



Current Affairs - August to October 2018

Month Type



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

(Showing **152** Important Ones)

International

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

 - Bond-I is Ethereum blockchain bond denominated in Australian dollars, making it Kangaroo bond (referring to foreign bonds issued in Australia in local currency).
- 2018 Global Hunger Index (GHI), prepared by global NGOs Concern Worldwide (Ireland) and Welthungerhilfe (Germany).

 - Level of hunger and undernutrition worldwide fell to 20.9, down from 29.2 in 2000.
 - India was ranked 103rd out of 119 qualifying countries.
 - 15 countries with 2018 GHI scores of less than 5 are not assigned individual ranks, but rather are collectively ranked 1–15. These are - Belarus, Cuba, Estonia, Kuwait, Latvia, Croatia, Montenegro, Romania, Turkey, Ukraine, Uruguay, Costa Rica, Chile, Lithuania, Bosnia & Herzegovina.
 - Bottom 5 - Central African Republic (119), Chad (118), Yemen (117), Madagascar (116), Zambia (115)
 - Neighbours - Bangladesh (86), China (25), Nepal (72), Pakistan (106), Sri Lanka (67)
- 2018 Global Liveability Index released by Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) -


 - Austrian capital Vienna ranked as world's most liveable city among 140 major cities.
 - Top 5 -
 - Vienna (Austria)
 - Melbourne (Australia)
 - Osaka (Japan)
 - Calgary (Canada)
 - Sydney (Australia)
 - Bottom 10 (Least Liveable) -
 - Port Moresby (Papua New Guinea) (136th)
 - Karachi (Pakistan) (137th)
 - Lagos (Nigeria) (138th)
 - Dhaka (Bangladesh) (139th)
 - Damascus (Syria) (140th)
 - No Indian cities were ranked in top ten or bottom ten of this edition of index. New Delhi ranked 112th and Mumbai ranked 117th position in list.
- 7 Indian companies have been listed in Fortune's 500 list 2018 of world biggest corporations, led by Indian Oil Corp (137th) and followed by Reliance (148th).














 - RIL is most profitable in India and ranked 99th globally, with Apple at top.
 - World's 500 largest companies generated \$30 trillion in profits in 2017.
 - Top 5 - Walmart, State Grid, Sinopec Group (China), China National Petroleum (China), Royal Dutch Shell
- A massive Earthquake of 7.5 Richter Scale along with Tsunami waves hit Palu City of Indonesia, triggering over 1000 human casualties.

6. ▶ According to *The Annual World Airport Traffic Report 2018* by Airport Council International (ACI) -
 - ✎ Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGI) is 16th busiest in world, by handling 63.4 million passengers in 2017.
 - ✎ First place was held by Atlanta Hartsfield-Jackson in US, handling 103.9 million passengers in 2017, followed by Beijing with 95.8 million passengers.
7. ▶ According to Global Soil Biodiversity Atlas prepared by World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), India faces grave danger to soil biodiversity -
 - ✎ Atlas was released as part of WWF's biennial Living Planet Report (LPR) 2018. The key aspect of this year's report was threat to soil biodiversity and pollinators, the two key drivers of biodiversity.
 - ✎ Soil Biodiversity -
 - ✎ Soil biodiversity is total community from genes to species, and varies depending on environment. The immense diversity in soil allows for great variety of ecosystem services that benefit species that inhabit it.
 - ✎ India was coloured red on atlas and is among countries whose soil biodiversity faces the highest level of risk
 - ✎ Pollinators -
 - ✎ 150 million bee colonies were needed to meet pollination requirements of about 50 million hectares of agricultural land in India, only 1.2 million colonies were present. Pollination is process by which plant pollen is transferred from male reproductive organs to female reproductive organs to form seeds.
8. ▶ According to International Monetary Fund (IMF), Macau in China would overtake oil-rich Qatar with highest per-capita gross domestic product of any country or jurisdiction on earth, by 2020. Macau is only place in China where casinos are legal and its gross domestic product has more than tripled from about \$34,500 per capita in 2001.
9. ▶ According to a recent study, earth may enter an irreversible hothouse condition, with global temperatures rising by 4 - 5 degrees and sea levels rising 10 - 60 metres, even if targets under 2015 Paris climate deal are met.
 - ✎ Currently, global average temperatures are just over 1 degree Celsius above pre-industrial and rising at 0.17 degree Celsius per decade.
 - ✎ Keeping global warming to within 1.5-2 degrees Celsius as agreed in 2015 Paris climate agreement by around 200 countries.
10. ▶ According to a study by Seattle-based Institute of Health Metrics and Evaluation published in *The Lancet* -
 - ✎ India ranks 158th in world for its investments in education and healthcare, among 195 Surveyed countries.
 - ✎ Finland tops the list in two key sectors.
 - ✎ USA ranked 27th, while China placed at 44th and Pakistan 164th.
11. ▶ According to a study named Economic Freedom in the World by Centre for Civil Society (CCS) along with Canada's Fraser Institute -
 - ✎ India stands at 96th rank out of 162 countries in economic freedom.
 - ✎ Hong Kong (1) and Singapore (2) are at top of list. New Zealand (3), Switzerland (4), Ireland (5) are others in Top 5.
 - ✎ Among BRICS nations, Russia and South Africa are ahead of India at 87th and 94th place and China and Brazil are behind it at 108th and 144th positions.
 - ✎ 10 lowest-ranked countries - Sudan, Guinea-Bissau, Angola, Central African Republic, Republic of Congo, Syria, Algeria, Argentina, Libya and last-place Venezuela.
12. ▶ According to global airlines events organiser Routesonline -
 - ✎ Bengaluru Kempegowda International Airport Secured Second Spot and Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport Secured Sixth Spot as fastest growing airport in world during January to June 2018.
 - ✎ Tokyo's Haneda Airport topped the Survey.
13. ▶ According to recent report, Pakistan could become world's 5th largest nuclear weapons state after Russia, United States, France and China in terms of possession of total nuclear warheads. Pakistan currently has 140 to 150 nuclear warheads and its stockpile is expected to increase to 220 to 250 by 2025 (surpassing United Kingdom).
 - ✎ The current estimate of 140 to 150 nuclear weapons with Pakistan exceeds projection made by US Defense Intelligence Agency in 1999 that Pakistan would have 60 to 80 warheads by 2020.
14. ▶ According to review by Asia Pacific Policy Group on Money Laundering (APPG), Pakistan's recent action against terror financing, particularly on legal front were found to be "unsatisfactory". Note that Pakistan was placed on Financial Action Task Force (FATF) grey list in February 2018 for failing to curb terror funding. APPG examines cases of all countries on the grey and black lists and reports to FATF.
15. ▶ After recent launch of Fateh Mobin (Bright Conqueror) short-range ballistic missile, Iran unveiled first domestically manufactured fighter jet nicknamed Kowsar. Its a fourth-generation fighter with advanced avionics and multi-purpose radar.
16. ▶ Agriculture and Environment ministries along with UN body Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) launched agriculture project that seeks to bring transformative change in farm sector through conservation of biodiversity and forest landscapes.

- ✎ It will be implemented in Madhya Pradesh, Mizoram, Odisha, Rajasthan and Uttarakhand.
 - ✎ It is being funded with US \$33.5 million grant from Global Environment Facility (GEF).
 - ✎ Existing unsustainable agricultural practices have resulted in depletion of water tables, biodiversity and habitat loss for wild species and land and soil degradation which have contributed to the environmental crisis in India. To overcome it, there is need for alternative paradigm to current extractive methods of agricultural production systems.
17. ▶ Amid economic crisis, Argentina central bank raised its benchmark interest by 15 percentage points to 60%, highest in world. The Argentine peso is down 50% this year against the dollar and the country's inflation is running at over 30%. Many south american nations are facing economic crisis, with neighbouring nation venezuela being under more more steep financial stress.
 18. ▶ As per Germany's Ifo Institute for Economic Research -
 - ✎ Germany's current account surplus will remain world's largest in 2018, for 3rd year at \$299 billion, in spite of increased trade tensions. It is followed by Japan in second position with \$200 billion. Netherlands is 3rd with 110 billion dollars. From 2011, Germany's current account surplus has been consistently above the European Commission's indicative threshold of 6 % of gross domestic product (GDP).
 - ✎ Current account surplus measures flow of goods, services and investments. It is considered a positive for any economy.
 - ✎ On other hand, in terms of Current Account Deficit, USA will remain to have largest current account deficit with nearly 420 billion euros.
 19. ▶ As per International Air Transport Association (IATA), India will become world's 3rd largest aviation market by 2024. India is presently at 7th place.
 20. ▶ As per a UN report on 'state of food security and nutrition in the world' number of undernourished globally increased to 821 million in 2017. Africa has highest prevalence of undernourishment, affecting almost 21 % of population (more than 25 crore people). Situation is also deteriorating in South America, where PoU increased from 4.7 % in 2014 to a 5 % in 2017.
 21. ▶ Asian Development Bank released its 2018 Flagship Statistical Report for Asia and the Pacific. This year's report is focusing on: Technological Innovation for Agricultural Statistics. As per the report -
 - ✎ Asia and Pacific region continues to grow in GDP and labour force has been reduced and is shifting from agriculture towards employment in industry and services.
 - ✎ Around 780 million people from the region moved out of extreme poverty from 2002 to 2013,
 - ✎ The GDP has increased from 30.1%in 2000 to 42.6% in 2017 (at 2011 purchasing power parity),
 - ✎ Use of satellite imagery and remote sensing technology has improved data accuracy.
 22. ▶ Asian Economic Integration Report 2018 presented by Asian Development Bank, with focus on progress in cooperation and migration.
 - ✎ India hosts highest number of outward international migrants in 2017, followed by China and Bangladesh. About one third of international migrants were from Asia in 2017.
 - ✎ FDI in Asian region remain stable with 517.5 billion in 2017.
 - ✎ This year in the report there was a special chapter "Toward Optimal Provision of Regional Public Goods in Asia and the Pacific". It stressed on that optimal provision of Regional public goods can be a solution for development challenges in era of economic interdependence.
 23. ▶ At International Court of Justice, India supported Mauritius over its claim on Chagos Islands, which are under United Kingdom's control in Indian Ocean..
 24. ▶ Bangladesh President Abdul Hamid approved controversial Digital Security Bill 2018, combining colonial-era Official Secrets Act with tough new provisions such as arrests without warrant. It aims to deal harshly with cybercrimes, including hurting religious sentiment, spreading negative propaganda against 1971 Liberation War and Bangabandhu (Sheikh Mujibur Rahman).
 - ✎ It also covers illegal activities in e-transactions and spreading defamatory data under its ambitIt provides for 7 - 14 years imprisonment and monetary fines of 25 lakh - 1 crore Taka
 - ✎ Law faced widespread vocal opposition from rights groups and journalists that it could endanger freedom of speech– especially on social media. The law has also drawn opposition internationally including from USA.
 25. ▶ Canada agreed to sign a trade deal with USA and Mexico, revamping North American Free Trade Agreement. New deal has been named as *United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA)*.
 - ✎ USMCA modernises what was covered by NAFTA by adding provisions on digital trade and intellectual property.
 - ✎ It would allow US farmers greater access to Canada's dairy market and address concerns about potential US auto tariffs. The pact will come up for review every six years.
 - ✎ Canada will export 2.6 million vehicles to USA, after 25 % global autos tariffs imposed by US on national security grounds. Deal, however, failed to resolve U.S. tariffs on Canada's steel and aluminum exports.

Background -

-  USA President Trump threatened to end 25-year-old North American Free Trade Agreement into a bilateral pact with Mexico and tax Canadian vehicle exports to USA if Canada failed to sign deal before September 30 midnight deadline. Canada, USA's 2nd largest trading partner, was left out when the US and Mexico had reached a preliminary deal in late August to revamp NAFTA.

- ▶ Canada legalised possession and use of recreational cannabis (also called Marijuana), becoming 2nd country to do so After Uruguay.
- ▶ China and Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) started off their first joint maritime exercises in Zhanjiang (China), to ease regional tensions linked to rival claims in South China Sea.
- ▶ China is planning bullet trains from Kolkata to Kunming City of China, expected to traverse through Myanmar and Bangladesh. The service is also expected to give a thrust to trade and commerce in the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) Economic Corridor.
 -  BCIM project is projected to run through Mandalay in Myanmar, Chittagong and Dhaka in Bangladesh, terminating in Kolkata.
- ▶ China launched its Centispace-1-s1 satellite, on a Kuaizhou-1A low-cost solid-fuel carrier rocket.
- ▶ China pledged \$60 billion of financial assistance to Africa, announced at 3rd Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) held in Beijing. FOCAC excludes Swaziland (recently renamed to Eswatini).
 -  Out of \$60 billion offered, China will disburse \$15 billion as aid, interest-free loans and concessional loans, \$20 billion as credit line, channel \$10 billion into special fund for China-Africa development and \$5 billion special fund will be set up only for African imports.
- ▶ China successfully launched a new marine satellite called HY-1C aboard a Long March-2C rocket. It will aim at better monitor its maritime waters and study impact of climate change.
- ▶ China successfully tested its first hypersonic aircraft called Xingkong-2 *Starry Sky-2*, capable of flying at speed 5 - 6 times that of Sound. It attained top speed of 4563 miles (7344 kilometers) per hour (speed of sound is 1235 km/h). It is difficult to trace this spacecraft due to its excessive speed.
- ▶ China tested the world's largest unmanned transport drone which can carry a payload of 1.5 tonnes, called Feihong-98 (FH-98). It has Max takeoff weight of 5.25 tonnes, capacity of 1.5 tonnes and 15 cubic metres, a flight height of 4,500 metres, speed of 180 KMPH, and a maximum range of 1200 kms.
 -  China is also planning to put a 'moon' of its own in the night sky by 2020, to replace conventional street lamps and save electricity.
 -  Chengdu city in southwestern Sichuan province of China is developing illumination satellites, which will shine along with the real moon but will be eight times brighter.
 -  These satellites will have a reflective coating which can reflect sunlight towards Earth similar to the moon. Placed only 500km above Earth, light reflected from the man-made moon will be more luminous than actual moon.
- ▶ China will sale 48 Wing Loong II high-end armed drones to Pakistan, as largest export deal for drones to date to any country.
 -  Wing Loong II is a high-end reconnaissance, strike and multi-role endurance unmanned aerial system, capable of being fitted with air-to-surface weapons. It can payload up to 480kg (1,060lbs), including 12 laser guided missiles or YJ-9E anti-ship missiles. It can fly at maximum altitude of 9,000 metres (29,500 feet).
- ▶ China's first private research university officially inaugurated in Zhejiang Province's Hangzhou city. Autonomy for top educational institutions has been a long-standing demand of Chinese academic community, as china's higher education bodies are mostly govt owned.
 -  Chinese Govt also announced to scrap setting population target in future, and give people more freedom with respect to childbirth. China wants to ease restrictions on family planning to combat ageing population.
- ▶ China-Maldives Friendship Bridge opened for traffic, as first cross-sea bridge to be built in Maldives.
 -  It is 2.2 km long bridge and has four vehicle lanes and two pedestrian lanes. It connects Maldives capital city Male and neighbouring Hulhule island where island country's main international airport is located.
 -  The bridge was built with Chinese grant of \$116 million, along with \$72 million as an additional loan.
- ▶ Chinese President Xi Jinping officially opened world's longest sea-crossing bridge.
 -  The \$20-billion bridge, which spans 55 kilometres, connects Hong Kong and Macau to the mainland Chinese city of Zhuhai.
 -  Bridge is designed to withstand earthquakes and typhoons, built using 400,000 tonnes of steel, enough to build 60 Eiffel Towers.
 -  It includes dual three-lane, oversea stretch (22.9 km) and undersea tunnel (6.7 km) which reaches depth of 44 m. The rest 25.4 km of the bridge runs over land. The two ends of tunnel of bridge are connected to two artificial islands. Bridge contains 400,000 tonnes of steel.
 -  Its total cost was 120 billion yuan (\$17.3 billion).
- ▶ Delhi government signed MOU with Seoul Metropolitan Government to work closely in the fields of environment, tourism, waste / solid waste management, infrastructure and public health.

39. ▶ Delhi government signed a twin-city agreement with the Moscow (Russia) for cooperation in fields like environment, culture and education, for the next 3 years.
40. ▶ Druzhba 2018 (Friendship 2018) joint bilateral military exercise between Pakistan and Russia held in Pakistan, as 3rd addition of this joint military drill.
41. ▶ Europe Space Agency launched a rocket named 'Aeolus' from French Guyana. This satellite will be put into orbit at an altitude of 320 kilometres (200 miles) above the Earth which will track global winds, allowing for improved weather forecasting.
42. ▶ European Union (EU) will stop twice-yearly changing of clocks from October 2019, implemented during the two World Wars and the 1970s oil crisis to save energy. EU countries are required to move forward by an hour on the last Sunday of March and back by an hour on the last Sunday of October.
43. ▶ External Affairs Ministry and Telecommunications Consultants India Ltd (TCIL) signed agreement for implementation of e-VidyaBharati and e-AarogyaBharati (e-VBAB) Network Project in Africa, seen as digital bridge of knowledge and health between India and Africa.
 - ▶ It is technological upgrade and extension of Pan-African e-Network Project (Phase 1) which was implemented in 48 partner countries across Africa from 2009 till 2017.
 - ▶ e-VBAB Network Project is completely funded by India for its entire duration, open for participation to all India's partner countries in Africa. Over its five-year duration, this project will provide free tele-education courses to 4000 students every year from African countries.
44. ▶ Facebook will invest over \$1 billion to build its first Asian data centre in Singapore, expected to open in 2022. Like other data centres, it will be fully powered by renewable energy.
45. ▶ Forbes' list of World's Highest-Paid Actors 2018 -
 - ▶ Top 3 -
 - ▶ George Clooney: \$239m
 - ▶ Dwayne Johnson: \$124m
 - ▶ Robert Downey Jr: \$81m.
 - ▶ Indian Actors Akshay Kumar (\$40.5 million) and Salman Khan (\$38.5 million) ranked at 7th and 9th place respectively.
46. ▶ Former PM HD Deve Gowda (*11th PM from June 1, 1996 to April 21, 1997*) conferred with Maharshi Valmiki Jayanti Award on occasion of Valmiki Jayanti (Oct 24), for his contribution to welfare of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes communities. Award will be given by Karnataka CM HD Kumaraswamy.
47. ▶ Fortune Change the World List 2018 -
 - ▶ It ranked companies using profit motive to help tackle social problems.
 - ▶ Reliance Industries' Telecom Unit Jio ranked as top company globally, for widening Internet access in India and benefitting the subscribers in terms of monetary savings and quality of services.
 - ▶ Top 5 Companies are -
 - ▶ Reliance Jio (Telecommunications) - India
 - ▶ Merck (Pharmaceuticals) - USA
 - ▶ Bank of America (Commercial Banking) - USA
 - ▶ Inditex (Specialty Retailers) - Spain
 - ▶ Alibaba Group (Internet Services & Retailing) - China
48. ▶ France Parliament approved a controversial asylum and immigration bill, designed to accelerate asylum procedures by cutting maximum processing time from 120 days to 90 days after entering France.
49. ▶ From January 2019, Indian tourists travelling to Bhutan via road will need either a voter ID or a valid passport to enter the country, while accompanying children can also travel with a birth certificate. Visitors will now get entry permits instead of identification slips.
50. ▶ Germany and UK with support from World Bank, launched a new Global Risk Financing Facility (GRiF), To support vulnerable countries to climate and disaster shocks.
 - ▶ This fund will consist of an initial corpus of \$150 million. It will be built on the work of several existing programs including InsuResilience Climate Risk Financing and Insurance Program MDTF established by BMZ, DFID and World Bank, Centre for Global Disaster Protection established by DFID and World Bank, and InsuResilience Solutions Fund jointly established by BMZ and KFW.
 - ▶ Funding includes Insurance premium financing, Risk financing investments, Risk financing mechanisms that promote parallel improvements in countries for crisis response and recovery AND Technical assistance and capacity building where this is not yet covered by other programs.
51. ▶ Germany will provide soft loan of euro 120 million (INR 990 crore approximately) to India to strengthen sewage water treatment infrastructure in Uttarakhand in an effort to clean River Ganga under Clean Ganga Mission. German development agency GIZ also has

prepared 'Ganga Box' aimed to target schools-going children and inform them about the river.

52. ▶ Global Competitiveness Report 2018 by World Economic Forum (WEF) -
 - ▶ India - Ranked 58th, Bettering 2017 Rank by 5 Places.
 - ▶ Top 5 - USA (1), Singapore (2), Germany (3), Switzerland (4), Japan (5)
 - ▶ Bottom 5 - Chad (140), Yemen (139), Haiti (138), Angola (137), Burundi (136)
 - ▶ Neighbours - Bangladesh (103), Sri Lanka (85), Pakistan (107), Nepal (109)
53. ▶ Google will shut down its social network Google+ for consumer use over next 10 months after a bug exposed personal data of up to 5 lakh users. Google+ currently has "low usage and engagement" and that 90% of Google+ user sessions last less than 5 seconds. Company plans to keep it alive enterprise customers who use it to facilitate conversation among co-workers.
54. ▶ Green Climate Fund (GCF) approved more than \$1 billion new investments for 19 new projects to help developing countries tackle climate change, during a meeting of GCF in Manama (Bahrain).
 - ▶ Funding was approved for projects linked to geothermal energy in Indonesia, greener cities in Europe and Middle East and protection for coastal communities in India.
 - ▶ About GCF -
 - ▶ GCF is UN-backed fund considered as key vehicle for climate-related development programs, guided by principles of UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). It aims to help developing countries to finance clean energy projects other mitigation efforts, practices and adaptation to counter climate change.
 - ▶ It was formally established by UNFCCC decision in Durban, South Africa in December 2011.
55. ▶ Henley Passport Index 2018.
 - ▶ Indian passport secured 81st rank with visa-free or visa-on-arrival access to 60 destinations.
 - ▶ Top 5 - Japan (1), Singapore (2), Germany (3), France (4), South Korea (5)
56. ▶ Historic Esala Maha Perehera festival held in Kandy 9Sri Lanka), held in month of Esala (July or August). It commemorates first teaching of Buddha after his enlightenment.
57. ▶ IT Firm IBM partnered with Indian IT companies (*including Persistent Systems, Invest India, Wipro, Capgemini and NASSCOM*) for its 'Call for Code' initiative that aims to build global solutions for disaster management For this, IBM provide access to its cloud, data, Artificial Intelligence and blockchain technologies, along with training and code to developers.
58. ▶ India Based construction major Larsen & Toubro is only Indian firm to be featured among top 25 companies in Forbes' global 2000 best employers list (ranked 22).
 - ▶ Among top 100, there are 4 Indian firms - Mahindra & Mahindra (55), Grasim Industries (59) and HDFC (91). Also, Total 24 domestic companies in overall list.
 - ▶ Top 3 - Alphabet (1), Microsoft (2), Apple.
59. ▶ India and Agence Française de Développement (France) signed an implementation agreement on "MOBILISE YOUR CITY (MYC). MYC is part of an international initiative which is supported by French and German Governments and was launched at 21st Conference of Parties (COP21) meeting in December 2015.
 - ▶ European Union has agreed to provide funds of Euro 3.5 million through the AFD to contribute to specific investments and technical assistance components within the Mobilise Your City (MYC) programme in India.
 - ▶ MYC aims at supporting three pilot cities - Nagpur, Kochi and Ahmedabad, to reduce their Green House Gas (GHG) emissions related to urban transport.
60. ▶ India and Bangladesh jointly launched construction of India-Bangladesh Friendship Product Pipeline Project, as first such pipeline through which refined diesel will be supplied to Bangladesh from India.
 - ▶ It involves construction of 130-kilometre long pipeline that will connect Siliguri in West Bengal and Parbatipur in Dinajpur district of Bangladesh. 6 KM stretch will be in India side and remaining 124 kilometres will in Bangladesh.
 - ▶ Pipeline has capacity of 1 million metric tons per annum. Initially, it will supply Bangladesh 2.5 lakh tonnes of diesel every year and gradually it will be increased to 4 lakh tonnes. It will replace existing practice of sending diesel by rail covering distance of 510 kilometers.
 - ▶ Also, Bangladesh approved allowing India to use its Chittagong and Mongla ports to transport cargo to and from its northeastern states. Indian goods can be transported through four entry points from states Tripura, Meghalaya and Assam. India will have to follow General Agreement on Tariff and Trade (GATT) and Bangladeshi regulations, pay customs duties and buy tax equivalent bonds to transport freight.
61. ▶ India and Bangladesh several agreements for enhancing inland and coastal waterways connectivity, Including an agreement to use Chattogram and Mongla Ports in Bangladesh for movement of goods to and from India. An addendum to 'Protocol on Inland Water Transit

- and Trade between two countries' has also been signed for the inclusion of Dhubri in India and Pangaon in Bangladesh as new Ports.
62. ▶ India and Germany signed Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) on skill development, which will provide dual vocational education and training to Indian youth. Under it, students who complete specific training courses in India will get certificate that is recognised in India and also in Germany.
 63. ▶ India and Myanmar signed MoU for appointment of private port operator for Operation and Maintenance (O&M) of Sittwe Port, Paletwa Inland Water Terminal and associated facilities included in Kaladan Multi Model Transit Transport Project.
 - ▶ Sittwe port in Myanmar will connect India's landlocked north-east region to Bay of Bengal through Mizoram. It will also provide alternate route to Kolkata.
 - ▶ It is also significant in implementation of India's Act East Policy as it will boost connectivity and will contribute to job creation in whole region, particularly in Myanmar's strife-torn Rakhine and Chin States.
 - ▶ It will significantly lower cost and distance of movement from Kolkata to Mizoram and beyond. It will also reduce dependency on only route narrow strip dubbed as Chicken's Neck in West Bengal, sandwiched between Bhutan and Bangladesh.
 64. ▶ India contributed \$1 million to United Nations (UN) Headquarters' Solar Project, under which solar panels will be installed on roof of UN headquarters at New York (US).
 65. ▶ India elected as President of Asia-Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development (AIBD) for 2 years, during its annual gathering in Colombo (Sri Lanka). Also, India's F. Sheheryar was re-elected as chair of executive board of AIBD and Sri Lanka elected as vice-chair.
 - ▶ AIBD is regional inter-governmental organisation serving countries of United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN-ESCAP) in field of electronic media development. It was established in 1977 under auspices of UNESCO.
 66. ▶ India elected to United Nations' Human Rights Council for a period of three years, by securing 188 votes in Asia-Pacific category (highest vote among all candidates).
 67. ▶ India is Partner Country in 87th Izmir International tradeshow in Turkey. India also launched its mega business pavilion 'Source India' hosting 75 Indian companies. Izmir is 3rd most populous city in Turkey, after Istanbul and Ankara.
 68. ▶ India launched humanitarian operation Samudra Maitri to provide assistance to earthquake and tsunami victims in Indonesia, dispatching two aircraft C-130J and C-17 and three naval ships carrying relief material and personnel to Indonesia.
 69. ▶ India lost one spot to rank as 9th most valuable nation brand in world, according to UK-based consultancy Brand Finance's Nation Brands 2018 report. However, India's brand value increased by 5% to \$2,159 billion. US topped the list with a brand value of \$25,899 billion.
 70. ▶ India ranked 28th among 73 countries in 2018 Government e-Payments Adoption Ranking (GEAR) by Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU)
 -
 - ▶ India jumped 8 positions in this ranking from 36th in 2011.
 - ▶ Norway has topped 2018 GEAR list scoring 89.7 points in seven categories.
 71. ▶ India ranked 5th among 206 countries in 2018 *Cigarette Package Health Warnings: International Status* Report by Canadian Cancer Society. In India, 85% of both sides of cigarette packets are covered with warnings.
 - ▶ Top 5 - Timor-Leste (92.5%), Nepal (90%), Vanuatu (90%), New Zealand (87.5%) and India held 5th rank jointly with Hong Kong and Thailand for 85% warnings.
 72. ▶ India ranks third globally in terms of number of family-owned businesses with 111 companies having a total market capitalisation of \$839 billion, according to a Credit Suisse report. India followed China (159 companies) and US (121 companies).
 73. ▶ India stands 19th in 'Theft Ranking' for countries with weapons-usable nuclear materials, according to the Nuclear Security Index. The index was released by the US-based Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI).
 - ▶ Neighboring Pakistan ranks 20th in List.
 - ▶ Australia shared top spot with Switzerland.
 74. ▶ India will buy 18 Bullet Trains from Japan, Each train with 10 coaches and would be able to attain speed of 350 km per hour. The 508-km high speed train corridor between Mumbai and Ahmedabad at an estimated cost of Rs 1,10,000 crore is expected to be operational by 2022.
 75. ▶ India's Ministry of Information and Broadcasting joined SDG Media Compact aimed at advancing awareness of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
 - ▶ SDG Media Compact is initiative of United Nations, in collaboration with UN Foundation. It is alliance of news and entertainment media and it is committing to work with United Nations to foster public discourse and spur action on SDGs.
 - ▶ It seeks to inspire media companies around world to leverage their resources to advance SDGs adopted by all world leaders at UN in 2015.
 - ▶ SDGs are 17 global non-binding goals featuring 169 targets to be implemented from 2015 to 2030.

76. ▶ Indian IT industry apex body Nasscom partnershiped with Hiroshima government for co-creating a Japan-India IT Corridor in Hiroshima. Through this partnership, India would be getting a gate way to the cutting-edge manufacturing technology of Japan. Indian companies on software side can help Japanese manufacturing companies adopt digital transformation and create innovative product and solutions lines.
77. ▶ Indian PM Narendra Modi, Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina and CMs of West Bengal (Mamta Baannerjee) and Tripura (Biplab Kumar Deb), jointly inaugurated three projects in Bangladesh, via video conference. Projects are -
- ▶ 500 MW additional power supply from India to Bangladesh, through existing Bheramara (Bangladesh) - Baharampur (India) interconnection.
 - ▶ Akhaura – Agartala Rail Link
 - ▶ Rehabilitation of Kulaura-Shahbazpur section of Bangladesh Railways.
78. ▶ India's non-life insurance penetration risen marginally to 0.9 % of GDP (\$ 27 billion), but still remains among highest underinsurance levels globally, as per a report by Lloyd's. It was .7 % for India in 2012.
- ▶ India's insurance gap accounts for 17 % of the total global insurance gap (\$162.5 billion).
 - ▶ Globally, India has seventh-largest insurance gap, with top spot held by Bangladesh (in Terms of % of GDP). In absolute terms, China has biggest insurance gap of \$ 76.4 billion.
 - ▶ Netherlands remains the country with the highest insurance penetration at 7.7 per cent, followed by South Korea (5 %).
79. ▶ Indra Jatra festival hed in Kathmandu (Nepal), as an eight day long annual festival observed to worship Indra, the lord of rain and good harvest.
80. ▶ Interbrand's "Best 100 Global Brands 2018" report -
- ▶ Apple displaced Google to become top brand in the world in 2018. Apple's brand value grew 16 % to \$214.5 billion. It also became first company in US to hit the \$1 trillion market cap.
 - ▶ Amazon achieved 56% growth to become third top brand globally.
 - ▶ Facebook fell to 9th place, amid data breach controversies.
81. ▶ International Monetary Fund (IMF) approved a loan agreement with Economically troubled South American Nation Argentina, on a 36-month Stand-By Arrangement (SBA) totaling to US\$57.1 billion. It is largest ever loan given by IMF.
82. ▶ International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank and World Trade Organization collectively launched report “Reinvigorating Trade and Inclusive Growth” report, seeking liberalisation of global service sector, asserting that barriers to these services trade currently is roughly as high as those to trade in goods about a half century ago.
- ▶ Services comprise some two-thirds of global GDP and employment, Yet facing lags due to limited opening of service sectors to foreign competition. Full services trade liberalisation can raise manufacturing productivity by average of 22%.
 - ▶ Services comprise significant shares of value added of all sectors in economy, yet Only quarter of global trade is traded as services. The trade in services sector has potential of contributing particularly strongly to productivity growth and economic growth overall.
 - ▶ Prolonged slowdown in pace of trade reform is leading to widespread trade distortions and putting at risk strength of global economic recovery, despite recent rebound in trade.
83. ▶ Iran unveiled Fateh Mobin (Bright Conqueror) next generation short-range ballistic missile capable of striking targets on land and sea. It is believed to have range between 300-500 kilometers.
- ▶ Amid this, USA created Iran Action Group (IAG) to execute Its Iran strategy and pressure it to change its behaviors. USA recently withdrawn from Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (also known nuclear deal) signed between Iran and P5+1 countries (P5: China, France, Russia, United Kingdom, United States and +1: Germana) and European Union in Vienna (Austria) in July 2015.
84. ▶ Israel opened a Visa Application Centre in Kolkata for tourists from West Bengal and the northeastern states to encourage more Indian travelers to visit Israel. It also reduced visa fees to INR 1,100 rupees from 1,700 charged from Indians.
85. ▶ Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries launched United Arab Emirates' (UAE) first locally made satellite KhalifaSat into orbit. The Japanese rocket also carried an IBUKI-2 greenhouse gas observation satellite for Japan.
86. ▶ Japan became world's first country to land 2 robotic rovers in asteroid Ryugu, also being first man made robot to have landed in an asteroid. Name of the rover that landed is *MINERVA-III*, consisting of 2 rovers.
87. ▶ Japan joined joint exercise 'Kamandag'(venom) with US and Filipino troops in Philippines for first time since World War II. Its first time Japanese armoured military vehicles were used on foreign soil since 1945.
88. ▶ Joint military exercise *Iron Magic 19* between United Arab Emirates (UAE) and United States (US) held near Dubai.
89. ▶ Khangchendzonga Biosphere Reserve became 11th Biosphere Reserve from India, to be included in UNESCO designated World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR), during 30th Session of Man and Biosphere (MAB) Programme of UNESCO held at Palembang (Indonesia).
- ▶ India has 18 Biosphere Reserves, with 11 internationally designated WNBR now with this Inclusion.

- ✎ Khangchendzonga Biosphere Reserve (Sikkim) reaching elevations of 1220 metres above sea-level.
 - ✎ Khangchendzonga National Park was designated a World Heritage Site in 2016 under 'mixed' category.
 - ✎ Over 118 species of large number of medicinal plants found in Dzongu Valley in north Sikkim are of ethno-medical utility.
90. ▶ Macedonia held a referendum on whether to change its name to the 'Republic of North Macedonia'.
- ✎ Greece and Macedonia had signed a deal in this regard in June. Greece argued that the name 'Macedonia' implied a territorial claim on its own province of the same name and has thus vetoed Macedonia's entry into NATO and European Union.
91. ▶ Malaysia Government abolished death penalty, following strong domestic opposition for it.
92. ▶ Manila (Philippines) based Asian Development Bank (ADB) launched its first Trade Finance Scorecard, a new tool to address market and boost trade finance. It aims to prevent money-laundering and terrorism. It will use a 2 level assessing, First level will consist of score out of 10 on seven criteria on the macro level and Second level will consist of five working-level issues on the micro level.
93. ▶ Members of European Parliament approved banning single-use plastics, to curb marine pollution. The ban is likely to take effect by 2021.
94. ▶ Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare asked United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (UNFAO) to declare 2019 as 'International Year of Millets', to draw wider global attention and action to promote cultivation of millets.
- ✎ India is observing 2018 as *National Year of Millets* to promote cultivation by amending cropping pattern of areas which are especially susceptible to climate change.
95. ▶ Ministry of Human Resource Development (HRD) decided to participate in Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) after gap of nine years, by sending team of officers to Paris to negotiate India's terms of participation in PISA 2021.
- ✎ Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is assessment test for 15-year-olds, organised every three years by Organisation for Economic Cooperation Development (OECD), Paris (France).
 - ✎ PISA measures student performance in mathematics, reading, and science and even innovative subjects like collaborative problem-solving and money literacy.
 - ✎ PISA test results give insight into education systems around the world. The results are shown as a national mean score and not shown individually. Its objective is not to rank countries, but to see how education system can be improved.
96. ▶ NITI Aayog and United Nations signed India-United Nations Sustainable Development Framework (UNSDF) for 2018-2022.
- ✎ It outlines work of UN agencies in India, with 19 UN agencies signing UNSDF 2018-2022.
 - ✎ 7 priority areas outlined in the UNSDF are - Poverty and Urbanization; Health, Water, and Sanitation; Education and Employability; Nutrition and Food Security; Climate Change, Clean Energy, and Disaster Resilience; Skilling, Entrepreneurship, and Job Creation; Gender Equality and Youth Development.
97. ▶ NSE signed a pact with the Uttarakhand government to provide access to capital to SMEs, to fuel growth of such SMEs in state by increasing awareness along with government on opportunities to raise capital, SME exchange guidelines, listing processes, compliance with listing etc.
98. ▶ National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM) signed a MoU with the Dubai Internet City (DIC) to help small and medium-sized Indian enterprises expand their operations in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.
99. ▶ Nepal become first country to double its tiger population in a decade as part of World Wildlife Foundation's (WWF) 'Tx2' programme, that aims to double number of tigers in all over world by 2022.
- ✎ There are now estimated 235 wild tigers in Nepal, compared to 121 back in 2009.
 - ✎ Tx2 programme It was launched by World Wildlife Foundation (WWF) at the 2010 St Petersburg Tiger Summit held in Russia. Under it, 13 tiger range countries had agreed to double the world tiger population by 2022, which is the year of tiger in Chinese calendar.
100. ▶ Ocean Cleanup foundation (founded by 24-year-old Dutch innovator Boyan Slat) launched world's first ocean cleanup array from San Francisco, called System 001, marking start of cleanup of Great Pacific Garbage Patch, a collection of marine debris in North Pacific Ocean. The patch is larger than area of France.
- ✎ System 001, named as 'Wilson', will be able to collect 50 tons of plastic in its first year. • It consists of a 2000 ft long U-shaped floating barrier with a three-meter (10 ft) skirt attached below.
 - ✎ Great Pacific Garbage Patch -
 - ✎ Its a collection of marine debris in the North Pacific Ocean, containing up to 16 times more waste than previously thought.
 - ✎ The Patch occupies an area three times the size of France in the Pacific Ocean between California and Hawaii with 79000 tons of plastic debris in the form of 1.8 trillion pieces.
 - ✎ It was discovered in 1997 by Charles Moore, who had sailed through a mishmash of floating plastic bottles and other debris on his way home to Los Angeles.
101. ▶ PM Narendra Modi conferred with United Nation's Champions of the Earth Award 2018 by UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres in New Delhi. He is among the six winners who received this award. Other Awardees are -

- French President Emmanuel Macron.
 - India's Cochin International Airport - Awarded in Entrepreneurial Vision category. It is world's first fully solar-powered airport.
 - Joan Carling - Awarded lifetime achievement award as a prominent defender of environmental and indigenous rights.
 - Beyond Meat and Impossible Foods - Jointly recognised in Science and Innovation category.
 - China's Zhejiang's Green Rural Revival Programme - Awarded in inspiration and action category.
102. ▶ Pacific Endeavor-2018, a communication exercise under Multinational Communications Interoperability Program (MCIP) began in Kathmandu (Nepal). It aims to develop common communications operating procedures to enable military forces in Asia Pacific region to collectively work in wake of disaster. It is jointly organised by Nepali Army and United States Pacific Command.
103. ▶ Pakistan and Russia signed contract on admission of service members of Pakistan in Russia's Military Training Institutes. This will be for first time, Pakistani soldiers will undergo training at Russian military institutes.
104. ▶ Pakistan invited Saudi Arabia to join \$50 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as 3rd strategic partner. Saudi Arabia is first country that Pakistan has invited to become partner in CPEC.
- Saudi Arabia has long history of financially bailing out Pakistan during economic crisis. Saudi Arabia loaned Pakistan \$1.5 billion in 2014 to strengthen its rupee currency, six months after Pakistan obtained its last IMF bailout.
105. ▶ Pakistan test-fired Ghauri ballistic missile capable of carrying both conventional and nuclear warheads up to a distance of 1300 kilometres.
106. ▶ Pakistan will launch its first manned mission in 2022, same year that India has planned to launch its own manned space mission Gaganyaan. It will be attempted by Pakistan with China's help.
107. ▶ Paytm launched QR-based smartphone payment settlement service in Japan, Named *PayPay*, in collaboration with SoftBank and Yahoo Japan Corporation. It is built around its QRtech, which is deployed in India to allow customers to make offline payments.
108. ▶ Philips selected 19 start-up companies for its first global start-up collaboration programme named 'AI in Healthcare for Radiology, Ultrasound and Oncology'. It will be conducted at Philips' innovation hubs in Bengaluru, Cambridge (US), Eindhoven (Netherlands) and Shanghai (China).
109. ▶ QS Asia University Ranking 2018 -
- Indian Institute of Technology Bombay (IIT-Bombay) has topped the Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) Asia University Rankings from India followed by IIT Delhi and IIT Madras.
 - Eight Indian universities have figured among the top 100 in the list of Asia's top 50 universities.
 - There are 75 universities from India in the top 500 Asia list.
 - National University of Singapore is ranked as Asia's best university, followed by University of Hong Kong, Nanyang Technological University (Singapore), Tsinghua University (China) and Peking University (China).
110. ▶ Qatar become first Gulf nation to offer permanent residency to expatriates, allowing maximum 100 expatriates to gain permanent residency each year.
111. ▶ RTI rating by Access Info Europe and the Centre for Law and Democracy , created by Transparency International -
- India ranked at 6th position out of 123 countries, after a downfall of 4 positions from the previous year. India got a score of 128 out of 150. It noted that India doesn't provide protection for whistleblowers.
 - In India, total RTIs filed in 2017 were: 66.6 lakh, out of which, 4.8 lakh were rejected. Total number of second appeals were 18.5 lakh and total penalty imposed by CIC is 1.9 crore.
 - Top 5 - Afghanistan, Mexico, Serbia, Sri Lanka, Slovenia. Austria Ranked Lowest.
112. ▶ Russia will conduct Vostok-2018 (East-2018) military exercise in September 2018, as biggest war games ever conducted by Russia since Zapad-81 (West-81) exercise conducted by erstwhile Soviet Union in 1981 which saw involvement of 100,000 to 150,000 troops.
- In Vostok 2018, over 300000 troops will participate. China and Mongolia will also participate in Vostok 2018.
 - Vostok-2018 exercise is being conducted in response to aggressive attitude towards Russia by NATO and West countries.
113. ▶ SBI signed MoU with Kathmandu-based National Banking Institute (NBI) for development of human resources of NBI. SBI will impart education, training and development to facilitate transformation of NBI's HR department.
114. ▶ Search engine Google launched Dataset Search, a new search engine for scientific community that will help them make sense of millions of datasets present online. It will work like Google Scholar, company's popular search engine for academic studies and reports.
- It will have twin benefits of creating data sharing ecosystem that will encourage data publishers to follow best practices for data storage and publication and give scientists way to show impact of their work through citation of datasets that they have produced.
 - Google also launched a new app 'Blog Compass' to help Indian bloggers manage their site and find topics to write about. The India exclusive app works as an analytics and recommendation platform. .

115. ▶ Singapore based DBS Bank named as world's best bank by Global Finance magazine, for its ability to invest in digital innovation while still maintaining stable operations for its customers. DBS is the first Asian bank to receive this title from New York-based publication, which last year gave it to ING Bank.
116. ▶ Super Typhoon Mangkhut, world's strongest storm in 2018, hit northern coast of Philippines with winds up to 200 kmph and heavy rains.
117. ▶ Sweden released a handbook of its "feminist foreign policy" for rights groups and foreign governments, showcasing lessons from nation's flagship approach to promote women's rights globally.
 - ▶ Sweden began its feminist foreign policy in response to discrimination and systematic subordination that still marks daily lives of countless women and girls around the world.
 - ▶ Policy's main aim is to include promotion of economic emancipation, fighting sexual violence and improving women's political participation.
118. ▶ Swedish PM Stefan Löfven became country's first leader to be ousted in a no-confidence vote.
119. ▶ Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) is only Indian company among top 10 firms to get foreign labour certification for the H-1B visas for the fiscal year 2018, according to data from US Department of Labour.
 - ▶ H-1B visas are the most sought-after among Indian IT professionals. London-headquartered Ernst and Young emerged as top employer to have received the certification.
120. ▶ Times Higher Education's (THE) world university rankings 2019 -
 - ▶ No Indian institution figures in the top 250 Universities. Although number of Indian institutions in rankings increased from 42 last year to 49, making India 5th best-represented nation.
 - ▶ Indian Institute of Science Bengaluru retained its position as best In India (ranked 251 - 300 globally), followed by IIT Indore (351-400).
 - ▶ Top 5 Globally -
 - ▶ University of Oxford (UK)
 - ▶ University of Cambridge (UK)
 - ▶ Stanford University (USA)
 - ▶ Massachusetts Institute of Technology (USA)
 - ▶ California Institute of Technology (USA)
121. ▶ Trident Juncture 18 (TRJE18) NATO-led military exercise to be held in Norway in October and November 2018, as largest of its kind in Norway since 1980s. 50,000 participants from 31 nations will take part, including 10,000 vehicles, 250 aircraft and 65 vessels.
122. ▶ UK-based charity Oxfam International's 'Commitment to Reducing Inequality (CRI) Index -
 - ▶ India ranked 147th among 157 countries, describing country's poor commitment to reducing inequality.
 - ▶ Top 5 - Denmark (1), Germany (2), Finland (3), Australia (4), Norway (5).
 - ▶ Bottom 5 - Nigeria (157), Uzbekistan (156), Haiti (155), Chad (154), Sierra Leone (153).
 - ▶ Neighbours - Bhutan (152), Bangladesh (148), Nepal (139), Pakistan (137), Sri Lanka (102), China (81)
123. ▶ UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres declared 2019-2028 as *Nelson Mandela Decade of Peace*, during Nelson Mandela peace summit honouring South African leader at UN.
124. ▶ UN Security Council (UNSC) held its first-ever meeting on corruption and its linkages to global conflicts. Citing the World Economic Forum's estimates, UN Secretary-General António Guterres said that corruption costs at least \$2.6 trillion or 5% of global GDP.
125. ▶ UN will launch a project on creating an "inventory" of art forms, craftsmanship and other intangible cultural heritage of the country. A total of 13 intangible cultural heritage elements from India have been inscribed till date on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.
126. ▶ US Defence Department will create a Space Force as 6th branch of military by 2020.
127. ▶ US-based *Internet Society and Internet Service Providers Association of India (ISPAI)* signed MoU to make Internet safe and secure in India by securing routers which is vital for healthy internet infrastructure. It will also promote Mutually Agreed Norms for Routing Security (MANRS) which is global initiative to implement crucial fixes needed to reduce most common threats to internet's routing system.
128. ▶ US-based Hyperloop Transportation Technologies or HyperloopTT launched first full-scale transportation capsule to be operational in 2019, named *Quintero One*. Its a 32-metre 5 tonne capsule, made a specially made dual-layer smart composite material called "Vibranium".
 - ▶ It can move at speeds of more than 750 miles (1,200 kilometers) per hour and has a capacity to hold 30 to 40 passengers.
 - ▶ In May 2018, Andhra Pradesh signed Mou with HyperloopTT to set up Hyperloop transportation system connecting Anantapur, Amaravati, Vijayawada and Visakhapatnam, as part of 700-800-km-long integrated public transit system.
 - ▶ Maharashtra government too signed pact with Richard Branson-led Virgin Group to build Mumbai-Pune Hyperloop.

- HyperloopTT would build the first Hyperloop system in China in the Guizhou province.
129. ▶ US-based aircraft maker Boeing will set up an electronics manufacturing and avionics assembly facility in Bengaluru at an investment of INR 1,152 crores, as company's second-largest such facility after one in Seattle (Washington).
 130. ▶ USA and Morocco launched GCTF Terrorist Travel Initiative under Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF), to enable sharing expertise on implementing effective counterterrorism watchlisting and screening tools. It will strengthen UNSC Resolution 2396 aiming to stop terrorist travel altogether.
 131. ▶ USA announced \$39 million grant to Sri Lanka as part its foreign military financing to boost maritime security, as first US grant to Sri Lanka since 2009, after US stopped arms sales to Sri Lanka during its Tamil separatist war that ended in 2009.
 132. ▶ USA announced closure of Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) mission in Washington DC, after PLO leaders failed to engage with US efforts to bring about peace with Israel and attempted to prompt an investigation of Israel by International Criminal Court.
 133. ▶ USA based IT Firm IBM acquired software Firm Red Hat in a \$34 billion cash and debt deal, as IBM's biggest ever acquisition so far. It will become a unit of IBM's Hybrid Cloud division.
 134. ▶ USA merged its Consulate General with its new embassy in Israel into single diplomatic mission in Jerusalem, as part of US's global efforts to improve efficiency and effectiveness of its operations. Earlier in May 2018, US moved its Israeli Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.
 - ▶ US will establish new Palestinian Affairs Unit inside embassy in Jerusalem to continue reporting, outreach and programming in West Bank and Gaza as well as with Palestinians in Jerusalem.
 135. ▶ USA will pull out of three-decade-old Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty signed with Russia during Cold War.
 - ▶ INF was crucial Cold War-era treaty banning development, testing and possession of short and medium range ground-launched nuclear missiles with range of 500-5,000 km, signed in December 1987 between USA and USSR.
 - ▶ It was central to ending arms race between two superpowers during cold war and protected America's NATO allies in Europe from Soviet missile attacks. It was designed to provide measure of some strategic stability on continent of Europe.
 - ▶ USA alleged that Russia has violated treaty and has been violating it for many years. This violation comes after Russia's alleged development and deployment of Novator 9M729 missile (also known as SSC-8), that could strike Europe at short notice.
 - ▶ It will allow US new nuclear weapon options in Pacific, to counter China's growing influence and may also trigger new Arms race between USA & Russia.
 136. ▶ USA's Central Bank Federal Reserve raised interest rates for a third time this year (by 25 basis points to 2.25 %), also reaffirming outlook for further hikes well into 2019. It reflects an upbeat assessment of economy.
 137. ▶ Ukraine began series of large-scale air force exercises with USA and other NATO countries, named *Clear Sky 2018*.
 138. ▶ Ukraine launched annual joint military exercise named Rapid Trident with United States and other NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) member countries, to be held in western Ukrainian village of Starychi till September 15, 2018.
 139. ▶ United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and World Health Organization (WHO) reiterated India's status as polio-free country, after some oral polio vaccine vials being found contaminated with the type-2 polio virus.
 - ▶ They also asserted that all vaccines provided under Universal Immunization Programme (UIP) are safe and urged people to get their children vaccinated.
 - ▶ India was certified polio-free in March 2014 and it still continues to remain vigilant against all three types of polioviruses. Last polio case due to wild poliovirus in country was detected on 13 January 2011.
 140. ▶ United Nations Development Programme Human Development Index 2018 -
 - ▶ India ranked 130 among 189 countries.
 - ▶ Neighbours - Bangladesh (136), Pakistan (150), Nepal (149), Sri Lanka (76)
 - ▶ Top 5 - Norway (1), Switzerland (2), Australia (3), Ireland (4) and Germany (5)
 - ▶ Bottom 5 - Niger (189), Central African Republic (188), South Sudan (187), Chad (186), Burundi (185).
 141. ▶ United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released special report on global warming in Incheon (South Korea), with contributions from 91 authors from 40 countries. It will be key scientific input in upcoming Katowice Climate Change Conference in Poland in December 2018.
 - ▶ It shows how half degree of warming makes big difference, adversely impacting global population and overall ecosystem.
 - ▶ It is possible to meet new warming target, with nations taking rapid transitions over 10 to 20 years and reach net zero around 2050, 25 years earlier than planned under earlier 2-degree goal.
 - ▶ It lists four pathways to curb global warming and through which the 1.5 degree target can be achieved. Also, Varying amounts between 100 to 1000 gigatons (billion tonnes) of CO₂ needs to be removed from atmosphere in these four pathways.
 - ▶ Advantages of keeping global temperature rise within 1.5 degrees celsius -

- ✎ By 2100, global sea level rise would be 10 cm lower with global warming of 1.5 degrees compared with 2 degrees Celsius.
 - ✎ Arctic Ocean free of sea ice in summer would be once per century with global warming of 1.5 degrees, compared with at least once per decade with 2 degrees Celsius.
 - ✎ Coral reefs will decline by 70-90% with global warming of 1.5 degrees, whereas virtually all (over 99%) would be lost with 2 degrees Celsius.
 - ✎ Climate-related risks to health, livelihoods, food security, water supply, human security and economic growth are projected to increase with global warming of 1.5 degrees Celsius and increase further with 2 degrees Celsius.
142. ▶ Vatican reached a landmark deal with China on appointment of bishops in China, with Pope Francis recognizing 7 state-appointed Chinese bishops as part of the deal.
143. ▶ World Bank Group's International Finance Corporation (IFC) launched its \$1 billion masala bond programme in the US and Europe, aimed at funding rapidly expanding investment activities of IFC in India.
- ✎ Masala bonds are rupee-denominated borrowings issued overseas. IFC uses them to raise rupee funds overseas and brings the proceeds to India for investments.
144. ▶ World Bank announced concessional loan worth USD 195 million to Nepal to reform country's financial and energy sectors.
145. ▶ World Bank announced funding of up to \$1 billion for the Indonesian government to supplement relief and reconstruction efforts in wake of the earthquake and tsunami that hit the country last month.
146. ▶ World Bank released its East Asia and Pacific economy update October 2018 edition.
- ✎ Countries of the East Asia and Pacific region will grow at 6.3 per cent in 2018 mainly due to China's moderate growth, down from 6.6 % growth of region in 2017.
147. ▶ World Health Organization (WHO) SAFER initiative to support governments in taking practical steps to accelerate progress on health, beat noncommunicable diseases (NCDs). SAFER provides five high-impact strategic actions prioritized for implementation to promote health and development -
- ✎ Strengthening restrictions on alcohol availability.
 - ✎ Advance and enforcing drink driving countermeasures.
 - ✎ Facilitating access to screening, brief interventions, and treatment.
 - ✎ Enforcing bans or comprehensive restrictions on alcohol advertising, sponsorship, and promotion.
 - ✎ Raising prices on alcohol through excise taxes and pricing policies.
148. ▶ World Health Organization (WHO) launched first global guidelines on sanitation and health, aimed at securing health and wellbeing for everyone, everywhere by considering sanitation as fundamental foundation of human health and development. By adopting these, countries can significantly reduce diarrhoeal deaths due to unsafe water, sanitation and hygiene.
149. ▶ World Trade Organization has set up a panel to look into the India-US export-subsidy dispute, on request of the US to examine the allegations on India's export incentive measures.
- ✎ US has challenged India's export subsidy programmes such as Merchandise Exports from India Scheme in the WTO, stating that these initiatives were harming its companies.
 - ✎ According to US, all WTO members, including India, are required to provide subsidies consistent with provisions of WTO's Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures.
150. ▶ World's First Intertidal art gallery called Coralarium opened in Maldives, filled with around 30 Sculptures acting as a habitat for coral and other marine species.
151. ▶ World's Most Innovative University Report, by Reuters news agency rankings -
- ✎ It was first published in 2015, since then there has been no mention of any Indian university in the list.
 - ✎ In top 100, 48 universities are from North America, 23 from Asia, 27 from Europe and 2 from Middle East. US dominated with 46 universities among top 100.
 - ✎ Top 10 -
 - ✎ Stanford University (US)
 - ✎ Massachusetts Institute of Technology (US)
 - ✎ Harvard University (US)
 - ✎ University of Pennsylvania (US)
 - ✎ University of Washington(US)
 - ✎ University of Texas System(US)
 - ✎ KU Leuven (Belgium)
 - ✎ Imperial College London (United Kingdom)

 University of North Carolina (US)

 Vanderbilt University (US)

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

Top

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