period of five years i.e. till 2021-22 by Govt. of India and with waiver of 1% Government Guarantee fee.
 - ▶ Provision of Govt. Guarantee will help in protecting farmers producing these commodities from making distress sales during peak arrival period and to provide remunerative prices to encourage higher investment and production.
 - ▶ MOUs -
 - ▶ With Jordan for cooperation in Customs, Health, Manpower and mining / beneficiation of Rock Phosphate & MOP and setting up facility in Jordan for Phosphoric Acid / DAP / NPK Fertilizers.
 - ▶ With Vietnam on Economic and Trade Cooperation.
 - ▶ With Fiji on Cooperation in Renewable Energy.
 - ▶ With Macedonia on cooperation in Health.
 - ▶ Misc -
 - ▶ Government reduced airfares for devotees travelling to Saudi Arabia or Haj, with prices of round tickets being slashed by INR 20000 (to INR 97000 now).
105. ▶ California became 6th USA state (after Colorado, Washington, Oregon, Alaska and Nevada), to permit sale of cannabis for recreational use.
106. ▶ Carribean Nation Dominican Republic and China established diplomatic relations, amid China's growing influence. With this, Dominican Republic has broken 77-year alliance with Taiwan.
107. ▶ Central American Nation Guatemala announced to move its Israeli Embassy to Jerusalem, after USA recently recognized Jerusalem as capital of Israel and annouced to move USA's Israeli embassy to Jerusalem.
108. ▶ Central Asian Nation Kazakhstan launched a 72-hour-long transit visa free regime for Indian citizens from 17th April 2018 to 31st December 2018.
109. ▶ Central Bank of Argentina raised interest rates by 300 basis points to fight inflationary pressures. Interest rates have been raised from 27.25 to 30.25 %, to prop up its ailing currency from sliding further against US dollar.
110. ▶ China Great Wall Industry Corporation (CGWIC) launched Algeria’s first telecommunications satellite, Alcomsat-1, aboard a Long March 3B rocket.
111. ▶ China Navy commissioned indigenously deveoped missile frigate named *Rizhao* and a new 4000-ton Type 054A Jiangkai II-class guided-missile frigate.
112. ▶ China abolished 2 term limit on Presidency, allowing Xi Jinping to remain as country’s leader for life.
113. ▶ China constructed a 330-foot tall air purifying tower in Xian (Shaanxi Province), biggest in world. It has produced more than 10 million cubic meters of clean air since launch.
114. ▶ China has built world's longest cross-sea bridge with length 55 KMs, connecting Hong Kong, Macau and mainland China. It took 7 years to complete, is six lanes wide and comprises of of 4 tunnels and 4 artificial islands. It has cost approx 20 Billion USD.
 - ▶ World's longest bridge is also in china, known as Danyang-Kunshan Grand Bridge, with 164.7 KM Length.
 - ▶ China also aims to deliver its domestically developed AG600 by 2022, world’s largest amphibious aircraft.
115. ▶ China has developed a new underwater surveillance network which will help its submarines to accurately track target vessels and will protect its interests in the Indian Ocean and South China Sea. It will acquire information about underwater environment, streaming acquired information to intelligence centres and providing actionable information to Chinese navy which will use it for tracking, navigation

and positioning.

116. ▶ China has set up world's first 3D-printed bus stops in Fengjing (Shanghai). The bus stops have a closed loop design, accommodating two-round stools inside the structure.
117. ▶ China has shut down its legal government-sanctioned ivory (*elephant teeth*) trade.
118. ▶ China introduced China Science and Technology Cloud (CSTC) to provide scientists with accessible, accurate and secure data services to promote research.
119. ▶ China is constructing world's fastest wind tunnel, to help in development of spacecraft. This 265 meter-long tunnel would be used to test hypersonic aircraft that can travel up to a speed of 30,625 kph.
120. ▶ China is elected as vice chair of Financial Action Task Force (FATF), global body mandated to combat terror financing and money laundering. Further, FATF in its plenary meeting in Paris, placed Pakistan under *grey list*, subject to direct monitoring and intense scrutiny by International Cooperation Review Group till June 2018 for compliance of Anti-Money Laundering and Combating Finance of Terrorism regulations.
121. ▶ China launched 2 BeiDou-3 satellites to provide navigation and positioning services to countries along Belt and Road initiative (BRI) by end of 2018. Launched satellites were BeiDou-3 M7 and BeiDou-3 M8 (26th and 27th satellites) in BeiDou Navigation Satellite System (BDS).
122. ▶ China launched 2 Beidou-3 MEO satellites (Beidou-30 and Beidou-31) as part of its third and final stage of launching its domestic Beidou (Compass) satellite navigation system. The new Twin satellites are MEO (Medium Earth Orbit) satellites, as third phase of Beidou satellite navigation system. BeiDou is 2nd generation of Chinese homegrown navigational system seen as rival to US's Global Positioning System (GPS). It comprises total 35 satellites (including 27 MEO (21,500 km orbits), 3 IGSO and 5 GSO satellites).
123. ▶ China launched 2 high-resolution optical remote sensing satellites - *Jilin-1 Video 07 and 08*, onboard Long March-11 rocket along with 4 other small commercial satellites.
124. ▶ China launched 2nd Land Surveying Satellite LKW-2 (also known as Yaogan Weixing-32), to be used for remote sensing exploration of land resources. It was launched on board of Long March-2D rocket.
125. ▶ China launched a hyperspectral imaging satellite 'Gaofen-5' for comprehensive observation of atmosphere, including air pollution. It is first China-developed satellite that can monitor air pollution.
126. ▶ China launched a new communication satellite named *APSTAR-6C*. It will offer TV transmission, communication, Internet and multimedia services to customers in Asia-Pacific region.
127. ▶ China proposed construction of the India-Nepal-China Economic Corridor with multi-dimensional connectivity through Himalayas, during Nepalese foreign minister Pradeep Kumar Gyawali's Visit to China.
128. ▶ China resumed Kailash Mansarovar Yatra through Nathu La route, which was stopped by China amid Doklam military face-off with India last year.
129. ▶ China started trial operations of world's biggest automated container terminal at Yangshan Deep Water Port in Shanghai. Terminal covers 2.23 million square metres and has a 2,350-metre shoreline.
130. ▶ China successfully launched 'Zhangheng 1', its first seismo-electromagnetic satellite to study seismic precursors. The Long March-2D rocket carried China Seismo- Electromagnetic Satellite (CSES) of 730 kg. Zhangheng 1 will let scientists monitor the electromagnetic field, ionospheric plasma and high-energy particles for five years.
131. ▶ China will build its first nuclear-powered aircraft carrier Liaoning by 2025, as part of its plans to achieve weaponry and technical developments for People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy by 2025.
 - ✏ At present, China's navy has 2 aircraft carriers running on conventional oil. French Navy's *Charles de Gaulle* is only non-US aircraft carrier powered by nuclear reactors. USA's Nimitz-class and Ford-class carrier are run by nuclear power.
132. ▶ China will build its second foreign naval base in Pakistan, after Djibouti (Nation in Horn of Africa).
 - ✏ It will be set up in Gwadar on the southwestern coast of Balochistan, that holds strategic significance as Gwadar is located near Chabahar port in Iran, that is being jointly developed by Iran, India and Afghanistan.
133. ▶ China will develop national carbon market as world's biggest trading system for climate-warming emissions, initially involving only power sector. China is biggest emitter with 3 billion metric tons of emissions annually.
134. ▶ China will establish 3 international courts (*in Beijing, Shenzhen and Xi'an*) to deal with disputes related to its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a development strategy focused on road connectivity and maritime cooperation between Eurasian countries.
135. ▶ China will launch 10 satellites into space over next three years to maintain non-stop surveillance on disputed waterway of South China Sea. It would provide scientific support for China's One Belt One Road initiative and emergency response efforts at sea.
136. ▶ China will launch a new meteorological satellite called Fengyun-II 09, to enhance its weather forecasting capabilities. It will be last in Fengyun-II series.

137. ▶ China will launch world's longest cross-sea bridge, connecting Hong Kong, Macau and mainland China. It will be 55km-long and six lanes wide.
138. ▶ China will provide financial support to construct counter-terrorism base in Badakshan province of northern Afghanistan that would prevent cross-border infiltration of Chinese Uyghur militants.
139. ▶ China, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Pakistan signed USD 4 million agreement to provide assistance to people of Fata and Balochistan region in Pakistan.
140. ▶ China-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) will issue its first US dollar-denominated bond with minimum worth of \$1 billion by June 2018.
- ▶ Minimum size of issuance will be 1 billion USD, which will be increased upon increase in demand for first bond.
 - ▶ Bond Maturity will be 3 - 5 years, depending on investor demand. AIIB plans to cap its total 2018 borrowing volume at US \$3 billion.
141. ▶ China's first domestically manufactured aircraft carrier known only as "Type 001A" started sea trials. Its name is speculated to be *Shandong*, after province of same name. It is approx 315 metres long, with displacement capacity of about 55,000 tonnes (70,000 loaded).
142. ▶ Chinese Air Force commissioned its new generation J-20 fourth-generation stealth fighter into combat service. China is 2nd country (after USA) to commission domestically developed stealth aircraft.
143. ▶ Chinese e-Commerce giant Alibaba acquired Pakistan's Largest e-commerce firm *Daraz.pk* for \$150 Million.
144. ▶ Chinese space startup *OneSpace* launched its OS-X rocket, with a 30 feet long satellite named *Chongqing Liangjiang star*. It is first private Chinese firm to launch a commercial rocket.
145. ▶ Cobra Gold training exercise held in Thailand, that includes activities such as drinking cobra blood. This year, 7 countries participated - USA, Thailand, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, South Korea, and Singapore.
146. ▶ Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL) and Russia's United Shipbuilding Corporation (USC) signed MoU to jointly Develop State-of-Art vessels for Inland and Coastal Waterways in India.
147. ▶ Colombia Became first South American Nation to Join North Atlantic Treaty Organization as global partner. NATO reached partnership agreement with Colombia in May 2017, just after Colombia signed peace agreement with communist Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), ending longest civil conflict in Latin America.
148. ▶ Corruption Perceptions Index 2017 by Transparency International (180 Nations) -
- ▶ India ranked 81st.
 - ▶ Neighbours - Sri Lanka (91), Pakistan (117), Myanmar (130) and Bangladesh (143), Bhutan (26) and China (77).
 - ▶ Top 5 - New Zealand (1), Denmark (2), Finland (3), Norway (4), Switzerland (5)
 - ▶ Bottom 5 - Somalia (180), South Sudan (179), Syria (178), Afghanistan (177), Yemen (176)
 - ▶ BRICS - Brazil (95), Russia (136), **India (81)**, China (77), South Africa (72)
149. ▶ Cyclonic Storm Sagar, the strongest tropical cyclone to ever make landfall in Somalia (East Africa), and first named cyclone of 2018 North Indian Ocean cyclone season. It traversed entire Gulf of Aden, affected Yemen and made landfall over northwestern Somalia.
150. ▶ Democratic Republic of Congo declared a new outbreak of Ebola in northwestern part, as 9th outbreak of Ebola since its discovery in 1976.
151. ▶ Disney acquired certain assets of 21st Century Fox (FOXA), for approximately USD 52.4 billion in stocks, with transaction valued at USD 66.1 billion including 21st Century Fox's debt.
152. ▶ E-Commerce Major Amazon launched its first-ever debit card in North American Nation Mexico.
153. ▶ E-commerce Major Amazon acquired a startup named Blink that builds wireless home security systems.
154. ▶ Ecuador granted citizenship to WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange.
- ▶ In 2012, Assange, an Australian-Ecuadoran, was granted asylum at Ecuadorian Embassy in London to avoid extradition to Sweden, where he faced an investigation over rape allegations.
155. ▶ Energy Efficiency Services Ltd (EESL) signed MoUs with Andhra Pradesh State Government to invest INR 3730 crore in state in various developmental activities.
156. ▶ Environmental Performance Index (EPI) 2018 by World Economic Forum (WEF) in collaboration with Yale University and Columbia University -
- ▶ India is ranked 177 among 180 countries.
 - ▶ Top 5 countries - Switzerland, France, Denmark, Malta and Sweden.
 - ▶ Bottom 5 countries - Nepal (176), India (177), Congo (178), Bangladesh (179), Burundi (180)
157. ▶ Equatorial Guinea, Ivory Coast, Kuwait, Peru, Poland and Netherlands joined UN Security Council as non-permanent members.
- ▶ UN Security Council has 15 members, including 5 with permanent seats who have power to veto resolutions – Britain, China, France, Russia and USA.

158. ▶ European Nation France approved making 15 years as legal age of sexual consent.
159. ▶ European Nation Iceland became First Nation to legalise equal pay between men and women, by passing a law that makes it illegal to pay men more than women, applicable for Companies employing minimum 25 people.
160. ▶ European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) brought into full effect, clarifying individual rights to personal data collected by companies for targeted advertising and other purposes.
- GDPR sets new rules for how companies manage and share personal data. Though rules apply only to citizens of European Union, global nature of internet means that nearly every online service will be affected.
 - GDPR sets a higher than ever bar for obtaining personal data on the internet, higher seen before. Rules will also force companies that suffer data breaches to disclose them within 72 hours.
161. ▶ Export control regime Wassenaar Arrangement included India as its 42nd member, during its plenary meeting in Vienna (Austria).
- Wassenaar Arrangement on Export Controls for Conventional Arms and Dual-Use Goods and Technologies, is a multilateral export control regime established to ensure regional and international security by promoting transparency in transfer of arms and dual-use goods and technologies.
 - This will enhance India's credentials in field of non-proliferation, although, India is not a signatory to the Non-Proliferation Treaty.
162. ▶ Export-Import Bank of India (Exim Bank) signed line of credit (LoC) agreement with Bank for Investment and Development (EBID) to provide US \$500 million credit facility to fund various development projects in 15-member countries of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) region in western-south Africa.
- ECOWAS is regional group of 15 West African countries. It was founded in May 1975, with signing of Treaty of Lagos. It aims to promote economic integration in all fields of activity of constituting countries.
163. ▶ Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg apologised for recent data breach controversy related to Data analytics firm *Cambridge Analytica*.
- Cambridge Analytica (CA) is 2013 established data analytics firm, under its British parent company Strategic Communications Laboratories (SCL) Group. Main objective of CA is to come up with political campaigns and reach out to potential voters by combining data from multiple sources.
 - CA alleged assisted in Donald Trump's victory in US Presidential Elections 2016, by using unethically gathered data to manipulate voter behaviour. CA also allegedly worked with the Leave EU camp during Britain's exit from the European Union (Brexit).
 - Facebook controversy -
 - One of CA co-founders, Christopher Wylie stated that CA exploited Facebook to harvest millions of people's profiles without their permission and used information to create a psychological profile of users as well as their friends. This was then used for targeted political advertising during UK's Brexit referendum as well as during the 2016 US presidential elections.
 - How -
 - Facebook lets app developers seek permissions from users to use their personal data to help develop the app. CA reportedly got private data from a Cambridge researcher - Aleksandr Kogan, who created an app called 'thisisyourdigitallife' to offer personality predictions online. Though Kogan got access to the data, it was only meant to be used by him for developing the app and not be shared with others. However, he allegedly sold the data to the CA.
 - Issues related to India -
 - CA reportedly planned expanding its services to other nations' electoral processes, especially India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh as they approach elections.
 - CA reportedly reached out to the two main political parties of the nation for a possible collaboration for the upcoming 2019 Lok Sabha elections.
 - Recently, IT Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad delivered a sharp warning to Facebook stating that Government would take stringent action including summoning its CEO Mark Zuckerberg to India, in case of any data theft of Indians.
 - Meanwhile, both ruling party and main opposition party of India reportedly accused each other of having links with Cambridge Analytica and engaging the firm in past elections.
164. ▶ Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg's Chan Zuckerberg Initiative and Bill Gates' Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation partnered to accelerate breakthroughs in education. It will focus on math, writing, and skills that correspond with things like memory and self-control.
165. ▶ Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) partnered with Department of Science and Technology (DST) to implement ASEAN India Research Training Fellowship (AIRTF).
- AIRTF scheme was introduced to promote scientific cooperation between India and ASEAN member countries.
 - It provides opportunities to upto 50 young researchers annually from ASEAN member countries to undertake research and training for period of 6 months at Academic and Research Institutions in India.






- ▶ Note that FICCI in partnership with Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and DS&T also gives away C V Raman International Fellowship for African Researchers, in line with efforts of promoting scientific and technological cooperation between India and Africa.
- 166. ▶ Fiji (island nation in South Pacific Ocean) signed partnered with India's The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) for assistance in tackling climate change effects and achieving environmental sustainability.
- 167. ▶ Financial Services Commission of Mauritius opened its representative office in Mumbai, to strengthen its partnership with its Indian counterparts in capacity building, financial literacy and exchange of expertise.
- 168. ▶ Financial Times London's Global MBA Ranking 2018 -
 - ▶ Rankings of Prominent Indian B-schools -
 - ▶ Indian School of Business (ISB) - 27th (28th last year)
 - ▶ IIM Ahmedabad - 31st (29th last year)
 - ▶ IIM-Bangalore - 35th (49th last year)
 - ▶ IIM-Calcutta - 78th (95th last year)
 - ▶ Stanford Graduate School of Business, US has topped the ranking followed by France's INSEAD.
- 169. ▶ Finnish Communication Giant Nokia acquired California (USA) based Internet of Things (IoT) start up *SpaceTime Insight*.
- 170. ▶ First India-UK Createch Summit will be held in Mumbai in February 2018, to explore convergence of creativity and technology, 'Createch' and its application across a range of areas.
- 171. ▶ For first time in nation's history, Saudi Arabia's women participated in an all-female marathon, held in al-Ahsa. Over 1500 women participated in event.
- 172. ▶ For the first time, Nepal Rastra Bank (Nepal's Central Bank) permitted domestic commercial banks to borrow funds from foreign banks and financial institutions, aiming to resolve liquidity crunch prevailing in Nepal's banking system since past few months. Banks of Nepal can now borrow loans up to 25 % of their core capital for 1 - 5 years.
- 173. ▶ For the first time, WHO will add gaming disorder to its International Classification of Diseases (ICD)
 - ▶ ICD is a diagnostic manual published by WHO that was last updated 27 years ago. 11th edition of the manual is due in 2018.
- 174. ▶ Forbes Magazine has named former Tesco supermarket worker Dan Middleton (UK) as world's richest YouTuber after he made a fortune of \$16.5 million this year. He shares videos of himself playing video games and describes gameplay and strategies on his YouTube channel, DanTDM.
- 175. ▶ Forbes annual list of the highest-paid musicians -
 - ▶ Top 3 -
 - ▶ Diddy (\$130m) (USA)
 - ▶ Beyonce (\$105m) (USA)
 - ▶ Drake (\$94m) (Canada)
- 176. ▶ Forbes' *World's Most Powerful People 2018* List (75 People) -
 - ▶ Xi Jinping (China's President) is at top for first time ever.
 - ▶ Top 5 - Chinese President XI Jinping (1), Russian President Vladimir Putin (2), US President Donald Trump (3), German Chancellor Angela Merkel (4), Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos (5).
 - ▶ 2 Indians named in list - PM Modi (9th) and Reliance Chairman Mukesh Ambani (32nd).
- 177. ▶ Forbes' First Ever Crypto Rich List (comprising 20 wealthiest people in cryptocurrency space)-
 - ▶ Ripple Co-founder Chris Larsen at atop with crypto net worth of \$7.5-8 billion.
 - ▶ Ethereum Co-founder Joseph Lubin (\$1-5 billion) is 2nd and Founder of cryptocurrency exchange Binance Changpeng Zhao (\$1.1-2 billion) is 3rd.
- 178. ▶ Forbes' Highest-Paid Athletes of All Time-
 - ▶ Retired American Basketball Legend Michael Jordan is named as highest-paid athlete of all time with \$1.7 billion income, followed by golfer Tiger Woods (\$1.7 billion) and Late American golfer Arnold Palmer at 3rd place (\$1.4 billion).
- 179. ▶ Forbes' Top Grossing actors 2017 -
 - ▶ American Actor Vin Diesel is at top with \$1.6 billion in global ticketing receipts from his film 'The Fate of the Furious'.
 - ▶ Second spot was occupied by Dwayne Johnson with \$1.5 billion receipts.
 - ▶ Wonder Woman actress Gal Gadot's films earned \$1.4 billion worldwide, ranking her third.
- 180. ▶ Forbes' billionaires List 2018 -
 - ▶ Top 5 -
 - ▶ Amazon founder Jeff Bezos (\$110 Billion)

- ✍ Microsoft founder Bill Gates (\$90 billion),
- ✍ Warren Buffet (\$84 billion)
- ✍ Bernard Arnault and family (\$72 billion)
- ✍ Facebook founder-CEO Mark Zuckerberg (\$71 billion)
- ✍ India's Mukesh Ambani (chairman of Reliance Industries) is 19th on list with worth of \$40.1 billion. Paytm founder Vijay Shekhar Sharma (aged 39 years) is youngest Indian billionaire with net worth of \$1.7 billion.
- 181. ▶ Forbes' best countries in world for business in 2018 (153 Nations) -
 - ✍ UK stayed at top of List, followed by New Zealand and Netherlands.
 - ✍ India is ranked 62nd on list. China ranks 66th.
- 182. ▶ Foreign Policy magazine's 2017 list of '50 Leading Global Thinkers' List -
 - ✍ Indian-American California senator Kamala Harris topped the List. South Korean President Moon Jae-in is ranked second in list and Indian-origin stand-up comedian Hasan Minhaj ranked 3rd.
- 183. ▶ Fortune magazine's *World's Most Admired Companies* List 2018
 - ✍ Apple topped the for 11th Consecutive year.
 - ✍ E-commerce firm Amazon retained 2nd spot, followed by Google's parent Alphabet.
- 184. ▶ Fortune's 'Businessperson of the Year' list -
 - ✍ It is annual ranking of world's top 20 heads of companies.
 - ✍ Aditya Puri, Managing Director of HDFC Bank, is the only Indian on (ranked 18th).
 - ✍ Top 3 - Jensen Huang (Nvidia), Jamie Dimon (JPMorgan Chase), Marc Benioff (Salesforce)
 - ✍ Indian Origin Person on list -Ajay Bagga (Mastercard, 6th), Shantanu Narayan (Adobe)
- 185. ▶ France announced to contribute 61.9 million dollars toward urgent humanitarian aid for Syria.
- 186. ▶ French Govt. approved banning all exploration and production of oil and natural gas by 2040 within country and its overseas territories.
- 187. ▶ German Development Bank KfW signed agreement with India's North Eastern Electric Power Corporation Limited (NEEPCO) for Providing \$20 Million of Additional Funding for India's *Pare Hydroelectric Plant* project under Indo-German Bilateral Development Cooperation.
- 188. ▶ Gevora Hotel in Dubai became *world's tallest hotel* with 356.53 Metres height, 1 metre taller than previous title holder *JW Marriott Marquis*.
- 189. ▶ Global Democracy Index by Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) (165 Nations and 2 Territories) -
 - ✍ India slipped to 42nd place among 165 Nations, from 32nd place last year.
 - ✍ List has been divided into 4 broad categories - *full democracy, flawed democracy, hybrid regime and authoritarian regime*.
 - ✍ North Korea is ranked lowest 167th, while Syria is a 2nd worst at 166th place.
 - ✍ Top 5 - Norway (1), Iceland (2), Sweden (3), New Zealand (4) and Denmark (5).
- 190. ▶ Global Firepower index 2017 (133 Nations) -
 - ✍ India's military strength is ranked 4th, after USA, Russia and China. France is ranked 5th. Pakistan is ranked 13th.
- 191. ▶ Global Flight Pricing Report by Melbourne-based Rome2rio Low-cost carriers IndiGo & Air India among top 5 cheapest airlines in world in providing international connectivity, ranked 2nd and 5th position. Air Asia X is named as cheapest airline in world.
- 192. ▶ Global IT Firm Capgemini acquired IT American IT Consulting firm LiquidHub for 400 million euros, to enhance its digital-consulting capabilities in North America.
- 193. ▶ Global Military Expenditure Report 2017 by Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) -
 - ✍ India surpassed France to become 5th largest military spender.
 - ✍ Top five (Amount in Billion USD) - US (610), China (228), Saudi Arabia (69.4), Russia (66.3) and India (63.9).
- 194. ▶ Global Urban Air Pollution database released by World Health Organisation (WHO) -
 - ✍ 14 Indian cities named in list of world's 20 most polluted cities in terms of particulate matter PM2.5 levels in 2016. These cities include Delhi, Varanasi, Kanpur, Faridabad, Gaya, Patna, Agra, Muzaffarpur, Srinagar, Gurgaon, Jaipur, Patiala and Jodhpur.
- 195. ▶ Global cyber security provider Kaspersky stated that India ranks 33rd worldwide in facing web-borne threats.
- 196. ▶ Google Launched its *Home* and *Mini Bluetooth speakers* in India priced at INR 9999 at 4499 Respectively. Google Home and Home Mini can be activated by saying 'Ok Google' and can answer user's general questions.
- 197. ▶ Google combined its two payment services, Google Wallet and Android Pay, into a new app called Google Pay.
- 198. ▶ Google launched *Bulletin* app that allows anyone to submit stories related to their local communities. Users can do this easily with their phone and it will be published straight away in the web. Google has not mentioned how it will verify the authenticity of the content.

199. ▶ Google launched *Datally* App that will help users understand, control and save on their mobile data. It will enable users to track their data usage in real time, and get personalized recommendations on saving data along with notifications of public Wi-Fi spots available nearby.
- ▶ Google also launched *Files Go* app that takes a mobile-first approach to freeing up space, finding files faster and easily sharing them with others, even when offline.
200. ▶ Google launched Android Things (codenamed Brillo), a variant of Android operating system for Internet of Things (IoT) devices, aiming to enable IoT machines developers to be built faster, cheaper and more secure.
- ▶ *Android Things* is aimed to be used with low-power and memory constrained Internet of Things (IoT) devices, which are usually built from different microcontroller unit (MCU) platforms.
201. ▶ Google signed USD 1.1 billion deal with HTC for talent acquisition, to acquire nearly 2000 HTC engineers, to expand in hardware sector and in Asia Pacific region.
202. ▶ Google will open a research lab focused on Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Beijing (China), its first such centre in Asia.
203. ▶ Google will shut down its high-end smartphone Augmented Reality (AR) platform named *Tango* and will focus on its mass market product *ARCore*. *Tango*, support will stop on March 1, 2018.
- ▶ *Tango* was introduced in 2014 and relied on advanced camera hardware to build 3D meshes of spaces.
 - ▶ It was difficult for Google to get phone manufacturers to build this expensive functionality into their products.
204. ▶ Government of South Australia approved building a major solar thermal plant which will be largest such thermal power plant in world and will power 35 % of households in South Australia. It will be developed by a US Firm, Solar Reserve at cost of Australian Dollar 650 million.
205. ▶ Greece's first space agency named *Hellenic Space Agency* has been officially launched. It is expected to benefit the country in various sectors viz. telecommunications, defense, medical applications, environmental monitoring, agriculture, fire prevention and control.
206. ▶ Guatemala (Central America) and Paraguay (South America) moved their Israeli Embassy to Jerusalem, after USA recently moved its Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.
207. ▶ Healthcare Access and Quality Index Data for 195 countries from Global Burden of Disease Study 2016 by Lancet -
- ▶ India ranked 145th.
 - ▶ Top five - Iceland (1), Norway (2), Netherlands (3), Luxembourg (4), Finland and Australia (5th rank each)
 - ▶ Countries with lowest scores are Central African Republic (195), Somalia (194), Guinea-Bissau (193), Chad (192), and Afghanistan (191).
 - ▶ China (48th), Sri Lanka (71st), Bangladesh (133rd), Nepal (149th), Pakistan (154th).
208. ▶ Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry signed an agreement with Germany's GIZ for technical cooperation in implementation of transport projects in Coimbatore (Tamil Nadu), Bhubaneswar (Odisha) and Kochi (Kerala).
209. ▶ IFFCO (Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative) and Indian Potash Ltd (IPL) acquired 37 % stake in JPMC (Jordan Phosphate Mines Company), Jordan's largest mining and chemical firm, for INR 900 crores.
210. ▶ IMD World Competitiveness Rankings (63 countries) -
- ▶ India rose one place to 44th. China is ranked 13th.
 - ▶ Top 5 - US (1), Hong Kong (2), Singapore (3), Netherlands (4), Switzerland (5).
211. ▶ IT firm Cognizant acquired Hedera Consulting, a Belgium-based business advisory and data analytics services company.
212. ▶ Inclusive Internet Index (III) 2018 report by The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) -
- ▶ 2018 edition of report covered 91% of the world's population and expanded data set of 86 countries, up from 75 countries in 2017.
 - ▶ India ranked 47th out of 86 countries, slipping by 11 positions compared to 36th rank in 2017.
 - ▶ Top 3 Nations - Sweden, Singapore, USA.
213. ▶ Index of Economic Freedom 2018 by Heritage Foundation -
- ▶ India ranked 130th out of 186 economies.
 - ▶ Top 5 - Hong Kong (1), Singapore (2), New Zealand (3), Switzerland (4), Australia (5)
 - ▶ Bottom 5 - North Korea (180), Venezuela (179), Cuba (178), Congo (177), Eritrea (176)
 - ▶ Neighbours - Bangladesh (128), Pakistan (131), Nepal (133), Sri Lanka (111)
214. ▶ India - UK Joint research projects on *Water Quality Research (WQR)* and *Energy Demand Reduction in Built Environment (EDR)* have been launched. WQR programme has 8 projects and EDR programme has 4 projects, with joint investment of up to £15 million.
215. ▶ India and Bangladesh signed agreement to set up a 129.5 km oil pipeline with capacity of 1 million metric tons per annum. Pipeline will be built from Siliguri Marketing Terminal of Numaligarah Refinery Ltd (NRL) in India to Parbaripur depot of Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC). Other MoUs Included -

- ▶ Cooperation between India's Prasar Bharati and Bangladesh Betar.
 - ▶ Installation of Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) Urdu Chair in Dhaka University.
 - ▶ Set up language labs in 500 schools in Bangladesh.
 - ▶ Trial run of first container train between India and Bangladesh flagged off from Kolkata.
216. ▶ India and Bhutan jointly unveiled *Special logo* for Golden Jubilee (50 years) celebrations through video-conference. During 2018, India and Bhutan will conduct several high-level exchanges.
217. ▶ India and Eritrea (East Africa) signed MoU on Foreign Office Consultations.
218. ▶ India and European Union (EU) signed cooperation agreement related to sharing of earth observation satellite data. Under this, EU will provide India with free, full and open access to data from Copernicus Sentinel family of satellites using high bandwidth connections from data hub to data hub. India will provide Copernicus programme and its participating states with free, full and open access to data from ISRO's earth observation satellites.
- ▶ This comprises data from land, ocean and atmospheric series of ISRO's civilian satellites (Oceansat-2, Scatsat-1, Megha-Tropiques, SARAL, INSAT-3D, INSAT-3DR) with exception of commercial high-resolution satellites data.
219. ▶ India and Finland signed agreement on tax dispute with Nokia under Mutual Agreement Procedure (MAP) system. This involves payment of Rs 1,600 crore, a sum that was deposited with government by Nokia in March 2018. This paves way for the sale of Nokia's Chennai (Sriperumbudu) plant, which has been shuttered since November 2014.
220. ▶ India and Germany signed Govt-to-Govt Umbrella Agreement to formalize an amount up to Euro 200 million for Financial Cooperation in form of loan for project 'Climate Friendly Urban Mobility III' and Euro 11 million Accompanying measures in form of grant for four projects.
221. ▶ India and Israel Jointly Launched a centre for excellence in floriculture, Thally in Krishnagiri district of Tamil Nadu.
- ▶ A similar centre specialising in vegetables such as capsicum, cucumber and tomatoes will be established in Dindigul, Tamil Nadu in January 2018, as part of a 3-year Indo-Israel agricultural partnership.
 - ▶ These centres will develop agricultural practices suitable for that particular geographical region and will share the best practices with local farmers.
222. ▶ India and Pakistan extended agreement of Thar Link Express, second solitary rail service between both countries for upto 2021. It links Jodhpur (India) and Karachi (Pakistan) via Munabao (Rajasthan)-Khokhrapar (Sindh) border crossing and carries only passengers.
223. ▶ India and Saudi Arabia signed bilateral annual Haj 2018 agreement, allowing Indian Haj pilgrims through sea route also (that was suspended in 1995). Sending pilgrims through ships will help cut down travel expenses significantly.
224. ▶ India and Spain signed Techno-commercial agreement to provide institutional mechanism for mutual cooperation in field of urban transport and for construction of the three Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS).
- ▶ 3 RRTS corridors Delhi-Meerut, Delhi – Panipat and Delhi – Alwar will be implemented in 1st phase.
 - ▶ RRTS is first of its kind project in India, with design speed of 180 kmph. It will use state-of-the-art technologies for track structure, rolling stock and signalling system. RRTS corridors will significantly reduce travel time between important NCR towns.
225. ▶ India and Sri Lanka agreed on cooperation on exchange of information and other aspects to tackle smuggling of drugs in both countries.
226. ▶ India and World Expo 2020 signed participants contract for India's pavilion in World Expo 2020 (Dubai), held once in 5 years.
227. ▶ India approved granting long-term visa (LTV) to minorities from Afghanistan seeking refuge in India.
228. ▶ India became 3rd largest electricity producer, with Electricity production of 1,003.525 Billion Unit between April 2017 – January 2018, as per data by India Brand Equity Foundation (IBEF) under commerce ministry. Top 3 Producers of Electricity are - China, USA and India.
229. ▶ India became biggest importer of U.S. oil refinery by-product 'petcoke', by Importing 8 Million Tonnes of USA's total export of 20 Million Tonnes of Petcoke in 2016.
- ▶ Petroleum coke called as 'petcoke', a U.S. oil refinery by-product, is cheaper and burns hotter than coal. But it also contains more planet-warming carbon and heart and lung-damaging sulfur.
230. ▶ India become top borrower from Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) with USD 1.5 billion worth of loans in 2017.
- ▶ Indonesia is at second position with USD 600 million worth loans.
 - ▶ AIIB is headquartered in Beijing (China) and has authorized capital of 100 Billion USD. India is 2nd largest shared holder in AIIB (8.52%) after China (26%). AIIB is preferred lender as it charges only 1 to 1.5 % interest with long term repayment and 5 year grace period.
231. ▶ India contributed \$50,000 to United Nations (UN) Secretary General Antonio Guterres's Office of Envoy on Youth to help with its mission of involving young people in UNs goals.
232. ▶ India contributed additional \$1 million to India-UN Development Partnership Fund, earmarked for South-South cooperation. It aims to intensify partnerships with other developing countries in south

- India pledged multi-year contribution of \$100 million to the fund established in June 2017. India has already provided \$6 million within 7 months since launch of fund.
233. ▶ India dragged USA to World Trade Organisation's (WTO) Dispute Settlement Mechanism over imposition of import duties on steel and aluminium.
- ▶ In March 2018, USA imposed heavy import tariffs on imported steel and aluminium items, sparking fears of global trade war. USA levied 25% tariff on steel and 10% tariff on aluminium imported from all countries except Canada and Mexico.
234. ▶ India emerged as 5th most attractive market for investments and the optimism over global economic growth is at a record level, as per survey of CEOs by global consultancy PwC.
- ▶ USA remains as top spot for global investment with 46% global CEOs considering USA as most attractive market for investment, followed by China (33%) and Germany (20%).
235. ▶ India emerged as top recipient of foreign direct investment (FDI) from within Commonwealth and is 2nd most lucrative source of investment within 53-member Commonwealth after UK.
236. ▶ India excluded Pakistan from list of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) member countries with which it will be connecting its National Knowledge Network (NKN), a multi-gigabit pan-India network aimed at providing a unified high speed network backbone for educational institutions in India. Researchers from different educational networks can collaborate with each other through NKN.
- ▶ NKN will be connected from these countries either to Delhi, Mumbai or Kolkata, depending on the proximity.
237. ▶ India for first time started importing Liquid Natural Gas (LNG) from USA, under 20-year Sale Purchase Agreement (SPA) with USA's natural gas exporter Cheniere Energy signed in December 2011. Under it, GAIL will purchase around 3.5 Million Tonne of LNG per year from Sabine Pass.
238. ▶ India for the first time agreed for most revered Buddhist relics from Sarnath to be taken to Sri Lanka for public exposition on occasion of Vesak festival. This is second time that India has taken initiative to exhibit sacred relics of Lord Buddha in Sri Lanka, after first time in 2012.
239. ▶ India has been awarded with Certificate of Commendation for its efforts in combating illegal wildlife trade. Award is conferred to Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) by Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) at its meeting in Geneva (Switzerland).
240. ▶ India initiated dumping probe on imports of 'Sodium Nitrite' from Russia, used in industries such as pharma and food processing.
- ▶ If it is proved that dumping has caused material injury to domestic industry, DGAD would impose anti-dumping duty on Sodium Nitrite.
241. ▶ India is named second fastest growing country for passenger traffic based on traffic forecasts during 2017-40 by Airports Council International (ACI), after Vietnam 8.5 % growth rate. India has 7.5 % and Iran has 7.3 % Passenger Growth Rate. Recently, ACI ranked Indira Gandhi International Airport in New Delhi at 16th position in the twenty busiest airports in world list.
242. ▶ India is ranked 10th on a new Commonwealth Innovation Index, topped by UK, Singapore and Canada. Index was launched as part of a new Commonwealth Innovation Hub on the sidelines of Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in London (UK). Theme of CHOGM 2018 *Towards a Common Future*. India was represented by PM Narendra Modi.
- ▶ Alongside, Malaria Summit was also held in London (United Kingdom), organized by non-profit organisation Malaria No More in conjunction AND Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.
- ▶ 53 Commonwealth Nations adapted Commonwealth Cyber Declaration at summit, to take action on cybersecurity by 2020. It also aims to tackle criminal groups and hostile state actors who pose a global threat to cybersecurity.
- ▶ Commonwealth Nations also agreed for Britain's Prince Charles succeeding his mother Queen Elizabeth II as Head of Commonwealth.
- ▶ India and 3 other countries (Sri Lanka, Mauritius and Malta) participated creating in USD 5 million *Commonwealth Small States Trade Finance Facility* which will enable small states to obtain easier access to international trade finance to diversify their economies and achieve sustainable development goals. Standard Chartered Bank and Bank of Baroda, are facility managers for this fund. 31 Commonwealth nations classified as small states can avail this facility. Before it is available to all such nations, it will be rolled out on pilot basis in Bahamas, Botswana, Brunei, Dominica, Fiji, Mauritius, Namibia and Seychelles.
243. ▶ India is ranked 7th in list of targeted countries for Web Application Attacks (WAA), as per report *Akamai State of the Internet Security Q4 2017*. It states that nearly 40 % of over 53000 cyber attacks in India occurred in financial sector during 2017.
244. ▶ India is selected as Chair of Ad Hoc Committee on Review & Reforms to look into various issues pertaining to the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPSC) at KP Plenary Session in Brisbane (Australia), with Angola chosen as Vice Chair.
- ▶ India was chosen KP Vice Chair for 2018 & Chair for 2019 in last plenary of KP in Dubai in November 2016.

-  Kimberley Process is joint initiative of governments, industry and civil societies to stem flow of 'conflict diamonds', rough diamonds used by rebel groups to finance wars against legitimate governments.
245. ▶ India joined *Australia Group*, an informal bloc (group) of countries that keeps a tight control over exports of substances used in making of chemical weapons. It is expected to strengthen India's bid to enter 48-member Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG).
-  India is now part of 3 of 4 key export control groups in world dealing with non-proliferation. Other 2 are -
-  Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) - an informal partnership among 35 countries that regulates trade in sensitive equipment and technologies to ensure there is no proliferation of missile and unmanned aerial vehicle technology capable of carrying payloads above 500kg for more than 300km.
 -  Wassenaar Arrangement - An informal grouping of 42 countries, exercising control over the export of dual-use goods and technologies in December 2017.
246. ▶ India joined Ashgabat Agreement which envisages facilitation of transit and transportation of goods between Central Asia and Persian Gulf to significantly boost up trade and investment.
-  Ashgabat Agreement aims at establishment of International Transport and Transit Corridor between the Iran, Oman, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, signed in April 2011.
247. ▶ India named 3rd largest solar market in world in 2017 behind China and USA, in a Mercom Communications report. India had set up record 9.6 GW of solar installations in 2017, more than double 4.3 GW installed in 2016.
248. ▶ India overtook Germany to become fourth largest automobile market, growing its Automobile by 9.5%. China topped the list followed by USA and Japan.
249. ▶ India provided financial assistance of USD 45.27 million to Sri Lanka for upgrading Kankesanthurai (KKS) Harbour (northern Sri Lanka) into a commercial port, through Export and Import Bank of India (Exim Bank).
250. ▶ India provided medical assistance worth approx \$1 million to Yemen, in response to a request from Yemeni government amid current turbulence there.
251. ▶ India re-elected to Council of the International Maritime Organization [IMO] under Category "B" at 30th session of IMO Assembly in London.
-  IMO is headquartered in London (UK) with Kitack Lim as Current Chief.
252. ▶ India received its first Liquid Natural Gas (LNG) cargo from United States (US) under long-term supply deal, on board GAIL's LNG ship *Meridian Spirit*.
253. ▶ India released grant of Nepalese Rupees (NRs) 18.07 crore for river training and construction of embankments along Lalbakeya, Bagmati and Kamla rivers in Nepal. India also released 33.10 Crore rupees to Nepal towards cost of two road packages of Birgunj-Thori Road being implemented under Postal Highway Projects.
254. ▶ India replaced Vietnam to become second largest producer of mobile phones in 2017. Currently, China stands at number one in mobile production around the world.
255. ▶ India revised Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) with Kenya, to enhance transparency in tax matters, control tax evasion, and eliminate double taxation. It offers reduced withholding tax rate on dividend and interest to 10 % from 15 %.
256. ▶ India sent Bangladesh its second relief consignment under Operation Insaniyat, on board INS Airavat, to help displaced Rohingya Muslims who fled Myanmar into Bangladesh following military crackdown in violence-hit Rakhine state.
257. ▶ India signed agreement with UN to build homes 50000 Houses for Nepal's April 2015 earthquake quake victims. India will give USD 8.41 million to UNOPS (United Nations Office for Project Services) and USD 7.41 Million to the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) to build 50000 homes by this agreement.
258. ▶ India will become 69th member of European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). Membership process includes purchase of shares by India at an estimated cost of around 1 million euros.
259. ▶ India will link its major highway corridors to international trade points to facilitate trade with Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Myanmar. About 2000 kms of highways will be constructed under this project, as part of Government's Bharatmala Project. Cost for construction of these highways is approx INR 25000 crores.
260. ▶ India will set up a Centre of Excellence in Information Technology (CEIT) at Al Azhar University (Egypt), to high-tech education and skills to youngsters of Egypt.
261. ▶ India won 6 elections to United Nations (UN) Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) bodies, and won places on executive boards of four UN bodies.
-  India won elections to Executive Boards of UN Development Programme (UNDP), UN Population Fund (UNFPA), UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and UN-Women. India will serve three-year terms from January 2019 on those executive boards.
 -  India was elected on UN Commission on Population and Development, Social Development, Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice.

262. ▶ India's BSF and Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) declared 8.3 km stretch of Indo-Bangladesh border as first 'crime-free zone', stretching Gunarmath and Kalyani Border Out Posts (BOPs) in India and Puthkhali and Daulatpur BOPs in Bangladesh. Bangladesh and India shared 4156 km long international border.
263. ▶ India, Bangladesh and Russia signed MoU for cooperation in construction of 2*1200 MWs Capacity Rooppur nuclear power plant near Dhaka (Bangladesh). It is first initiative under India-Russia nuclear deal to undertake atomic energy projects in third countries. It will India's first atomic energy venture abroad and Bangladesh's first atomic energy project.
264. ▶ India, China and other Asian countries will Coordinate to raise voice against Asian premium charged by Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).
- ▶ Asian Premium is extra charge being collected by OPEC countries from Asian countries when selling oil in comparison to western countries. They charge approx 10% extra from Asian Nations as Asian Premium and they give 10% discount to western Nations.
 - ▶ Its a concern for India as for Oil, India is largely dependent on Imports. India sources about 86% of crude oil, 75% of natural gas and 95% of LPG from OPEC member nations.
 - ▶ OPEC is an organization of 14 oil-exporting developing nations. Its headquarters are in Vienna (Austria) and Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia (de facto leader of OPEC), Kuwait, Qatar, UAE, Algeria, Angola, Libya, Nigeria, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon, Ecuador and Venezuela. OPEC members account 43% of global oil production and 73% of world's oil reserves.
265. ▶ India, Netherlands and Sweden launched first-of-its-kind joint research programme on HIV/AIDS, aimed at harnessing complementary research strengths and diverse expertise of 3 nations to catalyze development of better tools to address epidemic of HIV.
266. ▶ India-United Kingdom (UK) Joint Team won Newton-Bhabha Fund for project on Groundwater Arsenic Research in Ganga River Basin. Project is aimed to assess problem of arsenic poisoning and to understand aggravation such situation in next 25 to 30 years and its influence on groundwater management practices and suggest water remedial technologies accordingly, conducted from 3 sites – Bijnor and Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh and Nadia in West Bengal.
- ▶ Newton Bhabha Fund is provided by the British Council and aims to bring together UK and Indian scientific research and innovation sectors to find joint solutions to the challenges facing India in economic development and social welfare.
267. ▶ Indian Consortium consisting of IOCL, BPCL and HPCL and Saudi Aramco signed an MOU to jointly develop an integrated refinery and petrochemicals complex called Ratnagiri Refinery & Petrochemicals Ltd. (RRPCL) in Maharashtra.
- ▶ It will be capable of processing 1.2 million barrels of crude oil per day (60 million metric tonnes per annum (MMTPA)). Project cost is estimated at INR 3 lakh crores (USD 44 billion).
268. ▶ Indian Pharma Firm *Dr. Reddy's Laboratories* introduced anti cancer injection drug Melphalan Hydrochloride in USA. Melphalan hydrochloride for injection is indicated for the palliative treatment of patients with multiple myeloma for whom oral therapy is not appropriate.
269. ▶ Indian Railways handed over eighteen 1350 HP AC/DC diesel electric locomotives to Myanmar Railways, to develop cordial relations with neighboring Nation.
270. ▶ Indian Steel Association (ISA) state that USA's move to levy steep tariff on steel imports may hit India's domestic steel market. Recently, USA proposed to impose tariffs of 25% on steel imports and 10% on imported aluminium to protect domestic steel industry from cheap imports.
271. ▶ Indian engineers launched a major project in South Sudan that would improve connectivity between two major cities of South Sudan - Malakal-Melut. It will facilitate UN humanitarian operations in area.
272. ▶ Indian peacekeepers in UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) have re-built a 300-metre-long river bridge in Akoka village in record time. This bridge will enable people to cross the river and reach a town to access basic services.
273. ▶ India's Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd (BHEL) bagged order for executing largest hydro power project in Nepal, The 900 Megawatt Arun-3 hydro project placed by SJVN Arun-3 Power Development Company (SAPDC). Order is worth INR 536 Crores.
274. ▶ India's IndiGo is ranked 4th most *Punctual mega carrier* in world, ahead of British Airways and Lufthansa in a List by Aviation Analytics Company OAG. The list ranks Japan Airlines is at top.
275. ▶ India's NTPC will supply 300 megawatts (MW) of electricity to Bangladesh for 15 years, earning 900 Crores in annual revenue. It is under a Tender by Bangladesh for supply of 500 MW power from India.
276. ▶ India's National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM) established 2nd Digital Collaborative Opportunities Plaza (SIDCOP) platform in Guiyang (China), as India's second IT corridor in China (1st in Dalian) to provide Indian IT firms access to Chinese software market.
277. ▶ India's first sovereign wealth fund National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF) and Dubai-based ports operator *DP World Pvt. Ltd* Jointly created an investment platform to invest up to \$3 billion in ports, terminals, transportation and logistics businesses in India. This is the first investment platform from NIIF.


278. ▶ Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC) launched China's first India-dedicated publicly offered investment fund, named *Industrial and Commercial Bank Credit Suisse India Market Fund* with over \$3.6 trillion in assets (largest in world).
- ▶ It will invest in exchange-traded funds listed on more than 20 exchanges in Europe and US that are based on Indian market. It will invest in future of Indian economy and track distribution of industrial structure across Indian market.
 - ▶ This fund opens way for Chinese investors and provided good tool for low-threshold investment in India. It is also regarded as significant to boost investments in India.
279. ▶ Institute of Management and Technology (IMT) Ghaziabad announced as one of champions of United Nations' initiative on Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME), at World Economic Forum in Davos (Switzerland).
- ▶ PRME Champions Group consists of B-Schools involved as PRME signatories, working on real-time implementation of sustainability principles from various part of world. It aims to create activities that focus on UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
280. ▶ International Energy Agency (IEA) predicts Coal Power Production to rise in India @ 4% annually by 2022, due to growing fleet of coal power plants and strong power demand. IEA earlier also Predicted India's Renewable energy capacity to get doubled by 2022.
281. ▶ International Intellectual Property (IP) Index report by Global Innovation Policy Centre (GIPC) of US Chambers of Commerce (50 Nations) -
- ▶ India Ranked 44th, increasing substantially from 25% in 5th edition of Index to 30% in 6th edition.
 - ▶ Top 3 - USA, United Kingdom, Sweden.
282. ▶ International Labour Organisation (ILO) released World Social Protection Report 2017-2019, depicting that only 45 % of global population is effectively covered by at least one social benefit, while remaining 55 per cent that is 4 billion people are left unprotected.
283. ▶ International Monetary Fund approved USD 88 billion credit line for Mexico, replacing existing line of credit.
284. ▶ International Solar Alliance (ISA) and Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) signed Host Country Agreement here, to ISA a juridical personality and gives it power to contract, to acquire and dispose off movable and immovable properties. Under this, ISA shall have such privileges, applicable tax concessions and immunities as are necessary for ISA's Headquarter to independently discharge its function..
- ▶ ISA is headquartered in Gurgaon (Haryana) with Upendra Tripathy as Interim Director General.
285. ▶ International Solar Alliance (ISA) became treaty-based international intergovernmental organization, nearly a Month after Guinea became 15th country to ratify it.
- ▶ ISA is first treaty-based international government organisation to be based in India, with its secretariat in campus of National Institute of Solar Energy (NISE) in Gurgaon (Haryana).
 - ▶ So far, 46 countries have signed and 19 ratified Framework Agreement of ISA International Solar Alliance (ISA).
 - ▶ ISA was launched by India and France in November 2015 during COP-21 of UN Climate Conference in Paris (France).
 - ▶ ISA aims at addressing obstacles to deployment at scale of solar energy through better harmonization and aggregation of demand from solar rich countries by bringing standardization in solar technologies and fostering research and development.
 - ▶ Ministry of External Affairs has set aside US\$2 billion for solar projects in Africa out of India's US\$10 billion concessional Line of Credit (LOC) for Africa. France also pledged Euro 300 million soft loan for solar related projects in ISA member countries.
 - ▶ Australia also announced Joining ISA.
286. ▶ Investment Firm SoftBank signed \$930-million deal with China's energy conglomerate Golden Concord (GCL) to produce and sell solar equipment in India. GCL will have 40% stake in joint venture. The project will have a 4 gigawatt-capacity and will produce solar ingots, silicon wafers, batteries, and components.
287. ▶ Iran banned English from being taught in primary schools, amid suspected Western cultural invasion.
288. ▶ Iran banned use all cryptocurrencies including bitcoin by its banks and financial institutions. Iran Govt stated that it was necessary since cryptocurrencies can be turned into a means for money-laundering and financing terrorism.
289. ▶ Iran inaugurated first phase of Chabahar port located in Iran's southeastern Sistan-Baluchestan Province. Port will bypass Pakistan and will open new strategic transit route between Iran, India and Afghanistan. First phase is expected to increase its cargo handling capacity to 8.5 million tons annually, by over 3 three times from previous 2.5 million tons.
290. ▶ Iran opened its first museum dedicated to Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian, a solo female artist who has garnered widespread international attention during decades of exile. The museum displays 51 works of her, including her signature mirror mosaics.
291. ▶ Iran, Turkey and Russia held a special Meet in Ankara (Turkey), aiming to speed peace process for Syria and bolster their influence in the country.
292. ▶ Iranian government lifted restrictions on use of Internet, including messaging app Telegram, that were put after protests against unemployment and rising consumer prices in December 2017.
293. ▶ Iraq PM Haider al-Abadi declared victory in a 3year war by Iraqi forces against Islamic State jihadist group. He claimed that Iraqi forces are in complete control of the Iraqi-Syrian border.

294. ▶ Iraq overtook Saudi Arabia as India's top crude oil supplier by supplying 38.9 million tonnes (MT) crude oil in the current financial year. India is 80% dependent on imports to meet its oil needs.
295. ▶ Ireland People voted to end *abortion ban*, hailed as *a quiet revolution* in a very socially conservative country. Government proposed that law should be changed to allow unrestricted access to abortions up to 12 weeks of pregnancy.
296. ▶ Israel Parliament passed a controversial law that limits police's ability to recommend charges following their investigations, after criticism that lawmakers were seeking to protect Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The move was undertaken after widespread criticism and large protests against corruption.
297. ▶ Israel eased up visa application procedures for Indian tourists, to encourage more visitors from India.
298. ▶ Israel formally withdrawn from UNESCO (*United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization*). Tensions began after UNESCO admitted Palestine as a member state in 2011.
- ✎ Israel has been a UNESCO member since 1949, having 9 sites on UNESCO heritage list.
299. ▶ Israel successfully tested Its New advanced missile defense system capable of defending against ballistic missiles, named *Arrow - 3*.
300. ▶ Israel withdrawn its bid for a non-permanent seat at UN Security Council (UNSC) for 2019-2020 term.
- ✎ UNSC has 5 permanent and 10 non-permanent members who are elected for a two-year term.
301. ▶ Israel's parliament passed a law requiring a supermajority to relinquish (*leave*) control over any part of Jerusalem, that could hamstring city's division in any future peace deal. It will bar the government from ceding Israeli sovereignty over any part of Jerusalem without approval of at least 80 of the legislature's 120 members.
302. ▶ JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency) approved Official Development Assistance loan for Yen 45 billion for Bengaluru Water Supply and Sewerage Project (Phase 3) (I). People of this area will be provided with safe water supply and sewerage services.
303. ▶ JLL Report on Expensive Office Locations -
- ✎ Delhi is Ranked as 7th most expensive in world, with Mumbai at 16th position.
 - ✎ Top 5 - Hong Kong, London (West), New York, Beijing, Tokyo.
304. ▶ Japan Based Conglomerate Sony Corporation acquired London Based EMI Music Publishing, in a USD 1.9-billion deal. EMI is second-largest music publishing company by revenue. It will add over 2.1 million songs to Sony's huge list, which already owns 2.3 million copyrights.
305. ▶ Japan activated Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade (ARDB), its first marine unit since World War 2. In Japan's Constitution that was formed after WW 2, it renounced the right to wage war.
306. ▶ Japan approved Aid of Approx 73 Crores INR for Implementation of Advanced Traffic Information and Management System in Bengaluru (Karnataka).
307. ▶ Japan will offer grant of 8.4 million Yen (Approx 48 Lakh INR) for construction of a vocational training centre for poor women and youth in Rajasthan's Baran district.
308. ▶ Japan's Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) launched *new Earth observation satellite ASNARO-2*. It will perform Earth-observation tasks for 5 years from its orbit at an altitude of about 500 km.
309. ▶ Johannesburg (South Africa) based Global Market Research Group New World Wealth Report 2017 -
- ✎ Based on Total wealth of countrymen, Top 10 wealthiest countries are (amount in USD Billion)-
 - ✎ USA - 64584
 - ✎ China - 24803
 - ✎ Japan - 19522
 - ✎ United Kingdom - 9919
 - ✎ Germany - 9660
 - ✎ **India - 8230**
 - ✎ France - 6649
 - ✎ Canada - 6393
 - ✎ Australia - 6142
 - ✎ Italy - 4276
 - ✎ Report in Context of India -
 - ✎ India is now 6th richest in terms of wealth held by its people.
 - ✎ Since 2016, Indians' wealth increased 25% from 6584 to 8230 Billion USD in Just 1 year, which is more than china's 22 % increase over the period.
310. ▶ Kazakhstan surpassed Iraq as biggest oil over-producer in among Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) Nations. Kazakhstan's oil output in November and December 2017 was nearly 130000 barrels a day and Kazakhstan promised to pump out 20000

barrels a day less as per OPEC pact.

311. ▶ Kotak Mahindra Bank overtook SBI to become India's second-most-valued Bank in terms of market capitalisation. KMB's Market cap rose to 2.23 Lakh Crores. HDFC Remains at top with 5.03 Lakh Crores Market Cap. Bandhan Bank debuted in top 50 Indian Brands with 64000 Crores Market Cap.
312. ▶ Kuwait presented draft UN Security Council (UNSC) resolution, proposing to set up an international protection mission for Palestinians, after recent killing of palestinians amid their anti Israel protests at Gaza Strip.
313. ▶ Maharashtra government signed MoU with British Council to strengthen educational and cultural cooperation. British Council will expand its existing work in state, where it has trained over 100000 teachers benefitting around five million learners.
314. ▶ Maitre-2, second passenger bus to Kolkata via Dhaka flagged off from Agartala (Tripura), to boost trans-border relationship between India and Bangladesh.
315. ▶ Malaysia Government announced abolishing Goods and Services Tax (GST) by reducing it to 0%. New Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad had promised to abolish 6% GST levy before his electoral victory.
316. ▶ Malaysian Government proposed 10 years in jail and Gefty fines for publishers of fake news. Under Anti-Fake News Bill, anyone who publishes fake news could face fines of up to 500000 ringgit (USD 128140), up to 10 years in jail, or both.
317. ▶ Maldives Govt. declared a state of emergency deepening political crisis, after armed troops stormed country's top court.
318. ▶ Maldives Parliament approved anti-defection bill which states that MPs elected on political party tickets will lose their seat if they leave their party, get expelled, or change parties.
319. ▶ Mastercard Index of Women Entrepreneurs (MIWE) 2018 -
 - ▶ India ranked 52 among 57 countries.
 - ▶ Ghana (46.4 %) ranks first in world with highest number of women business owners, followed by Russia (34.6 %), Uganda (33.8 %), New Zealand (33 %) and Australia (32.1 %).
320. ▶ Messaging App WhatsApp launched *Business app*, to help small enterprises to connect efficiently with their customers, initially in Indonesia, Italy, Mexico, the UK and USA. In it, a small enterprise owner can create a Business Profile containing details like business description, contact details etc. It will be highlighted to regular users on WhatsApp.
321. ▶ Microsoft surpassed Google's parent company Alphabet in market capitalisation for first time in 3 years, becoming 3rd most valuable firm (at \$753 billion) after Apple (\$924 billion) and Amazon (\$783 billion).
322. ▶ Ministry of Communications launched Cool EMS Service with Japan, as a one-way service from Japan to India which allows customers in India to import Japanese food items for personal use which is allowed under Indian regulations. Initially available in Delhi only.
323. ▶ Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) will tie up with US and Finland to develop new pollution-forecast system that will help anticipate particulate matter (PM) levels at least two days in advance and at greater resolution.
 - ▶ Currently, System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting and Research (SAFAR), run out of Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), Pune, serves as apex forecaster of pollution trends in Delhi, Mumbai, Pune and Ahmedabad. It generates likely air quality profile for a day in advance, for these cities.
324. ▶ Mumbai is named 16th among top 20 costliest cities in world, according to Knight Frank Wealth Report 2018, based on 4 major indicators - wealth, investments, lifestyle and future. Top 3 Wealthiest Cities - Guangzhou (China), Hong Kong (China), New York (USA).
325. ▶ Mumbai is named among top 15 wealthiest cities globally, with a total wealth of \$950 billion. New York (USA) topped the list. Mumbai also features among top 10 cities in terms of billionaire population, with 28 billionaires.
326. ▶ Myanmar deferred signing agreement with India to streamline free movement of people within 16 km along the open border between two countries, citing domestic compulsions and asked for more time for the agreement to be sealed.
 - ▶ India and Myanmar share 1643 km unfenced border along Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram.
327. ▶ Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi's human rights award conferred by US Holocaust Memorial Museum has been taken back, which they had presented to her in 2012. It was done after ongoing violence against Rohingya Muslim minority community in Rakhine state of Myanmar.
328. ▶ NASA launched GOES-S (*Geostationary Operational Environmental Satellite*), an advanced weather satellite meant to safeguard Western USA, by forecasting natural calamities such as hurricanes, wildfires, floods etc. GOES-S will not only keep a watch over West Coast of USA, Alaska and Hawaii, but also over Mexico and Central America.
329. ▶ NASA's flying observatory Sofia will be observing celestial magnetic fields, star-forming regions, comets and Saturn's giant moon Titan, as part of observing campaign 2018. Sofia is a modified Boeing 747SP jetliner which carries a 100-inch diameter telescope.
330. ▶ Nancy Pelosi has set up record for longest speech in American Senate by delivering her speech for over 8 hours, breaking a record that dated back to 1909, set by Champ Clark (spoke for 5 hours and 15 minutes).

331. ▶ National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) signed an agreement with Cab Aggregator Uber to explore Urban Air Mobility (UAM) for future air transportation such as flying cars in populated areas. UAM is a safe system for air vehicles, to move passengers and cargo within a city.
332. ▶ National Assembly of France passed a controversial immigration law. While government defended the bill as balanced, it has been criticised by rightwingers for being too soft and by leftwingers for being repressive. New law aims for better-controlled immigration, as it reduces waiting time for asylum applications by almost half to six months and makes it easier to deport those turned down as "economic" migrants.
333. ▶ National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM) and China's Dalian Municipal People's Government signed agreement to create a platform called Sino-Indian Digital Collaboration Plaza (SIDCOP) in Dalian.
334. ▶ National Gallery of Modern Art (New Delhi) organized an exhibition titled *To the End of Land*, in collaboration with Embassy of Israel in India, on occasion of 25 years of diplomatic relations with Israel.
335. ▶ National Highways Authority of India took its First International assignment as it signed an agreement for upgradation of Yagyi – Kalewa section of highway in Myanmar, to be completed in 3 years.
336. ▶ National Small Industries Corporation (NSIC) signed MoU with SME Corporation Malaysia for cooperation in small and medium businesses (SMBs).
337. ▶ Neighbouring Nation Sri Lanka declared a state of emergency for 10 days, to curb heightening violence targeting Muslim minority, mainly in Kandy.
338. ▶ Nepal banned solo climbers from scaling its mountains, including Mount Everest, to reduce accidents.
339. ▶ Nepal rejected India's offer to jointly re-measure the height of Mount Everest (world's highest peak), following massive earthquake in 2015 and will carry out the measurement exercise on its own.
340. ▶ Nepal started accessing internet from China after commercial operations began at Nepal-China optical fibre link via Rasuwagadhi gateway across Himalayan Mountains. It ends Nepal's dependence on India for internet bandwidth, considered strategic loss for India. It is believed that initial speed by Chinese fibre link will be 1.5 Gigabit per second (gbps), less than 34 gbps provided by India.
341. ▶ Nepalese tea received an international trademark, after over 150 years of beginning of cultivation in country. Now, tea will be sold in international market with a common logo, representing national identity.
342. ▶ New Delhi ranked 22nd globally and 8th in Asia in TripAdvisor's top 25 travellers choice of destinations list 2018, topped by Paris (France). It is followed by London (UK), Rome (Italy), Bali (Indonesia), Crete (Greece).
343. ▶ New Manchester-India Partnership (MIP) aimed at connecting Indian companies with Northern regions of England has been launched in London (UK). This partnership is aimed at advancing trade, investment, science and innovation ties between India and Britain.
344. ▶ New Zealand Govt. banned all new offshore oil exploration permits as a part of Government's plan to transition towards a carbon-neutral future. Note that existing permits cover an area of 100000 sq km and some still have decades left on their exploration rights.
345. ▶ North Korean leader Kim Jong Un declared that his nation would stop its nuclear tests and intercontinental missile launches and will shut down its atomic test site. This brings relief to global community as North Korea has been continuously doing Nuclear tests and aggressively enhancing its nuclear capabilities over past few years.











 In a historic first, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un crossed border that separates 2 Koreas at demilitarized zone (DMZ) to enter South Korea, becoming first North Korean leader to step into South Korean territory since 1953.

346. ▶ Norway became world's first country to shut down national broadcasts of its FM network by completing its transition to digital radio, to allow for better sound quality, a greater number of channels and more functions, at a cost eight times lower than FM radio.
347. ▶ Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL) and Electricite de France (EDF) of France signed an Industrial Way Forward Agreement for implementation of six nuclear power reactor units at Jaitapur (Maharashtra) with a total capacity of about 10000 MW. Evolutionary Pressurized Reactors (EPRs) are evolutionary reactors, whose design has evolved from "KONVOI" and "N4" reactors are operational in Germany and France respectively for over 20 years.
348. ▶ ONGC Videsh Ltd signed MoU with IDRO Oil (a subsidiary of state-run Iranian Development and Renovation Organisation) for developing Susangerd field in Iran. OVL and IDRO Oil will jointly bid for a USD 1 billion contract for development of Susangerd oilfield in southern Iran.
349. ▶ Oklahoma will becoem first US State to use Nitrogen Gas for executions. Nitrogen is an odourless and tasteless gas that makes up about 78 % of air that humans breathe. However, it causes death when inhaled without any oxygen.
350. ▶ Oxford Dictionaries declared Youthquake as 2017's Word of the Year, reflecting what it calls a political awakening among millennial voters. Other Words of The year 2017 -

 *Populism* - Cambridge Dictionary.

 *Kwaussie* - Australian National Dictionary.

 *Feminism* - Merriam-Webster's.

351. ▶ Pacific Ocean Nation Marshall Islands will become first country to recognize cryptocurrency as its legal tender and adopt transparent crypto monetary system. Its Parliament passed law to create a digital currency called *Sovereign* (symbol *SOV*) to raise cash and boost economy. It will be implemented with Israeli fintech startup Neema.
 -  Initially, 24 million SOVs will be circulated and will be backed by Govt as a legal tender in country. SOV will be different from other cryptocurrencies because it will be officially recognized by law as legal tender and effectively backed by government.
352. ▶ Pakistan Navy successfully test fired indigenously built surface-to-surface anti-ship missile *Harba*, from newly commissioned Fast Attack Craft PNS *Himmat*.
353. ▶ Pakistan allowed Chinese currency Yuan for exports and financing transactions. Chinese Yuan is an approved foreign currency for denominating foreign currency transactions in Pakistan.
354. ▶ Pakistan allowed depreciation of its Currency (pakistani rupee), after talks with International Monetary Fund. It is believed to help shift foreign currency holdings from commercial banks back to official reserves.
355. ▶ Pakistan declared Mandarin as an official language of Pakistan, along with Urdu and English.
356. ▶ Pakistan hosted its first ever Shanghai Cooperation Organisation-Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (SCO-RATS) legal experts meeting in Islamabad.
357. ▶ Pakistan test fired Babur Weapon System-1 (B), enhanced version of indigenously-built Babur cruise missile with range of 700 KMs.
358. ▶ Pakistan will up a new hydropower project on Jhelum River, of over 700 megawatts in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), named Azad Pattan Hydropower Project (APHP). Project cost of USD 1.51 billion will be procured from foreign entities.
359. ▶ Pakistan's Parliament passed a bill granting fundamental rights to transgenders and outlawing discrimination against them.
360. ▶ Palestine submitted instrument of accession to Chemical Weapons Convention to European Union (EU), world's chemical weapons watchdog.
361. ▶ Philippines expressed its displeasure over construction of an apparent airbase on a man-made island in the South China Sea by China.
 -  China reportedly uses cabbage strategy for militarization of large areas in disputed south china sea, which is protested by neighboring nations (including *India, Japan, Bhutan, Philippines, Japan, Malaysia and Brunei*) claiming control on various parts of mineral rich south china sea.
 -  Cabbage strategy is also called *salami-slicing* strateg, Under which a contested area is surrounded by multiple security layers to deny access to the rival nation and is claimed subsequently. As per the observers, China, for a long time, has been pursuing this strategy.
362. ▶ Philippines formally Withdrawn from Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), mentioning that ICC was a righteous stand against those who politicise and weaponise human rights.
363. ▶ Philippines suspended use of a landmark vaccine for potentially deadly dengue virus after its French manufacturer Sanofi warned it could worsen the disease for people who had not previously been infected.
364. ▶ Property consultant Cushman & Wakefield's 'Office Space Across World 2017' report -
 -  Delhi-NCR is 84th most expensive office location in world. Mumbai's Bandra-Kurla Complex (BKC), which ranked 163rd in list is second most expensive location in India.
 -  List is topped by Hong Kong, followed by London and Tokyo.
365. ▶ Qatar approved a draft law on regulating ownership and use of properties by foreigners. It rules that non-Qataris might own and use properties under specific conditions, applicable to land space including buildings and residential units, detachment units in residential complexes.
 -  In Aug 2017, Qatar became first Arab Nation to offer permanent residency to foreigners.
366. ▶ Qatar banned products from United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Egypt; To protect safety of consumers by stopping trafficking of goods. These 4 nations has cut all diplomatic relations with Qatar amid suspected terror financing by Qatar.
367. ▶ Qatar introduced national service for women for first time. Women aged over 18 will now be able to volunteer for national service under law, men will have to serve for a year instead of three months.
368. ▶ Quality of Living survey 2018 by Mercer -
 -  Austria's capital city Vienna has been rated world's most liveable city for 9th consecutive year.
 -  Top 3 - Vienna (Austria), Zurich (Switzerland), Auckland (New Zealand) AND Germany's Munich tied for third place.
 -  Hyderabad and Pune have been rated India's most liveable cities as they have tied for 142nd place.
 -  Iraq's capital Baghdad is rated least liveable city for the tenth consecutive year.
369. ▶ Reliance chairman Mukesh Ambani, Human rights lawyer Indira Jaising and Architect Balkrishna Doshi are named by Fortune magazine as World's Greatest Leaders of 2018, at 24th, 20th and 43rd places respectively.

370. ▶ Renowned Indian painter Raja Ravi Varma's untitled painting of Tilottama was sold for \$795,000 (around Rs 5 crore) at Sotheby's Modern and Contemporary South Asian art auction in New York.
371. ▶ Report by global startup ecosystem map Startupblink -
- ▶ India is ranked 37th out of 125 countries in global startup ecosystem in 2017.
 - ▶ Top 5 - United States (1st), United Kingdom (2nd), Canada (3rd), Israel (4th) and Germany (5th).
 - ▶ In Asia - Singapore (10th), China (12th), South Korea (17th), Japan (20th).
 - ▶ In Africa - South Africa (38th), Kenya (53rd), Egypt (54th), and Nigeria (57th).
372. ▶ Researchers from Institute of Archaeology of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and Peking University announced that Chinese civilization was born 5800 years ago and got matured 3800 years ago., after 15 years of state-funded work. First civilisation emerged in areas around Yellow, Yangtze and Western Liao rivers.
373. ▶ Ruling Communist Party of China (CPC) proposed amending China's Constitution to allow 3rd term of any Individual as President of China. It will allow Xi Jinping to continue as President beyond 2023.
374. ▶ Russia and Egypt signed an agreement under which Russia's Rosatom will construct Egypt's first nuclear plant as *Daba nuclear plant*. It will be completed by 2029 with cost of \$21bn.
375. ▶ Russia launched Angosat-1, first national telecoms satellite for Angola, onboard Zenit-2SB rocket.
376. ▶ Russia launched world's First floating nuclear power unit into Baltic Sea, with 70-megawatt Capacity, named Akademik Lomonosov.
377. ▶ Russia signed agreement with Northern African Nation Sudan to build its first nuclear power plant, to help Sudan solve its energy security problems.
378. ▶ Russia successfully test fired its latest nuclear Inter Continental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) RS-28 Sarmat, with Speed over Mach 20 (20 times speed of light) and Operational range over 11000 kilometres. RS-28 Sarmat is a heavy liquid-propellant ICBM capable of carrying nuclear charges. It aims to replace R-36M2 Voyevoda ICBM, which is Russia's only Strategic Missile Force since 1988. Pakistan Navy also test fired indigenously developed Submarine Launched version of Cruise Missile (SLCM) *BABUR*, with range under 500 KMs.
379. ▶ Russia tested hypersonic missile named *Kinzhal*, said to travel at 10 times speed of sound and have a range of 2,000 km.
380. ▶ Russian space agency Roskosmos launched *Progress MS-08* unmanned cargo spacecraft for International Space Station (ISS). It carried equipments for German-Russian ICARUS research project aimed at studying wildlife-migration patterns and other material.
381. ▶ Russian-drafted resolution on a technical rollover of Yemen sanctions regime is adopted by United Nation Security Council (UNSC). Note that a Britain-drafted resolution failed to adopt after being vetoed by Russia. It committed for action against Iran and censured it for providing missiles and drones to Houthi rebels in Yemen.
382. ▶ Rwanda (East Africa) became first low-income country to provide universal eye care for its 12 million population. Its Government partnered with *Vision for a Nation (VFAN)* to train over 3,000 eye care nurses based in over 500 local health centres.
383. ▶ SWIFT (Society for World Interbank Financial Telecommunication System) platform expanded its GPI (Global Payment Innovation) Tracker system to help banks track their global transactions and keep full vigil on payments activity. From November 2018, GPI Tracker system will be included in all payment instructions carried between all 11,000 customers on SWIFT at all times. It will extend transparency and drive more banks to join service to make GPI new normal in cross-border payments.
- ▶ SWFIT GPI was launched in May 2017 to help banks to track their global transactions at all times, keeping full vigil on payments activity. It accounts for 10% of cross border payment traffic on SWIFT network.
 - ▶ SWIFT is global financial messaging service that enables financial institutions worldwide to send and receive information about financial transactions in secure, standardized and reliable environment.
384. ▶ Saudi Arabia Govt. allowed women to open their own businesses and benefit from government e-services without having to prove consent from husband or male guardian, as a major step away from country's strict guardianship system that has ruled it for decades. Saudi Arabia has also for the first time opened applications for women to enlist in military in rank of Soldiers.
385. ▶ Saudi Arabia and UAE became first countries of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) to introduce Value Added Tax (VAT) for first time to increase their revenue away from oil reserves.
386. ▶ Saudi Arabia approved national policy of its atomic energy programme, as it prepares to award contracts for its first nuclear power plants. Policy insists on limiting nuclear activities to peaceful purposes and calls for enhanced safety measures as well as use of best practices for radioactive waste management.
387. ▶ Saudi Arabia conducted Groovz Jazz Festival as its first ever jazz festival, in Riyadh.
388. ▶ Saudi Arabia hosted world chess tournament for the first time, named named as the King Salman World Rapid and Blitz Chess Championships, nearly two years after It's top cleric issued a religious edict against Chess.
- ▶ India's Viswanathan Anand won bronze in this Championship in Riyadh. Magnus Carlsen (Norway) won the tournament and Russia's Sergey Karjakin secured second spot.

389. ▶ Saudi Arabia lifted 35 year old ban on providing licenses to commercial movie theatres, aimed at economic growth and diversification.
390. ▶ Saudi Arabia opened its first public movie theatre, after over 35 years of prohibition for religious reasons. A special screening of Marvel superhero film 'Black Panther' was held in Riyadh.
391. ▶ Scientists from Australian Institute of Marine Biology have developed an ultra-fine biodegradable film, some 50000 times thinner than a human hair, to prevent coral bleaching, that had spread across the Great Barrier Reef in Australia in 2016 and 2017. Shield has been designed to sit on the surface of the water above the corals rather than directly on corals to provide an effective barrier against sun.
392. ▶ Scotland become first country to introduce a minimum unit pricing for alcohol. Alcoholic products in Scotland will cost a minimum of 50 pence per unit.
393. ▶ Seychelles' govt. refused to ratify a deal signed with India to build military infrastructure on its Assumption Island, signed in 2015 during Indian PM Narendra Modi's visit to Seychelles.
394. ▶ Singapore and China signed MOU to promote collaboration between companies from both countries in third-party markets along China's ambitious Belt and Road routes.
- ✎ Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) BRI is China's ambitious development strategy that aims to boost its connectivity and trade that will that will connect Asia, Africa, Middle East and Europe. It was proposed by Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2013. It comprises two components viz. the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road.
395. ▶ Singapore launched its first large-scale electric car-sharing programme to provide commuters with more transport options and steer them away from need to buy their own cars, to be run for a decade by BlueSG.
396. ▶ Singapore will impose a 'carbon tax' from 2019 to cut its greenhouse gas emissions and make companies more competitive as global agreements on climate change take effect. Tax will be SG\$5.0 (USD 3.8) per tonne of greenhouse gas emissions from 2019 to 2023.
397. ▶ Singapore's Changi Airport is named world's best airport for 6th consecutive year by consultancy firm Skytrax.
- ✎ Incheon International Airport in South Korea and Haneda Airport in Japan were placed 2nd and 3rd respectively.
 - ✎ Mumbai airport (Chhatrapati Shivaji Airport) is ranked 63rd, Bangalore (Kempegowda Airport) and Delhi (Indira Gandhi Airport) are at 64th and 66th place respectively.
398. ▶ Soft Drinks Industry Levy (also known as soft drinks sugar tax / sin tax / sugar tax) came into force in United Kingdom as part of government's plan to combat obesity and sugar related disease. Drinks containing 5 grams of sugar per 100ml taxed are taxed at 18 pence per litre, and those with more than 5 grams per 100ml taxed at 24 pence per litre.
399. ▶ Somalia Government and United Nations (UN) signed UN Strategic Framework for Somalia (UNSF), under which United Nations will support Somalia's development in priority areas over the next four years.
400. ▶ South Africa declared a *national disaster* over a drought that has ravaged parts of country and threatened to leave city of Cape Town without domestic tap water.
- ✎ Cape Town is in grip of a catastrophic 3 year long drought as sparse winter rains have failed to bring relief, and dam levels have dropped to dangerously low levels.
401. ▶ South Korea and Gujarat Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GCCCI) signed MoU for industrial co-operation, with a focus on automobile, defence and textiles sectors. It aims to help Gujarat-based small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to explore opportunities through joint ventures with South Korean firms.
402. ▶ South Korea banned its financial institutions from dealing in virtual currencies including Bitcoin, in wake of recent surge in Bitcoin price.
403. ▶ South Korean pop group BTS won online reader's poll for TIME 'Person of the Year 2018'. South Korean President Moon Jae-in finished 2nd with 5% votes, followed by former US President Barack Obama with 3% votes.
404. ▶ Southeastern Australian state New South Wales (NSW) announced USD 1.58 million partnership with India to enhance Indian startup ecosystem, technology, and advanced manufacturing sectors.
405. ▶ Sri Lanka banned import of vehicles without airbags for driver and front seat passenger, Anti-Locking Braking System standards (ABS) and other safety features.
406. ▶ Sri Lanka became 163rd nation to accede to anti-personnel mine ban convention, as it agreed for Prohibition of use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel mines and on their destruction.
- ✎ Convention on Prohibition of Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, commonly referred to as the Mine Ban Treaty or Ottawa Treaty, was adopted on September 18, 1997.
407. ▶ Sri Lanka formally handed over its southern strategic port of Hambantota to Chinese firm *China Merchants Port Holdings Company (CM Port)* on a 99-year lease. Hambantota port is strategically located right in the middle of vital energy supply lines in the Indian Ocean, connecting the Middle East and East Asia.
408. ▶ Swaziland's King Mswati III, Africa's last absolute monarch officially changed name of his country to *Kingdom of eSwatini*. Its a Swazi language name that stands for 'place of the Swazi'.

409. ▶ Sweden signed Strategic Partnership Agreement with United Nations for committing record \$370 million dollars to UN World Food Programme, for next 4 years (2018-2021). It is biggest ever contribution made by a donor within a WFP Strategic Partnership Agreement.
410. ▶ Swedish Academy, That organizes Nobel Prize in Literature announced that, Nobel Prize in literature will not be awarded this year due to sex-abuse allegations and other issues. Swedish Academy has been in stress due to #MeToo campaign since November 2017. Academy has been alleged of sexual misconduct by husband of one of its members.
411. ▶ Switzerland unveiled world's steepest funicular railway link to alpine resort of Stoos. It rises 743 metres along gradients as steep as 110% and has a track length of 1720 metres. It has been built at cost of INR 333 crores.
412. ▶ Syria returned to France Légion d'honneur (France's Highest Civilian Honour) presented to its President Bashar al-Assad. Syria stated that it has been done as France is a PRO-USA Nation.
413. ▶ Taipei World Trade Centre (TWTC) launched its office at New Delhi, to promote trade between India and Taiwan. It will serve as a single venue that combines consulting service on trade-related issues, trading partners, suppliers, and markets for international business.
414. ▶ Tanzania withdrew from United Nation's *Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework*, citing security reasons and lack of funds. Tanzania is considered as safe haven for refugees, particularly from conflict hit Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Burundi.
415. ▶ Tata Steel and Wipro are 2d Indian companies in US-based Ethisphere Institute's list of World's Most Ethical Companies for 2018, containing 135 companies from 23 countries. Tata Steel and Wipro are receiving the award for the sixth and seventh time respectively.
416. ▶ Tech Firm Apple acquired music recognition app Shazam, for approx \$400 million.
417. ▶ Technology Firm Google acquired US-based Tenor, a GIF platform for Android, iOS, and desktop. Tenor's GIF-searching functionality will be integrated into Google Images and Gboard, company's virtual keyboard.
418. ▶ Thomson Reuters Corp's First *Top 100 Global Technology Leaders* list 2018 -
▶ Top 3 - Microsoft (1), Intel (2), Cisco Systems (3)
▶ 45 % of 100 tech companies are headquartered in USA. Japan and Taiwan are tied for second place with 13 companies each, followed by India with 5 tech firms (TCS, Infosys, Wipro, HCL Tech, Tech Mahindra).
419. ▶ Tropical Cyclone Kelvin hit north coast of Western Australia, with winds up to a speed of 150 km per hour.
420. ▶ Tropical cyclone Gita hit small South Pacific island country Tonga with Category 4 intensity. with winds upto 145 mph. India contributed 1 Million USD as rehabilitation aid to Tonga.
421. ▶ Turkey launched construction of its first-ever nuclear power plant in Mersin region, with support from Russia. Cost of power plant would be around 20 billion dollars and will meet 10 % power requirements of Turkey.
422. ▶ Typhoon Tembin struck Philippines, causing huge human and financial losses.
423. ▶ UAE, UK, US and French armies participated in joint exercises in Abu Dhabi (UAE), named as *Flag4*.
424. ▶ UK government extended a pilot student visa scheme to 23 more universities under which Indian and other non-EU students will get six months time to find a job after finishing their course (upto 13 months duation). Scheme was introduced last year on a pilot basis in four British universities - Oxford, Bath, Cambridge and Imperial College London.
425. ▶ UK-based data analytics company Cambridge Analytica announced to shut down its operations, after being caught in a massive data-harvesting scandal took away all of its customers. Approx 2 months ago, it was revealed that CA had illegally harvested data of over 87 million Facebook users and used it to manipulate voter behavior in 2016 US Presidential elections.
426. ▶ UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) launched UN Road Safety Trust Fund to improve road safety worldwide. The fund has potential to galvanise global efforts to address road safety situation, building on progress made and experience gained over Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020. It will serve as catalyst for progress towards road safety targets of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
427. ▶ UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres announced to hold a climate summit in September 2019 in New York to review commitments of 2015 Paris Agreement on Climate Change, Considering effects of climate spreading all over the world. Earlier, Guterres appointed Michael Bloomberg as his Special Envoy for Climate Action.
428. ▶ UN will mark 100th Birth anniversary of South African Social Reformer Nelson Mandela (July 18, 2018) with a high-level meeting on world peace, named as *Nelson Mandela Peace summit*.
429. ▶ UNESCO Included *bird language* of Black Sea villagers (in northern Turkey) in list of Intangible Cultural Heritage. This high pitch system of whistling to communicate in the rugged terrain in Black Sea Regions dates back to some 500 years ago.
430. ▶ UNESCO recognized artisans of Panama Hats for their distinctive woven hats. Panam hats are a traditional brimmed straw hat of Ecuadorian origin.
431. ▶ UNICEF released its report *The State of the World's Children*, with theme *Children in a digital world*. Report states that India's girls and women are at risk of becoming further marginalised in society and at home if they remain digitally illiterate.
432. ▶ UNICEF report on newborn mortality rate -

- ▶ Pakistan has worst NMR in world, with 45.6 babies dying out of every 1,000 births in 2016. Pak is Followed by Afghanistan and Central African Republic.
 - ▶ Japan has best NMR, followed by Iceland and Singapore.
 - ▶ India's NMR is 25.4, making it 12th worst among 52 'lower-middle-income countries' that pose risk for newborns. India aims to attain NMR of 12 by 2030.
 - ▶ Further, As per report by NITI Aayog, sex ratio at birth (SRB) declined in 17 out of 21 large states of India, with Gujarat recording 53 points fall. Gujarat is followed by Haryana (35 points drop) and Rajasthan (32 points drop).
433. ▶ US Agency for International Development (USAID) announced USD 1 million support for Ending Tuberculosis (TB) Epidemic in India and to raise TB awareness to help India in its fight against TB.
- ▶ USAID also announced its first impact bond across globe by launching 'Rajasthan Development Impact Bond (Utkrisht Impact Bond)' aiming to reduce number of mother and baby deaths by improving quality of maternal care in Rajasthan's health infrastructure.
434. ▶ US Department of Treasury included India in monitoring list of its major trading partners that merit close attention to their currency practices and macroeconomic policies. This list identifies countries that are trying to artificially manage value of their currency to gain trade advantage, by keeping exchange rate low to promote cheaper exports. India is 6th addition to this watch list after China, Japan, South Korea, Germany and Switzerland.
435. ▶ US India Business Council (USIBC) formed an 11 member India Advisory Council to enhance bilateral strategic and economic partnership between India and USA.
436. ▶ US President Donald Trump signed an executive order to create a *faith-based* initiative, which would recognize vital role of faith in American life. It would ensure that faith-based organizations have equal access to government funding and equal right to exercise their beliefs.
437. ▶ US state California's economy surpassed UK to become world's fifth largest, With GDP of \$2.7 trillion, with UK and India as Next. California is only behind USA, China, Japan and Germany.
438. ▶ US state of New Jersey declared April as 'Sikh Awareness and Appreciation Month' as part of its effort to promote awareness of Sikhism.
439. ▶ USA Aerospace Firm *Lockheed Martin* announced setting up of F-16 jet production unit in India, under *Make in India* initiative.
440. ▶ USA Govt. cancelled NASA's Carbon Monitoring System (CMS) programme, amid budget constraints and higher priorities within science budget. NASA's CMS Programme costing \$10 million per year was meant to track carbon and methane, key greenhouse gases that contribute to global warming.
441. ▶ USA President Donald Trump announced to recognise Jerusalem as Israel's capital despite intense Arab, Muslim and European opposition. USA became 1st country to recognise Jerusalem as Israel's capital, since foundation of Israel in 1948. USA will also move its Israel Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.
- ▶ Israel has always regarded Jerusalem as its capital, while Palestinians claim East Jerusalem as capital of a future Palestinian state.
 - ▶ Later, United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution that stated this US recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital as 'null and void'. The resolution was moved by Turkey and Yemen.
442. ▶ USA President Donald Trump signed into law a sweeping 1.5 trillion dollars overhaul of US tax code, set to impact USA economy through dramatic tax cuts for corporations and temporary reductions for individuals.
443. ▶ USA President Trump has signed an order to ban bump-stock devices, that enable a rifle to shoot hundreds of rounds a minute.
444. ▶ USA President announced that USA will no longer give any fund to Pakistan to fight terrorism, as Pakistan has not properly utilized approx 33 Billion USD given to it over past decade.
445. ▶ USA Prez Donald Trump declared dead the *Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)* program, as it protected immigrants brought to nation illegally as children.
446. ▶ USA Space Firm *SpaceX* launched secret Zuma Mission for USA government, onboard Falcon 9 rocket.
- ▶ Zuma mission remains a secret as its nature or purpose and the agency behind it has not been made public.
447. ▶ USA Supreme Court restricted deportation of immigrant felons (अपराधी) by ruling that US Immigration and Nationality Act requiring deportation of immigrants convicted of certain crimes of violence is unconstitutionally vague.
448. ▶ USA Supreme Court ruled that travel ban imposed on six Muslim countries (*Chad, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Syria and Yemen*) by Prez Donald Trump can now go fully into effect. New ban also bars travellers from North Korea and Venezuela.
449. ▶ USA Trade Representative (USTR) again placed India on 'Priority Watch List' in its annual Special 301 Report on state of intellectual property protection, along with 11 Other Nations.
- ▶ This Report identifies US trading partners that do not effectively protect IP rights or deny market access to its innovators that rely on protection of their IP rights.

- India remains one of world's most challenging major economies with respect to protection and enforcement of intellectual property, as India's enforcement action and policies are insufficient to curb problem.
 - Report slammed Health Ministry of India for creating uncertainty in pharmaceutical market by demanding that pharmaceutical companies provide details of how they were using granted patents.
- 450. ▶ USA and Israeli forces held *Juniper Cobra 2018* Joint military drill.
- 451. ▶ USA and Philippine Armies held their Joint annual military exercise *Balikatan*.
- 452. ▶ USA and South Korea began their joint military training exercise named 'Foil Eagle'.
- 453. ▶ USA banned use of Venezuelan cryptocurrency (Petro) by its Citizens, stating that its introduction is intended to skirt US sanctions.
- 454. ▶ USA based software Firm Adobe acquired Magento for USD 1.68 billion. Magento works in B2B and B2C context and will help Adobe to compete with salesforce and provide functionality in e-commerce space.
- 455. ▶ USA challenged China at World Trade Organisation (WTO) over intellectual property breaches, alleging China of denying foreign patent holders (including US companies), basic patent rights that prevent Chinese entity from using technology after a licensing contract ends. US also accused China of violating WTO norms by imposing discriminatory contract terms against imported foreign technology.
- 456. ▶ USA lifted ban that it had imposed on refugees from 11 nations, which it termed as high-risk countries. The 11 Nations are - *Egypt, Iran, Libya, South Sudan, Yemen, Sudan, Iraq, Mali, North Korea, Somalia and Syria*.
- 457. ▶ USA placed Pakistan on newly formed Special Watch List for *severe violations of religious freedom*, as Pakistan continues to harass its religious minorities, tolerates extra-judicial violence in the guise of opposing blasphemy.
 - Moreover, USA also re-designated 10 countries as *Countries of Particular Concern* under International Religious Freedom (IRF) Act - Myanmar, China, Eritrea, Iran, North Korea, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.
- 458. ▶ USA pulled out of an international nuclear deal with Iran signed in 2015 by USA and 5 other Powers (UK, Russia, France, China, Germany and European Union).
 - This could raise risk of conflict in Middle East, upset America's European allies and bring uncertainty to global oil supplies.
 - The deal eased sanctions on Iran in exchange for the country limiting its nuclear programme, seen by many as a way to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear bomb.
 - USA Prez Trump complained that the agreement, does not address Iran's ballistic missile programme, its nuclear activities and nor its role in conflicts in Yemen and Syria. It did not prevent Iran from cheating and continuing to pursue nuclear weapons, so it needs to be vanished and Tough Economic Sanctions are being put back on Iran.
- 459. ▶ USA renamed its oldest and largest strategically important military command US Pacific Command (PACOM) to Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM). It is responsible for all US military activity in greater Pacific region. It has about 375,000 civilian and military personnel assigned, which also includes India. Renamed INDOPACOM will now extend its reach from Pacific Ocean to Indian Ocean Region.
- 460. ▶ USA resumed normal visa services for Turkish citizens, saying Turkish authorities fulfilled assurances no local staff would be detained or arrested for performing their duties.
- 461. ▶ USA will issue a 4 level travel advisory to its citizens from January 2018, based on a four- level classification system with clearly recommended actions. Four levels will be -
 - Level one – exercise normal precautions
 - Level two – exercise increased caution
 - Level three – reconsider travel
 - Level four – do not travel
- 462. ▶ USA withdrawn invitation to Chinese navy to participate in 2018 Rim of Pacific (RIMPAC) maritime exercise, amid China's continued illegal militarisation of islands in disputed South China Sea. RIMPAC 2019 is 26th edition of this exercise. RIMPAC is world's largest international maritime warfare exercise, held biennially near Honolulu, Hawaii (USA).
- 463. ▶ USA withdrawn itself from a United Nations pact to improve handling of migrant and refugee situations deeming it 'inconsistent' with policies.
- 464. ▶ USA's National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) will launch Wide Field Infrared Survey Telescope (WFIRST) in Mid-2020, as a next-generation space telescope to provide largest picture of universe ever seen, with same depth and clarity as Hubble Space Telescope.
- 465. ▶ USA's Stanford University will assist Uttar Pradesh Government to combat chronic disease like Japanese Encephalitis (JE) and Acute Encephalitis Syndrome (AES).
- 466. ▶ USA, France and Britain launched military operation against Syria, in response to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's chemical attack that killed over 60 people last week.

467. ▶ United Arab Emirates (UAE) adopted a new system of entry visas, under which it will issue long-term residency visas for up to 10 years to international investors and 'exceptional talents' including professionals and students. It will attract investors and increase economic competitiveness globally. UAE also allowed foreign investors to own 100% of UAE-based businesses by end of 2018, up from 49% cap currently.
468. ▶ United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Malaysia concluded joint military exercise *Desert Tiger 5*, in Dubai (UAE).
469. ▶ United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia formed new economic and partnership group named *Joint Cooperation Committee*, separate from Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).
- ✍ JCC will coordinate between UAE and Saudi Arabia in all military, political, economic, trade, cultural and other interest of 2 countries.
 - ✍ It will be headed by *Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan*, crown prince of Abu Dhabi.
470. ▶ United Arab Emirates (UAE) approved law on Equal Wages and Salaries for men and women, to provide women with equal opportunities as partners in UAE's development.
471. ▶ United Arab Emirates (UAE) became first arab nation to have Nuclear Power after constuction of its \$20 billion Barakah Plant west of Abu Dhabi has been Completed, led by Korea Electric Power Corp.
472. ▶ United Arab Emirates (UAE) launched its first space programme aimed at sending four Emirati astronauts to International Space Station within 5 years.
473. ▶ United Arab Emirates opened world's longest zip line in Ras al-Khaimah, measuring 2.83 km in length, enetring Guinness book of World Records for the same.
474. ▶ United Kingdom (UK) government formed a dedicated national security unit to counter fake news and disinformation. It will flag fake information on social media.
475. ▶ United Kingdom's National Crime Agency (NCA) listed Pakistan among top three sources for money laundering, other two being Nigeria and Russia. UK is prime destination for foreign corrupt and politically exposed people (PEPs) to launder money.
476. ▶ United Nations Committee for Development Policy (CDP) announced Bhutan along with Kiribati, Sao Tome and Principe and Solomon Islands will be recommended for graduation from least developed country (LDC) category. These four nations will be recommended to move up from ranks of poorest nations on account of increasing national earning power as well as access to better health care.
477. ▶ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) released Global Education Monitoring Report 2017-18, expresssing concern over school textbooks in many countries glorifying war and military heroes rather than teaching peace and non-violence. As per the report, just 10% of the textbooks across the world explicitly teach the need for conflict prevention and resolution.
478. ▶ United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and World Health Organisation (WHO) will collaborate to accelerate curbing environmental health risks.
479. ▶ United Nations General Assembly approved regular budget of \$5.397 billion for 2018-2019, marking 5% cut (286 million dollar) as compared to budget for 2016- 2017.
480. ▶ United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) released report *State of the World's Children 2017: Children in a Digital World*. UNICEF pointed out that despite massive online presence of children, very little is done to protect them from digital threats.
481. ▶ United Nations children's agency (UNICEF) stated that India has seen a sharp decline in child marriages over past 10 years, with only 27 % of girls getting married before 18 years in comparison to 47 per cent a decade back.
482. ▶ United Nations has issued an appeal for 951 million Dollars to meet the needs of nearly 900,000 Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. Recently, Rohingya influx has become world's fastest-growing refugee crisis with tens of thousands fleeing by land and sea daily from Myanmar's northern Rakhine state.
483. ▶ United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) designated 14 sites as Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS), located in China, Egypt, Japan, South Korea, Mexico, Portugal, Spain and Sri Lanka. With this, there are now 50 Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems in 20 countries.
- ✍ 14 New GIAHS-
 - ✍ Siwa Oasis - Egypt
 - ✍ Chinampa Agriculture in World Natural and Cultural Heritage Zone - Mexico
 - ✍ Zhagana Agriculture - Forest-Animal Husbandry Composite System - China
 - ✍ Huzhou Mulberry-dyke & Fish Pond System - China
 - ✍ Osaki Kodo's Traditional Water Management System for Sustainable Paddy Agriculture - Japan
 - ✍ Nishi-Awa Steep Slope Land Agriculture System - Japan
 - ✍ Traditional Hadong Tea Agrosystem in Hwagae-myeon - South Korea
 - ✍ Agricultural System of Valle Salado de Añana - Spain

- ✍ Malaga Raisin Production System in La Axarquía - Spain
- ✍ Cascaded Tank-Village System - Sri Lanka
- ✍ Rice Terraces in Southern Mountainous and Hilly Areas - China
- ✍ Xiajin Yellow River Old Course Ancient Mulberry Grove System - China
- ✍ Traditional Wasabi Cultivation in Shizuoka - Japan
- ✍ Barroso Agro-sylvo-pastoral System - Portuga
- ✍ GIAHS in India -
 - ✍ Saffron Heritage of Kashmir (J & K)
 - ✍ Koraput Traditional Agriculture (Odisha)
 - ✍ Kuttanad Below Sea Level Farming System (Kerala)


484. ▶ United States Trade Representative (USTR) announced reviewing eligibility of India, Indonesia and Kazakhstan in Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) based on concerns about countries' compliance with program.
- ✍ In Case of India, This review is based on concerns related to its compliance with GSP market access criterion and two petitions related to same criterion, filed by US dairy industry and US medical device industry.
 - ✍ Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) GSP is largest and oldest US trade preference programme introduced in 1976. It is designed to promote economic development by allowing duty-free entry for thousands of products from designated beneficiary countries. In India's case, GSP enables duty-free entry of 3,500 product lines in US markets. Total US imports under GSP in 2017 was \$21.2 billion, of which India was biggest beneficiary with \$5.6 billion.
485. ▶ Valletta (capital of Malta), is officially named European Capital of Culture 2018, along with Netherlands' city Leeuwarden.
- ✍ *European Capitals of Culture* initiative aims to highlight diversity of European culture and to increase citizens' sense of belonging to a common cultural area.
486. ▶ Venezuela Government announced 40 % increase to minimum wage, amid hyperinflation in oil-rich but crisis-stricken southern american nation.
487. ▶ Venezuela and Libya were suspended from voting in United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in 2018-19 session for not paying UN dues. It was for third time in three years these countries have been suspended from voting for unpaid dues. Their dues are - \$25 Million (Venezuela) and \$6 Million (Libya).
488. ▶ Venezuela become first country to officially launch its own cryptocurrency called *Petro*, backed by oil, gas, gold and diamond reserves to circumvent US-led financial sanctions. Venezuelan Government claimed that pre-mined cryptocurrency Petro raised US \$735 million on first day of its pre-sale.
489. ▶ Venezuela will launch a new virtual currency to ease country's economic crisis, triggered by falling oil revenue and plummeting value of bolivar, its existing currency. New crypto-currency *Petro* will allow country to advance in issues of monetary sovereignty, to make financial transactions and overcome the financial blockade.
490. ▶ Venezuelan Government led by President Nicolas Maduro decided to remove three zeros off Venezuelan currency Bolivar, to counter hyperinflation and crippling economic crisis. It is aimed to guarantee commercial activities and it will come into effect from June 4, 2018.
- ✍ Government will take out of circulation current bills and put into circulation new bills, to be known as *sovereign bolivar*.
 - ✍ Largest bill in circulation is 100000 bolivar note, which trades for about \$0.50.
 - ✍ A kilo of sugar (2.2 pounds) costs around 250,000 bolivars, while average wages are approx 450000 Bolivars only.
 - ✍ Venezuela's new set of monetary denomination will consist of 2 coins of 1 bolivar and 2 bolivar. There will be Notes of 2, 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 200 and 500 bolivars.
 - ✍ Venezuelan government also recently launched cryptocurrency *Petro*.
491. ▶ Vietnam's Nguyen Huong Giang is named winner of *Miss International Queen* in Thailand at one of world's top beauty pageants for transgender women.
492. ▶ Washington become USA first state to enact its own net-neutrality requirements after U.S. regulators repealed Obama-era rules designed to keep internet an even playing field. New law also requires internet providers to disclose information about their management practices, performance and commercial terms.
493. ▶ West African country Sierra Leone became first country to deploy blockchain technology in election process. Blockchain based solution used in Sierra Leone's election was developed by a Switzerland based voting technology company *Agora*.
494. ▶ Word 'populism' is announced as Cambridge Dictionary's Word of the Year 2017. It is defined as *political ideas and activities that are intended to get the support of ordinary people by giving them what they want*.
495. ▶ World Bank (WB) agreed to provide a grant to Bangladesh for meeting the basic needs of around one million Rohingyas who fled their homeland Myanmar.

496. ▶ World Bank Group approved USD 13 billion increase in paid-in capital, as part of a series of internal reforms. It consists USD 7.5 billion paid-in capital for International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) and USD 5.5 billion for International Finance Commission (IFC). It also includes a USD 52.6 billion callable capital increase for IBRD.
497. ▶ World Bank announced \$1.15 billion development policy loan for Egypt to support its economic reform programme, with \$500 million from World Bank Group, \$150 million from Britain and \$500 million from African Development Bank.
- ▶ Additionally, International Monetary Fund (IMF) approved \$ 44.5 million credit for Madagascar, to support the country's economic recovery.
498. ▶ World Bank approved \$55mn Loan to expand use of clean renewable energy in rural areas of Bangladesh where grid electricity cannot reach easily, under Second Rural Electrification and Renewable Energy Development (RERED II) Project.
499. ▶ World Bank will end its financial support for oil and gas exploration after 2019, in response to growing threat posed to climate change.
500. ▶ World Economic Forum (WEF)'s Inclusive Development Index 2018 -
- ▶ India ranked at 62nd place. China is on 26th position, Pakistan is on 47th and Bangladesh is ranked 34th.
 - ▶ Top 5 Advanced Economies - Norway, Ireland, Luxembourg, Switzerland, Denmark.
 - ▶ Top 5 Emerging Economies - Lithuania, Hungary, Azerbaijan, Latvia, Poland
501. ▶ World Economic Forums's (WEF's) Global Risks Report 2018 -
- ▶ On dimensions of Likelihood and impact, 5 environmental risks - *extreme weather, major natural disasters, biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse, man-made environmental disasters, and failure of climate-change mitigation and adaptation* are accorded highest weightage.
 - ▶ Top-ranking global risk on dimension of impact was *use of weapons of mass destruction* while on dimension of likelihood, *extreme weather events* ranked top.
502. ▶ World Economic Forum's (WEF) released Report Energy Transition Index 2018 titled *Fostering Effective Energy Transition*. It ranks countries on how well they are able to balance energy security and access with environmental sustainability
- ▶ India was ranked at 78th among 114 countries.
 - ▶ Top 5 - Sweden (1st), Norway (2nd), Switzerland (3rd), Finland (4th), Denmark (5th).
 - ▶ BRICS - Brazil (38th), Russia (70th) and China (76th).
503. ▶ World Happiness Index 2018 by UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network -
- ▶ In this report, Several parameters are used to generate a happiness score of country on a scale from 1 to 10.
 - ▶ India is ranked 133rd among 156 countries, down from 122 rank last year.
 - ▶ 2018 edition, for the first time ranked happiness of foreign-born immigrants in 117 countries.
 - ▶ Top 5 Happiest - Finland (1st), Norway (2nd), Denmark (3rd), Iceland (4th), Switzerland (5th). USA ranked 18th and Britain 19th.
 - ▶ Neighbours - Pakistan (75th), Nepal (101st), Bhutan (97th), Bangladesh (115th), Sri Lanka (116th).
504. ▶ World Health Organisation (WHO) published its first *Essential Diagnostics List*, a catalogue of tests needed to diagnose most common diseases along with number of global priority diseases.
- ▶ It aims to address inability to access diagnostic services, keeping the away from correct treatment.
 - ▶ The list contains 113 tests, out of which 58 are for detection of a wide range of common conditions and Remaining 55 tests are for detection of *priority* diseases such as tuberculosis, malaria, HIV, hepatitis B and C, syphilis and human papillomavirus.
 - ▶ WHO will update list on regular basis and will also issue call for applications to add categories to next edition.
 - ▶ It will provide a uniform tool useful to all countries, to test and treat health complications better and use health funds more efficiently by concentrating on truly essential tests.
505. ▶ World Health Organisation Central African Nation Gabon as *Polio-free*.
506. ▶ World Health Organization (WHO) invited pharmaceutical companies around world to submit proposals to manufacture affordable versions of newer medicines for treatment of drug resistant tuberculosis (DR-TB). It requested drug makers to submit Expression of Interest (EoI) for Bedaquiline and Delamanid, two new-generation drugs, recommended for DR-TB.
507. ▶ World Health Organization (WHO) launched comprehensive plan to eliminate industrially-produced artificial trans fats from global food supply by 2023. WHO calls on governments to use 'REPLACE' action package to eliminate industrially-produced trans-fatty acids from food supply. World Health Organization (WHO) also held an emergency meeting to discuss on outbreak of Ebola in Congo (Central Africa).
508. ▶ World Health Organization (WHO) validated Nepal for having eliminated trachoma, a contagious bacterial infection of eye. It makes Nepal first country in WHO's South-East Asia Region to defeat trachoma, world's leading infectious cause of blindness.
509. ▶ World Inequality Report 2018 by World Inequality Lab based at the Paris School of Economics (France) -
- ▶ Deregulation and related economic reforms in India since 1980s have led to significant increase in inequality. Inequality is increased to such an extent that In 2014, India's top 1% of earners grabbed 22% share of national income, while bottom 50% managed to get

only 15% share.

 Globally, since 1980, richest 1% earners have captured twice as much as the poorest 50% of world population.


510. ▶ World Migration Report 2018 by *UN International Organisation for Migration* -

 Indian diaspora is the largest in world, with 1.5 crore Indians living abroad India also receives highest amount in remittances (\$68.91 billion last year).

 Largest migration corridor is from India to UAE, where 3.5 million Indians were residing in 2015.

 USA is top destination for migrants, with 46.6 million migrants moving to USA in 2015.

511. ▶ World Trade Organization (WTO) will set up panel to examine whether India has complied with its 2016 ruling in case against US regarding domestic content requirements (DCR) rules for solar cells and modules.

 In 2016, WTO ruled against India for favouring local manufacturers in its solar power programme, on petition filed by USA.

 Afterwards, USA alleged that India continues to apply WTO-inconsistent measures and had approached WTO demanding action against India for non-compliance of WTO ruling in December 2017.

512. ▶ World's first camel hospital opened in Dubai (UAE).

513. ▶ Worldwide Cost of Living report 2018 by the Economist Intelligence Unit -

 Top 5 Costliest Cities - Singapore (1st for 5th straight year), Paris (France), Zurich (Switzerland), Hong Kong, Oslo (Norway).

 Syrian capital Damascus is world's cheapest city.

 Indian cities of Bangalore, Chennai and New Delhi and Pakistan's Karachi featured among ten cheapest locations surveyed.

514. ▶ World's biggest cruise-liner, "Symphony of the Seas", has been set sail in France, to embark on its maiden voyage in Mediterranean.

515. ▶ World's first long-distance electric bus line began service in Paris (France), presented by Flixbus. It will link Paris to France's northern city of Amiens, undertaking a 160 kilometres journey within 2 hours.

516. ▶ World's first robot ski competition *The Edge of Robot: Ski Robot Challenge* held near PyeongChang (South Korea), with Eight humanoid robots participating and \$10000 Prize Money.

517. ▶ World's longest glass bridge opened in Shijiazhuang (China). It lies 218 meters above hanging between the two cliffs in Hongyagu Scenic Area in Pingshan county, with 488 Meters length and capacity to hold 2000 people.

518. ▶ World's longest sandstone cave named 'Krem Puri' has been discovered in Meghalaya.

 It was discovered in 2016, but its actual length was found between 5th February and 1st March 2018.ii. It is 24583 metres long, over 6000 metres longer than world record-holder Cueva Del Saman, a sandstone cave in Edo Zulia, Venezuela.

519. ▶ Yahoo launched a group messaging app called *Squirrel*, focussed on friends, family and work groups.

520. ▶ e-Commerce Major Amazon's CEO Jeff Bezos became richest person ever as his wealth has hit \$105.1 billion, according to Bloomberg Billionaires Index. He passed Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates' previous record from 1999 (Gates is now worth \$93.3 billion).

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