

International Affairs – March 2019**UNSC designates Hamza bin Laden under its sanctions list**

- The United Nations Security Council has designated Hamza bin Laden under its sanctions list. The son of former Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden is now subject to a travel ban, assets freeze and an arms embargo.

US President asks China to immediately remove all tariffs on US agricultural products

- US President Donald Trump has asked China to immediately remove all tariffs on US agricultural products.

US slaps new sanctions on Venezuela

- The United States has slapped new sanctions on Venezuela. The sanctions were imposed a day after Russia and China vetoed a US and European resolution at the UN Security Council that called for unimpeded aid deliveries.

US seeks information on potential misuse of American-made F-16 by Pakistan

- The United States is seeking information on the potential misuse of American-made F-16 fighter jets by Pakistan against India in violation of the end-user agreement.

France reiterates its complete solidarity with India in fight against terrorism

- France has reiterated its complete solidarity with India in the fight against terrorism in all its forms.

Pakistan restores Samjhauta Express services to Delhi

- Pakistan restored the Samjhauta Express services between Lahore and Delhi, days after the train was suspended due to tense bilateral ties.

Israel, Russia to cooperate on pullout of foreign forces from Syria

- Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said his country and Russia are to form a joint team to examine the withdrawal of foreign forces from Syria.

Syria takes part in first Arab meeting since 2011

- Syria attended a meeting of Arab states for the first time since conflict broke out there in 2011. UAE already reopened its embassy in Damascus last December.

France reiterates support for India's permanent seat in Reformed UN Security Council

- France has reiterated its support for India as the permanent member of the UN Security Council (UNSC). France which assumed the March Presidency of the UNSC, reiterating its support for India, Germany and Japan as permanent members of an expanded Council.

US officially closes Jerusalem consulate

- The United States has officially shuttered its consulate in Jerusalem, downgrading the status of its main diplomatic mission to the Palestinians by folding it into the U.S. Embassy to Israel.

Russia suspends participation in Intermediate-Range Nuclear treaty with US

- Russian President Vladimir Putin has officially suspended the country's participation in a key Cold War-era nuclear arms-control treaty with the United States.

Nepal Government officials join INGAF training course in New Delhi

- The Third group of 22 officials of Nepal's Ministry of Finance joined their training course on 'Global Perspectives on Public Financial Management' at the Institute of Government Accounts and Finance (INGAF) in New Delhi.
- The training is being held under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme of the Ministry of External Affairs.

China decides to extend anti-smog measures

- China has decided to extend anti-smog measures for a third successive winter in a bid to reduce pollution levels. The Ministry of Ecology and Environment vowed to speed up the elimination of small coal-fired heating boilers in major regions.

Hafiz Saeed-led Jamaat-ud-Dawa placed in list of banned organisations

- Mumbai terror attack mastermind Hafiz Saeed-led Jamaat-ud-Dawa and its wing Falah-e-Insaniat Foundation have been formally placed in the list of banned organisations by Pakistan.

Washington's decision to withdraw India from GSP list

- Commerce Secretary AnupWadhawan said, US' decision to withdraw India's name from Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) list will not have any significant impact on country's 5.6 billion dollar exports to the country. The, economic value of GSP benefits are very moderate.

Two Nobel Prizes for literature will be awarded this year

- The Swedish Academy has said that two Nobel Prizes for literature will be awarded this year.

US revises visa policy for Pakistan

- The US has revised its visa policy for Pakistani citizens by slashing visa validity from five years to one year. Journalists and media persons will not be allowed to stay in the country for over three months without renewing travel permit. Pakistan also issues visas for three months to American journalists.

EU vetoes plan to add Saudi Arabia to money-laundering list

- Envoys from 28 EU member states unanimously rejected a proposal by the European Commission to add Saudi Arabia and other nations to the bloc's money-laundering blacklist.

Saudi Arabia criticized over human rights by 36 countries

- Thirty-six countries have signed an open letter criticising Saudi Arabia's human rights record. The collective rebuke was signed by all countries in the European Union plus Australia, Canada, Norway, New Zealand, Liechtenstein, Monaco and Montenegro.

NATO Chief rules out nuclear missile deployment to Europe

- NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg has ruled out deploying ground-based nuclear missiles to Europe. The agreement bans all ground-launched missiles, conventional or nuclear, with ranges of 310 to 3,400 miles.

Finland government resigns over failed reforms

- Finnish Prime Minister Juha Sipilä's centre-right government has resigned, just five weeks ahead of the Parliamentary election. The resignation came after the government failed to push through a flagship social and health care reform package.

116-year-old Japanese woman officially named oldest person

- 116-year-old Japanese woman Kane Tanaka has been honoured as the world's oldest living person by Guinness World Records. The previous oldest living person was another Japanese woman, Chiyo Miyako, who passed away last July, aged 117.

India's envoy to Pakistan return to Islamabad

- The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has said, India's High Commissioner to Pakistan Ajay Bisaria will return to Islamabad.

North Korea preparing missile launch, suggest satellite images

- In North Korea, satellite images of a facility near Pyongyang suggest that the country may be preparing to launch a missile or a satellite.

PM Modi, Bangladesh counterpart jointly inaugurate development projects

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Bangladesh counterpart Sheikh Hasina, jointly unveiled e-plaques for development projects in Bangladesh, through video conferencing.
- Both the leaders unveiled e-plaques for the supply of buses and trucks, the inauguration of 36 community clinics, 11 water treatment plants, and extension of National Knowledge Network to Bangladesh.

China protests US criticism of policies on religion

- China protests the United States for criticising Beijing's policies toward Muslim and Tibetan Buddhist minorities and saying the country was at war with faith.

China, US reach consensus on many key issues

- China and the United States have reached a consensus on many key issues, including exchange rates, during the latest round of talks to negotiate a comprehensive trade deal, in Washington.

North Koreans voting to elect rubber-stamp Parliament

- North Koreans are voting today to elect the country's rubber-stamp Parliament, the second such election since Kim Jong-un took power.
- Voting for the Supreme People's Assembly is mandatory and there's no choice of candidates. Turnout is always close to 100 per cent and approval for the governing alliance is unanimous. On Election Day, the entire population aged 17 or older must come out and vote.

UK becomes latest to ground Boeing 737 Max 8 jets after Ethiopian Airlines crash

- The United Kingdom has become the latest country to ban the Boeing 737 Max 8 aircraft from operating in or over national airspace following Ethiopia plane crash. The UK has joined the growing list of countries including Malaysia, Singapore, China, Australia and Ethiopia in grounding the aircraft.

UN warns Bangladesh of new crisis over Rohingya relocation plan

- The UN has warned Bangladesh of a new crisis if the country goes ahead with plans to relocate 23,000 Rohingya next month to an uninhabited island Bhasan Char prone to cyclones. More than seven lakh Rohingya are confined to overcrowded camps in Bangladesh.

US to withdraw its remaining diplomatic staff from embassy in Caracas

- The United States has decided to withdraw its remaining diplomatic staff from the embassy in Caracas as the crisis in Venezuela worsens.

UN requests Sri Lanka to establish hybrid court

- The United Nations has again requested Sri Lanka to establish a hybrid court consisting of international judges, lawyers and investigators to probe war crime allegations during three-decade long LTTE war.

India and US ask Pakistan to take concerted action to dismantle terror infrastructure operating on its soil

- India and the United States have agreed that Pakistan needs to take concerted action to dismantle the terrorist infrastructure and deny safe haven to all terror groups operating in its territory.

India awards 200 Golden Jubilee Scholarships

- The Indian Embassy in Nepal awarded 200 Golden Jubilee Scholarships to meritorious Nepali students for continuing various undergraduate courses at colleges and universities. These Scholarships are part of India's efforts to support human resources development in Nepal for the overall socio-economic development of the Himalayan nation and its people.

United States to set up six nuclear power plants in India

- India and the United States have committed to strengthen bilateral security and civil nuclear cooperation, including the establishment of six US nuclear power plants in India.

New Zealand bans Boeing 737 MAX aircrafts

- New Zealand has announced the grounding of Boeing 737 MAX aircraft from its airspace in the wake of a deadly plane crash in Ethiopia. Country's Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) said it was imposing the temporary suspension after consultation with other regulators.

US Senate votes to end support for Yemen war

- The US Senate rebuking Donald Trump's foreign policy and his alliance with Riyadh has voted to end support for the bloody Saudi-led war effort in Yemen.

Boeing recommends temporary suspension of its entire world fleet of 737 MAX aircraft

- One of the largest global aircraft manufacturers Boeing has recommended a temporary suspension of its entire world fleet of the 737 MAX aircraft.
- The move comes after several countries, including India, China, European Union and the United States banned the use of the aircraft in wake of the Ethiopian Airlines crash that killed all 157 people on board.

United States slams China for its human rights violations

- The United States has slammed China for its human rights violations in the country.

Door open for India to bring serious trade proposal to table: US

- The US has said that the door is open if India is prepared to bring a serious proposal to the table to address the issues related to trade and market access.

India to continue efforts to get Masood Azhar listed under UN 1267 sanctions

- New Delhi will continue to make concerted efforts to ensure that JeM chief Masood Azhar gets listed under UN 1267 sanctions regime with 14 of the 15 UN Security Council Members supporting India to list him as a global terrorist.

2019 Slovakia presidential election

- The Slovakian Presidential election is going to take place over two rounds on 16th and 30th March 2019. This is the fifth direct election of the President in Slovakia's history.

Cyclone Idai affects over 1.5 million people in three southern African countries

- Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Malawi have been hit by a vicious cyclone that has killed nearly 150 people, left hundreds more missing and stranded tens of thousands.
- According to the UN and government officials, Cyclone Idai has affected more than 1.5 million people in the three southern African countries.

Russia slams new Western sanctions against its officials

- Russia has slammed new Western sanctions against its officials over their role in a naval confrontation with Ukraine last year. The United States, Canada and the European Union slapped

new sanctions on more than a dozen Russian officials and businesses in response to Moscow's alleged aggression in Ukraine.

China terms Mumbai terror attacks as most notorious

- China has described the 2008 Mumbai attacks carried out by Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) terror outfit as one of the most notorious terrorist attacks.

UN patent data show Asia innovation surge

- United Nations said that more than half of all international patent applications filed last year came from Asia, a further sign of innovation shifting from west to east.
- US remained the leading individual country for applications in 2018.
- India registered the largest innovation jump of any country last year. Patent applications jumped more than 27 per cent from 1,583 in 2017 up to 2,013.

Indian-origin Jagmeet creates history, enters Canada parliament

- Indian-origin Jagmeet Singh has created history in Canada when he made his debut in the House of Commons as the first non-white leader of a major opposition party in the country.

Kazakhstan President resigns after nearly 30 years in power

- Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev has announced his resignation after nearly 30 years in power. The 78-year old leader had ruled the country since it emerged from the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s. The Chairman of the Kazakh Senate would take over.

Kazakhstan to rename country's capital Astana as Nursultan

- Kazakhstan's parliament voted to rename the country's capital Astana as Nursultan in honour of longtime ruler Nursultan Nazarbayev, a day after he resigned as president.
- Kazakhstan's new interim president Kassym-Jomart Tokayev proposed renaming the capital. Astana replaced Kazakhstan's largest city Almaty as the capital in 1997.

Nirav Modi arrested in London

- Fugitive jeweller Nirav Modi was arrested by Scotland Yard in London. He is the main accused in the 13,500 crore rupees Punjab National Bank scam case.

New Zealand bans assault weapons

- New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern has imposed an immediate ban on assault weapons like military style semi-automatic and assault rifles under tough new gun laws following the killing of 50 people in the country's worst mass shooting.

EU agrees to postpone Brexit beyond 29 March

- European Union leaders have agreed on a plan to delay the Article 50 process, postponing Brexit beyond 29 March.

Pakistan to receive over 2 billion US Dollars loan from China

- Cash-strapped Pakistan will receive over 2 billion US Dollars loan from China by Monday to provide a boost to its ailing economy. Pakistan has received 1 billion US dollars each from Saudi Arabia and the UAE, as part of the bailout packages by the two Gulf nations to help shore up Islamabad's dwindling foreign currency reserves.

Germany adds six months to Saudi arms export ban

- Germany has extended by six months an embargo on weapons exports to Saudi Arabia, instituted last October.

UN council passes resolution to combat terrorist financing

- The UN Security Council has unanimously passed the first-ever resolution ordering members to enforce laws against terror financing.

Venezuela's Juan Guaido barred from public office for 15 years

- Venezuela has barred opposition leader Juan Guaido from holding public office for 15 years.

US-backed Syrian force declares victory over Islamic State

- A U.S.-backed Syrian force says it has liberated the last area held by the Islamic State group in the eastern Syrian village of Baghouz, declaring victory over the extremists and the end of their self-declared caliphate.

France's 'yellow vest' demonstrators

- France's "yellow vests" are expected to stage further anti-government protests despite the authorities vowing a "zero tolerance" approach. The protests began in rural France on November 17 over fuel tax increases and quickly ballooned into a full-scale anti-government rebellion that two months of public policy debates have failed to defuse.

India-funded educational campus inaugurated in Nepal

- Educational campus constructed with Government of India's financial grant of 35.5 million Nepalese rupees was inaugurated in Nepal.

Sri Lankan President hands over proposal to declare Tripitaka as UNESCO World Heritage

- Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena handed over a proposal seeking to declare the Theravada Tripitaka, the sacred text of Buddhists, as a UNESCO World Heritage.
- The Theravada Tripitaka was declared a National heritage of Sri Lanka by President in January this year.

Voting ends in Thailand's first general election

- In Thailand, counting is underway at over 90,000 polling stations after the voting came to an end in country's first general election since 2014 military coup.

PM orders top-level judicial inquiry into Christchurch mosque attacks

- New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern ordered an independent judicial inquiry into whether police and intelligence services could have prevented the Christchurch mosque attacks on March 15.

Australia warns social media executives of jail over extremist content

- Australia warned social media giants on Tuesday that executives could be jailed if they fail to quickly remove extremist material from their platforms.

Trump sign proclamation recognising Israel's sovereignty over Golan Heights

- US President Donald Trump has signed a proclamation recognising Israel's sovereignty over the Golan Heights and told that Israel has an absolute right to self-defence.
- Israel captured the Golan Heights from Syria in the 1967 war but its sovereignty over the territory is not recognized by the international community.

US, Russia lock horns over Venezuela

- US and Russia clashed publicly over Venezuela, raising geopolitical stakes over the oil-producing nation after Moscow sent dozens of soldiers to Caracas amid what it alleged was a budding coup.

5.4 magnitude earthquake strikes off Japan

- In Japan, an earthquake with a preliminary magnitude of 5.4 struck off Miyazaki Prefecture, on the southeast coast of Kyushu Island.

Syria asks UN Security Council to hold meeting on Golan Heights

- Syria has asked the United Nations Security Council to hold an urgent meeting on the US decision to recognize the Golan Heights as Israeli territory.

Comoros President Azali Assoumani re-elected with over 60% of votes

- Comoros President Azali Assoumani was re-elected according to results published by the electoral commission of the Indian Ocean archipelago. The Comoros is a volcanic archipelago off Africa's east coast, in the warm Indian Ocean waters of the Mozambique Channel.

European Parliament adopts controversial copyright reforms

- European Parliament adopted controversial copyright reforms championed by news publishers and the media business. However, tech giants including google have opposed it. Under the reform, European law for the first time would hold platforms legally responsible for enforcing copyright, requiring them to check everything that their users post to prevent infringement.

India, Bangladesh to start cruise service

- India and Bangladesh will start a cruise service that would take passengers through the Sunderbans to Dhaka. Addressing a conference on Multipolarism in Asia: Issues and Challenges in New Delhi, joint secretary of External Affairs Ministry, Vikram Doraiswami said, the move aims to strengthen inland waterway routes between the two countries.

US circulates draft resolution at UNSC to blacklist JeM chief Masood Azhar

- The United States has circulated a draft resolution to the United Nations Security Council to blacklist Masood Azhar, Chief of Pakistan-based terrorist group Jaish-e-Mohammad.

China protects terror groups from UN Sanctions

- US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has said, China abuses over a million Muslims at home, but protects terror groups from UN sanctions.

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