

# News around the World

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## ***Dubai gets world's first AI-composed theme song***

- The world's first AI-composed (artificial intelligence) anthem dedicated to a city, titled 'Ode to Dubai', was unveiled at the ongoing Internet of Things Expo (IoT X) at the Dubai World Trade Centre (DWTC) in May.
- Whilst it took weeks, months or even years for classical composers to create their piece, AI-powered Aiva finished 'Ode to Dubai' in just 72 hours, according to Barreau.

## ***Trump announces May as National Mental Health Awareness Month***

- United States President Donald Trump in May has announced May to be observed as National Mental Health Awareness Month.
- While highlighting the initiatives taken by the country to provide treatment and recovery support services to the mentally ill patient, President Trump reflected his disappointment over the stigma attached with mental illness.

## ***NASA set to launch 'InSight' mission to study Mars' deep interior***

- The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) is set to send its first-ever mission to Mars to study its deep interior and find traces of how it was formed.
- Scheduled to be launched on May 5, 2018, NASA's Interior Exploration using Seismic Investigations, Geodesy and Heat Transport (InSight) will be the first-ever mission dedicated to study the heart of Mars.
- It also will be the first NASA mission, after the Apollo Moon Landings, to place a seismometer on the soil of another planet. The seismometer is a device that measures quakes.

## ***NASA's Kilopower Reactor could power missions to Mars***

- The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and the Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) on May 2, 2018 jointly demonstrated that the Kilopower portable nuclear fission reactor could enable crewed missions to the Moon, Mars and destinations beyond.
- The Kilopower Reactor Using Stirling Technology (KRUSTY) experiment was conducted at the NNSA's Nevada National Security Site from November 2017 through March 2018. The team successfully established that the system can create electricity with fission power.

## ***Nobel Prize in Literature will not be awarded this year***

- The Swedish Academy on May 4, 2018 announced that the Nobel Prize in Literature will be not awarded this year following the sex-abuse allegations and other issues within its ranks that have stained the body's reputation.
- The decision was taken in view of the reduced public confidence in the Academy. However, the 2018 prize will be given in 2019.

## ***US President Trump signs 'faith initiative' to promote religious freedom in US***

- US President Donald Trump on May 3, 2018 signed an executive order to create a faith-based initiative at the White House, which would promote policies that recognize the vital role of faith in American life.
- Trump signed the order during a ceremony in the White House Rose Garden on the occasion of the National Day of Prayer.

## ***NASA launches InSight spacecraft to Mars to dig down deep***

- A robotic geologist armed with a hammer and quake monitor rocketed toward Mars, aiming to land on the red planet and explore its mysterious insides.

- In a twist, NASA launched the Mars InSight lander from California rather than Florida's Cape Canaveral. It was the first interplanetary mission ever to depart from the West Coast, drawing pre-dawn crowds to fog-socked Vandenberg Air Force Base and rocket watchers down the California coast into Baja.
- The spacecraft will take more than six months to get to Mars and start its unprecedented geologic excavations, travelling 300 million miles (485 million kilometres) to get there.

#### ***Lebanon conducts first general election in nine years***

- The polling stations opened in Lebanon on May 6, 2018 for the country's first parliamentary election in nine years, a period marked by stretches of political paralysis and war in neighbouring Syria.
- The unofficial results are expected to start coming in and a formal tally is expected to be announced in the coming days.

#### ***12th informal meeting of SAARC Finance Ministers held in Manila***

- The 12th informal meeting of SAARC Finance Ministers was held on May 4, 2018 in Manila, the capital of Philippines in May on the sidelines of the 51st Annual Meeting of Asian Development Bank (ADB).
- The meeting was attended by the Finance Ministers/Heads of Delegations from all SAARC member states and was chaired by Nepal's Finance Minister Yuba Raj Khatiwada.
- According to a press statement issued by the SAARC Secretariat, Khatiwada underscored the need of concerted efforts to attain the objective of South Asian Economic Union as desired by the leaders of SAARC.

#### ***NASA, Uber team up to make flying cars a reality***

- The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) on May 8, 2018 signed a space act agreement with Uber Technologies to explore concepts and technologies related to Urban Air Mobility (UAM) for future air transportation such as flying cars in populated areas.
- Urban Air Mobility is a safe and efficient system for air vehicles, piloted or not, to move passengers and cargo within a city.
- The system could revolutionise the way people and goods move in crowded cities and vitally change the lifestyle.
- Under the agreement, Uber will share its plans with NASA for implementing the urban aviation rideshare network.

#### ***UN Chief Antonio Guterres announces to hold climate summit in September 2019***

- UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on May 8, 2018 announced to hold a climate summit in September 2019 in New York to review the commitments of the 2015 Paris Agreement on Climate Change.
- The announcement was made at the opening ceremony of the 37th session of the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.

#### ***Trump announces US withdrawal from Iran nuclear deal***

- The President of United States, Donald Trump on May 8, 2018 announced US withdrawal from the landmark 2015 nuclear deal with Iran.
- Trump stated through a televised address that the 2015 agreement, which included Germany, France and Britain, was a "horrible one-sided deal that should never ever have been made." He added that the United States "will be instituting the highest level of economic sanction."

#### ***Beijing to hold World Robot Conference***

- The 2018 World Robot Conference will be held in Beijing from August 15 to 19.
- The event will see over 12,000 competing teams and 50,000 participants from more than 10 countries and regions.
- A robot competition will be held during the conference where participants will compete in five categories.

### ***Renewable industry created 500,000 plus jobs in 2017 globally: IRENA***

- According to the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) report, the renewable energy industry created more than 500,000 new jobs globally in 2017, a 5.3 per cent increase from the previous year, with India and China among the largest employers.
- The report, 5th edition of Renewable Energy and Jobs - Annual Review, was launched at IRENA's 15th council in Abu Dhabi on May 8, 2018.

### ***China launches Gaofen-5 satellite to monitor air pollution***

- China successfully launched Gaofen-5 satellite, a hyperspectral imaging satellite, to monitor air pollution which is one of the country's major problems.
- The satellite was launched off the back of a Long March 4C rocket from the Taiyuan Satellite Launch Center in northern Shanxi Province.

### ***World's second oldest rock is from Odisha***

- A rock sample discovered eight years ago from Champua in Odisha's Kendujhar district has put India at the forefront of geological research in the world.
- Scientists have found a grain of magmatic zircon (a mineral that contains traces of radioactive isotopes) in the rock that is an estimated 4240 million years old, making it the world's second oldest rock.

### ***Sri Lankan army to set up Directorate of Overseas Operations***

- Sri Lankan army announced setting up of the 'Directorate of Overseas Operations' to defend itself against war crimes charges during the three-decade-long LTTE war.
- The Directorate was set up in April 2018 and is already engaged in the collection of the relevant material.

### ***In a first, Nasa plans to send a helicopter to explore habitat on Mars***

- The US space agency said in May it plans to launch the first-ever helicopter to Mars in 2020, a miniature, unmanned drone-like chopper that could boost our understanding of the Red Planet.
- Known simply as "The Mars Helicopter," the device weighs less than four pounds (1.8 kilograms), and its main body section, or fuselage, is about the size of a softball.
- It will be attached to the belly pan of the Mars 2020 rover, a wheeled robot that aims to determine the habitability of the Martian environment, search for signs of ancient life, and assess natural resources and hazards for future human explorers.

### ***SpaceX launches most powerful Falcon 9 rocket, carrying Bangladesh's first communication satellite***

- The California-based aerospace company SpaceX on May 11, 2018 launched its most powerful rocket yet 'Falcon 9', which is expected to carry humans to space later this year. The rocket was launched from Cape Canaveral, Florida
- The main aim behind the launching of the Block 5 Falcon 9 rocket was to propel Bangladesh's first high-orbit communications satellite, namely, Bangabandhu Satellite-1.
- The launch was initially expected to take place on May 10, 2018, but due to triggering of the automatic abort switch, the launch was postponed at the last minute.
- After successful liftoff, the rocket returned to an upright landing on the "Of Course I Still Love You" dronship stationed in the Atlantic Ocean.

### ***Trump cuts funding to NASA system that monitors greenhouse gases***

- US President Donald Trump's administration has cut off the funding for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA) Carbon Monitoring System (CMS). The move comes at a time when the world is struggling to combat climate change.

- According to Science Magazine, the United States has repeatedly proposed cuts to NASA's earth science budget, including NASA's Carbon Monitoring System (CMS).
- The NASA system monitors the flow of greenhouse gases.

### ***US opens new embassy in Jerusalem***

- The United States of America on May 14, 2018 officially relocated its embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, upholding the Jerusalem Embassy Act of 1995.
- US President Donald Trump did not attend the ceremony in Jerusalem however, he congratulated Israel through a video message broadcast saying that the opening had been "a long time coming."
- The US embassy was opened in Jerusalem on May 14, on the day that marked the 70th anniversary of the founding of the state of Israel, in the presence of several politicians and dignitaries including Ivanka Trump and her husband, Jared Kushner.

### ***16-year-old Indian becomes youngest woman to scale Mt. Everest***

- A 16-year-old girl from Haryana has registered her name as the youngest woman to scale the world highest peak in May evening, according to local media.
- Born in Hisar of Haryana in north-western India, Shivangi Pathak climbed Mount Everest exploring a message that women could overcome every obstacle to achieve their goals.
- Pathak said that she was inspired by Arunima Sinha, who was the first Indian amputee to scale the nearly 29,000 ft peak.

### ***China's first private rocket takes off***

- A Chinese based space startup, OneSpace has created history after it became the country's first private company to launch its own rocket.
- OneSpace said that it launched its OS-X rocket, measuring 9 meters tall successfully took off from a base in north-western China.
- The startup company has tied up with the Aviation Industry Corporation of China, a state-owned company to collect data for a research project for this mission.

### ***Russia launches world's first floating nuclear power plant***

- Russia on May 19, 2018 launched 'Akademik Lomonosov', the world's first floating nuclear power plant at the St Petersburg shipyard.
- The plant is currently towed to a port town called Murmansk in northwest Russia, where it will be loaded up with fuel. The plant would be then taken to a town in the Arctic Circle called Pevek, where it will begin generating power in mid-2019.
- The 'Akademik Lomonosov' is to be the first of a fleet of floating nuclear power stations to be stationed in the Russian Arctic.

### ***China launches satellite to explore dark side of moon***

- China on May 21, 2018 launched a relay satellite designed to establish a communication link between earth and a planned lunar probe that will explore the dark side of the moon.
- The satellite, known as Queqiao, or Magpie Bridge, will settle in an orbit about 455,000 km from earth and will be the world's first communication satellite operating there.
- China aims to catch up with Russia and the United States to become a major space power by 2030.

### ***Paraguay inaugurates embassy in Jerusalem***

- Paraguayan President Horacio Cartes inaugurated his country's Israel embassy in Jerusalem on May 21, 2018.

- With the decision, the nation becomes the third one to take the controversial step of moving its embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.
- The first move was made by the United States and Guatemala followed suit just days later.

#### ***UNICEF launches data visualisation app***

- The UNICEF on May 24, 2018 launched a 'data visualisation app' which provides a user-friendly visual representation of complex analytics of the education scenario in the country.
- The app has been made with technical inputs from the UNICEF, in collaboration with the National Institute of Education Planning and Administration (NIEPA) and the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT).

#### ***Nepal becomes first country in South-East Asia to eliminate Trachoma: WHO***

- The World Health Organization (WHO) on May 21, 2018 declared Nepal as free from Trachoma, the world's leading infectious cause of blindness.
- With this, Nepal becomes first country in WHO's South-East Asia Region to eliminate Trachoma.
- Trachoma was the second leading cause of preventable blindness in Nepal in the 1980s.
- In 2002, the Nepal Government augmented its efforts to eliminate the disease by launching the National Trachoma Programme.

#### ***India's Arjun Vajpai becomes world's youngest to scale record six peaks over 8,000 m***

- Indian mountaineer Arjun Vajpai this week became the youngest person in the world to scale six peaks over 8,000 metres when he summited the treacherous Kangchenjunga, the third highest mountain in the world.
- Vajpai, who became the third youngest person to scale the Mount Everest at the age of 16 in 2010, started his journey to the Kangchenjunga peak on April 26 from the Advanced Base Camp, situated at a height of 5,400 metres.

#### ***Colombia to be NATO's first Latin American 'global partner'***

- Colombia would be formally joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) next week. The announcement was made by the country's President Juan Manuel Santos on May 25, 2018.
- With the move, Colombia will become the first Latin American nation to be a part of the alliance. It would be joining the bloc as a 'global partner', which means it will not necessarily have to take part in any joint military action and will be fully accredited in Brussels.
- The NATO alliance comprising 29 member nations reached a partnership agreement with Colombia in May 2017, following the signing of a peace deal with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Farc).

#### ***Hamburg to host 2018 Global Wind Summit***

- The first edition of the Global Wind Summit will be hosted by Germany from September 25-28, 2018 at Hamburg.
- The Global Wind Summit 2018 will be the biggest meeting point for business, networking and information for the whole of the wind industry – onshore and offshore.
- The summit combines two conferences 'WindEnergy Hamburg' and 'WindEurope'.

#### ***Ireland ends abortion ban as 'quiet revolution' transforms country***

- Ireland on May 26, 2018 voted to end the abortion ban, a move hailed as the culmination of "a quiet revolution" in one of the Europe's most socially conservative countries. A quiet revolution has been taking place in Ireland over the last couple of decades.
- Voters voted to liberalise the highly restrictive abortion laws by two-to-one, thus, allowing the government to bring in the new legislation by the end of the year.

#### ***Singapore Airlines to launch world's longest commercial flights in October***

- Singapore Airlines (SIA) will launch the world's longest commercial flights from October 11 between Singapore and New Jersey in the United States of America.
- The 161-seat flight will cover 15,329 km non-stop, with travelling time lasting up to 18 hours and 45 minutes.
- According to the SIA, tickets will be made available for sale progressively across various booking channels starting from Thursday.

#### ***US Capitol to host first-ever gathering of Indian-Americans***

- The US Capitol will for the first time on June 7, 2018 host Indian American elected officials, leaders, philanthropists and some 80 community members running for elected offices in the November mid-term elections.
- Senator Kamala Harris from California, the first ever Indian origin to be elected to the US Senate, is scheduled to deliver a keynote address to the one-of-its-kind of gathering.

#### ***Microsoft becomes third most valuable firm globally***

- Software giant Microsoft has surpassed Google's parent company Alphabet in market capitalisation for the first time in three years, becoming the third most valuable firm globally after Apple and Amazon.
- On May 29, 2018, Microsoft reportedly had a market cap of \$753 billion at the close of trading, almost \$14 billion ahead of Alphabet.
- While Apple leads with a market cap of nearly \$924 billion, Amazon is at a distant second, with nearly \$783 billion.

#### ***International Conference on the TRIPS CBD Linkage to be held on 7-8 June in Geneva***

- The International Conference on TRIPS- CBD Linkage will be held in Geneva on June 7-8, 2018 to revive WTO discussions on issues related to theft of traditional knowledge.
- The conference will be organised jointly by Indian Government, Centre for WTO Studies, Indian Institute of Foreign Trade and the South Centre, an inter-governmental organisation based in Geneva.
- The international conference will bring together indigenous people and communities in developing and developed countries; internationally acclaimed academicians; Geneva-based negotiators; and capital based experts.