

THE WORLD IN 2019

From the world's most important power relation to key elections in the region, here's what our foreign correspondents around the world will be keeping an eye on in the coming year.

JANUARY



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's annual New Year's speech will set the tone for developments on the Korean peninsula as well as the deadlocked denuclearisation process.

President Donald Trump will deliver his annual State of the Union address, a speech scrutinised for US' direction on key domestic issues (healthcare, immigration, the economy, trade) and foreign policy agenda (North Korea, Russia, Nato, China).



The United States and China mark 40 years of diplomatic relations even as ties remain tense over trade row and other frictions.

FEBRUARY

The world's largest free trade deal – between the European Union and Japan – enters into force, accounting for a third of the global economy and covering more than 630 million people.

India to unveil what is expected to be a populist budget, sweetening the ground for the Narendra Modi government ahead of a general election.

Former Malaysian prime minister Najib Razak goes on trial on graft charges linked to the 1MDB scandal. His Umno-led Barisan Nasional coalition was defeated in the May 2018 general election by the Mahathir-led Pakatan Harapan.



MARCH

The 90-day truce for the US-China trade war comes to an end. If trade talks fail to deliver an agreement, the US will impose heightened tariffs on Chinese imports on March 2.

South Korea to mark the 100th anniversary of a key independence movement against Japanese colonial rule in 1919.

29

The United Kingdom becomes the first member of the European Union to leave the grouping. If Prime Minister Theresa May fails to win parliamentary backing for her deal to leave the union, a no-deal Brexit could unleash chaos across the country and abroad.



31

Ukraine holds presidential election amid Cold War anxieties rekindled by a recent clash with Russia in the Black Sea.

APRIL

APRIL TO MAY

India holds general election for the Lower House of Parliament. Seeking a second term, Prime Minister Narendra Modi faces a challenge from the Rahul Gandhi-led Congress Party which is trying to cobble together an alliance to mount a challenge to the popular leader.

17

For the first time, voters in Indonesia will head to the polls to elect their President and Members of Parliament on the same day. All eyes will be on the high-stakes contest between President Joko Widodo and his old rival, former general Prabowo Subianto.

20

Seventeen years after the US-led invasion overthrew the Taleban government in Kabul, Afghanistan is to hold presidential election for the third time. Around 15,000 foreign troops remain deployed on Afghan soil.



30

Japan's 85-year-old Emperor Akihito to abdicate throne for elder son, Crown Prince Naruhito, in the first such ceremony in 200 years. The retirement of Emperor Akihito will mark the end of the Heisei (achieving peace) era. Naruhito, who turns 59 on Feb 23, will become Emperor on May 1.

MAY

Australia is expected to hold a general election likely to be fought over issues such as immigration, climate change and the country's revolving-door politics. Polls indicate that the Scott Morrison-led coalition will lose to the Labor party which is led by Mr Bill Shorten.

4

China marks the 100th anniversary of the May Fourth Movement, an anti-imperialist student uprising in 1919 that brought to the fore modern ideas of science, democracy and progress in the country, and sowed the seeds for the birth of the Chinese Communist Party two years later (1921).

13

The Philippines holds mid-term elections seen as a vote of confidence in President Rodrigo Duterte. Twelve of the 24 seats in the Senate and all 297 seats in the House are up for grabs.

23-26

The European Parliament holds elections in a litmus test for far-right populism in Europe where established political parties in several countries, including Germany, have faced drubbing by nationalist and far-right parties.



MAY TO JUNE

India and the US to hold the first tri-service military exercises in the Bay of Bengal. The exercises signal closer cooperation between the two countries in the Indo-Pacific region.

JUNE

4

The 30th anniversary of one of China's most politically sensitive incidents will go unmarked on the mainland. Beijing will suppress any discussion on the Tiananmen incident. Remembrance events are held annually in Hong Kong.

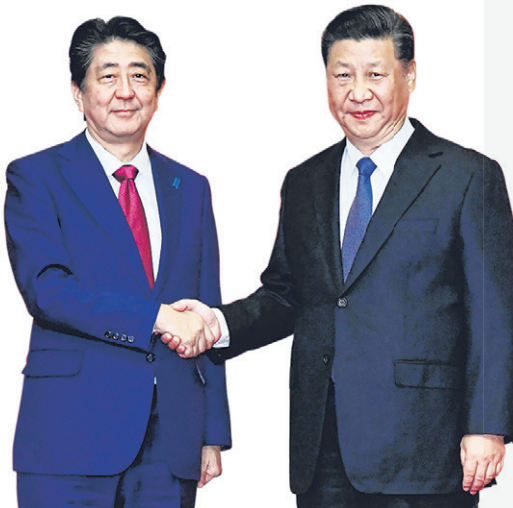


5

Qatar marks the second anniversary of blockade by its bigger neighbours. The Qatar blockade and other regional developments will be discussed at the 40th session of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) summit. The summit will be held in the United Arab Emirates, but no dates are set.

28-29

Leaders of the Group of 20 countries meet in Osaka, with discussions set to centre on the role of free trade and innovation to spur global economic growth. Chinese President Xi Jinping will make his first landmark visit to Japan since he took office in 2013, as ties warm between the two neighbours.



JULY

Japan holds Upper House elections. How the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) fares will have a bearing on Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's push to revise the Pacifist Constitution by 2020.

20

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (Nasa) celebrates the 50th anniversary of the moon landing.



SEPTEMBER

17-30

The 193-member United Nations General Assembly holds annual meetings in New York. The Palestinians will chair the group of 77 developing nations in 2019. The UN Climate Summit on Sept 23 will be closely watched, with the outcome seen as a test of global resolve to step up the fight against climate change.



OCTOBER

The People's Republic of China turns 70, the first of three consecutive landmark years. In 2020, China – the world's second biggest economy – aims to eradicate poverty and establish a moderately prosperous society. The year after that, the Chinese Communist Party will celebrate its centenary. Also on Oct 1, Beijing's new international airport, projected to be the world's largest, will begin operations. Beijing Daxing International Airport will eventually handle 880,000 flights and 100 million passengers each year.



2

The death anniversary of journalist Jamal Khashoggi will reverberate across the world if his killing two months ago inside the Saudi consulate in Istanbul remains unsolved. His case has spurred some positive developments in the Saudi-led war on Yemen, but it is doubtful if a UN-brokered ceasefire will last.

NOVEMBER

Poland holds parliamentary elections. If right-wing party Law and Justice (PiS) were to extend its surprise victory in 2015, it could signal a further turning away of the Poles from pro-European policies.

17-19

Trade ministers and leaders to meet in Chile for the annual Apec summit, which will focus on digital economy, regional connectivity, and women's role in economic growth.

DECEMBER



20

Macau marks 20th anniversary of return to China. The former Portuguese colony is now a key part of Beijing's plan to develop the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area into an economic powerhouse.

End 2019

South Korea is hosting Asean-Korea Commemorative Summit to mark 20 years of dialogue between South Korea and Asean as the Moon Jae-in administration seeks to elevate ties with the 10-member bloc under his signature New Southern Policy.

