

International Affairs**Japan names new era of Naruhito will be 'Reiwa'**

- The name of the era of Japan's soon-to-be-emperor Naruhito will be "Reiwa," the government announced.
- Emperor Akihito is stepping down on April 30, in the first abdication in 200 years, bringing his era of "Heisei" to an end. The new era takes effect May 1.

US suspends participation of Turkey in F-35 fighter jet program

- The US has suspend the participation of its ally Turkey in the F-35 stealth fighter jet programme after Ankara decided to buy Russian S-400 air defence system.

US, South Korea defence chiefs meet on de-nuclearization

- US Acting Secretary of Defence Patrick Shanahan met South Korean Minister of National Defence Jeong Kyeong-doo at the Pentagon in Washington over the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

Black, gay woman elected Chicago mayor in historic vote

- In a historic first, a gay African American woman Lori Lightfoot, a 56-year-old former federal prosecutor and practicing lawyer was elected mayor of Chicago, America's third largest city.

U.K.'s House of Commons approves Brexit delay law

- The lower house of the British Parliament approved a legislation which would force Prime Minister Theresa May to seek a Brexit delay to prevent a potentially disorderly departure on April 12 without a deal.
- The legislation put forward by opposition Labour lawmaker Yvette Cooper and it was approved at the final stage by 313 votes to 312.

Istanbul opens one of the largest airports in the world

- The new Istanbul Airport, which cost around \$8 billion to open, is said to be able to handle 90 million passengers a year.

London becomes first city to implement 24x7 pollution charge zone

- London became the first city in the world to implement a special Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) that would charge an entry fee for older vehicles if they do not meet the emission standards.

Netanyahu secures victory in national election for fifth term

- Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has won the Israeli national election, securing a record fifth term. In power since 2009, and having led the country for a total 13 years including his first term in the 1990s.

Japan extends North Korea sanctions for 2 years

- Japan has decided to extend its trade ban and other sanctions on North Korea for a further two years.
- The measures are part of Japan's unilateral sanctions imposed since 2006, in response to North Korea's nuclear tests and ballistic missile launches. The Japanese government plans to continue enforcing sanctions in cooperation with the United States and South Korea.

New Zealand Parliament votes to ban semi-automatic weapons

- New Zealand's Parliament passed sweeping gun laws that outlaw military style weapons, less than a month after mass shootings at two mosques in the city of Christchurch. A bill outlawing most automatic and semi-automatic weapons and banning components that modify existing weapons.

Sudan President Omar al-Bashir ousted, placed under arrest

- President Omar al-Bashir, who ruled Sudan with an iron fist for 30 years, was overthrown in a coup by the armed forces which announced a two-year period of military rule to be followed by elections.
- Mr. Bashir has been indicted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague and is facing an arrest warrant over allegations of genocide in Sudan's Darfur region during an insurgency that began in 2003 and led to death of an estimated 300,000 people.

Abu Dhabi International Book Fair, ADIBF 2019,

- UAE has announced that India will be the Guest of Honour country at the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair, ADIBF 2019, to be held from 24th to 30th of this month. The fair aims to highlight the UAE's rich heritage, showcasing its authenticity and modernity, as well as its cultural and literary output.

China trying to create its own globally decisive naval force through BRI: Pentagon

- China is trying to create its own globally decisive naval force through the ambitious multi-billion dollar **Belt and Road Initiative**, the Pentagon has told the US Congress. The BRI focuses on improving connectivity and cooperation among Asian countries, Africa, China and Europe.
- The project has become a major stumbling block in India-China relations as the controversial \$60 billion China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has been listed as its “flagship project”.

After years of giving refuge, Ecuador suspends Assange’s citizenship

- Ecuador has suspended Julian Assange’s citizenship and accused him and people connected to his WikiLeaks group of collaborating in attempts to destabilize the Andean nation’s government, after years of offering him shelter.
- Assange was offered refuge in 2012 by Ecuador's then-president Rafael Correa, but his relationship with Ecuador has soured under Moreno, who has said Assange violated the terms of his asylum.

World’s largest plane makes first test flight

- The world's largest aircraft took off over the Mojave Desert in California, the first flight for the carbon-composite plane built by Stratolaunch Systems Corp. The white airplane called Roc, which has a wingspan the length of an American football field.

Chinese firm opens Mars base simulator in desert

- Surrounded by barren hills in northwestern Gansu province, “Mars Base 1” opened with the aim of exposing teens — and soon tourists — to what life could be like on the planet.
- "Mars Base 1", a C-Space Project, in the Gobi desert, some 40 km from Jinchang in China's northwest Gansu province.

Amazon to shut down operations in China

- Amazon will shut its China online store by July 18, as the U.S. e-commerce giant focusses on the lucrative businesses of selling overseas goods and cloud services in the world’s most populous nation.

Saudi Arabia increases India's Haj Quota to 2 lakh

- Saudi Arabia has issued a formal order increasing the Haj quota of India to two lakhs from one lakh seventy five-thousand. Official sources said, the decision will ensure that all the Haj applicants from big states like Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh and Bihar can embark pilgrimage this year as their waiting lists have been cleared due to the increase in quota.

Weed festival in Thailand

- Thailand is celebrating its first ever weed festival, the Pan Ram weed festival. Thailand became the first in Southeast Asia to legalise marijuana for medical purposes in 2018, joining a growing list of governments to embrace liberalisation including Canada, Australia, Israel and more than half the US states.

India rebuilds Chhyoi Phel Kundeling monastery in Nepal

- Shyalpa Tenzin Rinpoche inaugurated newly reconstructed Monastery at Lisankhu village in Sindhupalchok district. The Monastery has been reconstructed with Government of India grant of 18.9 million Nepalese rupees.

U.S. to announce end to sanctions waivers for Iran oil imports

- The United States announced that all importers of Iranian oil will have to end their imports shortly or be subject to U.S. sanctions. The U.S. reimposed sanctions in November on exports of Iranian oil after Mr. Trump unilaterally pulled out of a 2015 nuclear accord between Iran and six world powers.

Ukraine elections: Comedian Zelenskiy declares victory in presidential race

- In Ukraine presidential elections, the former entertainer and political novice Volodymyr Zelenskiy of the Servant of the People took 73 percent of the vote, with incumbent President Petro Poroshenko had just 25% of vote.

All local government elections to be held through EVMs : Bangladesh

- In Bangladesh, all local government elections will be held through Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) from now on. Stating this the Secretary to the Election Commission of Bangladesh,

Helaluddin Ahmed said that the EVM is enriched with high technology and the government is confident of using it in the local body elections. The Election Commission of Bangladesh has also decided to bring third gender people under voter list.

The world's largest indoor waterfall at Singapore's Changi Airport

- The idea for Jewel's indoor forest and record-breaking waterfall developed in response to Changi Airport's request for proposals to build a facility with retail and dining, a host of travel-related amenities and some sort of attraction.

Qatar's exit visa system to end this year: U.N.

- Qatar is set to abolish its controversial exit visa system for all foreign workers by the end of 2019 the UN's International Labour Organization. Qatar has introduced a series of labour reforms since its selection as the 2022 World Cup host, with the event setting in motion a huge construction programme employing foreign workers.

Xi Jinping meets Imran Khan, calls for improvement of Indo-Pak relations

- Chinese President Xi Jinping met Prime Minister Imran Khan and expressed hope that Pakistan and India can meet each other halfway to improve their strained relations following the Pulwama terror attack by a JeM suicide bomber.

Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) Economic Corridor

- India's decision to skip the Belt and Road Forum (BRF) may have led to the exclusion of the Bangladesh- China- India- Myanmar (BCIM) Economic corridor from the list of projects covered by the China-led Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) umbrella.

Indonesia planning to move capital city away from Jakarta

- Indonesia has announced plans to build a new capital city, as its current capital, Jakarta, struggles with pollution, traffic gridlock and the fact that the city is sinking.

India-China team on pharma to meet

- India will be sending a high-level delegation to the first meeting of the working group on pharmaceuticals, with China, scheduled in Beijing next month.

Aung San Suu Kyi in Cambodia

- Myanmar civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi makes first official visit to Cambodia. She is on a three-day visit to Cambodia.

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