

CURRENT AFFAIRS MARCH 2016 - INTERNATIONAL

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News 1 - Japan lays down new plan to achieve 80% emission cut by 2050.



The Japanese government will stipulate a long-term goal of cutting greenhouse gas emissions by 80% by 2050 from the current levels. This move follows a new international climate agreement reached in Paris in December 2015.

The plan is likely to be approved by the cabinet before Japan hosts the Group of Seven (G7) summit in May. Under this plan, the Japanese Government will seek to introduce more renewable sources, while also aiming to have all households shift to more energy efficient LED Lights by 2030.

News 2 - South Korea passes Anti-Terror Bill.



The controversial anti-terror law of South Korea was passed by the parliament. 159 parliament members voted for the bill, while 1 voted against it. Opposition lawmakers made non-stop speeches to delay the vote on the country's first anti-terror bill from February 23.

This bill allows the spy agency to collect a wide range of personal data including phone records of those suspected of posing a security threat and also allows the National Intelligence Service (NIS) to have Internet posts deleted if it deems they pose a threat to public security.

News 3 - Emergency declared in Peru after oil spill hits rivers.



An emergency was declared three weeks after a major oil pipeline burst in Peru. The pipeline burst spilled more than a whopping 3000 barrels of crude oil into the Chiriaco and Morona rivers.

The government has instructed the indigenous communities not to eat fish from the polluted waters as it can be hazardous.

This has been the third oil spill in less than a month in this region.

News 4 - World's Costliest Train Station Opened at 9/11 Site in New York.



The most expensive train station in the world was opened at the World Trade Center site in New York. There was no official announcement to mark the 3pm opening to the rail commuters. Initially budgeted at \$2 billion, it has spiraled to \$3.85 billion.

This center connects the PATH commuter rail to New Jersey with New York subway lines, provides indoor pedestrian access to the Trade Center towers and will also house an enormous shopping and restaurant plaza. This building is designed by Spanish-Swiss architect Santiago Calatrava and is called Oculus.

News 5 - South Korea and US starts their largest ever military exercise.



South Korean and U.S. troops began their 8-week long large scale military exercises off the coast of the Korean peninsula involving about 17,000 American troops and more than 300,000 South Koreans.

North Korea has warned South Korea and US of nuclear strikes if the two allies go further with the drills. The annual exercises have traditionally led to a ratcheting up of tensions with Seoul's northern neighbor.

The last several months have been particularly contentious, after North Korea claimed to have tested its first hydrogen bomb and fired a satellite into orbit.

News 6 - Iran Successfully Test-Fired Several Ballistic Missiles During Their Military Drill.



Iran's Revolutionary Guards (IRGC) has launched several ballistic missiles as part of a military exercise. The missiles had a range of 300 kms to 2000 kms. These tests were conducted to showcase the country's preventive power and its skill to challenge any threat against the state and the sovereignty of the country.

These missiles launched from silos in several locations across the country also demonstrated Iran's deterrence power and its readiness to confront threats. Iran claims to already have surface-to-surface missiles with a range of 2000 kms, which are capable of striking Israel and US military bases in the Middle East.

News 7 - Arab League brands Lebanese movement “Hezbollah” a terrorist group.



The Arab League has declared the Lebanese Shia political organization “Hezbollah”, a terrorist group after the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) had also declared Hezbollah a terrorist group.

The Arab League, dominated by Sunni Muslim countries, said the decision had been near unanimous. Hezbollah is a key political and military force in Lebanon, and is involved in the conflict in Syria. Its support for President Bashar al-Assad has long pitted it against Gulf states backing rebels.

News 8 - The 13th meeting of Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development conducted in Dubai.



The 13th meeting of Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development was held in Dubai. The meeting reached consensus on the need for a new set of connectivity targets to help governments more effectively harness broadband networks and services to drive progress towards the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. About 57% of the world's population are still offline and unable to take advantage of the enormous economic and social benefits the Internet can offer.

Established in 2010, as a top-level advocacy body promoting broadband as an accelerator of global development, the Broadband Commission is chaired by President Paul Kagame of Rwanda and Mexico's Carlos Slim Helú.

News 9 - The 4th World Congress of Biosphere Reserves inaugurated at Lima, Peru.



The 4th World Congress of Biosphere Reserves was inaugurated on 14 March 2016 at Lima in Peru. This event was held from 14 March to 17 March 2016. The Congress will address issues related to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Post-2015 Development Agenda, such as education for sustainable development, the economic viability of nature conservation systems, biodiversity, and the protection and sustainable use of natural resources, among others.

News 10 - The 59th Commission on Narcotic Drugs took place from 14-22 March 2016 in Vienna.



The 59th Session of Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) was inaugurated on the 14th March 2016 in Vienna, Austria. This commission meets every year to discuss the global state of drug control and to adopt resolutions to guide the way forward. Around 1500 delegates representing Member States, inter-governmental organizations, and civil society will be participating in the session.

During this session, the Commission will discuss 10 draft resolutions and hold 74 side events and over 25 exhibitions. Among other things, the session's work includes preparations for the UN General Assembly Special Session on the World Drug Problem, which is to be held in April 2016.

News 11 - Mother Teresa to be granted Sainthood on September 4.



Pope Francis announced that Mother Teresa will be granted sainthood of the Roman Catholic Church on the 4th September 2016.

The Nobel Laureate founded the Missionaries of Charity and spent close to 45 years serving the poor, the sick, the orphaned, and the dying on the streets of Kolkata. She died at the age of 87 in Kolkata in year 1997. She was known as the saint of the gutters.

News 12 - Mauritania becomes second African country to ratify 2014 Protocol to the Forced Labour Convention.



Mauritania has ratified the 2014 Protocol to the Forced Labour Convention, 1930, reinforcing thereby the global movement against forced labor in all its forms, including human trafficking.

Mauritania follows Niger, Norway and the United Kingdom. The protocol requires States to take effective measures for prevention of forced labor, protection of victims and ensuring their access to justice and compensation. The ILO estimates

that 21 million people are victims of forced labor worldwide, generating approximately US\$ 150 billion in illicit profits annually.

News 13 - Malawi tests first unmanned aerial vehicle flights for HIV early infant diagnosis.



The Government of Malawi and UNICEF have started testing the use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs or drones) to explore cost effective ways of reducing waiting times for HIV testing of infants.

The test, which is using simulated samples, will have the potential to cut waiting times dramatically, and if successful, will be integrated into the health system alongside other mechanisms such as road transport and SMS.

The first successful test flight completed the 10 km route unhindered travelling from a community health centre to the Kamuzu Central Hospital laboratory.

News 14 - My Biosphere, My Future campaign: Launched by UNESCO in Lima.



My Biosphere, My Future campaign was launched by UNESCO at the 4th World Congress of Biosphere Reserves in Lima, Peru for sustainable development through different projects.

The biodiversity hotspot, Oxapampa – Ashaninka – Yanasha biosphere reserve in the Amazon is being disturbed by the human activities like deforestation and overfishing of endangering local species of tropical fish.

This campaign will help to address the problems of the biosphere in the Amazon belt and improve the income and quality of life through various projects.

News 15 - Myanmar Parliament elected Htin Kyaw as the first civilian President in 53 years.



Myanmar's parliament, the Hluttaw, has chosen Htin Kyaw as the country's new president. This brought end to a decade close of military rule. Kyaw will replace Thein Sein who will step down at the end of March 2016.

He was elected with 360 of the total 652 votes casted. The two other candidates put forward, Khin Aung Myint and Henry Van Thio, by the army and the upper house, will act as first and second vice president, respectively.

News 16 - TCS named official technology partner for Virgin Money London Marathon.



The IT Major Tata Consultancy Services through a press release has announced it has been named as the official technology partner of Virgin Money London Marathon for three years – 2016, 2017 and 2018.

The partnership with Virgin Money London Marathon would help them to enhance the digital experience delivered to marathon participants by giving them wealth of data and insight to help and guide their preparation and also to boost their performance.

The Virgin Money London Marathon is an annual long-distance running event held in London, United Kingdom. The event holds the Guinness world record as the largest annual fund raising event in the world.

News 17 - Russia's own Rating Firm – ACRA aims at breaking monopoly.



Russia's own new national credit-ratings firm Analytical Credit Rating Agency (ACRA), seen as a domestic competitor to global ratings agencies, plans to issue its first ratings this year.

The "Big Three" global credit rating agencies, all based in the US – Standard and Poor's, Moody's, and Fitch Ratings announced to officially stop issuing local credit ratings for Russian companies. The CEO of ACRA is Ekaterina Trofimova.

News 18 - Obama starts for a historic Cuba visit.

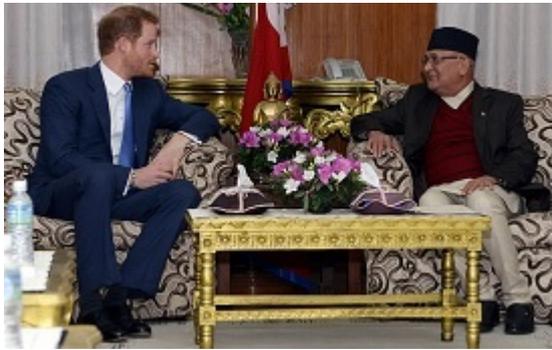


The US President Barack Obama boarded on a historic trip to Cuba. The three-day trip – the first by a US president in 88 years – was unthinkable until Obama and the Cuban President Raul Castro agreed in December 2014 to re-establish diplomatic ties.

The president Obama has gone along with his wife Michelle and their two daughters Sasha and Malia. As the Air Force One touched down in Havana, the US president cheerfully began the landmark trip by tweeting in local slang: "Que bola Cuba?" - or "What's up Cuba?"

News 19 - Prince Harry Begins a 5-day Trip to Nepal.





Britain's Prince Harry began a 5-day official trip to Nepal on the 19th March. He reached Kathmandu to mark the 200th anniversary of their bilateral ties. Prince Harry is leading a 30-member delegation. He met the Nepalese Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli and discussed Nepal-Britain bilateral co-operation.

Prince Harry is the first British royal to visit Nepal since the monarchy was abolished in 2008 following street protests. During his trip, Harry will tour areas hit by last year's devastating earthquake and visit a camp for displaced quake survivors.

News 20 - Nepal joined the Shanghai Cooperation Organization as Dialogue Partner.



Nepal joined the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) as their Dialogue Partner after a memorandum was signed during the Nepalese Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli's visit to China.

Azerbaijan also officially became a SCO dialogue partner on 21 March 2016. The SCO currently has six member states - China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, with Afghanistan, India, Iran, Mongolia and Pakistan as observers, and Belarus, Turkey and Sri Lanka as dialogue partners.

News 21 - Ali Mohamed Shein wins Presidential Elections of Zanzibar.



The Zanzibar Electoral Commission (ZEC) has declared the incumbent President Ali Mohamed Shein of Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) as winner of the presidential elections. He won with 91.4% of the votes. Fifteen European and US diplomats, however, issued a joint statement regretting the weekend vote, which was boycotted by the opposition.

Zanzibar is a semi-autonomous region of Tanzania and has its own president and parliament.

News 22 - Brussels: Islamic State attacks airport and stations; 31 killed.





Brussels, the capital city of Belgium, came under terrorist attacks when a series of explosions took place at the Zaventem Airport and Maalbeek metro station killing at least 31 people and injuring more than 200. The Islamic State has taken the responsibility of the attacks.

Three days of national mourning have been declared in Belgium. Investigators believe they were carried out by the same cell behind November's gun and bomb attacks in Paris.

News 23 - OECD released Standardized e-format for Exchange of BEPS Country-by-Country reports.



The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) released its standardized electronic format for the exchange of Country-by-Country (CbC) reports between jurisdictions, CbC XML Schema – along with the related user guide.

The move is part of larger efforts, agreed upon by G-20 countries to clamp down on activities that leads to Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS). The first exchanges of CbC reports will start in 2018, with information on the year 2016.

News 24 - The 9th International Abilympics started in France.



The 9th International Abilympics started on 23rd March 2016 at Bordeaux in France. The name Abilympics comes from the idea of organizing a competition to promote the skills of persons with disabilities. It combines Abilities with the idea of the Olympics.

The International Abilympics Federation (IAF) aims at promoting the skills competition for persons with disabilities in its international dimension. The International Abilympics are held every four years. The others countries which hosted the Abilympics are Australia in 1995, Czech Republic in 2000, India in 2003, Japan in 2007 and Korea in 2011.

News 25 - US Congress introduces legislation to help India join APEC.





Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation

The Chairman of the House Sub-committee on Asia and the Pacific, Matt Salmon along with few other influential lawmakers introduced a Bill in the Congress asking the US administration to help India join the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) saying an economically prosperous India benefits the US' strategic goals in Asia.

The Singapore headquartered APEC is a forum for 21 economies to promote free trade throughout the Asia-Pacific region.

News 26 - US House introduces resolution to bring India on par with NATO allies.



A Congressional resolution was introduced in the United States House aiming to bring India on par with America's NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) allies.

This was introduced by the Congressman George Holding, who is the Co-Chairman of the House India Caucus, the US-India Defense Technology and Partnership Act (HR 4825), the resolution also seeks to elevate India's status in export of defence articles from the US.

News 27 - Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic sentenced to 40-year imprisonment on account of Genocide.



The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) found former Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic guilty of the 1995 Srebrenica genocide and nine other war crimes. The court, hence, sentenced him to a 40-year imprisonment.

As per the ruling, Karadzic was found guilty of 10 out of 11 charges related to genocide, crimes against humanity and war crime charges. However, he was acquitted of a second count of genocide in other Bosnian towns.

News 28 - Iran signed contract with France's Oil Giant, Total.



Iran has inked a confidential oil agreement with French oil giant, Total, to develop the South Azadegan oil field shared by Iran and Iraq, which also holds an in-situ oil reserve of about 33.2 billion barrels.

Iran and the oil giant, have agreed to keep the articles of the accord confidential, and the French firm is now "studying its participation in the development of the oil field," Zangeneh was quoted as saying by Press TV.

News 29 - Pakistan and Iran agree to boost economic ties.



Iran and Pakistan have mutually agreed to improve economic ties. The two countries also agreed to open two more border crossings to increase trade.

The agreement was reached when the Iranian President Hassan Rouhani met the Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif during his two-day official visit to Pakistan. The two leaders also discussed about cooperation in the fields of energy, anti-terrorism fights, sea-trade and other such critical areas.

News 30 - World Bank approved \$100 million loan to Jordan for creating jobs for Jordanians, Syrian refugees.



The World Bank President Jim Yong Kim announced to provide 100 million US dollars' loan, at rates usually reserved for the poorest countries, to Jordan for creating one lakh jobs for Jordanians and Syrian refugees.

The World Bank extended the highly unusual financing offer because of the extraordinarily difficult situation faced by both the refugees and their Jordanian hosts. The announcement was made during a joint visit by Kim and United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon.

News 31 - Singapore Test Fires Barak Missile.



Singapore successfully test-fired its Barak Missile. The missile was test-fired from its Victory-class missile corvette RSS Vigour during a fleet exercise conducted in the South China Sea.

Singapore's Minister for Defence Dr. Ng Eng Hen was briefed by Colonel Edwin Leong, Commanding Officer of the

RSN's Missile Corvette Squadron, on the conduct of the exercise and the capabilities of the missile corvette, the defense ministry said in a press statement today.

News 32 - Syrian Army recaptured Palmyra city from the Islamic State.



Palmyra was in the news on 26th March 2016 as the Syrian Army recaptured the historic city from Islamic State (IS) terror group Russian Aerospace Forces.

The loss of is a big setback for the Islamic State. The Islamic State militants retreating from Palmyra laid thousands of mines which the Syrian army is now clearing before civilians can return. The Islamic State still has complete control over Raqqa and runs most of Deir al-Zor province in eastern Syria, which borders Iraq.

News 33 - First Cyber Security Organization launched by China.



China launched its first cyber security public organization, Cyber Security Association of China. It is aimed at safeguarding national cyber security and guiding Internet companies to perform their duties. China had launched its first special fund for cyber security with an initial capital of 300 million yuan (\$46 million) in order to become a strong internet power.

This organization will focus on promoting self-discipline in the industry, accelerating the establishment of industry standards and cybersecurity studies and participating in international cooperation.

News 34 - UNICEF launches “Unfairy Tales” of refugee and migrant children.



The United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) launched a series of animated films called ‘Unfairy Tales’. These animated films are the true stories of the plight of children from the conflict areas, which explain the horror behind why they had to flee. The three animated films are: i) “Ivine and the Pillow” ii) “Malak and the Boat” and iii) Mustafa. These tales are a part of the #actofhumanity initiative.

News 35 - US museum returned ancient Rama statue to Cambodia.





The Denver Museum of Art of United States returned a 10th century sandstone statue of God Rama stolen from Cambodia. The statue called the “Torso of Rama” does not have head, arms and feet.

The museum said it itself realized that the Khmer-era statue was looted from the Koh Ker temple near the famous Angkor Wat complex in the 70s decade after the recent discussions with Cambodia.

News 36 - First company listing done in Myanmar.



Myanmar’s Yangon Stock Exchange opened for its first day of business, with the trading of a single company, First Myanmar Investment Co. The shares of First Myanmar rose by 19%. The move comes as the country’s development accelerates with a democratic government being formed after an election victory in November, part of a political and economic transformation that’s bringing an end to more than five decades of isolation.

First Myanmar, Myanmar Citizens Bank and Myanmar Thilawa SEZ are among the initial batch of six companies approved for listing.