

International Current Affairs**Qatar cease to be a member of OPEC**

- Qatar will cease to be a member of the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries. The country had sent an official notification to the OPEC expressing its wish to pull out and to focus on its liquefied natural gas production in December.

US, Israel quit UNESCO

- The United States and Israel officially quit the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) with the close of 2018.

Pakistan, India exchange list of nuclear installations

- India and Pakistan exchanged the list of nuclear installations and facilities covered under the Agreement on the Prohibition of Attack against Nuclear installations between them.
- India and Pakistan also exchanged the lists of civilian prisoners and fishermen in their custody.

Newly-elected parliament members in Bangladesh took oath of office

- The newly-elected parliament members in Bangladesh took oath of office in Dhaka. Sheikh Hasina is likely to be sworn in as the prime minister on January 10 for the third consecutive term and a record fourth time.

Tropical storm Pabuk

- Tens of thousands of tourists have fled the Thai resort islands of Koh Phangan and Koh Tao ahead of tropical storm Pabuk.

China develops its own 'Mother of All Bombs'

- China's defence industry giant North Industries Group Corporation Limited (NORINCO) has developed a massive bomb to be the country's answer to the US-built 'Mother of All Bombs', the most powerful non-nuclear weapon.

Pakistan abolishes visa on arrival for Afghans

- Pakistan abolished the long-standing facility of visa on arrival for Afghan nationals. The move to restrict Afghans came as Pakistan has already decided to issue 'on-arrival' visas to citizens of 24 other countries to increase tourism and investments.

Pakistan Army inducts indigenously developed A-100 rocket

- The Pakistan Army has inducted an indigenously developed rocket, having over 100 km range, in Multiple Launch Rocket System (MLRS) of its corps of artillery.

Egypt opens West Asia's largest cathedral

- Egypt has opened West Asia's largest cathedral in its New Administrative Capital, 45 kilometres east of Cairo. President Abdul Fattah al-Sisi inaugurated the newly-built Cathedral of Nativity and also a mosque.

Saudi women to get divorce notices over text

- In Saudi Arabia, a new regulation is set to stop Saudi women from not knowing about their own divorce. Courts will be required to notify women by text on rulings confirming their divorces.

Bangladesh:**Sheikh Hasina was sworn in as Prime Minister**

- Sheikh Hasina was sworn in as Prime Minister of Bangladesh for the third consecutive. It is Hasina's fourth term in office.

Guatemala to withdraw from UN-backed anti-corruption commission

- Guatemala has said it is withdrawing from a UN-backed anti-corruption commission.

World Bank President Jim Yong Kim to step down on Feb 1

- World Bank President Jim Yong Kim announced that he will step down from his position on February 1 - much before the end of his term in 2022.

India takes over operations of Chabahar port in Iran

- India has taken over operations of the strategic Chabahar port in the Sistan-Balochistan province of Iran's southern coast.
- This is the first time India will be operating a port outside its territory.

Congo Opposition leader wins presidential election

- In Congo, opposition leader Felix Tshisekedi has won the long-delayed presidential election. The electoral commission announced that Tshisekedi has won with 38.57 percent of more than 18 million ballots cast.

Right wing coalition is set to rule Andalusia

- In Spain, a right wing coalition is set to rule country's most populous region, Andalusia. This ends 37 years of Socialist rule in Andalusia. Andalusia is the main arrival point in Spain for migrants crossing the Mediterranean.

Saudi Arabia to cut its oil exports in Jan by 10%

- Saudi Arabia, the world's top crude supplier will slash its oil exports in January by 10 percent.

China may further fortify its man-made islands in South China Sea

- China said it may further fortify its man-made islands in the South China Sea depending on threats faced by the outposts.

18th amendment of the Constitution of Pakistan

- It removed the power of the President to dissolve Parliament unilaterally, turning Pakistan from a semi-presidential to a parliamentary republic.

Tulsi Gabbard announces 2020 presidential run to take on Trump

- Tulsi Gabbard, the first Hindu lawmaker in the US Congress, has said that she is running for the White House in 2020. Ms. Gabbard is the second woman after Senator Elizabeth Warren to enter the presidential race from the Democratic party.

California sea lions killed to protect migrating fish

- Four sea lions were euthanised in the last month as part of a program to protect salmon runs and steelhead trout that are at risk of going extinct.

US partial govt shutdown becomes longest on record

- The partial shutdown of the US government has become the longest on record, with still no end in sight to the political standoff. It reaches its 22nd day, overtaking the previous record – the 21-day shutdown in 1995-96 under then-President Bill Clinton.

ICC acquits former Ivory Coast Prez Laurent Gbagbo for crimes against humanity

- The International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague acquitted former Ivory Coast President Laurent Gbagbo of all charges of crimes against humanity over post-electoral violence in the West African nation.

UK PM Theresa May wins no-confidence vote

- British Prime Minister Theresa May has won a confidence vote, a day after her government suffered a parliamentary defeat over her Brexit deal with the European Union (EU).

Trump nominates 3 Indian Americans to key administration post

- US President Donald Trump has nominated three Indian Americans to key administration positions as per the latest list of senior nominations sent by the White House to the Senate.

- Rita Baranwal has been nominated for the post of Assistant Secretary of Energy (Nuclear Energy), Aditya Bamzai for Member of the Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board and Bimal Patel as the Assistant Secretary of Treasury.

US to have potential missile defence cooperation with India

- United States is contemplating to have potential missile defence cooperation with India as part of its effort to deepen the bilateral strategic partnership.

Sri Lankan new opposition leader

- In Sri Lanka, former President Mahinda Rajapaksa took over as new opposition leader following political developments of last months.

China revises 2017 economic growth down to 6.8% from 6.9%

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German parliament classifies North African states and Georgia as safe countries of origin

- The German parliament has adopted a draft law that classifies the North African states of Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco as well as Georgia as safe countries of origin.

China population growth continued to slow in 2018

- China's population rose by 15.23 million people in 2018, marking a continued decrease in the growth rate of the world's most populous nation.
- India, the world's second most populous nation, has also been experiencing slower population growth with 1.362 billion.

Nepal's central bank bans use of Indian currency notes

- Nepal's central bank has banned the use of Indian currency notes of Rs 2,000, Rs 500 and Rs 200 denominations. Under the new regulation issued, Nepali citizens cannot carry these denominations to countries other than India.

World Capital of Architecture for 2020

- The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has announced that the Brazilian city of Rio de Janeiro will be the World Capital of Architecture for 2020.
- The city will host the World Congress of UIA, in July 2020, an event that occurs every three years.

Germany sanctions Iranian airline

- Germany has banned Iranian airline Mahan Air from its airports, in an escalation of sanctions adopted by the European Union against Tehran over attacks on opponents in the bloc.

India shares coordinates of Kartarpur Corridor with Pakistan

- India has shared the co-ordinates of the zero point or crossing point of the Kartarpur corridor along the International Border with Pakistan.
- The External Affairs Ministry said it has also proposed dates for the visit of a Pakistan delegation to New Delhi to discuss and finalise the modalities so that Indian pilgrims can visit the holy Gurudwara Kartarpur Sahib using the corridor at the earliest.

Election in Thailand

- After nearly five years of military rule, Thailand will hold elections on March 24. The poll will be the first since generals ousted a democratically elected government in 2014 after violent street protests.

US confirms meeting of its envoy and Taliban in Qatar

- United States has confirmed that its envoy is meeting in Qatar with the Taliban, seeking to negotiate an end to the Afghanistan war despite a new major attack claimed by the insurgents.

UN chief warns, world is "losing the race" on climate change

- United Nations chief Antonio Guterres warned that the world is "losing the race" on climate change and demanded that governments make bolder commitments beyond the Paris accord.

Venezuela announces breaking off diplomatic ties with US

- Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro has announced that he is breaking off diplomatic ties with the United States after his American counterpart Donald Trump recognised Opposition leader Juan Guaido as the South American country's interim President.

Kamala Harris raises over 1 Million USD within 24 hrs

- In the United States, Kamala Harris, the first Indian-origin Senator, has raised a whopping more than 1 million US Dollar funds within 24 hours after announcing her Presidential bid for 2020.

US orders non-emergency embassy staff to leave Venezuela

- The United States has ordered its non-emergency embassy staff to leave Venezuela but refused to comply with a full expulsion demanded by Nicolas Maduro, who Washington says is no longer president.

Malaysia stripped of world para swim event over Israel stance

- Malaysia has been stripped of the right to host the 2019 World Para Swimming Championships for threatening to refuse to allow Israeli athletes to take part.

Climate march to prevent global warming

- Climate march held in Belgium for urgent action to prevent global warming. The event has been described as Belgium's biggest climate march ever.

‘Uttara Devi’

- Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena dedicated to the public newly imported locomotive power set from India to be used for the ‘Uttara Devi’ Colombo-Kankesanthurai train.
- The new powerset has been imported from India under Line of credit (LOC) assistance.

Common digital currency called "Aber" launched

- The central banks of the UAE and Saudi Arabia have launched a common digital currency called "Aber", which will be used in financial settlements between the two countries through Blockchains and Distributed Ledgers technologies.

China's top negotiator arrives in Washington for trade talks with US

- China's top trade negotiator has reached Washington as the world's top two economies prepare for crucial trade talks.

Syria signs long-term economic cooperation deal with Iran

- Syria has signed a long-term economic cooperation deal with Iran. The new agreement covers the industrial, agricultural, service, infrastructure and energy sectors among others.

Turkey aims to form safe zones in Syria for refugees to return

- Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has said the country is aiming to form safe zones in northern Syria so that Syrian refugees hosted by Turkey could return to their home country.

UK Parliament approves Brexit amendment on replacing Irish backstop

- In Britain, lawmakers voted in favour of an amendment in BREXIT plan seeking alternative arrangements to replace the Irish border arrangement known as the Irish backstop.

Myanmar parliament approves step toward charter change

- Myanmar's parliament has voted to create a committee to propose amendments to the country's military-enacted constitution, which grants the armed forces the power to block any change.

Polar vortex brings cold snap to US states

- The United States is shivering in a deadly cold snap known as a polar vortex. Temperatures fell to minus 30 degree Celsius in Chicago, colder than parts of Antarctica and minus 37 degree Celsius in North Dakota.

New H-1B visa filing rule to give priority to workers with advanced degrees from US

- The US has announced a new H-1B visa filing rule from April under which priority would be given to foreign workers with advanced degrees from American universities.

Chinese government urged to legitimise babies of unmarried woman to tide over low fertility crisis

- A single Chinese woman has asked the law makers to legalise children of unmarried women to tide over the problem of low fertility rate haunting China, the world's most populous nation, after the number of new-borns dropped by two million last year despite the government permitting two children since 2016.

Malaysia crowns Pahang state's Sultan Abdullah as 16th king

- Sultan Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah of central Pahang state was crowned as Malaysia's 16th king under a unique rotating monarchy system.

World Economic Forum Report

- A report by World Economic Forum today said that India is set to become the world's third largest consumer market behind only USA and China by 2030.
- The report titled 'Future of Consumption in Fast-Growth Consumer Market - India' also noted that growth of the middle class will lift nearly 25 million households out of poverty.

Global consultancy firm PwC report

- India is likely to surpass the United Kingdom in the world's largest economy rankings in 2019, to become world's fifth largest economy, according to a report by global consultancy firm PwC.
- 1) US was the world's largest economy with a size of 19.39 trillion dollars 2) China at 12.23 trillion dollars at the second place in 2017.

2019 Edelman Trust Barometer report

- India is among the most trusted nations globally when it comes to government, business, NGOs and media.
- China topped the Trust Index among both the informed public and the general population segments.
- India was at the second place in the informed public category and third place in the general population category.

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