

India to host G-20 Summit in 2022

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said that India will host the G20 Summit in 2022**, when the country celebrates its 75 years of Independence.
- In a tweet, Mr Modi said, in 2022 India completes 75 years since Independence and he looks forward to welcoming the world to the G-20 Summit in that special year.
- Mr Modi invited leaders from across the world to come to India, the world's fastest growing large economy, and know its rich history and diversity and experience the warm Indian hospitality.

World Bank unveils USD 200 billion in climate action investment for 2021-25

- **The World Bank unveiled USD 200 billion in climate action investment for 2021 to 2025**, thus, doubling its current five-year funding.
- The move coincides with a UN climate summit COP24 in Katowice, Poland.
- The move represents a significantly ramped up ambition to tackle climate change and sends an important signal to the wider global community to do the same.

Qatar to withdraw from OPEC in January 2019

- **Qatar** decided to withdraw its membership from the **Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)** from January 2019.
- The announcement was made by Qatar's Energy Minister, Saad al-Kaabi at a press conference in Doha.

COP24: UN Conference on Climate Change begins in Poland

- The **24th meeting of Conference of Parties (COP24) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)** began on December 3, 2018 at **Katowice, Poland**.
- The Fijian Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama declared the UN COP24 climate summit open and handed over the presidency of the talks to Michal Kurtyka, Poland's Deputy Environment Minister in the presence of UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.

Asia Pacific Summit 2018 begins in Kathmandu

- The **Asia Pacific Summit 2018** began on December 1, 2018 in **Kathmandu, Nepal**. The Summit will continue till December 3, 2018.
- The Theme of two-day Summit is "Addressing the Critical Challenges of Our Time: Interdependence, Mutual Prosperity, and Universal Values".

SpaceX launches 64 satellites aboard reusable rocket

- Elon Musk's SpaceX on December 3, 2018 launched **its Falcon 9 rocket carrying 64 small satellites into low orbit around the Earth, setting a new US record**.
- According to the company, the mission was one of its largest and most complex and intricate endeavours. The mission also marked the third voyage to space for the same Falcon 9 rocket, which marks another milestone for SpaceX's cost-cutting reusable rocket technology.

UNSC to convene on Iran missile launch issue

- The UN Security Council convened on December 4, 2018 to discuss on ***the Iran missile launch issue***.
- The world body held the meeting at the request of France and Britain after they accused Iran of test-firing a medium-range missile during the weekend.

UN launches AI chat bot with Facebook to help battle climate change

- The world is facing a man-made disaster and the extinction of much of the natural world is on the horizon, renowned broadcaster Sir David Attenborough said on the launch of UN's new campaign, **ActNow.bot**.
- The initiative comes as global decision-makers are being asked at the two-week long UN climate negotiations, known as COP24, which officially began on November 3, to intensify efforts in the battle against climate change and to agree on the implementation guidelines of the landmark 2015 Paris Agreement.
- ActNow.bot is designed with artificial intelligence to give people the power and knowledge to take personal action against climate change directly on the **Facebook Messenger Platform**.

United States gives 60 days to Russia to comply with nuclear treaty

- **United States** warned **Russia** that it will withdraw from a major Cold War treaty limiting mid-range nuclear arms, if **Moscow does not dismantle missiles within 60 days**.
- US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said that the US will no longer be bound by the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty, unless Moscow withdraws a new system that has threatened to trigger an arms race.

US re-establishes Permanent Diplomatic Mission in Somalia for first time in 27 years

- The **United States** re-established a "**permanent diplomatic presence**" in **Somalia** for the first time in 27 years.
- The department spokeswoman Heather Nauert called the new move another step forward in formalising US diplomatic engagement in Mogadishu.

OPEC to meet in Vienna

- **The members of Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries** and other oil-producing countries are scheduled to meet in **Vienna** to discuss ways to manage the oil output, supply glut and demand slowdown.
- Over the past two months, **oil prices have plunged and a barrel of Brent crude currently stands at around USD 60**.

China launches the first ever space rover to explore the dark side of the moon

- China has launched a rover on December 8, 2018, **that will land on the far side of the moon, a global first that would boost Beijing's ambitions to become a space superpower**.
- **The Chang'e-4 lunar probe mission** -- named after the moon goddess in Chinese mythology -- launched on a Long March 3B rocket from the southwestern Xichang launch centre in the pre-dawn hours, according to the official Xinhua news agency.

India 4th, China 1st highest carbon dioxide emitter: Study

- India is the fourth highest emitter of carbon dioxide in the world, accounting for 7 per cent of global emissions in 2017, a study by the Global Carbon Project released on December 5 says.
- The top four emitters in 2017, which covered 58 per cent of global emissions, were China (27 per cent), the US (15 per cent), the European Union (10 per cent) and India (7 per cent), according to the projection by the Global Carbon Project.

Indian cardiologist performs world's first telerobotic surgery from a distance of 32 km

- India became the world's first to successfully perform a telerobotic coronary intervention on December 5 by an Ahmedabad base cardiologist in Gujarat.
- An Ahmedabad based cardiologist Dr Tejal Patel performed the first ever telerobotic operation on a middle-aged woman

UN launches new framework to combat international terrorism

- The UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on December 6, 2018 launched a new framework titled 'UN Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact' to combat international terrorism and coordinate efforts across the peace and security, humanitarian, human rights and sustainable development sectors.
- The framework is an agreement between the UN chief, 36 organisational entities, the International Criminal Police Organisation (INTERPOL) and the World Customs Organisation to better serve the needs of member states when it comes to tackling the scourge of international terrorism.

FAO Council approves India's proposal to observe International Year of Millets in 2023

- Food and Agriculture organisation, FAO Council has approved **India's proposal to observe an International Year of Millets in 2023.**
- **Millets consists of Jowar, Bajra, Ragi and minor millets together termed as nutri-cereals.** In addition, the FAO Council has also approved India's membership to the Executive Board of the United Nations World Food Program for 2020 and 2021.

First International Conference on 'Sustainable Water Management' held in Mohali

- The first International Conference on 'Sustainable Water Management' began on December 10, 2018 at Indian School of Business (ISB) in Mohali, Punjab.
- The conference is being organised by Bhakra Beas Management Board (BBMB) under the aegis of the National Hydrology Project of the Union Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation. It will be held for two days till December 11.

UAE to double women's representation in Federal National Council to 50 per cent

- The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has, in a landmark decision, decided to increase the representation of Emirati women in the Federal National Council to 50 per cent from the coming Parliamentary term.
- A decree passed by the UAE President has directed the doubling of the current percentage of women's representation in the Federal National Council from 22.5 per cent to 50 per cent in the coming parliamentary term.

John Kelly to step down as US's Chief of Staff

- President Trump said on December 8, 2018 that his chief of staff, **John F. Kelly, would step down by the end of December 2018.**
- The move is a part of a long-planned staff shake-up as the president heads into the 2020 campaign facing growing peril from the special counsel and newly empowered Democrats.

Ukrainian to end two-decade-old friendship treaty with Russia

- Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko on December 10, 2018 signed a bill ending the two-decade-old **treaty on friendship, cooperation and partnership between Ukraine and Russia.**
- **The treaty will be terminated on April 1, 2019 amid rising tensions between the two countries.**

Japan chooses Chinese character for 'disaster' to define year 2018

- **Japan selected the Chinese character for 'disaster' as its defining symbol for 2018,** a year that saw the country hit by deadly floods, earthquakes and storms.
- At the end of every year, the people of Japan vote for the Chinese character they think embodies the key events of the previous 12 months. **20858 people out of 193,214 chose the character 'disaster'.**
- **Floods across Japan in July 2018 caused more than 200 deaths and nearly evacuation of 9 million people.**

Nepal bans Indian currency notes above Rs 100 denomination

- The **Nepal government has banned the use of Indian currency notes of Rs 2,000, Rs 500 and Rs 200 denominations,** according to a media report.
- **The government has asked the people to refrain from keeping or carrying Indian bank notes higher than Rs 100 denomination** as it has not legalised them, The Kathmandu Post quoted Minister for Information and Communications Gokul Prasad Baskota as saying.

Global debt hits all-time high of USD 184 trillion: IMF

- **The International Monetary Fund has revealed in a report that the global debt has reached an all-time high of 184 trillion US dollars,** which is the equivalent to 225 per cent of the world GDP in 2017.
- The report states that nations like the **United States, China and Japan account for more than half of the debt.**

Sweden moves to ban outdoor smoking

- **Sweden is banning outdoor smoking in certain public places including playgrounds and train station platforms.**
- In a 142-120 vote the Riksdagen, the Swedish Parliament extended the smoking ban as of July 1, 2019.
- According to the new law, **the goal is to make the Scandinavian country smoke-free by 2025.**

'Justice' is Merriam-Webster's word of the year after spike in searches

- **Merriam-Webster has chosen "justice" as its 2018 word of the year.**
- Merriam-Webster's word of the year follows the **Oxford Dictionaries choice of "toxic" and Dictionary.com's pick of "misinformation."**

Sri Lankan President reinstates ousted PM Ranil Wickremesinghe

- Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena on December 16, 2018 **reappointed Ranil Wickremesinghe as the Prime Minister of the country**, after suddenly dismissing him from the post nearly two months ago.
- The President clarified that his move to terminate the Prime Minister was done in "good faith" and the reinstatement was done to uphold parliamentary traditions and democracy.

COP24: Member countries finalise 'Katowice package' rules to implement 2015 Paris Climate Agreement

- The UN Climate Conference (COP24) on December 14, 2018 saw the adoption of '**Katowice package**', **the rulebook for implementation of the 2015 Paris climate agreement**.
- The Ministers of 200 nations reached consensus on rules after two weeks of intense negotiations during **the 24th Conference of the Parties (COP24) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) that took place during December 2-14, 2018 in Katowice, Poland**. The meeting was presided by Polish President, Michal Kurtyka.

Rural India-set drama 'Period. End of Sentence' in Oscar shortlist

- **Period. End of Sentence**, a film about women in India fighting against the deeply rooted stigma of menstruation and delving upon the work of real life Pad Man Arunachalam Muruganathan, has made it to the **Oscar shortlist in the Documentary Short Subject category**.
- The film is executive produced **by Guneet Monga and co-produced by Monga's Sikhya Entertainment**, which has backed films like The Lunchbox and Masaan.

Farthest object in solar system 'Farout' discovered

- **Scientists have discovered the most-distant body ever observed in our solar system**, located over 100 times farther than Earth is from the Sun.
- The new object, discovered by Scott S Sheppard from Carnegie Institution for Science, David Tholen from the University of Hawaii and Chad Trujillo from Northern Arizona University in the US, has been given the provisional designation **2018 VG18 nicknamed Farout**.

New Zealand to phase out plastic shopping bags from 2019

- In **New Zealand**, regulations for mandatory phase-out of single-use plastic shopping bags **will take effect from July 1, 2019**.
- The retailers will no longer be able to sell or give away single-use plastic shopping bags from July next year after the cabinet agreed to the proposed regulations for a mandatory nationwide phase-out of these bags.

Belgium Prime Minister Charles Michel resigns over migration spat

- **Belgian Prime Minister Charles Michel** has resigned amid pressure on his government over **his support for the UN global compact on migration**.
- The pressure increased after his biggest coalition partner, the right-wing N-VA party, quit the government over the issue.

US Defence Secretary Jim Mattis resigns, cites differences with Trump

- **Jim Mattis**, the Defence Secretary of the United States abruptly announced his resignation on December 20, 2018, **citing policy differences with President Donald Trump as the main reason behind the move.**
- The resignation comes a day after President Donald Trump announced that all US troops would be withdrawn from Syria. **The President is also considering a substantial US pullout from the 17-year-long conflict in Afghanistan.**

US Senate approves legislation to fund government

- The US Senate has approved a legislation **to temporarily fund the government in an effort to avoid partial shutdown over President Donald Trump's insistence on setting up border wall with Mexico.** The funds would keep the government running till February 8.
- The House of Representatives, in which the Republicans have a majority, needs to pass a similar bill to avoid a government shutdown this weekend.

France fines Uber 400000 euros over huge data breach

- **France's data protection agency** said on December 20, 2018 that it had fined **the US ride-hailing group Uber 400,000 euros over a 2016 data breach** that exposed the personal data of some 57 million clients and drivers worldwide.
- **The French Data Protection Authority said the breach would have been prevented,** if certain elementary security measures had been in place.

Burundi names Gitega as new capital

- **Burundi declared the small central city of Gitega the country's new political capital** on Saturday, in line with a presidential promise made a decade ago.
- A government spokesman named Gitega while also stating that the previous capital Bujumbura, on the north-eastern shore of Lake Tanganyika, would in future function solely as the country's economic centre.

Patrick Shanahan to replace James Mattis as US Defence Secretary

- **Patrick Shanahan** will be taking over as **the acting US Defence Secretary from January 1, 2019,** replacing James Mattis, who resigned abruptly recently. The announcement was made by US President Donald Trump through a tweet on December 23, 2018.
- James Mattis had abruptly announced his resignation on December 20, 2018, citing policy differences with President Donald Trump as the main reason behind the move.

India's Vedangi Kulkarni becomes fastest Asian to cycle the globe

- India's **Vedangi Kulkarni has become the fastest Asian to cycle the globe.** The 20-year-old Indian completed the 29,000 kilometers' distance required to qualify as bicycling across the globe on December 23, 2018.
- Overall, **Kulkarni spent 159 days peddling up to 300 km a day in 14 countries.**

Thailand approves medical use of marijuana

- **Thailand** on December 25, 2018 approved **the licensed use of marijuana for medical use and research.**

- With this, **Thailand has become the first country in Southeast Asia to take such action.** Marijuana has been traditionally used as a stimulant and painkiller in the nation.

Iraq declares Christmas as a public holiday

- The Iraqi government has declared **Christmas Day a national holiday across the country.**
- The declaration came after the Iraqi Cabinet approved a law to mark December 25 as an official holiday across the country “**on the occasion of the birth of Jesus Christ**”.

Japan announces withdrawal from IWC to resume commercial whaling

- **Japan** on December 26, 2018 announced its decision to **withdraw from the International Whaling Commission and said that it will resume commercial whaling from July 2019.** The withdrawal will come into effect by June 30, 2019.
- The withdrawal from the International Whaling Commission means that the Japanese whalers will be able to resume hunting of minke and other whales, which are currently protected by the IWC, in the Japanese coastal waters.

Palestine to apply for full UN membership in January 2019

- Palestinian Foreign Minister Riyad al-Malki declared on December 26, 2018 **that Palestine would initiate an application to gain full state membership at the United Nations in January 2019.**
- To secure full state membership, **the Palestinians would require the support from at least nine out of the UNSC's 15 member states.**

UAE reopens its embassy in Syria, after 6 years of suspension

- The **United Arab Emirates** on December 27, 2018 resumed its diplomatic services at its embassy in **Damascus in Syria** after six years of suspension. The move signals a thaw in the relations between the two countries, as also with the Arab world.
- The Charge d'Affaires of the UAE Embassy began discharging his duty on December 27, 2018.

Sheikh Hasina wins third consecutive term as prime minister

- **Bangladesh's Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina secured her third consecutive term and fourth overall with a landslide victory in the nation's general elections.** The results were announced by the Election Commission on December 31, 2018.
- **The Election Commission confirmed that Hasina won her Gopalganj-3 seat bagging over 2.29 lakh votes,** while her Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) opponent got only 123 votes.