

China launches new high-orbit satellite BeiDou-3

- China successfully launched a high orbit satellite BeiDou-3 to boost BeiDou global satellite navigation system being built to rival United States Global Position System (GPS).
- The satellite was launched from the Xichang Satellite Launch Centre in the southwestern Sichuan Province.

Japan cabinet approves bill to accept foreign workers

- Japan's Cabinet approved a draft bill to bring more blue-collar foreign workers into the country to address chronic labour shortages.
- The Bill will now be submitted to parliament.
- However, the draft legislation has come under attack from both the opposition and members of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's own party.

Turkey unveils world's largest airport in Istanbul

- The world's largest airport was unveiled by Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan outside Istanbul.
- The new \$11.7 billion will be one of the world's busiest, though it will not be fully operational until January. The name of the new airport will be Istanbul Airport.
- The airport uses mobile applications and artificial intelligence for customers, is energy efficient and boasts of a high-tech security system.

First interstellar object Oumuamua could be alien probe, say Harvard scientists

- The cigar-shaped interstellar object -- originating from a star system not our own -- discovered last year and nicknamed Oumuamua' may actually be an alien probe, states a new study by Harvard scientists.
- Oumuamua, which means "a messenger from afar arriving first" in Hawaiian, looped around the sun on September 9 and made its closest pass by Earth on October 14.
- It was first thought to be an asteroid. But when its trajectory and velocity was measured, that was ruled out and then it was thought to be a comet.

UN Releases Special Diwali Stamp

- The UN Postal System has issued two stamps with diyas in celebration of Diwali as "the quest for the triumph of good over evil".
- The stamps are in the \$1.15 denomination, which is the basic rate for international air mail letters.

World's first AI news anchor unveiled in China

- China's state news agency Xinhua this week introduced the newest members of its newsroom: AI anchors who will report "tirelessly" all day every day, from anywhere in the country.
- Chinese viewers were greeted with a digital version of a regular Xinhua news anchor named Qiu Hao. The anchor, wearing a red tie and pin-striped suit, nods his head in emphasis, blinking and raising his eyebrows slightly.

Palau Becomes First Nation to Ban Chemical Sunscreens

- Palau is the first country to ban “reef-toxic” sunscreens. It passed a law this week banning sunscreens that contain any one of ten chemicals, including oxybenzone and octinoxate, which are the same chemicals targeted in Hawaii’s chemical sunscreen ban earlier this year.
- Palau, which is home to 500 islands and over 21,000 people in the Micronesia region of the Pacific Ocean, is drawing ever greater numbers of tourists, but with this has come environmental degradation.

33rd ASEAN Summit begins in Singapore

- The 33rd edition of the ASEAN Summit began on November 11, 2018 at Suntec Singapore Convention Centre, Singapore. The opening ceremony of the summit will take place on November 13, 2018. Lee Hsien Loong, Prime Minister of Singapore, is the Chairman of this year’s Summit.
- The Summit will continue till November 15, 2018 along with other related summits like East Asia Summit (EAS), Regional Comprehensive Economic Summit (RCEP) and ASEAN plus summits.
- The Summit will see the presence of leaders of partner countries such as Russian President Vladimir Putin, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Indian PM Narendra Modi and Japan’s Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

UN World Food Programme and Alibaba join hands to achieve zero hunger

- United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) and Alibaba Group (Alibaba), the world’s largest e-commerce company by transaction value, have entered into a strategic partnership to support efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2 a world with zero hunger.
- WFP’s Executive Director, David Beasley, and Alibaba Partner and Chairman of the Alibaba Foundation, Sun Lijun, signed the agreement at Alibaba’s headquarters in Hangzhou, China.
- Under the framework, Alibaba will provide its leading technology and resources to support the digital transformation of WFP’s operations.

World's largest 'human brain' supercomputer with 1 million processors switched on

- The world's largest neuromorphic supercomputer designed and built to work in the same way a human brain does has been fitted with its landmark one-millionth processor core and is being switched on for the first time.
- The newly formed million-processor-core 'Spiking Neural Network Architecture' or 'SpiNNaker' machine is capable of completing more than 200 million actions per second, with each of its chips having 100 million transistors.

Amnesty International strips Myanmar's Aung San Suu Kyi of 'Ambassador of Conscience' Award

- Amnesty International on November 12, 2018 stripped Myanmar’s de facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi of its highest honour, the ‘Ambassador of Conscience’ award, over her indifference to atrocities committed by the Myanmar military against and increasing intolerance of freedom of expression.
- The Amnesty International, an international human rights group, named Suu Kyi as its 2009 Ambassador of Conscience Award recipient when she was still under house arrest for her opposition to Myanmar's oppressive military.

WhatsApp selects 20 teams to curb fake news globally, including India

- Facebook-owned WhatsApp selected 20 research teams worldwide including experts from India and those of Indian origin who will work towards how misinformation spreads and what additional steps it could take to curb fake news.
- Shakuntala Banaji from London School of Economics and Political Science, Anushi Agrawal and Nihal Passanha from Bengaluru-based media and arts collective “Maraa” and Ramnath Bhat from LSE were selected for the paper “WhatsApp Vigilantes? WhatsApp messages and mob violence in India.”

17th AEC Council Meeting held in Singapore

- The 17th ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) Council Meeting was held in Singapore as part of the 33rd ASEAN Summit and Related Summit Meetings.
- Apart from taking stock of regional economic integration efforts during the year, the meeting reiterated ASEAN’s commitment to free and open trade by deepening the integration of its economies and realising the AEC Blueprint 2025.
- The meeting was attended by the ASEAN Economic Ministers and AEC Ministers.
- They signed the ASEAN Agreement on e-Commerce, Concluded the ASEAN Trade in Services Agreement (ATISA) and Finalised the Fourth Protocol to Amend the ASEAN Comprehensive Investment Agreement (ACIA).

Regional meeting of World Customs Organisation held in Jaipur

- Four-day regional meeting of World Customs Organisation (WCO) was held in Jaipur, Rajasthan.
- It was attended by representatives of 33 member countries of Asia.
- The meeting was jointly chaired by WCO Deputy Secretary General, Ricardo Travino and Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs Chairman, S Ramesh.
- The meeting deliberated upon amended Kyoto protocol, digital customs, e-commerce among other issues.

Setback for Theresa May as Dominic Raab resigns as Brexit Secretary

- British Prime Minister Theresa May suffered a blow on November 15, 2018 after the Brexit Secretary Dominic Raab resigned over a proposed EU withdrawal agreement.
- Raab said he cannot reconcile the terms of the proposed deal.
- Raab, who had been in place since July 2018, resigned soon after the resignation of Shailesh Vara as a junior Northern Ireland Minister over the draft accord.

World Tolerance Summit held in Dubai

- The World Tolerance Summit (WTS) 2018 was inaugurated on November 16, 2018 in Dubai, UAE. The theme of the summit was ‘Prospering from Pluralism: Embracing Diversity through Innovation and Collaboration’.
- The two-summit is the biggest gathering of government leaders, ambassadors, change-makers and key figures from the public and private sectors. Over 2,000 ministers and government leaders from around the world are expected to participate in the event. It is being held in the UAE for the first time.

UNSC condemns killing of UN peacekeepers & national soldiers in DRC

- UN Security Council has condemned the killing of at least 20 soldiers during operations against insurgents in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.
- In a press statement, the council members expressed condolences to the families of the killed, including seven Malawian and one Tanzanian UN peacekeepers and at least 12 Congo soldiers, and wished a speedy recovery to the injured.

Maldives to rejoin Commonwealth, 2 years after withdrawing

- The Maldives cabinet has approved the proposal to rejoin the Commonwealth, two years after withdrawing from the 53-nation grouping.
- The announcement was made by the nation's newly inaugurated President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih on November 19. President Solih said that the proposal will be sent to the Parliament for ratification.

Nissan Chairman Carlos Ghosn arrested over financial misconduct

- Nissan Chairman Carlos Ghosn has been arrested in Tokyo over claims of financial misconduct.
- The company's Chief Executive Hiroto Saikawa said, Ghosn will be sacked from the Japanese firm after a board meeting on November 22.

26th General Conference on Weights and Measures redefines standard definition of Kg

- The 26th meeting of the General Conference on Weights and Measures (CGPM) was held from November 13-16, 2018 at Palais des Congrès, Versailles, France. The CGPM is the highest international body of the world for accurate and precise measurements.
- The 26th CGPM was special and historic, as the members voted for the redefinition of 130-years-old "Le grand K – the SI unit of kg" in terms of the fundamental Planck's constant (h). The new definitions will come into force on May 20, 2019.
- The CGPM comprises 60 countries including India and 42 Associate Members. India was represented by Consumer Affairs Secretary Avinash K Srivastava, National Physical Laboratory (NPL) Director D K Aswal and Head of NPL's Planning, Monitoring & Evaluation TD Senguttuvan.

Australia refuses to sign UN migration pact

- The Australian Government announced on November 21, 2018 that it would not sign the UN Global Compact for Migration saying that the agreement would undermine its existing immigration policies.
- Speaking on the decision, Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison said that the government believes that the Compact is inconsistent with its well-established policies and not in Australia's interest.

UN environment Chief Erik Solheim resigns amid audit on travel expenses

- UN Environment Chief Erik Solheim resigned from his post on November 20, 2018 following an audit report questioning his huge travel expenses.
- In an official statement, Solheim said that he had received the final audit report of his travel expenses and after deep reflection, he decided to step down. A UN audit had found that Solheim had spent nearly five lakh US dollar on travel.

Saudi, UAE announce USD 500 million in aid to war-torn Yemen

- Saudi Arabia and the UAE, which lead a military coalition against the Huthi rebels in Yemen, on November 20, 2018 announced USD 500 million in aid to the country on the brink of famine.
- Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates will each give USD 250 million in response to the food crisis to support more than 10 million people.

US suspends USD 1.66 bn security assistance to Pakistan

- The United States has suspended its 1.66 billion dollar security assistance to Pakistan. The decision has been taken on the directions of President Donald Trump.
- Deputy Assistant Secretary Defense for Afghanistan, Pakistan and Central Asia under the previous Obama administration, David Sedney said that the blocking of military assistance, which began in January this year, is a strong signal of American frustration.

US, South Korea scale down joint military exercise 'Foal Eagle'

- The United States and South Korea have scaled down an annual joint military exercise, Foal Eagle, scheduled for the spring of 2019.
- According to US Defence Secretary Jim Mattis, the move is to facilitate nuclear talks with North Korea.

International Space Station completes 20 years

- The International Space Station (ISS) turned 20 years old on November 20, 2018. The project was kicked by Russian space agency Roscosmos when it launched its Zarya module from the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan on November 20, 1998.
- The launch was followed by NASA's Unity module. The pair was joined in low-earth orbit, which kick-started a 13-year construction effort of the most ambitious construction project in the history of humanity. The result of the effort was a habitable artificial satellite, which currently serves as a giant orbiting observatory and laboratory.

Nepal's largest exhibition 'ConMac 2018' starts in Bhaktapur

- Nepal's largest exhibition on construction equipment and technology "ConMac 2018" started in Bhaktapur near Kathmandu on November 22, 2018.
- Development is the main agenda of the present government and it is committed to infrastructure development in Nepal and machines and technology are very essential to achieve this goal.
- The Nepal government plans to construct 6,000 to 8,000 KM roads and prepare Detail Project Report (DPR) for 2,800 KM railway lines in the next four years.

UN's atomic watchdog calls on North Korea to re-admit nuclear inspectors

- The head of the UN's atomic watchdog, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has called on North Korea to allow inspectors back into the country to monitor its nuclear program.
- Speaking at a board meeting of the IAEA, Director General Yukiya Amano noted that Pyongyang had in September talked about denuclearization measures including the permanent dismantlement of the nuclear facilities in Yongbyon a reactor where it produces plutonium.

Britain, EU agree on draft text of Brexit

- Britain and the European Union have agreed on a draft text setting out a close post-Brexit relationship.
- However, wrangling with Spain over control of Gibraltar must still be settled before EU leaders meet on November 25 in order to rubber-stamp the pact.

Beijing's Population falls for the first time in 2 Decades

- The population of China's capital, Beijing, declined for the first time in two decades in 2017.
- The number of permanent residents reached 21.707 million in 2017 which is 22,000 fewer than 2016. The number of people in the city's six urban districts has also declined by 3 percent

NASA, SpaceX to launch test flight on January 7, ahead of historic crewed flight

- The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) of the United States is planning to send humans to space for the first time in eight years, in a historic flight through SpaceX Crew Dragon.
- Prior to the historic launch, as a part of the preparation, the space agency will shoot out a test flight on January 7, 2019. The announcement comes as the race between Boeing and SpaceX to launch their first crewed space missions is heating up.

NASA's InSight Mars explorer lands safely on the Red Planet

- NASA's InSight explorer successfully touched down on Mars on November 26, 2018, after an almost seven-month journey through deep space.
- This is the eighth time in human history that NASA has executed a successful landing on the red planet and the first in six years.

Nepal launches Social Security Scheme

- Nepal government launched a Social Security Scheme for formal sector workers of the country. Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli unveiled the scheme in Kathmandu.
- The scheme aims to strengthen the system in which the government is accountable to its people. People of all ages and categories would be included in the scheme.

G20 Summit 2018 begins in Argentina

- The 2018 G20 Summit began on November 28, 2018 in the city of Buenos Aires, Argentina. Nineteen leaders of the world's biggest economies and a representative of the European Union will be holding a meeting on November 30 as part of the G20 summit.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be representing India at the Summit and is scheduled to meet US President Donald Trump, Chinese President Xi Jinping, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, Argentina President Mauricio Macri, Chilean President Sebastian Pinera and German Chancellor Angela Merkel, on the sidelines of the summit.
- US President Donald Trump is expected to hold a trilateral meeting with Prime Minister Modi and Japanese Premier Shinzo Abe on the sidelines of the G-20 Summit.

A section of stairs from Eiffel Tower sold for 170,000 euros

- A section of stairs from the Eiffel Tower in Paris was sold for almost 170,000 euros, around three times the pre-sale estimate.
- The auctioneers announced that more than two dozen wrought-iron steps from the original spiral structure, from between the second and third floors of the Paris landmark, were sold to a Middle East collector.

EU aims to be first carbon neutral economy by 2050

- The European Union on November 28, 2018 urged government, businesses, citizens and regions to join it in an ambitious plan to cut emissions and make the bloc carbon neutral by 2050.
- The EU climate commissioner Miguel Arias Canete said in a press conference in Brussels that the bloc is kicking off a process to determine how Europe's energy and climate policy will evolve between now and 2050.

South Korea tests space rocket engine

- South Korea conducted a rocket engine test launch, paving the way for the development of its own space launch vehicle.
- A liquid-fuel engine successfully propelled a single-stage rocket from the Naro Space Center on the country's southern coast.

China plans to deliver free WiFi to the world by 2026

- Chinese internet technology firm is planning to launch a constellation of 272 satellites by 2026 with an aim to provide free WiFi service worldwide.
- LinkSure Network, founded in Shanghai in 2013, markets itself as a global innovative mobile internet company specialising in free internet access, content and location-based services on its official website.
- It unveiled its first satellite in the constellation plan on November 27, 2018.
- The satellite, 'LinkSure-1,' will be launched from Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre in Northwest China's Gansu province next year, and by 2020 there will be 10 satellites in space.
- The constellation will have 272 satellites by 2026.

Kenya hosts inaugural Sustainable Blue Economy conference

- Africa is hosting a historic conference that has to do with environmental protection. The first ever Sustainable Blue Conference starts today in the Kenyan capital, Nairobi.
- The three-day conference has high global support with over twenty world leaders in Nairobi for the event. A number of environment friendly civil society organizations are also in attendance.

Congo's Ebola outbreak now second-largest in history: WHO

- The World Health Organization has said that Congo's deadly Ebola outbreak is now the second largest in history, behind the devastating West Africa outbreak that killed thousands a few years ago.
- According to Congo's health ministry, the total death toll has reached 426, among which 379 are confirmed cases and 47 are probable ones.