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Yearly Review of International Affairs 2017 - Current Affairs Capsule in PDF

January 2017

- NASA marks 50 years of Apollo 1 Pad Fire
 - **NASA on Friday marked the 50th anniversary of its moon program's fatal** Apollo launch pad fire with the first public display of the scorched hatch that trapped three astronauts inside their spaceship during a routine pre-launch test.
 - **NASA astronauts Virgil "Gus" Grissom, Edward White and Roger Chaffee** died when thick smoke filled the crew module of the Apollo 1 capsule on Jan. 27, 1967.
- Gambia's new President Adama Barrow
 - Gambia's President Adama Barrow has returned to the country to assume power days after his predecessor Yahya Jammeh left to go into exile.
 - President Barrow's plane touched down at Banjul airport. Mr Barrow, who has been in neighbouring Senegal, won elections in December.
 - However a handover was stalled when Mr Jammeh, Gambia's president of 22 years, refused to step aside.
- World Government Summit
 - A global summit on governance is being organised in Dubai from February 12-14. It will hold 3 forums to explore global researches in happiness, climate change & Arab youth.



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- 7 world and international organisations the IMF, the UN, UNESCO, WB, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development & World Economic Forum will participate in the event.
- More than 150 countries will be taking part.
- **New Ghanaian President Sworn In**
 - Nana Akufo-Addo has been sworn in as Ghana's new president after beating John Mahama in last month's election.
 - Mr Akufo-Addo's inauguration represents the latest peaceful handover of power in Ghana.
 - He said he would reduce taxes to boost the economy, adding that Ghana was now "opened for business again".
 - His main promise was to build a factory in each of Ghana's more than 200 districts.
- **A Nepal to have Constitution amendment**
 - Nepal's SC said, "Judiciary could not bar the Legislative from using its wisdom in the formulation of legislation, on the basis of the principle of separation of powers."
 - Issues like change in demarcation of provinces, citizenship, language & making the Constitution more inclusive are incorporated in the amendment.
 - CJ Sushila Karki & Justice Ishwor Prasad Khatiwada gave this ruling.
- **China Flags Off First Train to London**
 - China has launched its first freight train to London over 12000 km away as part of efforts to improve trade.
 - The train departed from Yiwu, Zhejiang Province & will pass through Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus, Poland, Germany, Belgium & France before arriving in London. The journey will take 18 days.
 - London is the 15th city in Europe added to China-Europe freight train services.



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- Guterres Takes Charge as UN Sect-General
 - Antonio Guterres took charge as the 9th UN Secretary General.
 - He succeeded Ban Ki-moon as the world's top diplomat.
 - He served as Portugal's prime minister between 1995 & 2002.
 - He was the UN High Commissioner for Refugees from June 2005 to Dec 2015.
 - The new UN chief said, let us make 2017 a year for peace in which all citizens, governments, leaders strive to overcome our differences.
- Pakistan's New Chief Justice Takes Oath
 - Justice Mian Saqib Nisar took oath of office as Pakistan's 25th Chief Justice.
 - He replaced Justice Anwar Zaheer Jamali who retired after superannuation.
 - Pakistan's President Mamnoon Hussain administered oath to the new Chief Justice of Supreme Court.
 - He is the senior-most judge and in April this year he served as acting CJ in the absence of Chief Justice Jamali who had gone abroad.

February 2017

- Mobile World Congress in Barcelona
 - The 2017 Mobile World Congress (MWC) began in Mobile World Capital Barcelona on February 27, 2017 and will conclude on March 2, 2017.
 - MWC is the world's largest gathering for the mobile industry, organised by the GSMA.
 - The global tech industry gathers to get participate in new smartphone launches, VR and AR developments, chipsets and wearable's.
- Pakistan Army launches "Radd-ul-Fasaad"





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- A nationwide military operation “Radd-ul-Fasaad’ was launched by **Pakistan Army to eliminate terrorists and ensure security of Pakistan’s borders.**
- As per the Director-General of the Inter-Services Public Relations the operation aims to eliminate threat of terrorism, consolidate gains of **operations made so far and ensure strengthened security of Pakistan’s borders**
- **Pink Shirt Day**
 - Fighting against the racism, bullying, hate crimes and discrimination, **Sikhs across the UK and Canada observed ‘Pink Shirt Day’** on Feb 22, coming out in pink shirts and turbans to give message of kindness and tolerance.
 - The campaign has also found support from Canadian PM Justin Trudeau and National Defence Minister of Canada Harjit Sajjan, a Sikh who too sporting a pink shirt day.
- **Arun-3 Hydro Electric Project in Nepal**
 - The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs chaired has approved investment for generation component of Arun-3 HEP (900 MW) for an estimated cost of Rs. 5723.72 cr.
 - Project is located on Arun River in Sankhuwasabha District of Eastern Nepal.
 - The project will provide surplus power to India strengthening power availability in the country and will also strengthening economic linkages with Nepal.
- **Trump Chooses H.R. McMaster as NSA**
 - Army Lieutenant General H.R. McMaster(54) was appointed as National Security Adviser of the USA by the President Donald Trump on February 21, 2017.
 - McMaster will replace Michael Flynn.



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- He authored book titled – **Dereliction of Duty: Lyndon Johnson, Robert McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Lies That Led to Vietnam** in 1997.
- Longest elevated cycle path in the world
 - The longest elevated bike path in the world has been opened in the South eastern Chinese city of Xiamen.
 - The 5 mile long, 16-foot wide bicycle-only pathway – **dubbed** – “the winding viaduct”
 - The route can carry 2023 cyclists per hour, while 300 hire bikes are available for people who do not have one.
 - It is built by Copenhagen-based firm Dissing + Weitling.
- Syrian govt. used chlorine gas in Aleppo
 - Syrian govt. forces carried out at least 8 chemical attacks during the battle for Aleppo, Human Rights Watch (HRW) said on Monday.
 - Around 200 people were injured by the toxic gases used on opposition-controlled areas of the northern city.
 - The use of chlorine gas as a weapon is banned under the Chemical Weapons Convention, which Syria joined in 2013 under pressure from Russia.
- Hamas chooses a new leader in Gaza
 - Hamas has named a top militant commander Yehiya Sinwar as its new leader in the Gaza Strip.
 - The appointment of Yehiya Sinwar, who was freed by Israel in a 2011 prisoner swap, solidifies the takeover of Gaza operations by the armed wing of the Palestinian group.
 - Mr. Sinwar replaces Ismail Haniyeh, who served as the Prime Minister of **Hamas’s government following the 2007 takeover of Gaza.**
- Bulletproof glass around Eiffel Tower





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- In France, the Mayor of Paris has announced the erection of a 2.5 meter wall of bulletproof glass around the Eiffel Tower.
- **The new security measure is meant to protect France's most recognizable symbol in the event of a terrorist threat.**
- An estimated 6-million people visit the Eiffel Tower every year, and it is globally recognized as a symbol of France, and Paris.
- China to take fingerprints of foreigners
 - China is to begin taking fingerprints of all foreign visitors as it steps up security on its borders. It will be introduced at Shenzhen airport.
 - All foreign passport holders aged 14-70 will have to give their fingerprints.
 - USA, Japan, Taiwan and Cambodia already have this facility.
 - The ministry said the regulation would strengthen immigration controls & increase efficiency.

March 2017

- Montenegro welcomes US NATO approval
 - Montenegro officials welcomed the US Senate's decision to ratify its entry into NATO, calling it a great step for the tiny Balkan nation.
 - Montenegro is set to become NATO's 29th member following the Senate's overwhelming ratification.
 - Russia has been accused by Montenegro of trying to stage an Election Day coup in October to try to keep the country out of the alliance.
- Tropical Cyclone Debbie
 - Residents of Australia's northeast coast begin evacuating low-lying areas ahead of powerful cyclone.
 - Aus. Bureau of Meteorology said that the cyclone Debbie was expected to cross the Queensland state coast along a sparsely populated 100-km stretch early Tuesday.



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- Cyclone was expected to intensify from a category 2 storm on Mond to a category 4 storm with wind gusts of up to 260 km/hour.
- American Hindu Coalition (AHC)
 - An organisation launched by a group of influential American Hindus, most of them of Indian descent, aspires to emerge as a political platform for all Hindus in the country regardless of their ethnic origin.
 - The American Hindu Coalition (AHC) will be formally inaugurated in May but the group has launched a website and started raising funds online and from selected donors.
- 2017 healthiest country index
 - Bloomberg released its 2017 World Health Index today and the world's healthiest country may come as a bit of a surprise.
 - Italy, the land known for pasta, pizza and wine has been named the healthiest country by the index.
 - The index graded 163 countries based on variables such as life expectancy, causes of death and health risks such as high blood pressure, malnutrition etc.
- Germany to use voice recognition
 - Germany is to begin testing new voice recognition software that can tell which country migrants without documentation come from.
 - The Federal Office for Migrants and Refugees said the automated new system would begin within 2 weeks.
 - The new software is similar to the voice authentication technology used by banks and insurance companies and is capable of differentiating between dialects.
- River granted same rights as human being
 - In a world-first a New Zealand Whanganui river has been granted the same legal rights as a human being.





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- The local Māori tribe of Whanganui in the North Island has fought for the recognition of their river -the third-largest in New Zealand.
- The new status of the river means if someone abused or harmed it the law now sees no differentiation between harming the tribe or harming the river.
- Bangladesh declares Mar 25 'Genocide Day'
 - **Bangladesh's unanimously adopted a resolution declaring March 25 as Genocide Day**, in remembrance of the atrocities carried out by the Pakistani Army in the night of March 25, 1971.
 - The Pakistan Army swooped on unarmed civilians on the night of March 25, 1971, to crush the Bengali rebellion
 - **'Operation Searchlight' began in the first hours of March 25, in Dhaka.**
- Pakistan set to conduct national census
 - Pakistan is set to conduct its first national census in 19 years for which it will deploy nearly 200,000 troops.
 - First phase will start from March 15 and conclude on April 15. After a ten-day gap the second phase will start from April 25 and conclude on May 25.
 - Islamabad last conducted a census in 1998, which recorded a national population of approximately 180 million at that time.
- Worst humanitarian crisis since 1945
 - The world faces the largest humanitarian crisis since the end of the Second World War with more than 20 million people in 4 countries facing starvation and famine, UN has warned.
 - He urged an immediate injection of funds for Yemen, South Sudan, Somalia and northeast Nigeria.
 - Largest humanitarian crisis was in Yemen.
- Yellow fever



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- **Rio de Janeiro has said it plans to vaccinate the state's entire population** against yellow fever in response to an outbreak that has killed at least 113 people around Brazil.
- Yellow fever is an acute viral disease. It is spread primarily by *Aedes aegypti*, a type of mosquito found throughout the tropics and subtropics.
- The virus is an RNA virus of the genus *Flavivirus*.

April 2017

- El Salvador bans metals mining
 - El Salvador became the first country in the world to ban the mining of metals in what campaigners called a landmark move for environmental protection.
 - The law bans "prospection, exploration, exploitation, extraction or processing of metallic minerals in El Salvador".
 - The new law entered into force after being signed by President Salvador Sanchez Ceren.
- Trump introduces biggest tax reform plan
 - US President Donald Trump has introduced biggest tax reform plan in the history of United States.
 - The income tax rates have been slashed from 39.6% to 35%.
 - The new plan proposes for a 15% corporate tax rate which is a sharp drop from the existing 35%.
 - However, under the US law, only the Congress is empowered to make major changes to the tax laws.
- Freight train connects Russia with China
 - A freight train connecting Russia with China arrived in Ganzhou an inland city in Jiangxi province, carrying goods from Moscow on April 24.





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- The freight train travelled more than 7000 km.
- This freight train connecting Russia and China is expected to bring resources from Europe and boost local development.
- Cuba, Morocco reestablish diplomatic ties
 - Cuba and Morocco have signed an agreement to re-establish diplomatic ties after a time period of 37 years.
 - The decision to re-establish diplomatic ties has been made couple of weeks **after King Mohammed's private visit to Cuba.**
 - Morocco severed its ties with Cuba in 1980 after Fidel Castro officially recognised Western Sahara as the independent Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic.
- India wins elections to 2 UN bodies
 - India has won elections to two subsidiary bodies of a UN organ focused on social and economic issues.
 - India along with 12 other members was elected to the Committee for Programme and Coordination, a subsidiary body of the UN Economic and Social Council.
 - The 13 members are elected for three-year terms, beginning January 2018.
- Cyclone Cook strikes New Zealand
 - In New Zealand, hundreds of people have been evacuated from some coastal areas as the second major storm in just over a week made landfall near the North Island town of Whakatane.
 - Gusts of 209kmh were recorded at White Island and 154km/h at Cape Kidnappers in Hawke's Bay.
 - Cyclone Cook was a compact system, meaning the strongest winds were within a relatively narrow swat.
- US drops biggest non-nuclear bomb



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- The US has dropped the "mother of all bombs" - the largest non-nuclear weapon ever used in combat by the US military - on an area of eastern Afghanistan.
- The weapon is known in the US Air Force by its nickname MOAB, or "mother of all bombs".
- MOAB stands for massive ordinance air blast.
- The bomb was dropped in Achin district of Nangarhar, Afghanistan to target ISIS militants.
- G20 Digital Ministerial Meet
 - The G20 Digital Ministerial Meeting was held in Dusseldorf, Germany.
 - **It concluded with adaptation of declaration on 'Shaping Digitalisation for an Interconnected World'.**
 - The ministerial conference was held according to the G20 Task Force on the digital economy established in G20 summit held in Hangzhou, China in 2016.
- Achim Steiner-new administrator of UNDP
 - UN chief Antonio Guterres has named Achim Steiner, as the new administrator of the UN Development Programme (UNDP).
 - Headquartered in New York City, the UNDP seeks to reduce poverty, improve social development and encourage women's empowerment.
 - Steiner, who previously served at the UN Environment Programme and headed the UN office in Kenya, was selected to succeed Helen Clark.
- China tops the list in executions
 - Amnesty International said China topped on executions in 2016, despite the number of executions worldwide dropped by 37%.
 - In its 2016 Global review of the death penalty published, Amnesty said, China executed more people than all other countries in the world put together.





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- Other countries in the list are Iran, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.
- First UK rail freight service to China
 - The first rail freight service from the UK to China will depart on a 7500-mile journey from Essex on April 10.
 - The service is part of China's One Belt, One Road programme of reviving the ancient Silk Road trading routes with the West dating back more than 2,000 years.
 - The first train from China to UK arrived three months ago.
- 1st Country to Fully Legalize Marijuana
 - Uruguay is set to be the 1st country in the world to fully allow the production, sale and consumption of marijuana when its pharmacies will be allowed to sell marijuana.
 - Uruguay legalized the cultivation, distribution and consumption in 2013 but the rollout has been slow.
 - The authorization for pharmacies to sell marijuana was initially expected by the end of 2014, but was delayed many times.
- World's largest solar plant
 - Morocco's King Mohammed VI launched the fourth and final stage of Noor Ouarzazate, the world's largest solar plant.
 - The Noor Ouarzazate IV power station in the southern province of Ouarzazate, spanned over an area of 137 hectares (1.37 square km), will be set up with over \$75 million with photovoltaic (PV) technology.
 - The plant will start operations in 2018.
- Germany to launch cyber command centre
 - **Germany is the first NATO state to launch a “self-contained” cyber command unit designed to shield IT and weapons systems from growing attacks.**
 - **The Bundeswehr’s Cyber and Information Space (CIR) boasts a status equal to that of the army, navy, and air force.**



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- CIR will start off with 260 IT specialists, but will grow to 13,500 military and civilian personnel by July.
- New Ecuador President elected
 - Ruling Party of Ecuador, Alianza PAIS candidate Lenin Moreno won the **Ecuador's presidential election.**
 - He defeated Guillermo Lasso.
 - Out of 94% of voting acts counted, the National Electoral Council declared Moreno has defeated Lasso by 51% to 49%.
- Turkey concludes Operation
 - Turkey has officially ended Operation Euphrates Shield it launched in Syria last August.
 - Turkey had sent military equipment to support Free Syrian Army rebels to fight the ISIS terrorists.
 - Turkish troops are still stationed in the secured regions and along the border, which amounts to nearly 2,000 sq km of Syrian territory.
- Myanmar becomes 7th member of SASEC
 - Myanmar became the 7th member of South Asia Sub-regional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) program of Asian Development Bank.
 - **Myanmar's membership comes in advance of the first SASEC meeting of Finance Ministers** that will be held in New Delhi on April 3.
 - Prior to becoming member, Myanmar was having observer status of SASEC since 2013.

May 2017

- 'The Square' wins top prize at Cannes.
 - The Swedish film 'The Square' has won the Palme d'Or, the top prize at 70th Cannes Film Festival.





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- The Square is a Swedish satirical drama film directed by Ruben Östlund.
- The film '120 Beats Per Minute!' won the Grand Prix, the runner-up prize.
- The 70th annual Cannes Film Festival took place in Cannes, France.
- G7 summit begins in Italy.
 - A two day G7 summit began in **Sicily's picturesque town of Taormina, Italy**
 - The summit will focus on issues surrounding security and growth. A tough debate is expected on issues including trade and climate change.
 - G7 consists of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK and US. The EU also has representatives.
 - Jean-Claude Juncker and Donald Tusk will be representing the European Union.
- Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction.
 - The 2017 Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction is being held in Cancun, Mexico.
 - It is the most important international forum dedicated to the disaster risk reduction agenda.
 - It will mark the first opportunity for the international community to review global progress on the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, which was adopted in Japan in 2015.
- Taiwan court to recognise gay marriage.
 - Taiwan's constitutional court has declared that same-sex couples have the right to legally marry,
 - This is first such ruling in Asia.
 - The court gave the country's parliament a period of two years for laws to be amended to allow same-sex marriage.
 - Taiwan has a reputation as a beacon of liberalism in the region.
- Impeachment against Duterte rejected.



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- Philippine parliamentary panel has rejected a proposal for an impeachment motion against President Rodrigo Duterte for his alleged involvement in extrajudicial killings and other crimes.
- The failed proposal, filed by legislator Gary Alejano, called for Duterte's impeachment for "culpable violation of the Constitution, betrayal of public trust, engaging in bribery and other crimes".
- Emergency in Yemen over cholera outbreak
 - A state of emergency has been declared in the capital, Sanaa, due to a deadly outbreak of cholera. The International Committee of the Red Cross has stated that the disease killed at least 115 people and left more than 8,000 others infected across the country.
 - The World Health Organization now classifies Yemen as one of the worst humanitarian emergencies in the world.
- Nepal votes in first local elections
 - Nepalese are lining up to vote for representatives in municipal and village councils for the first time in two decades.
 - The first phase was conducted on May 14.
 - Crucial local positions have been held by government-appointed representatives because elections could not be held amid a 10-year-old communist insurgency and years of delay in drafting a new constitution.
- Nepal joins OBOR
 - Nepal formally signed the One Belt One Road framework agreement, **leaving India the only country in South Asia not involved in China's** ambitious economic strategy.
 - Nepal's **formal entry into the OBOR network will allow collaboration in** construction of cross-border railways and highways etc.
 - Funds will be provided by the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank as well as the Silk Road Fund.





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- Moon Jae-in sworn in as President
 - Moon Jae-in has been declared winner in South Korea's presidential election by that country's National Election Commission.
 - He replaced the ousted President Park Geun-hye, who was ejected from office in March after a corruption scandal
 - Moon is a 64 year old former human rights lawyer and a liberal who favors a more open policy toward North Korea.
- Pakistan's new envoy to India
 - Sohail Mahmood will be Pakistan's new High Commissioner to India and is set to take charge at the end of this month.
 - Mahmood, now Pakistan's Ambassador to Turkey, will succeed Abdul Basit.
 - Mahmood has served in Pakistani missions in Washington, New York, Ankara and Bangkok.
- Macron becomes youngest French President
 - Emmanuel Macron has become the youngest-ever president of France, defeating far-right leader Marine Le Pen in a pivotal vote for the future of the divided country and Europe.
 - The victory caps an extraordinary rise for the 39-year-old former investment banker, who will become the country's youngest-ever leader.
 - Macron won about 65.5% while Le Pen won 33.9% votes.
- Jordan, US launch military exercises
 - Jordan and the United States kicked off annual military exercises today with about 7,400 troops from more than 20 nations taking part.
 - Jordan is a key recipient of US financial aid and a partner in the US-led coalition battling Islamic State group jihadists in Syria and Iraq.
 - This year's "Eager Lion" exercises -- the seventh so far -- are the largest and most complex.
- First city to get its own Microsoft font



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- Dubai has become the first city to get its own Microsoft-designed font.
- The typeface comes in both Latin and Arabic script, and will be available in 23 languages.
- Dubai's Crown Prince Hamdan bin Mohammed al-Maktoum said he had been personally involved in "all the stages" of the development of the font.
- UN marks 1st World Tuna Day
 - The United Nations has marked the 1st World Tuna Day yesterday with calls to conserve one of the globe's most popular fish to be caught and eaten.
 - Tuna plays a critical role in sustainable development, food security, economic opportunity, and livelihoods of people around the world.
 - The General Assembly established World Tuna Day in Dec to reinforce its importance to nations around the globe.

June 2017

- Romania picks a new Prime Minister
 - Romanian President Klaus Iohannis has nominated the outgoing economy minister Mihai Tudose as the new prime minister.
 - According to Iohannis the decision has been taken to end the current political crisis which harming the economy and country's external image abroad.
 - Tudose now has 10 days to gain the vote of confidence in his government and his programme.
- China's fastest bullet train
 - China's fastest next generation bullet train "Fuxing" has made its debut on Beijing-Shanghai railway line.





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- The train can achieve speeds as high as 400 km/hour with a consistent speed of 350 km/hour.
- It includes a sophisticated monitoring system that constantly checks its performance & automatically slows down the train in case of emergencies.
- It has been designed and manufactured in China.
- World's worst cholera outbreak
 - UN has warned that Yemen is now facing the worst cholera outbreak anywhere in the world with about 1,310 people dying due to the disease since late April.
 - According to a statement by UNICEF and WHO, the number of suspected cholera cases in the country has exceeded 200,000.
 - No part of Yemen has been spared from the cholera outbreak, with an estimated 5,000 new cases every day.
- Egypt's president ratifies islands deal
 - Egypt's president has ratified a disputed 2016 agreement under which his country would transfer control of 2 Red Sea islands to Saudi Arabia.
 - Deal to hand over Tiran and Sanafir was agreed during a visit to Egypt by Saudi King Salman a year ago.
 - The Egyptian govt says that the 2 islands have always been Saudi's, but were placed under Egypt's protection in 1950's amid Arab-Israeli tension.
- Saudi Arabia makes 13 demands to Qatar
 - Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries that have cut ties with Qatar have issued a list of demands to end a major Gulf crisis.
 - In the 13-point list, countries have demand Qatar to shut down the Al Jazeera network, close a Turkish military base and scale down ties with Iran.
 - They have given Qatar 10 days to comply with all of the demands which include paying an unspecified sum in compensation.
- Facebook Launches UK Initiative



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- Facebook is launching a UK program to train and fund local organizations to combat extremist material online.
- The new initiative will train NGO's to help them monitor and respond to extremist content and create a dedicated support desk so they can communicate directly with Facebook.
- The program comes in wake of criticism by politicians that tech companies are slow to remove extremist content
- Saudi imposes family tax
 - Saudi Arabia has decided to impose a family tax of 100 riyals per dependent per month on expatriates.
 - The fee will be implemented from July 1 and is expected to pose a financial burden on over 41 lakh Indian families living in Saudi.
 - It will be doubled to 200 Saudi riyals for every dependent from July 2018, tripled to 300 Saudi riyals in 2019 and quadrupled to 400 Saudi riyals from July 2020
- Best airline in the world
 - Qatar Airways has been named Best Airline in the World for 2017 by consumer aviation website Skytrax.
 - This is Qatar Airways' fourth win in the last 10 years after securing the top spot in 2011, 2012, and 2015.
 - Qatar Airways also took home the award for Best Business Class in the World and Best Airline in the Middle East.
 - Two Indian airlines IndiGo and Jet Airways were on the Top 100 list.
- Pakistan begins fencing its border
 - Pakistan will soon begin construction of a fence across its porous border with Afghanistan in order to improve security.
 - In first phase high infiltration-prone border areas in Bajaur, Mohmand and Khyber are being fenced.





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- New forts and border posts would be built in order to improve surveillance and defense.
- The 2 nations are divided by 2400km Durand Line, drawn by britishers in 1896.
- **World's 1st data embassy**
 - PM of Estonia Jüri Ratas and PM of Luxembourg Xavier Bettel signed an agreement on housing data and information systems between 2 countries, **thereby creating world's 1st data embassy.**
 - Luxembourg has been chosen as the location for the embassy and will begins its operations from 2018.
 - Luxembourg has been chosen since it has capabilities to provide a high level of security for the stored data.
- Sweden to reach zero carbon emissions
 - Sweden has pledged to reach net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2045 in order to tackle climate change.
 - Reaching net-zero carbon emissions will demand at least an 85% cut in **domestic greenhouse gas emissions from Sweden's 1990 levels.**
 - Swedish government will now be required to present a climate report during its annual budget bill.
- South Korea to end use of nuclear power
 - **South Korea's President Moon Jae-in**, has vowed to phase out the **country's dependence on nuclear power**, following fears of a Fukushima-style meltdown.
 - He has decided not extend the operation of ageing reactors, many of which will come to end of their lifespans between 2020 and 2030.
 - He has decided to completely scrap construction plans for new nuclear reactors that are currently under way.
- AIB approves 3 new members



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- Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank has approved membership of Argentina, Madagascar and Tonga at its 2nd annual meeting of governors.
- Approved applicants included 1 regional prospective member of Tonga and 2 non-regional members of Argentina and Madagascar.
- They will officially join AIIB once they complete the required domestic processes and deposit first installment of capital with bank.
- BRICS Foreign Ministers to meet in China
 - According to Russian Foreign Ministry Foreign Ministers of BRICS countries will meet in Beijing, China on June 18-19.
 - This was decided during the 2nd meeting of BRICS Sherpas and Sous-Sherpas held in China.
 - It is the first time the foreign ministers meeting has been called by a host country holding the BRICS Summit.
 - China took over the rotating presidency of the BRICS from India last year.
- India-Afghan air freight corridor
 - India and Afghanistan will operationalise their first air-freight corridor in next few days.
 - The flight will be operated by Ariana Afghan Airlines (**Afghanistan's** national carrier).
 - It will carry commodities from Kabul to Delhi and then return with Indian goods to Kabul.
 - The development is significant since Pakistan does not allow use of its land for trade between Afghanistan and India.
- US to conduct naval drill in Qatar
 - Two US Navy vessels arrived in Doha to take part in a joint military exercise with the Qatari Emiri Navy.
 - Notably, Qatar hosts the biggest US military base in the Middle East with more than 11,000 troops deployed or assigned to Al-Udeid Air Base.





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- Qatar has also signed a agreement to purchase F-15 fighter jets from the US with an initial cost of \$12 billion.
- Controversial anti-terror law passed
 - Japan passed a controversial anti-terror law that sparked street protests **and warnings from critics that it would stomp on citizens' privacy rights** and lead to over-the-top police surveillance.
 - The government argues it is necessary to prevent terrorism ahead of the 2020 Olympics.
 - The legislation would criminalise plotting and preparing to commit 277 **“serious crimes”**.
- India to co-partner in ANUGA 2017
 - India will be the co-partner with Germany to organize the ANUGA food festival which will be held in Cologne, Germany from October 7-11.
 - The acronym of ANUGA is Allgemeine Nahrungs- und Genussmittel-Ausstellung or General Food and Non essential Provisions Exhibition.
 - ANUGA offers an extensive supporting programme with Lectures, Special exhibition and attractive industry events.
- MoU between India and Armenia
 - The government has approved an MoU between India and Armenia for cooperation on youth matters.
 - The MoU was signed in April, 2017. This MoU shall remain in force for a period of five years.
 - The objective of the MoU is to strengthen and encourage cooperation between the two countries on youth matters through participation in events and activities organized by the parties etc.
- Panama cuts ties with Taiwan
 - Panama has cut long-standing diplomatic ties with Taiwan and established relations with China, in a diplomatic coup for Beijing.



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- The Panamanian government said it recognised there was "only one China" and considered Taiwan part of it.
- A joint communiqué establishing ties was also signed by China's Foreign Minister **Wang Yi** and Panama's Foreign Minister **Isabel de Saint Malo** in Beijing.
- Puerto Rico votes to become US state
 - Puerto Rico voted in favour of becoming the 51st US state with 97% voters supporting the referendum.
 - US Congress will now have to decide whether it wants to expand the **nation's borders and accept the Caribbean** island into the Union.
 - Puerto Rico has been under the control of the US since 1898 and was taken in the Spanish-American war.
 - Suffering from a large deficit and 12% unemployment rate.
- UN holds first Ocean Conference
 - United Nations held its first-ever Ocean Conference to renew member nations' commitment to combatting rising sea levels, pollution, and harmful fishing practices for the protection of world's waterways.
 - The conference ended with the adoption by consensus of a '14-point Call for Action' to conserve and sustainably use oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.
- Second MI Ministerial in Beijing
 - **World's Energy Leaders gathered in Beijing for 2nd** Mission Innovation Ministerial and 8th Clean Energy Ministerial.
 - India announced 2 MI-centric Funding Opportunities in Smart Grid and Offgrid Access at US \$5 million each.
 - While MI focuses on research and development for new technologies, Clean Energy Ministerial focuses on scaling the deployment of clean energy technologies and solutions.





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- EU imposes new anti-dumping duties
 - European Union has imposed new anti-dumping duties on steel products from China.
 - EU took the action against China for allegedly flooding global markets in violation of international trade agreements.
 - EU has imposed duties of up to 35.9% on Chinese hot-rolled flat steel used in shipbuilding, and gas containers.
 - In January, commission had slapped anti-dumping duties on stainless steel tube.
- India to partner with UNOSSC
 - India and the UN Office for South-South Cooperation have launched a partnership fund to promote sustainable development projects across the developing world.
 - This will be the first time that India has entered into a partnership with the UN in a triangular cooperation with fellow developing countries.
 - It was launched on World Oceans day.
- Walmart Tops Fortune 500 List
 - Walmart has topped the Fortune's annual list of Americas top 500 companies 5th consecutive year with the revenue of \$485.8 million.
 - Walmart was followed by Berkshire Hathaway and Apple.
 - Elon Musk's startup Tesla has entered 2017 Fortune 500 list for the first time at the 383rd position.
 - This year the combined total revenue of all 500 companies reached \$12.1 trillion, 65% of U.S. GDP.
- Deuba elected as the PM of Nepal.
 - Nepali Congress Chairman Sher Bahadur Deuba has been elected as the new Prime Minister of Nepal.
 - This is the tenth time in just over a decade that the leadership has changed hands.



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- This will be Deuba's fourth stint as PM of Nepal.
- The post of Prime Minister fell vacant after Maoist leader Prachanda resigned in May under a power-sharing deal with the Nepali Congress leader.
- **Montenegro becomes NATO's 29th member**
 - Montenegro has formally become the 29th member of North Atlantic Treaty Organization.
 - To get there, Montenegro has stood up against its ally Russia which has sought to maintain strong historic and political influence in the country.
 - Russia has threatened economic and political retaliation including a campaign to undermine Montenegrin tourism industry which relies heavily on Russian visitors.
- **5 Arab States Break Ties With Qatar**
 - Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Egypt and Bahrain have cut diplomatic ties with Qatar.
 - The countries have accused Qatar of supporting terrorism and destabilizing the region.
 - The countries have also planned to break off all land, air and sea traffic with Qatar and eject its diplomats from their territories.
 - Qatar was also expelled from a Saudi-led coalition fighting in Yemen.
- **'Fireball' hits computers globally**
 - Chinese malware named 'Fireball' has infected over 250 million computers worldwide.
 - It is designed to hijack browsers to change default search engine and track their web traffic on behalf of a digital marketing firm called Rafotech.
 - It has the ability to spy on victims, perform efficient malware dropping and execute any malicious code.
 - India and Brazil have been hit worst by Fireball.





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- UNGA elects 5 non-Permanent UNSC Members
 - The UN General Assembly has elected Cote D'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Kuwait, Poland and Peru as the non-permanent members of the Security Council.
 - They have been elected for a period of 2 years beginning January 1, 2018.
 - Netherlands was also elected to serve a one-year term it shares with Italy.
 - UN Security Council is made up of 10 elected members and 5 permanent veto-wielding powers.
- Leo Varadkar to be next Irish PM
 - Indian origin Leo Varadkar is set to become the Republic of Ireland's next Prime Minister.
 - He will become country's youngest ever and first gay Prime Minister. He is also the first PM from an ethnic minority background.
 - Varadkar defeated Housing Minister Simon Coveney with 60 per cent of the votes.
 - He will succeed Enda Kenny as leader of the centre-right party.
- Denmark scraps blasphemy law
 - Danish lawmakers have repealed a 334-year-old blasphemy law.
 - The law which forbids public insults of a religion, such as the burning of holy books has been scraped.
 - But remarks and acts that threaten or demean certain groups of people because of their religious beliefs will still be punishable.
 - Denmark was the only Scandinavian country with a blasphemy law.
- Japan launches satellite to improve GPS
 - Japan launched a new satellite to improve the global positioning system's accuracy and establish an efficient communication system in the event of natural disasters.



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- The Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries launched the latest version of the H-IIA rocket with the Michibiki 2 communications satellite.
- It is a part of the Quasi-Zenith Satellite System.
- US completes first ICBM intercept test.
 - US military has successfully carried out its first-ever missile defense test to intercept ICBM.
 - US military fired an intercontinental ballistic missile type weapon from the Kwajalein Atoll and then fired a missile to intercept it from Vandenberg air force base.
 - Officials said that test was planned "years in advance" and was not a direct response to North Korean missile tests.

July 2017

- Constitutional Assembly election
 - The Venezuelan Constituent Assembly elections of 2017 took place on 30 July 2017 on the presidential decree of President Nicolás Maduro.
 - It was the first election of a Constituent Assembly, which has the power to rewrite the constitution, since the Constituent Assembly elections of 1999 called by referendum.
 - President Maduro called for the Assembly on May 1 amid a political crisis.
- 755 US diplomats to depart Russia
 - Russian President Vladimir Putin has announced that 755 staff must leave US diplomatic missions, in retaliation for new US sanctions against Moscow.
 - This is thought to be the largest expulsion of diplomats from any country in modern history.





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- The new US sanctions were in retaliation both for Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and Russian interference in the US election.
- **China produces gas from 'flammable ice'**
 - China has produced natural gas from methane hydrate, also known as flammable ice in an experimental project in South China Sea.
 - A drilling platform deployed off the coast of Zhuhai for 60 days produced 309,000 m³ of natural gas.
 - Flammable ice consists of methane trapped within water crystals, has been identified as a new gas source for China.
 - Japan reported a similar production test in May.
- Counter-terrorism meeting
 - Indonesia and Australia co-hosted a counter-terrorism meeting to address the rising threat of foreign fighters.
 - The one-day gathering brought together 6 countries including Malaysia, Philippines and New Zealand.
 - Ministers will discuss the challenges posed by growing terrorism in Southeast Asia as well as concerns that IS is trying establish a regional caliphate in Philippines.
- Sri Lanka, China sign \$1.5 bn port deal
 - Sri Lanka's govt has signed a long-delayed agreement to sell a 70% stake in the \$1.5 billion Hambantota port to China.
 - The Agreement has been signed in a bid to recover from the heavy burden of repayment of loans obtained to build the port.
 - It is seen as part of Beijing's so-called "string-of-pearls plan" for a line of ports stretching from its waters to the Persian Gulf.
- Russia to Stay in Syria for 50 Years
 - Russian President Vladimir Putin has signed a law ratifying a deal with Syrian govt to allow Russia to keep its airbase in Syria for almost half a century.



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- Russian forces will be deployed at Hmeymim base for 49 years with the option of extending that arrangement for 25-year periods.
- Russia has previously used the base to conduct strikes against forces opposing President Bashar al-Assad.
- BRICS sign memorandum on taxation
 - Tax authorities of the five BRICS countries signed a landmark document to establish a mechanism for taxation cooperation.
 - The authorities agreed to cooperate on taxation information exchange, improve consultation procedures efficiency and plan paths for coordination of taxation policies
 - BRICS nations total share in global economy has risen from 12% to 23% in the past decade.
- UK to ban sale of petrol and diesel cars
 - Britain is going to ban all new petrol and diesel cars and vans from 2040 in a bid to cut air pollution.
 - Ban follows a similar proposal by the French govt, and will also include hybrid vehicles that have an electric motor and a petrol or diesel engine.
 - Ministers have also unveiled a £255m fund to help councils tackle emissions, including potential for charging zones for dirtiest vehicles.
- BRICS Youth Forum opens in Beijing
 - 2017 BRICS Youth Forum opened in China to discuss youth development in BRICS member-nations.
 - Themed "Enhance BRICS Partnership, Promote Youth Development," the forum gathered 50 youth representatives working as civil servants, scholars, entrepreneurs & journalists from BRICS countries.
 - BRICS countries first came up with the idea of establishing a dialogue mechanism for BRICS youth in 2014.
- Independence from World Bank & IMF





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- Bolivia's President Evo Morales has declared "total independence" from the International Monetary Fund and World Bank.
- Bolivia's past dependence on the agencies was so great that the IMF had an office in govt headquarters and even participated in their meetings.
- Bolivia is now in the process of becoming a member of the Southern Common Market, Mercosur and Morales.
- Panama opens embassy in China
 - Panama has opened an embassy in China as it seeks to deepen its links after its diplomatic break with Taiwan.
 - Announcement was made as a delegation of Chinese business chiefs was on a visit to Panama to explore investment opportunities.
 - Previously, Panama maintained trade relations with China but with upgrade in ties it now hopes to become a key point for China's interests in Central America
- IMF lowered forecasts for US, UK
 - The International Monetary Fund has lowered its forecasts for US and UK economic growth this year, following weaker than expected activity in the first three months.
 - The IMF expects the UK to grow by 1.7% this year while US will grow 2.1%, as against the 2.3% it was predicting in April.
 - IMF kept its growth forecasts for the world economy unchanged for this year and next year.
- US commissions USS Gerald Ford
 - **US Navy has commissioned the world's largest aircraft carrier, USS Gerald R Ford** into the fleet.
 - Construction started in 2009 and was completed on 22 July 2017. She is expected to leave on her first deployment around 2020.
 - The Ford was built at Newport News Shipbuilding, a giant Navy contractor in Virginia.



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- Indian growth to pick up in 2017, 2018
 - According to the latest World Economic Outlook report of IMF, Growth in India is forecast to pick up further in 2017 and 2018.
 - IMF projects India to grow at 7.7 per cent in 2018, estimating a significant increase against the backdrop of ongoing economic reforms.
 - Global growth for 2016 is now estimated at 3.2 per cent, slightly stronger than the April 2017 forecast
- Iran and Iraq to boost military ties
 - Iran and Iraq signed deals aimed at boosting military cooperation during a visit by Baghdad's Defence Minister Irfan al-Hayali to Tehran.
 - Both the neighbours agreed on a wide range of military and defence cooperation including the "fight against terrorism and extremism".
 - **The Iraqi minister acknowledged Iran's help in the fight against IS and** also stressed the importance of unity.
- Martial law extended in Mindanao
 - Legislators in the Philippines have voted overwhelmingly to extend martial law to deal with an Islamist insurgency in the restive island of Mindanao.
 - Militants linked to so-called Islamic State have been occupying parts of Marawi, a city in the south, since May.
 - Martial law allows the use of the military to enforce law and the detention of people without charge for long periods.
- US blocks \$350 million aid to Pakistan
 - United States has blocked 350 million dollars in coalition support funds to Pakistan as Islamabad failed to act against the dreaded Haqqani network.
 - The Pentagon's decision came ahead of a review of US policy on Afghanistan and Pakistan.





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- This is not the first time the Pentagon has decided not to make military reimbursements. Last year, the Pentagon withheld \$300 million in reimbursements.
- US citizens banned from visiting N Korea
 - US govt has said it will bar Americans from traveling to North Korea due to risk of "long-term detention" in the country.
 - This comes after US student Otto Warmbier was released from detention in coma & later died.
 - Once the ban is in effect, US citizens will need special validation to travel to North Korea.
 - North Korea allows foreign tourists to visit but their travel is strictly limited.
- IMF approves conditional \$1.8 bn loan
 - The **International Monetary Fund's board has approved a \$1.8 billion loan** to Greece but will only release the money if the country gets debt relief from its European creditors.
 - If an agreement on debt relief is reached, IMF will join eurozone lenders in an ongoing bailout.
 - The current rescue program, funded by other eurozone nations and monitored with help from the IMF, ends in one year.
- Australia joins Int'l Solar Alliance
 - Australia became the 35th country to join the International Solar Alliance, an initiative launched by PM Modi in 2015 in Paris.
 - The platform brings together countries that are keen to massively ramp up their solar power production. It is co-led by India & France.
 - Till May this year, 6 countries had ratified the agreement, once 15 countries ratify it, the agreement will become a legal entity.
- **Providing "safe havens" to terrorists**



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- US has listed Pakistan among the nations providing safe havens to terrorists.
- Report said Pak did not take sufficient action against terror groups such as LeT & JeM and allowed them to operate, train & fundraise inside the country.
- Annual Report on Terrorism said UN-designated terrorist Hafiz Saeed continued to address rallies despite being proscribed under provisions of Anti-Terrorism Act.
- World's most streamed song ever
 - Luis Fonsi's 'Despacito' has become the most-streamed song of all time, 6 months after it was released.
 - It has been played 4.6 billion times across all streaming services, overtaking Justin Bieber's Sorry, which previously held the title.
 - Despacito which means slowly in Spanish has spent 10 weeks at no. 1 on US singles chart, the 1st Spanish song to reach the top spot since Macarena in 1996
- Somalia back online after three weeks
 - Internet has returned to Somalia after an outage of more than 3 weeks that reportedly cost Somalia's economy \$10 million a day.
 - Internet was restored after repairing a severed undersea cable that was accidentally hit by a ship.
 - Major companies reported millions of dollars in revenue losses, university studies were also disrupted.
 - It also complicated efforts to combat a nationwide drought.
- U.S. puts new sanctions on Iran
 - United States has slapped new economic sanctions against Iran over its ballistic missile programme.





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- U.S. govt said it was targeting 18 entities and people for supporting what is said was "illicit Iranian actors or transnational criminal activity."
- U.S. has also alleged that Tehran's malign activities in Middle East undercut any positive contributions coming from 2015 Iran nuclear accord.
- Peacekeepers rescue humanitarian workers
 - Indian peacekeepers have rescued more than a dozen humanitarian workers who came under heavy firing from unknown gunmen in a town in South Sudan.
 - Troops serving with U.N. Mission in South Sudan were alerted about the firing, peacekeepers responded by firing warning shots into the air which caused attackers to flee.
 - As of June 2017, as many as 7676 Indian peacekeepers are serving in UNMISS.
- First anniversary of failed coup
 - Turkey is holding a series of events to mark 1st anniversary of a failed coup in which at least 260 people died.
 - An army faction tried to seize power last July but the attempt collapsed. About 100,000 govt employees were dismissed & 40,000 were arrested.
 - President Erdogan lead a National Unity March across Bosphorus Bridge which has been renamed Martyrs Bridge to commemorate those who died.
- Part of South China Sea renamed
 - Indonesia will now refer to the northern areas of its exclusive economic zone in the South China Sea as the "North Natuna Sea".
 - Part of the renamed sea is claimed by China under its contentious maritime boundary, known as the "nine-dash line".
 - Indonesia is not the first country to rename part of the South China Sea. In 2011, the Philippines renamed the waters as the "West Philippine Sea".



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- Access to physical education
 - Saudi Arabia will soon grant girls in public schools access to physical education.
 - Education Ministry will introduce the physical education classes gradually and in accordance with (Islamic) Shariah regulations.
 - The decision to allow girls to play sports in public schools is significant in Saudi Arabia because women taking part in exercise is still seen as a taboo.
- World Petroleum Congress
 - The 22nd World Petroleum Congress, the largest gathering for the oil and gas industry, began in Istanbul.
 - World Petroleum Congress is organized every 3 years by London-based World Petroleum Council and includes 65 member countries from around the world.
 - Theme for this year was “**Bridges to our Energy Future**”.
 - Workshops, technical forums and thematic panels will be held during the congress.
- Citizenship for Myanmar Rohingyas
 - UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi has called for granting citizenship to Myanmar's Muslim Rohingya minority.
 - Grandi said granting citizenship is very crucial for achieving peace and development in the Rakhine state.
 - The Rohingya have long been denied citizenship, freedom of movement and basic rights in Myanmar, where they are often seen as illegal immigrants from Bangladesh.
- Iraq declares victory over ISIS
 - **Iraq's prime minister, Haider** al-Abadi, has declared victory over Islamic State forces in Mosul after months-long of bitter fighting.





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- The city had been the last major urban stronghold Isis held in Iraq, and defeat there pushes the group back towards its insurgent roots.
- Victory in Mosul is still both a strategic and symbolic milestone for Iraqi fighters backed by US-led coalition forces.
- **UNHRC to review Pak's human right record**
 - United Nations Human Rights Council has said that it will undertake a thorough two-day review of Islamabad's human rights record.
 - Pakistan will be reviewed by the Human Rights Committee for its implementation of the International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights.
 - Committee will issue concluding observations based on constructive dialogue and documents submitted by the State.
- **UNESCO omits Great Barrier Reef**
 - UNESCO has voted to leave Great Barrier Reef off its "in danger" list despite recent widespread destruction.
 - Back-to-back coral bleaching events had intensified debate about whether UNESCO should change the status of Australia's reef.
 - The ruling was made at a World Heritage Committee meeting in Poland.
 - It called on Australia to provide updates on its protection efforts by Dec 2019.
- **Nepal, China ink border security deal**
 - Nepal and China have signed an agreement to set up a border law enforcement centre to manage and curb border related crimes while respecting each other's sovereignty.
 - The aim of establishing the centre is to cooperate each other on the border security management and to curb border related crimes.
 - Border b/w China and Nepal is 1,236 km in length, along the mountain range the Himalayas.
- **UK launches 'Grand Trunk Road' project**



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- British govt has launched a new project 'Grand Trunk Road' to mark 70th anniversary of India's partition.
- Project was launched this week to bring British Asians of all faiths & backgrounds together to reflect on their shared history through 11 special events.
- The aim is for the participants to remember lives lost and learn about history of partition from those who lived through the violence.
- Global treaty banning nuclear weapons
 - A global treaty banning nuclear weapons was adopted at the United Nations despite opposition from US, Britain, France and other nuclear powers that boycotted negotiations.
 - The treaty was adopted by a vote of 122 in favor with one country the Netherlands voting against while Singapore abstained.
 - None of the nine countries that possess nuclear weapons took part in the negotiations or the vote.
- Vietnam renews Indian Oil Deal
 - Vietnam has granted ONGC Videsh a two-year extension to explore oil block 128 in the South China Sea.
 - The part of the oil block 128 is in the U-shaped '**nine-dash line,**' the area which is claimed by China. The permission was first granted in the year 2006 which is due to expire in mid-June.
- US celebrates its 241st Independence Day
 - US will celebrate its 241st Independence Day on July 4, 2017.
 - On that day in 1776, 13 British colonies in America signed the Declaration of Independence from Britain.
 - The declaration was made through the adoption the Declaration of Independence, which was drafted by founding father Thomas Jefferson.





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- The day is associated with patriotic displays, barbecues, picnics, fireworks and parades.
- WHO declares an end to Ebola outbreak
 - World Health Organization has declared the end of the most recent outbreak of Ebola virus disease in the Democratic Republic of Congo.
 - Announcement comes 42 days after the last confirmed Ebola patient tested negative for the disease for the 2nd time.
 - **This is DRC's 8th** outbreak of EVD since discovery of the virus in the country in 1976. The last one started in 2014 and killed nearly 50 people
- Chief Executive of Hong Kong
 - **China's President Xi Jinping has inaugurated the new Hong Kong** administration led by Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor, the first woman to lead the city.
 - **The event coincided with the 20th anniversary of the handover of the city's** sovereignty from Britain to China.
 - Carrie Lam is the 4th Chief Executive of Hong Kong.
- Pakistan bans JuD front
 - Pakistan has banned Tehreek-e-Azaadi Jammu and Kashmir, a new front **for Hafiz Saeed's Jamaat**-ud-Dawa, as the international pressure on the country increases.
 - TAJK gained prominence as a JuD front when it held pro-Kashmir freedom rallies and displayed banners & streamers across Pakistan on Kashmir Day.
 - UN placed both JuD and FIF on its watch list in December 2008 and March 2012, respectively.
- Germany to fine social media firms
 - Germany's cabinet has approved a plan to fine social networks up to **€50m** if they fail to remove hateful postings quickly.



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- Law gives social media networks 24 hrs to delete or block obviously criminal content and 7 days to deal with less clear-cut cases.
- Social networks will also have to publish a report every 6 months detailing how many complaints they received and how they dealt with them.

August 2017

- France holds migration summit
 - European leaders will meet their counterparts from Niger, Chad and Libya in Paris to discuss ways of stemming economic migration.
 - **Getting Europe's migrant crisis under control will be the main focus of a summit.**
 - European countries are at loggerheads over how to deal with the arrival of hundreds of thousands of people fleeing war, poverty and political upheaval in Middle East & Africa.
- Toughest law against plastic bags
 - **Kenya has imposed world's toughest laws to reduce plastic pollution, with people selling or using plastic bags at risk of up to 4 years in prison & fines of up to 4m Kenyan shillings.**
 - With this move Kenya joins 40 other countries that have banned, partly banned or taxed single use plastic bags, including China, France & Italy.
 - It took Kenya 3 attempts over 10 years to finally pass the ban.
- Ban on transgender military recruits
 - President Trump has signed a memorandum that directs US military to not accept transgender individuals as recruits.
 - It also halts use of govt funds for sex-reassignment surgeries for active personnel unless the process is already under way.





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- Announcement reversed a policy shift started under his predecessor, President Obama.
- There are about 15,000 transgender people serving in US military.
- Canada to allow gender-neutral passports
 - Canadian citizens who do not identify as male or female will soon be able to mark "X" on their passports and other identity documents.
 - The step has been taken so that Canadians are able to better reflect their gender identity.
 - This measure will advance equality for all Canadian citizens irrespective of their gender identity and expression.
- US to build radar systems in Palau
 - US has announced plans to install radar systems in Palau, a move that will increase its monitoring ability in western Pacific region
 - While Palau is an independent nation, it has no military & US is responsible for its defence under an agreement with Washington
 - Palau is about 1,300km south-west of Guam, US Pacific territory that Pyongyang threatened to fire missiles towards earlier this month
- International Military Music Festival
 - A Tri-Services band from Indian Armed Forces has been invited to perform in International Military Music Festival in Moscow
 - International Military Music Festival Spasskaya Tower is the parade of best military music bands of Russia & other countries that takes place every year at Red Square in Moscow
 - Participation of Tri- Services Band would foster better ties b/w Armed Forces of 2 countries
- US imposes financial sanctions
 - United States has slapped strong financial sanctions on Venezuela, barring banks from any new deals with the government.



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- It also prohibits dealings in certain existing bonds owned by the Venezuelan public sector, as well as dividend payments to the government.
- Venezuela has been engulfed in an economic crisis, featuring skyrocketing inflation and food shortages.
- Smart snow leopard plan
 - Nepal has launched its climate-smart snow leopard landscape management plan, leading the way in safeguarding the endangered species and its habitat.
 - The conservation plan addresses key current and emerging threats to the snow leopards, including climate change.
 - This is the first climate-smart landscape management plan for snow leopard conservation in the world.
- First-ever shipment of coal to Ukraine
 - The United States has sent its first shipment of anthracite coal to Ukraine from the U.S. port of Baltimore under a deal designed to increase Ukraine's energy security.
 - The first shipment of 62,000 tons is expected to arrive in Odesa's Yuzhnyy port in three weeks.
 - **Most of Ukraine's anthracite coal in the past came from parts of Donbas** that are now controlled by Russia-backed separatists.
- China to relaunch fastest bullet trains
 - China is relaunching world's fastest bullet trains running at 350 km/h.
 - China first ran trains at 350 km/h in 2008 but cut speeds back to 250-300 km/h in 2011 following a two-train collision.
 - Trains will service the route from Beijing to Shanghai, making 1250 km journey in just 4 hr, 30 mins.
 - China has spent about \$360 bn on high-speed rail, building by far largest network in the world.





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- Iran tests new ballistic missile
 - Iran has "successfully" tested a new ballistic missile that can carry multiple warheads and can travel up to 2,000km.
 - The move was a direct challenge to US President Donald Trump, who in August signed a bill imposing mandatory penalties on those involved in Iran's ballistic missile programme.
 - This is the third Iranian missile with a range of 2,000 km.
- World's fastest bullet train launched
 - **China began the process to restore the world's fastest bullet train,** running at 350 km/hr, from Beijing to Shanghai, 6 years after it reduced the speed of its trains.
 - **A 'Fuxing' bullet train, which will enjoy the high-speed,** departed Beijing South Railway for Shanghai.
 - The Fuxing has a 30-year life, 10 years more than the existing model, and consumes 10% less power when running at 350 km/hr.
- Afghan Air Force receives helicopters
 - The Afghan Air Force took delivery of its first four US made UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters.
 - The U.S. plans to supply a total of 159 Black Hawks to Afghanistan in the coming years as it boosts the capacity of the Afghan Air Force.
 - The helicopters will replace the Russian made Mi-17 helicopters.
- Bangladesh nuclear plant
 - India said it is collaborating with Russia to build the Roppur nuclear power plant in Bangladesh. This will be India's first atomic energy venture abroad.
 - The Rooppur project, which is being built by the Russians near Dhaka, will be **Bangladesh's first atomic** energy project.



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- According to the 2014 Indo-Russia agreement, both countries can supply materials to third countries for nuclear energy.
- 50 Nations Ink UN Nuclear Ban Treaty
 - Brazil was the first country to sign onto the ban, followed by nations from Algeria to Venezuela.
 - Before the day was out, 50 states as different as Indonesia and Ireland had put their names to the treaty.
 - **The U.S., Britain and France said the prohibition wouldn't work and would end up disarming their nations while emboldening "bad actors".**
- Military cooperation deal
 - Britain and Saudi Arabia have signed a framework deal on military and security cooperation as the Riyadh regime intensifies its ongoing campaign against Yemen.
 - The agreement comes as Britain seeks to explore lucrative trade deals outside Europe, after voting to leave the European Union.
 - The deal comes just 2 days after Gulf rival Qatar agreed to purchase jet fighters from the European nation
- Countries that faced natural disasters
 - According to UN secretary-general Antonio Guterres, India ranked 3rd among the countries that have faced the most natural disasters in the last half century.
 - U.S, followed by China, India, Philippines and Indonesia, have experienced most disasters since 1995 - more than 1,600, or once every 5 days.
 - Climate change was among the 7 global threats that he listed needing immediate global action.
- Saudi Arabia to unblock internet calling





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- Saudi Arabia has decided to lift ban on internet calling apps as it faces criticism over censorship.
- All online voice & video call services like Skype & WhatsApp that satisfy regulatory requirements will become accessible.
- It is aimed at improving business confidence as kingdom transitions into a post-oil era, access to VoIP will reduce operational costs & spur digital entrepreneurship.
- First US military base in Israel
 - For the first time in history, U.S. has established a permanent military base in Israel.
 - The base will be located within Israel Defense Forces Air Defense School in southern Israel.
 - It will include barracks & several other buildings for U.S. troops to be stationed in the country, as well as systems to identify & intercept aerial threats.
 - It will operate under Israeli military directives.
- China opens dual-use highway
 - China has opened a strategic highway in Tibet to Nepal border which could be used for civilian & defense purposes.
 - The highway will shorten the journey from an hour to 30 mins b/w dual-use civil & military airport & Tibet's 2nd-largest city.
 - The highway will enable China to forge a route into South Asia in both economic & defense terms.
- Tunisia lifts ban on Muslim women
 - Tunisia has abolished a 44 yr old ban on Muslim women marrying non-Muslims as president seeks to secure equal rights for country's female population.



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- Until now a non-Muslim man who wished to marry a Muslim Tunisian woman had to convert to Islam & submit a certificate of his conversion as proof.
- Commission led by a female lawyer & rights activists was created, aimed at drafting revised rules.
- Russia and Iraq restore air travel
 - Russia and Iraq have restored scheduled commercial airline services for the first time since 2004.
 - **An Iraqi Airways plane left Baghdad and will arrive at Moscow's Vnukovo airport.**
 - The two countries may also later agree on air travel to the Iraqi city of Basra.
 - Russia suspended regular flights to Iraq in 2004 after the US-led invasion in 2003 plunged the Arab country into war.
- Sahara Forest Project takes-off
 - In a bid to turn the desert land into a flourishing farmland, Jordan has launched Sahara forest project, which will use innovative technology to produce food using, sun & sea water.
 - SFP is centered around the core technologies of saltwater-cooled greenhouses, concentrated solar power, and desert revegetation practices.
 - Norwegian govt & European Union are the 2 biggest donors to the project.
- Fresh sanctions on North Korea
 - Security Council has unanimously adopted a US-drafted resolution to impose new sanctions on North Korea
 - Resolution seeks to cut imports of refined petroleum products to 2 mn barrels a year, ban textile exports & strengthen inspection of ships that are believed to be carrying cargo in breach of sanctions





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- UN imposed a fresh round of sanctions on North Korea after its 6th & largest nuclear test
- ADB to provide \$152 mn to Nepal
 - Asian Development Bank will provide a \$152 mn to Nepal for implementation & enhancement of its power transmission & distribution.
 - The project, having a 4 to 5-year completion period, would incorporate various components such as construction of transmission lines, upgrading sub-stations.
 - Aid will be granted to PTDEEP which supports expansion of the transmission lines in various areas of Nepal
- France appoints envoy to mediate
 - France has picked former ambassador Bertrand Besancenot to Saudi Arabia as a special envoy to try & help mediation efforts in Qatar crisis.
 - France, which has close ties with Egypt & UAE while also being a major arms supplier to Qatar has called for calm in the dispute.
 - A dispute erupted in June when Arab countries cut diplomatic, trade & **travel ties over Qatar's terrorist & extremist groups.**
- France to ban oil and gas production
 - France's govt is unveiling a law to ban all production & exploration of oil & natural gas by 2040 on its mainland & overseas territories
 - Ban is part of a larger plan to wean country's economy from fossil fuels, to encourage clean energy & fulfill France's commitment under the Paris Climate Agreement
 - France's oil & gas production represents just 1% of national consumption the rest is imported
- Seychelles ratifies ISA pact
 - Seychelles has become the ninth member to ratify the International Solar Alliance Framework Agreement.



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- With this, the ISA will need the ratification of just 6 more countries to become a recognized inter-governmental body.
- The ISA was instituted to connect 121 solar-resource-rich nations for research, low-cost financing and rapid deployment of clean energy.
- **Trump to end Dreamers Program**
 - Donald Trump has decided to scrap a program giving work permits to people who came to the United States illegally as children.
 - The program, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, was established in 2012.
 - DACA, as it is usually referred to, protected young immigrants who came to the U.S. as children without legal status.
- **Iran tests its homegrown air defence**
 - Iran has tested its home grown air defence system, designed to match the Russian S-300, the head of the Revolutionary Guards' air defence has said.
 - Bavar (which means "belief") is Tehran's first long-range missile defence system, and is set to be operational by March 2018.
 - In 2010, Iran began manufacturing Bavar-373 after the purchase of the S-300 from Russia was suspended.
- **Australia and Timor-Leste strike deal**
 - Australia and Timor-Leste have reached a historic agreement, concluding a long-running and bitter maritime boundary dispute over the Timor Sea through conciliation.
 - The deal clarifies the legal status of the Greater Sunrise gas fields, and establishes a regime to develop and share revenue from the resource.
 - Timor sea holds 9th cubic feet of gas.
- **Indian Ocean Conference held in Colombo**





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- India Foundation, a Delhi-based think tank, hosted the Indian Ocean Conference 2017 (IOC) in collaboration with RSIS, Singapore, and NIFS, Colombo (both research and study centres).
- Theme of the conference is peace, progress and prosperity.
- It has seen participation from around 35 countries including USA, Australia, India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Germany, Kenya, South Korea and Afghanistan.
- Kenyan court scraps presidential vote
 - Kenya's Supreme Court has nullified the result of August 8 presidential election won by President Uhuru Kenyatta
 - The court said the electoral board committed "irregularities & illegalities" during last month's vote, harming the integrity of the election
 - The court ordered another presidential election to be held within 60 days
 - No presidential election in Kenya has ever been nullified before
- Nepal signs UN assistance framework
 - Nepalese govt has signed UN Development Assistance Framework for 2018-2022, which lays out development strategy for next 5 years.
 - \$635 mn package involving 26 UN agencies is aimed at assisting Nepal in economic growth, social development, climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction.
 - The assistance framework will contribute to achieving Agenda 2030 for sustainable development.

October 2017

- Saudi to allow women into sports stadium
 - Women in Saudi Arabia have been allowed to attend matches at sports stadiums form 2018.
 - As per the current rules, women are not allowed in sports stadiums.



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- This decision is a part of economic and social reforms implemented by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.
- Earlier, Saudi Arabian Royal declaration permitted women to drive, starting from June 2018.
- Catalonia gets independence from Spain
 - Catalonia declared independence from Spain after lawmakers in the autonomous region voted to declare independence.
 - The decision was made during a secret vote in Barcelona on 27th October 2017.
 - After the declaration, the Spanish government dismissed the Catalan President Carles Puigdemont and his cabinet. It allowed Madrid to directly administer the region.
- 14th SAARCLAW Conference held in Colombo
 - 14th South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation in Law (SAARCLAW) Conference is being held from 27th -29th October, 2017 in Colombo, Sri Lanka, along with the 11th SAARC Chief Justices Conference.
 - Theme of 14th **SAARCLAW Conference is “Emerging Legal Trends in SAARC Countries”**.
 - During the course of this three-day conference, discussion will be held on several subjects.
- CII Industrial Innovation 2017
 - L&T Technology Services has been honored with the CII Industrial Innovation Award, 2017 in New Delhi.
 - This award is referred as one of the most innovative Indian companies in the services category at the CII Industrial Innovation Awards ceremony in New Delhi
 - **The Confederation of Indian Industry praised LTTS’ efforts to create a collaborative ecosystem comprising of global technology firms.**





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- First Tesla factory outside US
 - Electric car maker Tesla has set up its first electric car manufacturing plant outside the US at Shanghai in China.
 - **China has the world's largest auto industry.**
 - Tesla, Inc. is an American automaker, energy storage company and solar panel manufacturer based in Palo Alto, California. It was founded in 2003 and its CEO is Elon Musk.
- Melbourne Mercer Global Pension Index
 - India is ranked 28th out of 30 countries in the Melbourne Mercer Global Pension Index 2017 published by Australian Centre for Financial Studies.
 - It reviewed pension system of 30 countries which together cover 60% of **the world's population.**
 - **India's overall index is 44.9, which marks an improvement** over index value of 43.4 in 2016. Denmark topped the index for 6th consecutive year.
- **'Most powerful' passport: Singapore**
 - As per 'Global Passport Power Rank 2017', compiled by international financial advisory firm Arton Capital, passport of Singapore is now the **"most powerful" passport in the world.**
 - The index ranks national passports on basis of Visa-Free Score.
 - VFS is number of countries a passport holder can visit visa-free or with visa on arrival. Higher ranking indicates better global mobility.
- Robert removed as goodwill ambassador
 - Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe has been removed from goodwill ambassador, to World Health Organization (WHO).
 - Mugabe, 93, is blamed in the West for destroying Zimbabwe's economy and numerous human rights abuses during his 37 years leading the country as either president or prime minister.
- Sri Lanka commissions warship in Navy



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- Sri Lanka Navy commissioned Coast Guard Ship Suraksha provided by India.
- SLCGS Suraksha is an Offshore Patrol Vessel (OPV) provided by the Indian Coast Guard to the Sri Lanka Navy.
- **During its tenure with Indian Coast Guard, this OPV was named 'Varuna'.** It was formally handed over to Sri Lankan Navy in September 2017.
- India's new chancery complex in Dhaka
 - External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj opened the new chancery complex of the Indian High Commission in Dhaka.
 - Swaraj lit a candle to mark the opening of the huge complex at Dhaka's Baridhara diplomatic enclave while the High Commission was previously operating from a house in Gulshan area.
 - During the ceremony, she also inaugurated 15 development projects of Bangladesh being funded by India
- **Gitanjali became America's Scientist**
 - 11 years old Gitanjali Rao from Lone Tree, Colorado, is the winner of this year's **Discovery Education 3M Young Scientist Challenge**.
 - She got the award for her sensor that can detect lead levels in water better than traditional methods.
 - Gitanjali after winning will take home US\$25,000 for her innovative idea, which she said that she developed approximately five months ago.
- 2nd World Congress on Marxism
 - 2nd World Congress on Marxism is scheduled to be held in Peking University in Beijing from 5th – 6th May 2018.
 - **The theme of 2nd World Congress on Marxism will be "Marxism and the current world and China".**





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- The 2nd World Congress on Marxism coincides with the 200th anniversary of Karl Marx's birth and 40th anniversary of China's reform and opening-up.
- **Shinzo Abe reelected as PM of Japan**
 - **Japanese PM Shinzo Abe's Liberal Democratic Party** secured over two-thirds majority in the lower house of Parliament.
 - **The win gives Abe's ruling coalition, which already holds majority in the upper house, free reign to pass legislation in the country.**
 - **Abe is likely to acquire the title of Japan's longest serving Prime Minister.** His four-year term was to otherwise end in December 2018.
- **Lebanon passes first budget since 2005**
 - Lebanon's parliament has approved a government budget for the first time since 2005.
 - For 12 years, political crises and wars have forced Lebanon's state institutions to operate without a budget.
 - The 2005 assassination of former premier Rafik Hariri, plunged Lebanon into turmoil, dividing the country between supporters and enemies of Damascus.
- **Peru legalized medical marijuana**
 - **Peru's conservative Congress passed a bill to legalize medical uses of marijuana.**
 - **This legislation was proposed by Peru's President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski.**
 - It came after police cracked down on a group of mothers making cannabis oil in a makeshift laboratory to treat their children suffering from epilepsy, a neurological disorder.
- **World's oldest warship sailing again**
 - **The refurbished "USS Constitution" which is world's oldest commissioned warship sailed again on October 20, 2017.**



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- USS Constitution's ride marks 220th anniversary of its launch as well as U.S. Navy's 242nd birthday.
- This will be its first sail since October 2014. 'USS Constitution' was named by the first President of United States, George Washington.
- **World's first floating wind farm**
 - World's first floating wind farm located over 15 miles off the coast of Peterhead, Aberdeenshire in Scotland has started generating electricity.
 - Work of setting up this wind farm started in July 2017.
 - It is expected that this floating wind farm will generate 135GWh of electricity each year.
- **Child Mortality 2017: Report**
 - As per a report titled "**Levels and Trends in Child Mortality 2017**", India along with Pakistan, Nigeria, Congo and Ethiopia is responsible for half of all new-born deaths in the world.
 - Report estimates are developed by UN Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation in context of monitoring child survival.
 - As per the report, 6 million children died before reaching the age of five in 2016
- **Consumer Conference 2017**
 - Petroleum and Natural Gas minister, Shri Dharmendra Pradhan, led a delegation to Tokyo participate in LNG Producer- Consumer Conference.
 - The conference is organized by the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan and the Asia Pacific Energy Research Centre.
 - It is a global annual dialogue which provides participants a forum for sharing the latest trends in the global LNG market.
- **India, Brazil, S.A. sign agreement**
 - India, Brazil and South Africa signed the IBSA Trust Fund Agreement that seeks to combat poverty in developing countries.





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- The agreement was signed during 8th IBSA trilateral Ministerial Commission Meeting in Durban, South Africa.
- The IBSA Fund was created in 2004. India, Brazil and South Africa (IBSA) contributes USD 1 million annually to this fund. Fund is managed by UNDP Special Unit.
- **“Authentic Brands Study 2017”**
 - On 17th October 2017, a new survey named **“Authentic Brands Study”** stated that, Indian consumers regard Google as the most authentic brand.
 - Survey was conducted by Cohn & Wolfe. It is followed by Microsoft, Amazon.com, Maruti Suzuki and Apple.
 - Globally, Amazon occupies the 1st place and Apple the 2nd, as the most authentic brands, according to the Cohn & Wolfe survey.
- Report on worst cities for women
 - **As per a survey by the Thomson Reuters Foundation, India’s capital Delhi** is one of the worst megacities in the world on the parameter of women safety.
 - The survey was conducted in 19 megacities (having more than 10 million population) of the world between June and July 2017.
 - **Japan’s capital Tokyo emerged as the safest city in terms of risk of sexual harassment.**
- Audrey Azoulay elected as UNESCO DG
 - Former French Culture Minister Audrey Azoulay (45) was elected as new Director General of UNESCO – **the UN’s education, science and culture** agency.
 - With this, she becomes first Jewish Director of UNESCO.
 - **Azoulay defeated Qatar’s Hamad bin Abdulaziz al-Kawari** in the final 30-28 vote. She will succeed outgoing Director-General Irina Bokova of Bulgaria.



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- Nisha Desai appointed as head of USIBC
 - Nisha Desai Biswal, former U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia, was appointed as President of the U.S.-India Business Council.
 - USIBC is a forum of U.S. businesses under the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, with headquarters at Washington, D.C.
 - Nisha Desai Biswal will combine the interests of the American businesses in a way that would be useful to the Indian government.
- India slips to 8th among valuable brands
 - India has ranked as 8th most valuable nation brand as per **Brand Finance's Nation Brands 2017 report.**
 - In 2017, India has slipped down by one spot as compared to 2016 ranking.
 - **India's National Brand Value** in 2017 at USD 2.04 trillion too has eroded by nearly one percent from last year's USD 2.06 trillion.
- IFC invests \$76 mn in masala bond
 - The IFC, a member of the World Bank Group, has invested USD76 million in 5 years in masala bond of Fullerton India Credit Company.
 - IFC is using masala bonds to support companies in diversifying their funding sources, thus expanding a newly opened market to attract private investment.
 - IFC helped create the masala bond market through its own first issuance in November 2014.
- Shah appointed as FICCI UK Director
 - The apex industry body, Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry announced appointment of Param Shah as the new Director for the United Kingdom (UK) operations.
 - Shah will succeed Pratik Dattani whose tenure with FICCI ended recently.





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- Shah has more than 15 years of experience, which includes working for Gujarat Chamber of Commerce and Industry as Deputy Secretary General.
- Conference of SAARC Speakers
 - The 8th Conference of the Association of SAARC Speakers and Parliamentarians is being held in Colombo.
 - The three day conference which started on October 4, 2017 is lead by Sumitra Mahajan.
 - She will speak on the topic Association of the SAARC Speakers and Parliamentarians, a platform for the Parliamentarians of South Asia to work together to reach the 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development.
- Suu Kyi stripped of Oxford honour
 - An honour bestowed on Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi by the city of Oxford has been withdrawn as a reaction to her perceived inadequate response to the plight of Rohingya Muslims in the country.
 - **The 'Freedom of Oxford' had been granted to her in 1997 for her long struggle for democracy by the Oxford City Council.**
 - Council said it is no longer appropriate for her to hold the honour.
- President of India reaches Djibouti
 - Indian president, Shri Ram Nath Kovind reached Djibouti on October 3, 2017 in the first leg of his state visit to two African countries - Djibouti and Ethiopia.
 - **This is President Kovind's first overseas visit after assuming office.**
 - The two leaders engaged in a short round of talks on bilateral relations and themes of common interest to both countries.
- Soumya Swaminathan as Deputy DG of WHO
 - Dr Soumya Swaminathan, director general of the Indian Council of Medical Research has been appointed the deputy director general for programmes (DDP) of WHO.



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- She also holds a key position as secretary in the department of health research, ministry of health and family welfare.
- She is a pediatrician by speciality and has more than 30 years of experience in clinical care, research.
- First Saudi monarch to visit Russia
 - King Salman of Saudi Arabia will arrive in Russia to conduct the first official visit to the country by a Saudi king.
 - Main topic of talks in Moscow will be Syria, where Russia & Saudis are backing different sides in the 6 year-long conflict.
 - Saudi Arabia & Russia are heavily dependent on oil exports & plunge of the price of crude that began in 2014 lashed both of their economies.
- Benghazi reopens after three-year
 - **Benghazi's commercial port** officially reopened after a 3 year closure due to fighting between rival factions in the east Libyan city.
 - Commercial operations at the port had ended in 2014 when armed movements, including the Islamic State terror group, occupied the North African country's 2nd city.
 - The port does not export oil, but imports gas & some petroleum products as well as general cargo.
- UAE begins collecting 'sin' taxes
 - United Arab Emirates has started collecting "sin" taxes on tobacco products, energy drinks & soft drinks.
 - Tobacco & energy drinks will be taxed at 100% & soft drinks at 50%.
 - New tax push comes as UAE & other Gulf nations have struggled with low global energy prices
 - All 6 members of Gulf Cooperation Council have agreed to begin collecting VAT taxes, though others may begin later than January
- Catalonia to hold referendum





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- Catalonia is holding a referendum on independence from Spain despite the govt calling it a mockery of democracy.
- The govt has called the referendum as unconstitutional & country's Constitutional Court has suspended the vote so that it could consider the matter.
- A minority of around 40% of Catalans support independence, polls show, although a majority want to hold a referendum on the issue.

November 2017

- Victoria legalises Euthanasia
 - Victoria became the first Australian state to legalize assisted dying or euthanasia.
 - Lawmakers voted to allow terminally ill patients the right to request a lethal drug to end their lives from June 2019.
 - The legislation was passed in Victoria after 100 hours of debate, making it the only place in Australia where the practice will be legal.
- Volcano erupts in Bali
 - Mount Agung is erupting for the second time in less than a week in Bali.
 - Indonesia's disaster mitigation agency said 40,000 people had been evacuated from near Bali's erupting Mount Agung volcano.
 - The volcano alert for Bali's Mount Agung has been raised to its the highest level, prompting the closure of the tourist island's main airport amid fears of an imminent major eruption.
- Guidelines on responding to child abuse
 - In a first, the World Health Organisation has formulated clinical guidelines on responding to children and adolescents who have been sexually abused.



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- WHO's **first of kind** gender-sensitive guidelines provide first line support to child or adolescent in response to the disclosure of sexual abuse.
- The guidelines are grounded in human rights standards and ethical principles.
- Iran allows women to compete in sports
 - Women weightlifters from Iran will be allowed to compete internationally for the first time.
 - Iran has one of the world's strongest weightlifting cultures, and its men have won seven Olympic gold medals this century.
 - The federation's chief also said that the women weightlifters can compete wearing special clothes for Muslim athletes.
- Myanmar, Bangladesh sign deal
 - Bangladesh and Myanmar signed a memorandum of understanding on the return of Rohingya Muslims who fled the Rakhine state in Myanmar to escape a military crackdown.
 - The Rohingya are a stateless minority who have long experienced persecution in Myanmar, also known as Burma.
 - More than 600,000 have fled to neighbouring Bangladesh since deadly Rohingya attacks in August.
- **Air force drill "Vigilant Ace"**
 - The air forces of South Korea and the United States will hold 'Vigilant Ace' a joint drill from 4th – 8th December.
 - 'Vigilant Ace' between air forces of United States and South Korea is held at periodic intervals to simulate wartime defenses.
 - The exercise comes as North Korea continues to press forward with developing its nuclear and missile program.
- S&P **retains India's rating at 'BBB-'**





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- Rating agency Standard & Poor's (S&P) kept its sovereign rating for India unchanged at 'BBB-', with an outlook for the nation as 'stable'.
- BBB- rating is the lowest investment grade and just one notch above junk status.
- S&P **stated that India's sizable fiscal deficit, low per capita income, and high government debt do not warrant a sovereign rating upgrade as of now.**
- Mount Agung erupts after 54 years
 - Mount Agung, a volcano on the Indonesian island of Bali has erupted for the first time in more than 54 years.
 - Mount Agung last erupted in 1963, claiming 1600 lives.
 - Due to increased volcanic activity in the recent months, more than 1.4 lakh people have evacuated their homes.
- WTO sets up panel on Qatar-UAE crisis
 - **The World Trade Organization has established a panel to decide on Qatar's complaint against measures imposed on Doha by UAE for its alleged financial support for militant groups.**
 - **Qatar insists UAE's actions violate its rights and those of other countries by denying freedom of transit to Qatar.**
 - Bahrain, Egypt, Saudi Arabia & UAE launched an economic boycott of Qatar in June 2017.
- Most violent region for women
 - According to UN, Latin America and the Caribbean is the most violent region in the world for women.
 - Rate of sexual violence against women outside of relationships is the highest in the world in the region & the 2nd-highest for those who are in, or were in, a couple.
 - UN Women and UNDP found out that assaults on women persisted in the region despite severe laws aimed at curbing the phenomenon.



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- China launches remote sensing satellites
 - On 21st November 2017, China launched three remote sensing satellites Jilin-1 04, Jilin-1 05 and Jilin-1 06 from Taiyuan Satellite Launch Center **in China's northern Shanxi Province.**
 - The satellites have been designed to improve observation capability to promote commercial use for the remote sensing industry.
 - The system will be used for wide imaging, video imaging, and multispectral imaging.
- Asia-**Europe Foreign Ministers' Meeting**
 - Two-day 13th Asia-**Europe Foreign Ministers' Meeting** begun on November 20, 2017, in Nay Pyi Taw, the capital of Myanmar.
 - The meeting was inaugurated by Aung San Suu Kyi, the de facto leader of Myanmar.
 - The meeting was held with an objective to boost cooperation between Asia and Europe in political, economic, social and cultural spheres.
 - Representatives from 51 countries attended the meeting.
- Bengaluru joins network for climate data
 - Bengaluru has joined 91 cities across the globe in Datacity programme to collate data on climate change.
 - Datacity programme was launched in Paris in 2015 with an objective to develop data which can help resolve climate challenges.
 - This programme is led by French start-up accelerator NUMA and is supported by technology experts including Carto, OpenDataSoft, and Dataiku.
- Modi Govt. 3rd most trusted in the world



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- Indian government under Prime Minister Narendra Modi has ranked as the third most trusted government in the world as per Government at a Glance 2017.
- It was published by Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.
- As per the report, nearly 74 percent of Indians have expressed confidence in their national government.
- This list is topped by Switzerland and followed by Indonesia.
- India wins ICJ seat
 - India's nominee to the ICJ Dalveer Bhandari was re-elected after the United Kingdom withdrew its candidate Christopher Greenwood.
 - The U.K. chose to withdraw after it became clear that it would not win the contest in the General Assembly and it did not have adequate support in the UNSC.
 - This is the first time in the 70-year history of the United Nations that the U.K. will not be on ICJ.
- Anuk Arudpragasam bags 2017 DSC Prize
 - **Sri Lankan author Anuk Arudpragasam's "The Story of a Brief Marriage"** has bagged the \$25,000 DSC Prize for South Asian Literature 2017.
 - Bangladesh Finance Minister Abul Maal Abdul Muhith presented the award to Arudpragasam.
 - **"The Story of a Brief Marriage" is a touching tale of a young man trapped on the frontlines between the Sri Lankan Army and the Tamil Tigers.**
- Sarah Clarke: 1st female Black Rod
 - Sarah Clarke, a former director of the Wimbledon tennis championships, has been appointed as Black Rod at the House of Lords.
 - **It is the first time a woman has held this position in the UK parliament's 669-year history.**



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- She is currently championships director at the All England Lawn Tennis Club.
- Black Rod is the senior official responsible for maintaining order at the House of Lords.
- UN passes Pakistan-sponsored resolution
 - United Nations (UN) General Assembly unanimously passed a Pakistan-sponsored resolution.
 - It considers right of peoples to self-determination as a fundamental condition for the effective guarantee and observance of human rights.
 - It states that foreign military intervention, aggression, and occupation suppresses the right of peoples to self-determination and other human rights.
- **Sarajevo in UNESCO's Memory of the World**
 - Sarajevo Haggadah, the 14th-century richly illuminated Hebrew manuscript, has been included in UNESCO's Memory of the World Register.
 - Sarajevo Haggadah has been kept at the National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina since 1894.
 - In Hebrew, Haggadah means a handwritten story (on parchment). It is read by family members on the occasion of the Jewish feast of Passover.
- Qatar, the Richest Country: IMF Report
 - Based on the per capita income of its people, Qatar has been named the world's richest country as per the recent International Monetary Fund (IMF) report.
 - The per capita GDP (gross domestic product) of Qatar is over Rs. 81 lakh.
 - With per capita GDP of over Rs. 38 lakh, the United States is at No. 13. India, with a GDP of over Rs. 4 lakh per person, is ranked 126th.
- Khan Market 24th Most Expensive location





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- As per the latest report released by real estate consultancy firm Cushman & Wakefield, **Delhi's Khan Market is most expensive retail location in India and 24th most expensive retail location in world.**
- The report presented findings from a survey which covered 400 retail locations in 66 countries.
- **Market's 24th rank in this year's rankings marks an improvement over 28th rank in 2016 rankings.**
- Kevin became Miss International 2017
 - On 14th November 2017, Indonesia's **Kevin Lilliana was crowned Miss International 2017 by the Philippines' Kylie Verzosa at the Tokyo Dome City Hall in Japan.**
 - This is the first Miss International title for Indonesia.
 - Kevin Lilliana is 21 years old. She is a model. She has won the crown beating 68 candidates from across the world.
- Conf. on eradication of Child Labour
 - A plenary session of 4th Global Conference on Sustained Eradication of Child Labour was held in Buenos Aires, Argentina on November 15, 2017.
 - This Conference was jointly organised by Government of Argentina and International Labour Organization.
 - Minister of Women & Child Development, Maneka Gandhi attended the conference and gave her commitment to continue working to eliminate child labour.
- ISA to set up 1000 GW of solar energy
 - The International Solar Alliance has announced a target to support setting up 1000GW of solar energy capacity by 2030 across its member countries.
 - It will be met through projects that ISA will support under its various work programmes.
 - This initiative by India to harness the untapped resource of sunshine-rich countries was launched at the Paris climate talks in 2015.



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- Forbes List of Asia's Richest Families
 - **India's Ambani family has topped the Forbes list of Asia's Richest Families** for the first time with a net worth of \$44.8 billion.
 - **The collective wealth of Asia's 50 richest families on the list is a record \$699 billion.**
 - Top 3 Families in Asia- **India's Ambani Family- \$44.8 billion, Korea's Lee family- \$40.8 billion, Hong Kong's Kwok family-** (\$40.4 billion).
- UN Peacekeeping Defence conference 2017
 - UN Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial Conference 2017 was held in Vancouver, Canada on 14th & 15th November 2017.
 - Over 500 delegates from more than 70 countries and international organizations attended this conference.
 - During the conference, new pledges were sought from member countries, particularly in areas where the UN faces gaps, such as rapid deployment, helicopters and francophone units.
- 31st ASEAN Summit held in Manila
 - 31st ASEAN Summit and Related Summits were held in Manila, Philippines from 10th – 14th November, 2017.
 - Philippines President Rodrigo Roa Duterte chaired the plenary session of the 31st ASEAN Summit.
 - The theme of the summit was '**Partnering for Change, Engaging the World**'.
 - ASEAN ministers inked free trade and investment pacts with Hong Kong.
- **Slovenia's President Wins Second Term**
 - **Slovenia's President Borut Pahor wins Second Term in Runoff Election.**
 - He received nearly 53 percent of votes.
 - His rival, Marjan Sarec, the former actor and mayor of a small town north received a little more than 47 percent of the vote.





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- Saudi Arabia recognizes Yoga as Sport
 - The Saudi Arabian government has approved the practice of yoga as a sports activity.
 - This news came from a social media post of Nouf Marwaai, founder of the Arab Yoga Foundation in the Saudi kingdom.
 - The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has recognized the practice of Yoga as an approved sport, which can be practiced freely there.
- **World's first fully electric cargo ship**
 - **China has launched the world's first all-electric ship**, which can travel up to 80 km with 2000-tonnes cargo after a two-hour charge.
 - The ship is 70.5-metre-long and weighs about 600 tonnes. It was launched **in Guangzhou in South China's Guangdong Province.**
 - The ship has been manufactured by the Guangzhou Shipyard International Company Ltd.
- India to be 3rd largest economy by 2028
 - **India is likely to overtake Japan as world's third-largest economy**, by 2028 in terms of nominal gross domestic product (GDP).
 - This is according to a recent report by Bank of America Merrill Lynch (BofA-ML).
 - This projection is based on the assumption that Indian economy will grow **at 10% rate in US dollar terms over the next 10 years, ahead of Japan's 1.6% growth rate.**
- 10th South Asia Economic Summit
 - The 10th South Asia Economic Summit (SAES) has begun in Kathmandu, Nepal.
 - The theme of the 3-day summit is **"Deepening Economic Integration for Inclusive and Sustainable Development in South Asia"**.



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- The summit is being organised by National Planning Commission and Ministry of Commerce of Nepal and South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics, and Environment, Nepal.
- Bangladesh CJ Surendra Sinha resigns
 - **Bangladesh's first Hindu Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha has** resigned after facing financial irregularities and money laundering allegations.
 - Surendra Kumar Sinha led the Supreme Court to a landmark verdict which **scrapped Parliament's power to remove judges on grounds of misconduct and incapacity**, in August 2017.
 - His term was scheduled to expire in January 2018.
- APEC summit held in Vietnam
 - **Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Economic Leaders' Meeting** was held on 10th and 11th November, 2017 in Da Nang, Vietnam.
 - **Theme of this meeting was 'Creating New Dynamism, Fostering a Shared Future'**.
 - Leaders of 21 Pacific Rim countries attended this meeting. This was the first APEC meeting for several leaders.
- EU Launches Election Observation Mission
 - The European Union Election Observation Mission was officially launched to monitor the general and provincial polls in Nepal which are scheduled for November 26 and December 7.
 - Around 100 election observers from member countries of the EU have been deployed to oversee the polls in the Himalayan nation.
 - The EU has allocated 3.5 million euro for the entire election observation process.
- The top tourist destinations in 2017





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- Hong Kong remains the world's most visited city by international travellers in spite of strained relations with neighbouring China.
- In a report on the top 100 city destinations that highlights the growth in Asian tourism, market research firm Euromonitor International said 25.7 million arrivals are expected in Hong Kong in 2017.
- Other countries followed by Hong Kong are Bangkok and London.
- **India again member of UNESCO's Board**
 - India has been re-elected as the member of the UNESCO's executive board, its top decision-making body.
 - The election was held at the 39th session of the General Conference of the UNESCO in Paris, France.
 - In the General Conference, each country has one vote, irrespective of its size or the extent of its contribution to the budget.
- **Three-day Organic World Congress**
 - A 3-day Organic World Congress, 2017 is being organized at India Expo Centre in Greater Noida.
 - It will see the participation of 1,400 representatives from 110 countries, and 2000 delegates from India.
 - The OWC is organized once every 3 years in a different country. Last edition took place in Istanbul, Turkey in 2014.
- **Business optimism ranking, India at 7th**
 - As per Grant Thornton's International Business Report (IBR), India has slipped to 7th position in 'business optimism' index for the September 2017 quarter.
 - This marks a drop by five places as compared to 2nd position in the previous three months.
 - Grant Thornton International Business Report (IBR) is a business survey launched in 1992.
- **Guinea becomes new member of ISA**



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- **Guinea's Foreign Minister, Mamady Toure handed over Guinea's** Instrument of Accession to the India-initiated International Solar Alliance.
- ISA is an alliance of countries which are located completely or partly between Tropic of Cancer and Tropic of Capricorn.
- Under the ISA, solar rich countries will collaborate to fulfill their objectives and needs pertaining to solar energy.
- **'Paradise Papers' revelations**
 - **'Paradise Papers' indicate that out of 180 countries represented in the data** of offshore entities held by persons of different nationalities, India ranks 19th in terms of a number of names.
 - 714 Indians reportedly appear in the tally.
 - Government has directed that investigations will be monitored through a reconstituted Multi Agency Group, headed by the Chairman, CBDT Sushil Chandra.
- **India Pavilion Launched at COP 23**
 - The India Pavilion at Conference of Parties (COP) 23 was inaugurated by Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Dr. Harsh Vardhan at Bonn in Germany.
 - The Minister is leading the Indian delegation, which is participating in the 23rd to the UNFCCC being held at the Bonn, Germany from November 6-17, 2017.
 - **India's theme for COP 23 is "Conserving Now, Preserving Future"**.
- **Col. Rajyavardhan attended Youth Forum**
 - The Minister of State (Independent Charge) Youth Affairs and Sports Col. Rajyavardhan Rathore is in Egypt to attend World Youth Forum at Sharam El Shiekh.
 - The five-day forum was inaugurated by the President of Egypt Mr. Abdelfateh El Sisi.





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- The Forum aims to provide a platform to the youth from all over the globe to engage with the key global policymakers.
- Typhoon Damrey arrives in Vietnam
 - Typhoon Damrey hit Vietnam on 4th November 2017 and made landfall causing devastation.
 - This was the strongest cyclone in Vietnam in 16 years.
 - It weakened and fully dissipated on 5th November 2017. Typhoon Damrey killed at least 27 people and 22 are missing after it hit southern Vietnam.
- **Tokyo's AI 'boy' gained a residency**
 - An AI character was made an official resident of Tokyo district in Japan.
 - He doesn't exist physically. He is a virtual chatty seven-year-old boy.
 - **The virtual boy was named "Shibuya Mirai". Mirai, whose name means "future" in the Japanese language. He can have text conversations with humans on the widely used LINE messaging app.**
 - His hobbies are taking pictures and observing people.
- Saudi prince killed in helicopter crash
 - Saudi Prince Mansur bin Muqrin, deputy governor of Asir, died in a helicopter crash near the border with Yemen.
 - This comes a day after kingdom intercepted a ballistic missile that was said to have originated from Yemen.
 - The prince's death also came on the heels of Saudi removing a host of prominent officials in a sweeping crackdown in which dozens of princes & former ministers were detained.
- South Korea imposes unilateral sanctions
 - South Korea has imposed unilateral sanctions on 18 North Koreans, barring any financial transactions b/w those sanctioned & any South Koreans, as part of international efforts to dry up Pyongyang's illegal cash flows.



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- The measures were Seoul's first unilateral sanctions under Moon, who took office in May.
- **The announcement came a day ahead of U.S. President Trump's visit to South Korea.**
- Disrespecting national anthem punishable
 - China has made disrespecting the national anthem a criminal offence, punishable by up to three years in prison.
 - According to the amendment passed, penalties include detention, imprisonment of up to three years and the deprivation of political rights.
 - Such punishments previously applied to the desecration of the national flag and emblem in public.
- Asia's largest Island-Building Vessel
 - China unveiled Asia's largest artificial island-building ship.
 - The 140-metre-long vessel, which has been dubbed as "magic island maker", is capable of digging 6,000 cubic metres an hour.
 - The boat named Tian Kun Hao is equivalent of three standard swimming pools.
- Lebanese PM Saad al-Hariri resigns
 - Lebanese Prime Minister Saad al-Hariri resigned unexpectedly.
 - Saad al-Hariri has said after his resignation that, he sensed a plot to target his life and feared the same fate as his assassinated father if he remained as leader.
 - Saad al-Hariri became Lebanon's Prime Minister in 2016 and headed a 30-member national unity cabinet.
- India Slips 21 Slots on WEF Gender Index
 - **India slipped 21 places on the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap index to 108, behind neighbours China and Bangladesh.**





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- It is primarily due to less participation of women in the economy and low wages, according to the WEF Global Gender Gap Report 2017.
- **India's latest ranking is 10 notches lower than its reading in 2006** when the WEF started measuring the gender gap.
- **Ambani becomes Asia's Richest Person**
 - Chairman of RIL **Mukesh Ambani overtook China's Hui Ka Yan to become Asia's richest person with a total** wealth of \$42.1 billion, according to **Forbes' real-time billionaire's list.**
 - Ambani's personal wealth rose by \$466 million.
 - **Globally, Ambani stood at the 14th spot on Forbes' real-time billionaire's list.**
- **'Ease of doing business' report**
 - India broke into **the top 100 in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business** rankings, notching up the biggest improvement among all countries on the back of big gains on a number of measures.
 - The rise to the 100th position from 130 last year made India one of the top 10 best-improved countries.
 - The report ranks 190 countries on the basis of a combined score on 10 parameters.
- **Jackson named top-earning dead celebrity**
 - Michael Jackson, who died in the year 2009 i.e, Eight years ago, is still generating millions of dollars.
 - Jackson named top-earning dead celebrity for the 5th time. He was an American singer, songwriter, and dancer.
 - He was one of the most popular entertainers in the world and was the best-selling music artist at the time of his death. His earnings have been estimated to be \$75 million.
- **India tops list of new TB cases in 2016**



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- According to 'Global TB Report 2017' released by World Health Organization (WHO), India has topped the list of seven countries, accounting for 64% of the 10.4 million new tuberculosis cases worldwide in 2016.
- Tuberculosis is a contagious disease which affects the lung and is caused by Mycobacterium tuberculosis.
- Every year 24th March is observed as 'World Tuberculosis Day' across the world.

Yearly review of Business and Economy 2017

Books & Authors Yearly Review 2017

Yearly Review on Days & Events 2017

Yearly Review on Person in News 2017



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