



Current Affairs - December 2017 to February 2018

Month Type



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(Showing **215** Important Ones)


International

- ▶ 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.
- ▶ 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.
- ▶ 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.
- ▶ 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.
- ▶ *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.
- ▶ *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

10. ▶ *The Legatum Prosperity Index 2017* (149 countries) -
 - ✎ India ranks 100th in this list of prosperity.
 - ✎ Top 5 - Norway, New Zealand, Finland, Switzerland and Sweden.
11. ▶ 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.
12. ▶ 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.
13. ▶ 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).
14. ▶ 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.
15. ▶ 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.
16. ▶ 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).
17. ▶ 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.
18. ▶ American and Japanese armies launched 13th edition of their joint exercise named Iron Fist, in California (USA).
19. ▶ 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.
20. ▶ 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.
21. ▶ Andhra Pradesh Government and Zurich (Switzerland) signed a letter of intent to promote mutual prosperity and development.
22. ▶ 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.
23. ▶ 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.
24. ▶ 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.
25. ▶ 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.
26. ▶ 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.
27. ▶ 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.
28. ▶ 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*.
29. ▶ 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).

30. ▶ 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.


31. ▶ 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).

32. ▶ 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.

33. ▶ 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.

34. ▶ Belgium became first country to send a female ambassador (Dominique Mineur) to Saudi Arabia.

35. ▶ 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.

36. ▶ Bermuda became first country to legalize and then repeal same-sex marriage, after it reversed right of gay couples to marry.

37. ▶ Bharti Airtel signed agreement with Millicom International, under which *Airtel Rwanda Ltd* will acquire 100% equity in Tigo Rwanda Ltd.

38. ▶ 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.

39. ▶ Bollywood Film Padmaavat has been banned in Malaysia by country's censor board, stating that it touches on the *sensitivities of Islam*.

40. ▶ Brazil declared *social emergency* on Venezuela border, to tackle influx of people fleeing crisis hit Venezuela. The declaration will free he authorities to allocate infrastructure funds and other humanitarian measures on Venezuela border.


41. ▶ Brazil's securities regulator prohibited local investment funds from buying cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin, Ethereum.


42. ▶ 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.

43. ▶ Bulgaria taken over European Union's six-month revolving presidency, from Estonia.


44. ▶ 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).











45. ▶ Central American Nation Guatemala announced to move its Israeli Embassy to Jerusalem, after USA recently recognized Jerusalem as capital of Israel and announced to move USA's Israeli embassy to Jerusalem.
46. ▶ China Great Wall Industry Corporation (CGWIC) launched Algeria's first telecommunications satellite, Alcomsat-1, aboard a Long March 3B rocket.
47. ▶ 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.
48. ▶ 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.
49. ▶ China has shut down its legal government-sanctioned ivory (*elephant teeth*) trade.
50. ▶ 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.
51. ▶ 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).
52. ▶ 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.
53. ▶ China resumed Kailash Mansarovar Yatra through Nathu La route, which was stopped by China amid Doklam military face-off with India last year.
54. ▶ 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.
55. ▶ 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.
56. ▶ 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.
57. ▶ 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.
58. ▶ 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.
59. ▶ 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.
60. ▶ 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.
61. ▶ 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.
62. ▶ 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.
63. ▶ 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.
64. ▶ 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)
65. ▶ 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.
66. ▶ 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.
67. ▶ 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)
68. ▶ 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.
69. ▶ 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.
70. ▶ 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.
71. ▶ 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.
72. ▶ 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.
73. ▶ 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.
74. ▶ 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.
75. ▶ 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.
76. ▶ Forbes annual list of the highest-paid musicians -
 - 📌 Top 3 -
 - 📌 Diddy (\$130m) (USA)
 - 📌 Beyonce (\$105m) (USA)
 - 📌 Drake (\$94m) (Canada)
77. ▶ 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.
78. ▶ 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).
79. ▶ 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.
80. ▶ 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.
81. ▶ 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.
82. ▶ 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)
83. ▶ French Govt. approved banning all exploration and production of oil and natural gas by 2040 within country and its overseas territories.
84. ▶ 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.
85. ▶ Gevora Hotel in Dubai became *world's tallest hotel* with 356.53 Metres height, 1 metre taller than previous title holder *JW Marriott Marquis*.
86. ▶ 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).
87. ▶ 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.
88. ▶ 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.
89. ▶ 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.
90. ▶ Google will open a research lab focused on Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Beijing (China), its first such centre in Asia.
91. ▶ 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.
92. ▶ 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.
93. ▶ 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).
94. ▶ 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.

95. ▶ 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.
96. ▶ 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.
97. ▶ 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.
98. ▶ 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.
99. ▶ 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.
100. ▶ 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.
101. ▶ 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.
102. ▶ India approved granting long-term visa (LTV) to minorities from Afghanistan seeking refuge in India.
103. ▶ 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.
104. ▶ 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.
105. ▶ 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.
106. ▶ 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.
107. ▶ 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%).
108. ▶ 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.
109. ▶ 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).

110. ▶ 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.
111. ▶ 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.
112. ▶ 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.
113. ▶ 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.
114. ▶ 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).
115. ▶ 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.
116. ▶ 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 %.
117. ▶ 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.
118. ▶ 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.
119. ▶ 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.
120. ▶ 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.
121. ▶ 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.
122. ▶ 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.
123. ▶ 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).
124. ▶ 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.
125. ▶ 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.

126. ▶ International Monetary Fund approved USD 88 billion credit line for Mexico, replacing existing line of credit.
127. ▶ 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.
128. ▶ Iran banned English from being taught in primary schools, amid suspected Western cultural invasion.
129. ▶ 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 times from previous 2.5 million tons.
130. ▶ Iraq PM Haider al-Abadi declared victory in a 3-year war by Iraqi forces against Islamic State jihadist group. He claimed that Iraqi forces are in complete control of the Iraqi-Syrian border.
131. ▶ 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.
132. ▶ 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.
133. ▶ 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.
134. ▶ 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.
135. ▶ Japan approved Aid of Approx 73 Crores INR for Implementation of Advanced Traffic Information and Management System in Bengaluru (Karnataka).
136. ▶ 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.
137. ▶ 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.
138. ▶ 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.

139. ▶ 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.
140. ▶ Maldives Govt. declared a state of emergency deepening political crisis, after armed troops stormed country's top court.
141. ▶ 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.
142. ▶ 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.
143. ▶ 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.
144. ▶ 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.
145. ▶ 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.
146. ▶ 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.
147. ▶ 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.
148. ▶ Pakistan allowed Chinese currency Yuan for exports and financing transactions. Chinese Yuan is an approved foreign currency for denominating foreign currency transactions in Pakistan.
149. ▶ 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.
150. ▶ Pakistan declared Mandarin as an official languages of Pakistan, along with Urdu and English.
151. ▶ 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.
152. ▶ 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 protsetd by neighboring nations (inlcuding *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.
153. ▶ 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.
154. ▶ Russia and Egypt signed an agreement under which Russia's Rosatom will construct Egypt's first nuclear plant as *Dabaa nuclear plant*. It will be completed by 2029 with cost of \$21bn.
155. ▶ Russia launched Angosat-1, first national telecoms satellite for Angola, onboard Zenit-2SB rocket.
156. ▶ Russia signed agreement with Northern African Nation Sudan to build its first nuclear power plant, to help Sudan solve its energy security problems.
157. ▶ 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.
158. ▶ 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.
159. ▶ 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.
160. ▶ 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.

161. ▶ 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.
162. ▶ Saudi Arabia lifted 35 year old ban on providing licenses to commercial movie theatres, aimed at economic growth and diversification.
163. ▶ 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.
164. ▶ 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.
165. ▶ 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.
166. ▶ South Korea and Gujarat Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GCCI) 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.
167. ▶ South Korea banned its financial institutions from dealing in virtual currencies including Bitcoin, in wake of recent surge in Bitcoin price.
168. ▶ 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.
169. ▶ 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.
170. ▶ 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.
171. ▶ 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.
172. ▶ 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.
173. ▶ 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.
174. ▶ Tech Firm Apple acquired music recognition app Shazam, for approx \$400 million.
175. ▶ 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).
176. ▶ 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.
177. ▶ Typhoon Tembin struck Philippines, causing huge human and financial losses.
178. ▶ UAE, UK, US and French armies participated in joint exercises in Abu Dhabi (UAE), named as *Flag 4*.
179. ▶ 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.
180. ▶ 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*.
181. ▶ 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.
182. ▶ 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.
183. ▶ 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).
184. ▶ 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.
185. ▶ 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.
186. ▶ 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.
187. ▶ 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.
188. ▶ 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*.
189. ▶ 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.
190. ▶ 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
191. ▶ USA withdrawn itself from a United Nations pact to improve handling of migrant and refugee situations deeming it 'inconsistent' with policies.
192. ▶ 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.
193. ▶ 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.
194. ▶ United Arab Emirates (UAE) launched its first space programme aimed at sending four Emirati astronauts to International Space Station within 5 years.
195. ▶ United Kingdom (UK) government formed a dedicated national security unit to counter fake news and disinformation. It will flag fake information on social media.
196. ▶ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) released Global Education Monitoring Report 2017-18, expressing 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.

197. ▶ United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and World Health Organisation (WHO) will collaborate to accelerate curbing environmental health risks.
198. ▶ 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.
199. ▶ Valletta (capital of Malta), is officially named European Capital of Culture 2018, along with Netherlands' city Leeuwarden.
200. ▶ Venezuela Government announced 40 % increase to minimum wage, amid hyperinflation in oil-rich but crisis-stricken southern american nation.
201. ▶ 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).
202. ▶ 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.
203. ▶ 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.
204. ▶ 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*.
205. ▶ 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.
206. ▶ World Bank will end its financial support for oil and gas exploration after 2019, in response to growing threat posed to climate change.
207. ▶ 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
208. ▶ 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.
209. ▶ World Health Organisation Central African Nation Gabon as *Polio-free*.
210. ▶ 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.
211. ▶ 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.
212. ▶ World's first camel hospital opened in Dubai (UAE).
213. ▶ 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.
214. ▶ 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.
215. ▶ 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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