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## **January 4, 2019: National Current Affairs**

### **1. Pakistan hails Trump`s desire for `great ties`**

- The Foreign Office on January 3, 2019 welcomed US President Donald Trump`s remarks on ties with Pakistan and said the government was keenly waiting for the engagement at the highest level.
- `We look forward to positive engagement with the US at the leadership level, FO spokesman Dr Mohammad Faisal said.
- He was giving his reaction to President Trump`s comments about Pakistan during a cabinet meeting.
- Mr Trump repeated the allegation of Pakistan being duplicitous in its dealings with America. He, nevertheless, expressed his desire for better ties with Islamabad.
- `When we give money to Pakistan, \$1.3 billion, I ended that. A lot of people don`t know it, because they haven`t been fair to us. We want to have a great relationship with Pakistan, but they house the enemy, they take care of the enemy. We just can`t do that,` President Trump had said.

### **2. SAARC CCI terms Pakistan role vital for strengthening regional trade**

- SAARC CCI President Ruwan Edirisinghe January 3, 2019 underscored that Pakistan`s support for boosting of trade, investment and business among the member countries was of key importance.
- He said South Asia has tremendous trade potential, which needs to be tapped with a shared vision of 2030 envisaged to address core trade issues and Pakistan`s role in this regard is vital as no prosperity is possible without restoring peace in the region.
- Explaining security and political barriers as the main challenges faced by South Asian countries, he urged to celebrate the current successes instead of focusing on the issues. Because SAARC nations show the best improvement in terms of GDP growth, which averages at over 6.5 percent means "SAARC countries

have the highest rate of growing economies in the world”.

## **January 4, 2019: International Current Affairs**

### **3. North Korea`s top diplomat in Italy `seeking asylum`**

- North Korea`s top diplomat in Italy has sought asylum and gone into hiding, Seoul lawmakers told reporters after a closed-door meeting with South Korean intelligence officials on January 3, 2019.
- It would mark the latest high-profile defection by a senior North Korean envoy since the deputy ambassador in London abandoned his post in 2016.
- `Acting ambassador Jo Song Gil`s term was ending in late November last year and he escaped the diplomatic compound in early November` with his wife, lawmaker Kim Min-ki told reporters.
- Jo, 48, has been acting ambassador in Rome since October 2017 after Italy expelled the then ambassador Mun Jong Nam in protest at a North Korean nuclear test a month earlier in violation of UN resolutions.

### **4. US warns Iran against space launches**

- The United States issued a pre-emptive warning to Iran on January 3, 2019 against pursuing three planned space rocket launches that it said would violate a UN Security Council resolution because they use ballistic missile technology.
- Iran rejected the warning, issued by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, saying its space vehicle launches and missile tests were not violations.
- Pompeo said Iran planned to launch in the coming months three rockets, called Space Launch Vehicles (SLV), that he said incorporate technology `virtually identical` to what is used in intercontinental ballistic missiles.

### **5. Ireland to seek EU aid in case of no-deal Brexit**

- Ireland will seek hundreds of millions of euros in aid from Brussels if Britain crashes out of the EU without a deal, the agriculture minister was quoted on January 3, 2019 as saying.
- `You`re looking at hundreds of millions here, Michael Creed told The Irish Independent.
- `Between the beef industry and the fishing industry we`re talking mega-money.
- With the UK parliament locked in stalemate over the painstakingly-brokered draft Brexit deal, the possibility of Britain leaving the trading bloc in March without an agreement now looms ever larger. The emergency aid for Ireland would aim to buttress sectors such as beef, dairy and fishing

## 6. China`s probe lands on far side of moon

- A Chinese lunar rover landed on the far side of the moon on January 3, 2019, in a global first that boosts Beijing`s ambitions to become a space superpower.
- The Chang`e-4 probe touched down and sent a photo of the so called `dark side` of the moon to the Queqiao satellite, which would relay communications to controllers on Earth, China`s national space agency said on its website.
- Beijing is pouring billions into its military-run space programme, with hopes of having a crewed space station by 2022, and of eventually sending humans to the moon.
- The Chang`e-4 lunar probe mission named after the moon goddess in Chinese mythology was launched in December from the south-western Xichang launch centre. It is the second Chinese probe to land on the moon, following the Yutu (Jade Rabbit) rover mission in 2013.

## 7. Nearly 400 migrants died at US border in 2018

- At least 376 migrants died at the U.S.-Mexico border in 2018, Anadolu Agency said January 3, 2019 quoting a UN monitor.
- The estimate from the International Organization on Migration`s Missing Migrants Project includes 214 men, 20 women and four children. The other 138 could not be identified from their remains. Others likely died, but their remains have not been found.
- The vast majority of those who perished were from the Americas. Only two, who hailed from South Asia, did not come from the region.
- The data comes amid U.S. President Donald Trump`s hardline approach to immigration, both illegal and legal, including a crackdown on asylum regulations, Anadolu added

## 8. North Korea ambassador to Italy `disappears`

- Jo Song-gil was thought to have been living in Rome with his wife and children before he disappeared South Korea`s spy agency has told officials that North Korea`s ambassador to Italy has disappeared.
- The announcement follows unconfirmed reports that Pyongyang`s top diplomat in Italy had sought asylum from an unidentified Western country. Jo Song-gil, the acting North Korean ambassador to Rome, is the son and son-in-law of high-ranking North Korean officials.
- The last senior diplomat to defect was the deputy ambassador in London. Thae Yong-ho abandoned his post in 2016, along with his wife and children. He defected to South Korea.
- As one of the highest-ranking officials to ever defect from the North, his move was seen as a blow to Kim Jong-un`s regime. He would go on to urge the world to spread information in North Korea to undermine Mr Kim`s status among his people.

## 9. 'Snowman' shape of distant Ultima Thule revealed

- The small, icy world known as Ultima Thule has finally been revealed. A new picture returned from Nasa's New Horizons spacecraft shows it to be two objects joined together - to give a look like a "snowman".
- The US probe's images acquired as it approached Ultima hinted at the possibility of a double body, but the first detailed picture from January 1, 2019's close flyby confirms it. New Horizons encountered Ultima 6.5 billion km from Earth.
- The event set a record for the most distant ever exploration of a Solar System object. The previous mark was also set by New Horizons when it flew past the dwarf planet Pluto in 2015. But Ultima is 1.5 billion km further out.
- It orbits the Sun in a region of the Solar System known as the Kuiper belt - a collection of debris and dwarf planets. There are hundreds of thousands of Kuiper members like Ultima, and their frigid state almost certainly holds clues to how all planetary bodies came into being some 4.6 billion years ago.

## 10. Anak Krakatau volcano: Satellites get clear view of collapse

- There is now some very good optical satellite imagery of the collapsed Anak Krakatau volcano, which generated the devastating tsunami on 22 December.
- Poor weather conditions over Indonesia's Sunda Strait had frustrated spacecraft that view the Earth in the same type of light as our eyes. But the team at Planet has managed to find windows in the cloud. Pictures from its Dove and SkySat platforms show the extent of the volcanic cone's failure.
- It is easier to appreciate now how the island has been reshaped. What was once a crater at the summit of a 340m-high edifice has been completely broken open to form a small bay.
- Indonesia's disaster agency says more than two-thirds of Anak Krakatau's volume (150-170 million cubic metres) is missing. Much of it is assumed to have slipped into the sea in the colossal landslide that produced the tsunami.

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