

International Current Affairs 2018

International Current Affairs- April

- The presidents of Iran, Turkey & Russia met for their second tripartite summit in under six months, aiming to speed the peace process for Syria & bolster their influence in the country. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan hosted his Russian & Iranian counterparts Vladimir Putin & Hassan Rouhani in Ankara for a meeting that could have a critical bearing on developments in Syria.
- Singapore & China signed an MoU in Beijing, China to promote greater collaboration between Singapore & Chinese companies in third-party markets along the Belt & Road.
- India & World Expo 2020 signed participants contract for India's pavilion in the prestigious World Expo 2020 held once in 5 years. The contract provides for the setting up of India pavilion at Expo 2020 on an extra large plot (about one acre) in the 'Opportunity' segment.
- Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has decided to scrap the quota system in government services after thousands of students marched across the country in protest against a controversial policy of setting aside jobs for special groups.
- World Bank has approved \$55mn to expand the use of clean renewable energy in rural areas of Bangladesh where grid electricity cannot reach easily.
- United Nations' Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed announced the launch of the 'UN Road Safety Trust Fund' to stimulate action that can save lives & prevent injuries & sufferings associated with road accidents.
- United Kingdom joined the India-led International Solar Alliance (ISA) ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's four-day visit to Britain.
- The Jatra begins in Nepal. It is believed that the festival started during Malla dynasty. In Nepal, the famous Bisket Jatra is being celebrated in Bhaktapur & other parts of Kathmandu valley.
- Since 2016, fourteen new sites have been designated as Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS), including the first ones in Europe.
- India has won an election to a crucial non-governmental organisation committee in the United Nations. It topped the election held by the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations in the Asia Pacific States category. The Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations is a standing committee of Economic & Social Council (ECOSOC).
- Swaziland's King Mswati III, Africa's last absolute monarch, officially changed the name of his country to the 'Kingdom of eSwatini'. Accordingly, the country, a

member of the Commonwealth, will now be known by its historic name of eSwatini.

- Britain's Prince Charles will succeed his mother Queen Elizabeth II as the Head of the Commonwealth after the heads of government agreed on his succession.
- The Commonwealth countries have unanimously agreed to take action on cybersecurity by 2020. In a landmark declaration at the end of Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in London, the leaders of 53 countries agreed to work closely to evaluate & strengthen their cybersecurity frameworks & response mechanisms.
- Bolivian Foreign Minister Fernando Huanacuni has announced that Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Paraguay & Peru had decided to temporarily leave the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), given differences over choosing the secretary general of the group.
- Iran has banned the use of bitcoin & other cryptocurrencies by its banks & financial institutions.
- Canada & the European Union will host the world's first 2-Day female foreign ministers' meeting in September 2018 in Canada. The announcement was made by the Canadian Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland.

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- European Union & the United Nations co-chaired an international conference in Brussels, Belgium aiming to pump financial aid for Syrians & garner political support for UN-led intra-Syrian talks.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi left on a three-day visit to China. Mr Modi will hold talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping during an informal summit in Wuhan city.
- Mario Abdo Benitez won the presidential election conducted in Paraguay. He belongs to the ruling

Colorado Party. He had secured 46.5% of the votes, with 96% of 21,000.

- Mike Pompeo was sworn in as the secretary of state, shortly after the Senate confirmed the former CIA director's nomination as America's top diplomat at a crucial time when the US is involved in several high stakes negotiations around the world.
- The leaders of North & South Korea agreed to pursue a permanent peace & the complete denuclearization of the divided peninsula, as they embraced after a historic summit laden with symbolism. Kim Jong-un, the leader of North Korea & Moon Jae-in, the leader of South Korea also agreed to end hostile activities between the two nations, change the demilitarised zone (DMZ) that divides the country into a "peace zone" by ceasing propaganda broadcasts.


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International Current Affairs- May

- Guatemala has opened an embassy in Jerusalem two days after the U.S. moved its embassy to the contested capital city.
- Russia unveiled the world's first floating nuclear power station at a ceremony in the port of the far northern city of Murmansk, where it will be loaded with nuclear fuel before heading to eastern Siberia. Built in Saint Petersburg, the Akademik Lomonosov arrived in Murmansk where it was moored in the port.
- World Health Organization (WHO) declared Nepal as free from Trachoma, the world's leading infectious cause of blindness. With this, Nepal becomes the first country in WHO's South-East Asia Region to eliminate Trachoma.
- Colombia would be formally joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The announcement was made by the Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos. With the move, Colombia will become the first Latin American nation to be a part of the alliance.
- On the first leg of 3-Nation visit, PM Modi has visited Indonesia. India and Indonesia signed 15 MoUs in the fields of defence, scientific and technological cooperation, railways and health, among others. PM Modi and Indonesian President Joko Widodo in a joint

statement also agreed to develop further cooperation in maritime sector for "immense stability" in the region.

- India has released 33.10 Crore rupees to Nepal towards the cost of two road packages of Birgunj-Thori Road being implemented under Postal Highway Projects in Nepal with Government of India's grant assistance.
- As many as 26 countries, including India, will participate in the biennial Rim of the Pacific, RIMPAC military exercise, in and around the Hawaiian Islands and Southern California. It is the world's largest international maritime exercise.
- **The Dominican Republic & China established diplomatic relations as the Caribbean country becomes the latest nation to dump Taiwan** in the face of Beijing's growing influence. With this, Dominican Republic has broken a 77-year alliance with Taiwan.
- The bilateral trade between **India & China through Nathu La border** has resumed. The announcement was made by the General Secretary of the Indo-China Border Traders' Welfare Association, Tenzing Tsepel.
- **India is organising a cultural festival in Egypt to commemorate the 157th birth anniversary of Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore.** An exhibition on the paintings of Tagore titled 'Rabindranath Tagore: Rhythm in Colours' will be held in Giza.
- **New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman** announced that he **would be resigning** from office hours after 4 women accused him of physical violence.
- **Israel withdrew** from a race against Germany & Belgium for **two seats on the United Nations Security Council in 2019-20.**
- UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres **announced to hold a climate summit in September 2019 in New York to review the commitments of the 2015 Paris Agreement on Climate Change.** Guterres appointed former New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg as his Special Envoy for Climate Action.
- **President Trump announced US withdrawal** from the 2015 landmark nuclear deal with Iran. Mr Trump signed a fresh set of sanctions against Iran & warned countries against any cooperation with Tehran on its controversial nuclear weapons programme.
- **The leaders of China, Japan & South Korea met in Tokyo against the backdrop of historic diplomatic moves by North Korea & a push for the isolated country to give up its nuclear weapons.** Japanese PM Shinzo Abe, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang & South Korean President Moon Jae-in held talks in the first three-way summit in two-and-a-half years.
- **World Health Organization (WHO) has launched a comprehensive plan to eliminate industrially-produced artificial trans fats from the global food supply by 2023.** WHO calls on governments to use the 'REPLACE' action package to eliminate industrially-produced trans-fatty acids from the food supply. The global health body estimates that every year, trans fat intake leads to over 5,00,000 deaths worldwide from cardiovascular diseases.



- Presently, there are 193-member countries in the UN General Assembly.

International Current Affairs- June

- **On his visit to Israel, Gujarat CM Vijay Rupani met Israel's Agriculture & Rural Development Minister Uri Ariel & announced a joint working group (JWG) between Gujarat & Israel in the fields of agriculture, horticulture & allied sectors.**
- **Pakistan has been placed on the grey list by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) for failing to curb anti-terror financing despite its diplomatic efforts to avert the decision.**
- **Britain's Queen Elizabeth granted royal assent to PM Theresa May's flagship Brexit legislation, ending months of debate over the legislation that will formally end the country's European Union membership.**
- **Nepali PM Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli is on his first visit to China** after assuming the charge as PM. China will build a railway connecting the western region of Tibet with Nepal, this was signed during Oli's visit to Beijing. The link will connect the Tibetan city of Xigaze with Nepal's capital Kathmandu.
- **Mongolia broke ground for the construction of country's first oil refinery with the help of a USD 1 billion loan** from India. Rajnath Singh attended the groundbreaking ceremony for the construction of the refinery at 'Stantsiin Hooloi' & described it as an important milestone in the bilateral ties.
- **The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) launches the findings of SIPRI Yearbook 2018**, which assesses the current state of armaments, disarmament & international security. Key findings include the following:
 - All the nuclear weapon-possessing states are developing new nuclear weapon systems & modernizing their existing systems;
 - The number of personnel deployed with peace operations worldwide continues to fall while the demand is increasing.
 - At the start of 2018 nine states—the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, China, India, Pakistan, Israel & the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) - possessed approximately 14,465 nuclear weapons.
- **World Bank approved \$700 million to help Bangladesh achieve its education for all vision** by improving the primary education sector. The Quality Learning for All Program (QLEAP) will cover more than 18 million children studying in pre-primary level to grade 5.
- **Nikki Haley, the US Permanent Representative to the United Nations announced the withdrawal of the United States from the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC)**, accusing the council of bias against US ally Israel. This marks the first time that a member has voluntarily left the UNHRC.
- **World Bank predicts that US growth will register 2.7% in 2018, aided by tax cuts**, before slowing to 2.5% next

year & 2% in 2020. China's growth is projected at 6.5% this year, 6.3% in 2019 & 6.2% in 2020.

- **India & Tajikistan** reaffirmed their commitment to promote bilateral relations & agreed to enhance economic cooperation, particularly in sustainable water development.
- **United States** decided to **provide security guarantees to North Korea**, in exchange of Pyongyang's firm & unwavering commitment to complete denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula.

International Current Affairs- July

- Pakistan got its first-ever woman Chief Justice of a high court. Justice Tahira Safdar was named as the Chief Justice of the Balochistan High Court.
- United States eased export controls for high-technology product sales to India by elevating its status to a Strategic Trade Authorisation-1 (STA-1) country. With the move, the United States has granted India the same access as NATO allies, Australia, Japan and South Korea.
- The ninth and final meeting of Eminent Persons Group (EPG) on Nepal-India Relations concluded in Kathmandu, Nepal. EPG is a joint mechanism consisting of experts and intellectuals from India and Nepal.
- Asia's first arbitration centre specialised in intellectual property is slated to open in Tokyo in September 2018 to resolve the growing number of disputes in the region.
- The world's first digital art museum opened its doors to the public in Tokyo, Japan.
- UN member states approved a 6.69 billion US Dollar budget for 13 peacekeeping operations for the year 2018-19.
- The Mattala Rajapaksa International Airport (MRIA) would be operated as a Sri Lanka-India joint venture. The \$210 million facility, 241km south-east of Colombo, is dubbed the "world's emptiest airport" due to a lack of flights.
- UN Security Council adopted a resolution 2427, aimed at a framework for mainstreaming protection, rights, well-being and empowerment of children throughout the conflict cycle. Resolution 2427, strongly condemns the recruitment and use of children by parties to armed conflict as well as their re-recruitment, killing and maiming, rape and other forms of sexual violence, abductions.
- US President Donald Trump and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin held the first summit at Helsinki in Finland. Host Finland President Sauli Niinisto met Trump before Trump and Putin sit down to a bilateral meeting first without aides and then with their teams of support staff.
- External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj co-chaired the second joint commission meeting with her Bahraini counterpart Shaikh Khalid Bin Ahmed Bin

Mohamed Al Khalifa. Issues of trade, investment and counter-terror cooperation discussed at the joint commission meeting. She jointly inaugurated impressive Embassy of India Complex in Manama.

- European Union (EU) & Japan signed an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA). It was signed at EU-Japan summit in Tokyo by EU Presidents Jean-Claude Juncker and Donald Tusk and Japanese PM Shinzo Abe. It is biggest ever trade deal negotiated by the EU & creates free trade zone covering nearly third of the world's GDP.
- UN Environment Programme (UNEP) entered into a partnership with Google to monitor the impacts of human activity on global ecosystems by using sophisticated online tools. It was launched during a High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development at United Nations (UN) headquarters in New York.
- US State Department announced that the inaugural 'two-plus-two dialogue' between India and the United States will be held in New Delhi on September 6. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Defence Secretary James Mattis will travel to India for the dialogue with External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj and Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.
- Myanmar joined the India-initiated International Solar Alliance (ISA), thus, becoming the 68th signatory to the Framework Agreement of the ISA that aims for optimum utilisation of solar energy.


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International Current Affairs- August

- 4th BIMSTEC Summit held in Kathmandu, Nepal. The main focus was on countering terrorism, enhancing regional connectivity and boosting trade. The theme was 'Towards a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable Bay of Bengal region'.
- The First South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Agri Cooperative Business Forum held in Kathmandu, Nepal. The theme was 'Organizing and Strengthening Family Farmers' Cooperatives to

attain the Sustainable- Development-Goals-1 and 2 in South Asia'.

- The G20 Digital Economy Ministerial Meeting was held in Salta, Argentina. It took place as part of Sherpa Track for 2018 G20 Leaders' Summit, which is to be hosted by Argentina by end of 2018. The theme was 'Building consensus for fair and sustainable development'.
- In Sri Lanka, the fourth Asian electoral stakeholders forum (AESF-IV) begins in Colombo to discuss the state of elections and democracy in the region. It is being held for the first time in South Asia with support from the Election Commission of Sri Lanka and the Asian network for free elections (ANFREL). The theme was, 'Advancing Election Transparency and Integrity: Promoting and Defending Democracy Together'.
- The 8th meeting of India-Kenya Joint Trade Committee was held in Nairobi, Kenya.
- The World Bank launched 'bond-i', the world's first bond to be created, allocated, transferred and managed by using distributed ledger technology. This two-year bond successfully raised 110 million Australian dollars (USD 80.48 million).
- Treasurer Scott Morrison has been elected the new Prime Minister of Australia after winning an internal vote of 45-40 against former Home Affairs Minister Peter Dutton. He will take over the charge as PM from Malcolm Turnbull.
- Iran unveiled its first domestic fighter jet named 'KOWSAR' with President Hassan Rouhani.
- France's Parliament signed into law a controversial asylum and immigration bill. The bill is designed to accelerate asylum procedures by cutting the maximum processing time from the current 120 days to 90 days after entering France.
- United States Congress passed the National Defense Authorisation Act-2019 (NDAA-19) which capped its security-related aid to Pakistan to \$150 million, significantly below the historic level of more than \$ 1 billion to \$750 million per year.
- External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj inaugurated 'Panini Language Laboratory' at Mahatma Gandhi Institute (MGI) at Port Louis in Mauritius. She called on Prime Minister of Mauritius Pravind Kumar Jagnauth and discussed further deepening of the special ties between the two nations.
- In Sri Lanka, the ten-day festival of the historic Esala Maha Perehera began in Kandy with a grand procession. The procession set off from the biggest Buddhist temple in Sri Lanka, Sri Dalada Maligawa at an auspicious time.
- Japan pipped China as the world's number two stock market, as per Bloomberg report. Both markets are ranked after the US which is the world's largest at just over \$31 trillion.
- Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong chaired the 51st ASEAN Foreign Ministers meeting in Singapore.
- UK government announced new plans to change the law for organ and tissue donation to address the urgent need for organs within the Indian-origin communities in the country.

- Saudi Arabia announced that it is freezing all new trade and investment with Canada over its interference in its internal affairs.
- Israel opened a Visa Application Centre in Kolkata for tourists from West Bengal and the northeastern states to encourage more Indian travelers to visit that country.
- Nepal-India Literature Festival 2018 held in Birgunj, Nepal. It was inaugurated by Chief Minister of Province 2 Mohammad Lalbabu Raut. The festival is aimed at strengthening Indo-Nepal ties.
- Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, Radha Mohan Singh urged to Jose Graziano da Silva, the Director General of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (UNFAO) to declare the upcoming year as the 'International Year of Millets'.
- The 24th World Congress of Philosophy (WCP) was held in Beijing, China. It was organized by the International Federation of Philosophical Societies, and Peking University. Its theme was "Learning To Be Human".
- US secretary of state, Mike Pompeo announced the formation of the Iran Action Group (IAG) to coordinate and run the country's policy towards Iran. Pompeo has named Brian Hook, the State Department's director of policy planning, as the group's head.
- Qatar King Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani pledged to make direct investment in Turkey and announced a 15-billion US dollar investment into the country's financial markets and banks.

International Current Affairs- September

- Canada agreed to sign a trade deal with the United States & Mexico, revamping the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). The new deal has been named the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA).
- Argentina has received \$57.1 billion from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the biggest loan package ever from the global body aimed at boosting the country's struggling economy.
- Nepal is set to become the first country in the world to double its tiger population as part of the World Wildlife Foundation's (WWF) 'Tx2' programme which aims to double the number of tigers all over the world.
- India has contributed one million US dollars for the installation of solar panels on the roof of the imposing UN building at the world body's headquarters in New York.
- PM Narendra Modi & his Bangladesh counterpart Sheikh Hasina jointly launched the construction of India-Bangladesh Friendship Product Pipeline Project through video conferencing. The 130-kilometre pipeline will connect Siliguri in West Bengal in India & Parbatipur in Dinajpur district of Bangladesh.
- Germany has rolled out the world's first hydrogen-powered train.
- Bangladesh's Cabinet has approved a draft agreement with India to enable New Delhi to use the Chittagong

- & Mongla ports for the movement of goods to & from northeast India.
- Jaipur Literature Festival began in Houston at the Asia Society of Texas.
- Justice Om Prakash Mishra has been sworn in as new Chief Justice of Nepal.
- PM Modi, his Bangladesh counterpart Sheikh Hasina, & CMs of West Bengal Mamata Banerjee & Tripura Biplab Kumar Deb jointly inaugurated three projects in Bangladesh via video conferencing. These include: 500 MW additional power supply from India to Bangladesh, Akhaura - Agartala Rail Link, & Rehabilitation of the Kulaura-Shahbazpur section of Bangladesh Railways. Note: Akhaura-Agartala rail project is about 12 km long of which 5.5 km would be laid in India while 6.5 km would be in Bangladesh.
- Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) candidate Arif-ur-Rehman Alvi was elected as the 13th President of Pakistan, the result data from the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) confirmed.
- India is the Partner Country in the 87th Izmir International tradeshow which begins in Turkey. In this tradeshow India will also be launching a mega business pavilion 'Source India' hosting 75 Indian companies with the aim of tie-ups in order to increase India's exports to Turkey & other neighboring countries.
- The three-day World Hindu Congress has begun in Chicago, the USA. The theme is 'think collectively, achieve valiantly'.


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